Rider Canyon

Locations/Elevations

Trailhead (4560 ft / 1390 m) to Colorado River (3010 ft / 917 m)

Mileages

4 mi (6.4 km)

Trailhead Access

The road is passable by two wheel drive vehicles with good clearance though the road is subject to damage from flooding. From Highway 89A turn off to the south on a dirt road 0.2 miles west of mile marker 557. This is where the road log begins. The BLM has done an outstanding job of closing and posting the numerous “roads to nowhere.” Please do your part to protect the Brady Pincushion Cactus by staying on the roads. Along most of this drive there are carsonite posts indicating the route to the trailhead.

0.0 Leave Highway 89A and go through gate.

0.3 Stock tank on right, keep left.

0.8 Bog area, left or right will take you to the same place.

1.7 Road forks, two track lane to right; stay to the left.

2.2 Cattle Guard; keep left at next two right turns.

3.4 Pass through gate.

4.1 Road goes through dry wash and turns left past levee

4.6 Take a left at the T.

4.8 Go right through fence and head south.

5.4 Through fence.

5.7 Take left at Y.

6.6 Go through fence.

9.3 Scrap trailer to the left. Climb hill.

10.2 Keep left at the Y.

10.9 Dry stock tank on left.

11.9 Through wash and left at intersection. Nice camping to right.

12.2 Cattle Chute to left. Take a right up the hill.

13.8 Small outcrop of Kaibab Limestone to left. Large Earth Crack ahead.

14.1 Park in turn-around. Trail begins at trail marker approximately 120 ft (36.6 m) west.

Water Sources

Potholes below pour-offs are not reliable. The only reliable water source is the Colorado River.

Campsites

Good campsites are on Rider Beach at the Colorado River and on the rim. A few marginal sites exist in Rider Canyon wash.

Important Notes

This can be characterized as a route more than a trail, especially at the top where the footing is precarious, and washouts are frequent. The route follows the mostly dry drainage for the majority of the trip, ending at House Rock Rapid. There are several bypasses around dry pour-offs and, in pools of water that often collect below these pour-offs, some wading may be necessary. As with all routes in Marble Canyon summer temperatures soar, so it should only be attempted in the shoulder seasons.

Route Description

The start of this route can be seen almost due north from the end of the road. Cross the large earth crack and descend down into the rocky drainage just ahead. A large block of the canyon wall has been faulted away from the rim. The beginning of the descent is marked with a large cairn. Keep to the left of the 35' wide chute as you enter. Toward the lower end of the chute two chock stones bar the way. Both can be passed to the left and by going under the blocks. The second is much tighter then the first and requires removal of packs.

Follow the trail as it comes out of the chute to the base of the Kaibab Formation. Several switchbacks in the Toroweap slopes will bring you to a talus filled gully that will take you through the Coconino cliffs. Follow the slope all the way to the stream bed. There is a faint trail that contours to the west at the top of the Coconino sandstone. Do not follow this path. The route to the streambed is loose and steep, and almost directly down once you've descended through the Kaibab. There are several cairned routes in this area, one of which has been washed out at the very bottom, so be prepared to do a bit of backtracking at this point.

Once the stream bed is reached, follow it to the river (approx. 3 miles). The boulders which are initially present will quickly give way to a slick rock environment. There are several pour-offs which require scrambling. In some places a trail exists to bypass pour-offs: usually these bypasses are on the north side of the drainage, but near the middle of your journey to the river, there will be a long traverse on the south side. The last mile to the river contains a series of remarkable narrows. The most substantial pour-off has a bypass that is usually marked with cairns on the north side; this bypass includes a short stretch of hand and foot climbing down a 30 ft. cascading crevice to the bottom of the canyon. This occurs about 1/3 mile from the River. Be prepared to wade through some cold, muddy water; in at least one spot, wading is unavoidable if water is present.

Maps

7.5 Minute Quadrants: Emmit Wash, Bitter Spring

Last updated January 2022