Soap Canyon

Locations/Elevations

Rim (4220 ft / 1286 m) to Colorado River (3050 ft / 930 m)

Mileages

approximately 4.5 mi (7.2 km)

Trailhead Access

Soap Canyon is accessed either from the Colorado River or from a road 1 mile west of Cliff Dwellers Lodge, 0.1 mile west of mile marker 548, at the “Soap Canyon Trailhead” sign. Turn off of the highway and go through the gate (remember to close it) and drive left through a small cattle station. The trailhead parking area is 1/2 mile from the highway.

Water Sources

There is no flowing water in this canyon but there are occasionally potholes. You should carry enough water to reach the river. River water may be silty, so be prepared to have a method of settling out the sediment.

Campsites

There are suitable level sites along the way, although they are subject to flooding during thunderstorms. There are several good campsites at the river. During the summer months large rafting trips may be encountered at the river campsites. These parties camp upstream of the rapid. South of the mouth of the creek there are suitable campsites away from potential river parties.

Important Notes

Those seeking to experience Marble Canyon and visit the Colorado River in a day hike will find Soap Canyon an appealing option. Route finding skills are required to navigate pour-offs and enormous rock-falls, and in one tricky spot a rope might be needed.

Route Description

This route drops into the south fork of Soap Canyon. From the trailhead parking lot start walking down the sandy wash. This will shortly end at an easily climbed pour-off immediately above the actual south fork of Soap Canyon. Turn left and continue down canyon.

Soap Creek is filled with large boulders which make for slow travel. There is a cairned route to the left through the large landslide. Once past the boulder field, there is a pour-off which can be bypassed via a cairned route on the right. This traverse can be easily missed, as it starts about 50 yards up canyon from the pour-off. The traverse leads to a steep descent. At the base of this descent a collection of house-size boulders clogs the drainage bottom. There are two routes through these boulders, one is via 10’ downclimb where a fixed rope is often hanging. It is never a good idea to rely on old ropes, so bringing your own 30 foot piece of rope or webbing is a good idea. A ropeless route on the left side of the drainage is exposed but solid for those with good scrambling skills. Continue boulder hopping until the north fork of Soap Canyon enters from the left. The remainder of the way to the river is easy walking on the sandy-bottom dry creek bed.

Maps

7.5 Minute Quadrants: Bitter Springs
15 Minute Quadrants: Tanner Wash