Powell Plateau

Locations/Elevations

Swamp Point (7550 ft / 2301 m) to Muav Saddle (6711 ft / 2045 m)
Swamp Point to Powell Plateau (7650 ft / 2332 m)
Swamp Point to Dutton Point

Mileages

1 mi (1.6 km)
1.5 mi (2.4 km)
7 mi (11.3 km)

Trailhead Access

The trailhead for Powell Plateau and North Bass begins at Swamp Point. Swamp Point is at the end of Swamp Ridge road which is accessed at the end of FS 268B and Grand Canyon National Park boundary. A high clearance 4X4 vehicle is recommended for this road.

Water Sources

The only available water is the Queen Anne spring located ¼ mile east of Muav Saddle at the base of the Coconino. It is intermittent.

Campsites

Numerous campsites are available on the Plateau. There are no good campsites between Swamp Point and the Plateau.

Trail Description

The Powell Plateau trailhead is located at Swamp Point. Vehicles can be parked 1/4 mile east of the trailhead. The trail drops down to Muav Saddle through a series of dry, chaparral switchbacks. Follow the switchbacks to minimize erosion. The bison unfortunately have not learned to do so. At the saddle is a trail junction. The North Bass Trail is to the left. The trail to the right leads to the Muav cabin, built in 1925 near a camp used by Theodore Roosevelt. It is open and can be explored. There is also a log book found inside. The middle trail continues south to a slightly lower saddle and up to Powell Plateau. It may be a bit overgrown by gamble oak and maple. Once again there are switchbacks up the steep climb to the top of the plateau. Once on the plateau, you will find an amazing Ponderosa Pine forest. Wander north to spectacular views of the Esplanade or continue south on the trail toward Dutton Point. The trail is evident and is marked by blazes on trees. To take in the views from Newberry, Thompson, Beale, and Ives points follow the very northern edge of the plateau. As you go west, the plateau tilts and the elevation lowers. Soon you will be walking in a Pinyon-Juniper ecosystem with many types of wonderful cacti.

Sections of eastern Powell Plateau are classic examples of old growth Ponderosa forests. Human impacts from logging, grazing and fire suppression have not occurred here, and the forest is in a pristine state. The plateau is extremely susceptible to wildfires from lightning which occur here every summer. Grand Canyon National Park does not suppress fires on the plateau. The area is subject to closure during fire activity.

General Information & History

During the summer months, Powell Plateau constitutes a lost world: separate from the north rim; less visited and more pristine than the north rim. It is a paradise for those interested in wildflowers and bird-watching. The Plateau offers undisrupted views up the canyon to the east and the west. Dutton Point, at the far eastern edge of the Plateau, is arguably one of the finest views in the National Park.

Maps

7.5 Minute Quadrants: Powell Plateau, King Arthur Castle
15 Minute Quadrants: Powell Plateau
Trails Illustrated: Grand Canyon East, Grand Canyon West, Grand Canyon North and South (National Geographic)

Last updated September 2024