

**Lolo National Forest Trails  
Missoula Ranger District**

**Babcock Mountain Trail # 10**



| <b>Item</b>                | <b>Remarks</b>  |
|----------------------------|---|
| Managed Uses:              | Hiking/Horse  |
| Difficulty:                | Moderate to difficult due to a steady increase in grade from about 10 percent to 20 percent.  |
| Trail Length:              | 2.5 miles one way   |
| Trail Termini:             | Beginning - Off Rock Creek Road to the left as you travel south; across the road from the parking area<br>Ending - Turn around at the junction with the old road bed #4300 and follow the same trail back to the trailhead. No loop trail/road opportunities exist. |
| Trail Elevation:           | At beginning/lowest-approx. 3600 ft.<br>At end/highest-approx. 5500 ft.   |
| Managed use<br>Seasons:    | Spring-Fall   |
| Maintenance<br>Frequency:  | Every three years   |
| Trip<br>Type Duration:     | Short day hike to old road bed #4300 that accesses Babcock Mountain.  |
| Trail Usage:               | Low   |
| Trailhead Facilities:      | Parking for 3 to 4 cars; no restrooms, campsites, or drinking water.  |
| Trail Use<br>Restrictions: | Closed to all motorized vehicles  |
| Reference Maps:            | Lolo NF Visitor Map, West Half  |

Map Location: Section 19, T10N, R16W

Associated Trails: Valley of the Moon interpretive nature trail is nearby with parking and restroom facilities.

### **Attraction and Considerations:**

This trail grants beautiful views of Rock Creek Valley during the wide sweeping switchbacks that continue throughout the entire trail. Scenic attractions include views of the valley and steep ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir covered mountain sides. In the spring, the vivid green valley is full of prairie grasses and is split in two by Rock Creek. Wildflowers are abundant on the forest floor surrounding the trail during the spring and early summer months, making this hike a great walk for botany buffs. Later in the summer and into the fall, the valley's grassy bottom is a beautiful golden-brown and Rock Creek is more visible, seeming to sparkle due to the contrast in colors.

### **Trail Description:**

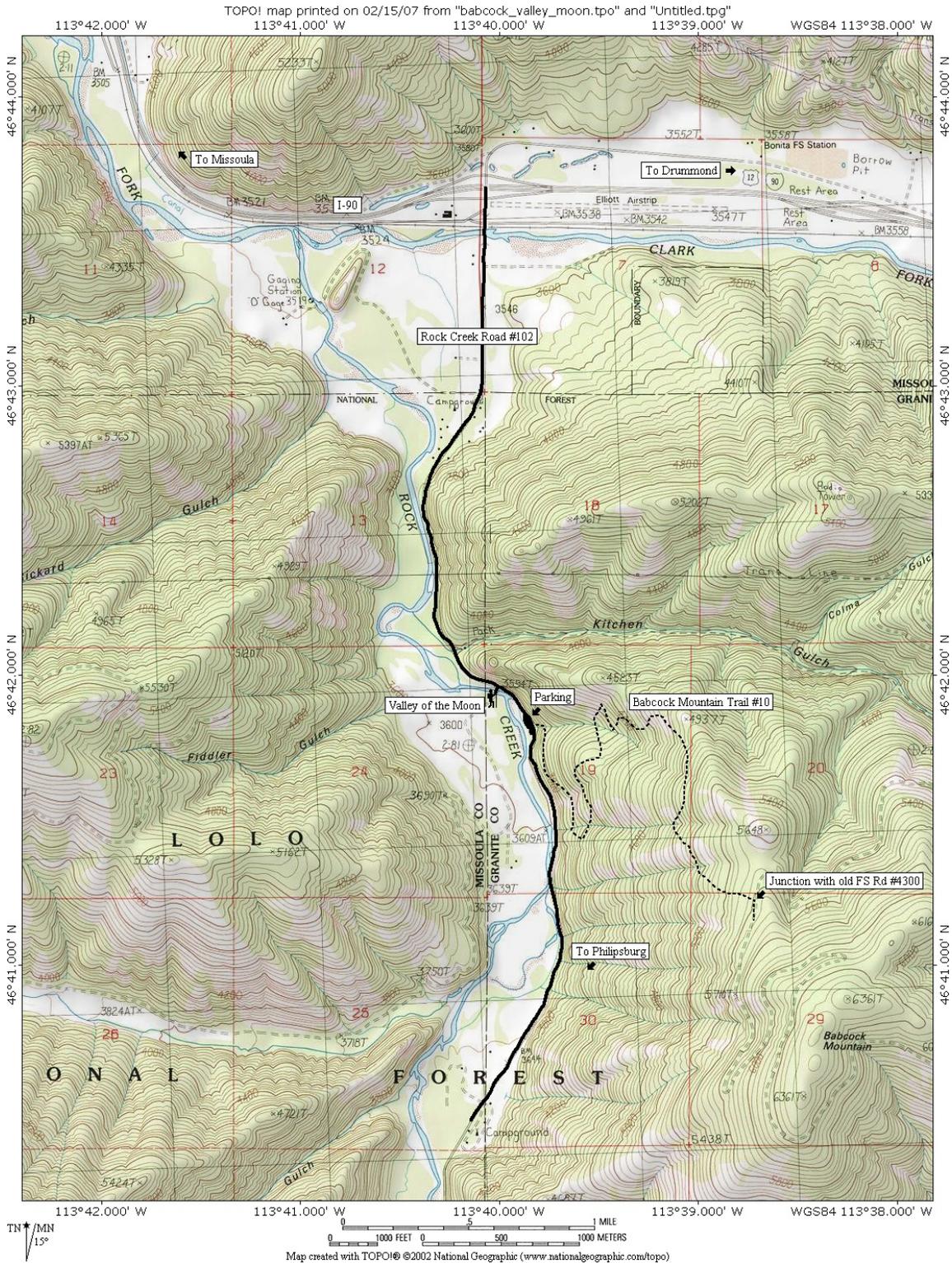
The trail starts toward the north end of the parking lot on the opposite side of the road. Hidden by vegetation, the trail is not prominent because of the low level of use it receives. Immediately, the trail ascends into a very steep draw that lasts only a quarter of a mile, and eventually decreases to a gradual grade for the remainder of the trail. Once the trail evens out, it winds through an open forest of grasses and shrubs dominated by the occasional ponderosa pine. When the trail leads into the drainage, the vegetation becomes more abundant with ninebark and serviceberry and becomes canopied by a greater number of trees. This pattern of open and sweeping areas of forest, leading into more densely forested areas continues for the remainder of the trail.

The trail itself is washed out in some areas but it is still manageable. This is a great hike during the morning hours because the sun has not come over the east side of the hill yet. Bring gators for the dew that will accumulate on your pants, making you soaking wet.

The trail terminates on the old road bed #4300 and is marked by a cairn (three stones stacked).

### **Accessing the Trail:**

From Missoula, drive 20 miles east on Interstate 90 and exit onto Rock Creek Road #120, Exit 126. Drive about 2 ½ miles south from the interstate until you see a hiking symbol sign on the right side of the road. Just after the sign is a dirt turnout that is also on the right side of the road. This is the parking area for the Babcock Mountain Trailhead. The trail is directly across the road from the parking area.



**For more information contact the Missoula Ranger District at 406-329-3814.**