

MAZATZAL WILDERNESS TRAILHEADS (TH)

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Tonto National Forest Service



Not uncommonly one of the more challenging parts of a back-country trip is attempting to find the trailhead itself. For this reason, we have developed the following explanation of how to reach various trailheads. This will also enable those who wish to “get away from the crowd” to locate areas that received less use.

Location of Main Trailheads (TH) (organized alphabetically)

BARNHARDT TH — Drive up Highway 87 (the Beeline Highway) to the junction with Highway 188. Approximately 4 miles beyond this junction, turn left on FR 419 (this turn-off is just before crossing the Rye Creek Bridge, about 1 mile south of the Rye Creek Store). Follow FR 419 for 4.7 miles to the trailhead. **The Barnhardt, Y Bar, and Half Moon Trails** begin here. This is the most heavily-used trailhead for this Wilderness Area.

CITY CREEK TH — From Payson, drive west on Main Street (which becomes FR 406) toward the East Verde. Approximately 11 miles after turning off Highway 87, turn right into a small parking area (located a few hundred feet beyond a sharp switchback). This road is very steep in spots, and 4x4's are recommended for hauling horses. There is a small pipe corral available at the trailhead. **The Mazatzal Divide Trail 23** begins across the road.

COTTONWOOD GROVE TH — From the town of Carefree, drive east and north on Cave Creek Road (FR 24) to the junction of the Bartlett FR 19. Turn right down this paved highway for 6 miles; turn left and continue on FR 205 (towards Horseshoe Reservoir). After 7.7 miles, look for a corral on the left side of the road. Across from the corral, a primitive road (FR 161) parallels the river downstream for approx. one mile to the trailhead. Horse-trailers should be left near the corral. Do not try to cross the river unless there is little or no water flowing (crossing the river is done as your own risk!). **Copper Camp Trail 87** begins several miles up FR 477, and **Fig Trail 92** begins a short distance up FR 477.

CROSS F TH — From the intersection of McDowell Road and State Hwy. 87 (just north of the Country Club exit from State Hwy. 202), drive north up Hwy. 87 for 44.1 miles. Look for a direction sign (between Mileposts 222 and 223) which shows Sycamore Creek to the left (west). Turn left down this paved FR 627 for 3.3 miles. There is a small parking area on the left, along the creek. **The Little Saddle Trail 244** begins across the old highway, but the trail sign is hard to see.

DEADMAN MESA TH — From Payson, continue north on Highway 87 for approximately 19 miles to Strawberry. Turn left at the Strawberry Lodge on Rd. (FR 428) for approximately 7 1/2 miles; turn left (south) on FR 491 (**4WD Vehicle is required**). Drive 6 slow miles to the Trailhead. **The Deadman Mesa Trail 17** is accessed at this point.

DEER CREEK TH — Drive up Highway 87 (the Beeline Highway) to the junction with Highway 188. Across from this junction, a small road turns off to the left (west). The trailhead is a short distance up this road. The **Deer Creek, South Fork, and Gold Ridge Trails** can be accessed from here.

DOLL BABY TH — From Payson, drive west on Main Street (which becomes FR 406) toward the East Verde. This road ends at the trailhead after approximately 12 miles (approximately 1 1/2 miles beyond the **City Creek TB**). This road is very steep in spots, and 4WDs are recommended for hauling horses. A private road under permit to a rancher extends into the Wilderness Area, however no other vehicles are allowed beyond this point. Stock water is available. The **Bull Spring and Saddle Ridge Trails** are accessed approximately 3 miles down the private road.

MINERAL CREEK TH — From Payson, drive west on Main Street (becomes FR 406) approximately 5 1/2 miles (after turning off Highway 87) towards the East Verde. Turn left on FR 414. Follow this road approximately 6 miles to a parking area and corral. The **North Peak Trail 24** begins approximately 1/2 mile west of this point up a jeep road in **Mineral Creek**.

MORMON GROVE TH - From the intersection of McDowell Road and State Hwy 87 (just north of the Country Club exit from State Hwy. 202), drive north up Hwy. 87 for 44.1 miles. Look for a direction sign (between Mileposts 222 and 223) which shows Sycamore Creek to the left (west). Turn left down this paved FR 627 for 1.2 miles to the junction of FR 201 which is graveled. Turn right and go 1.2 mile to the junction of FR 25 (this junction is on the Slate Creek Divide). Turn left down this 4WD road and go for 2.7 miles to the junction with FR 25A. Turn left, cross the creek and drive up this road (still FR 25) approx. 1 1/2 miles to the corral at the end of the road. Parking is limited, and **horse-trailers are not recommended**. The **Saddle Mountain Trail 88** begins here.

PEELEY TB — From the intersection of McDowell Road and State Hwy 87 (just north of the Country Club exit from State Hwy. 202), drive north up Hwy. 87 for 44.1 miles. Look for a direction sign (between Mileposts 222 and 223) which shows Sycamore Creek to the left (west). Turn left down this paved FR 627 for 1.2 miles to the junction of FR 201 which is graveled. Turn right and go 1.2 mile to the junction of FR 25 (this junction is on the Slate Creek Divide). Turn left and begin climbing, still on FR 201. Go approx. seven (7) miles to its end at the trailhead. This road gets progressively rougher, and may require 4WD; it is not recommended for horse-trailers or sedans. The **Mazatzal Divide Tr. 23, Deer Creek Tr. 45, and the Cornucopa Tr. 86** are accessed via this trailhead.

PINE MOUNTAIN ROAD TH — From the intersection of McDowell Road and State Hwy 87 (just north of the Country Club exit from State Hwy. 202), drive north up Hwy. 87 for 44.1 miles. Look for a direction sign (between Mileposts 222 and 223) which shows Sycamore Creek to the left (west). Turn left down this paved FR 627 for 1.2 miles to the junction of FR 201 which is graveled. Turn right and go 1.2 mile to the junction of FR 25 (this junction is on the Slate Creek Divide). Turn left and begin climbing, still on FR 201. There are several interesting trails branching off this road during its last two miles. The road gets progressively rougher and finally may require 4WD. **Not recommended for horse-trailers or sedans**. The **Gold Ridge Tr. 47, the South Fork Tr. 46, and the Davey Gowan Trail 48** are all accessible via this road.

RED CREEK TH — From the town of Carefree, continue east and north on the Cave Creek Road FR 24 for 35 miles to a T-junction with FR 269. Turn right for 3 miles to FR 18. Turn left on FR 18 for approximately 2 1/2 miles to Red Creek. High-clearance vehicles are recommended for reaching this trailhead. Be sure your vehicle has plenty of gas. From this point it is possible to hike or pack down Red Creek (a primitive jeep road follows the creek) for approximately 3 miles to the Verde River. The **Verde River Trail 11** is accessed at the river.

SEARS TH — From the town of Carefree, continue east and north on Cave Creek Road (FR 24) to the junction of the Bartlett Road (FR 19). Turn right down this paved highway for approximately 6 miles; turn left and continue on FR 205 for 7.7 miles to a corral where FR 161 turns right. From this point, it is possible when the river is low to cross the river to get to FR 479 (Crossing the river is done at your own risk!). Salt River Project has blocked the access by prohibiting vehicles from crossing Horseshoe Dam. Continue northeast on FR 479 for approximately 1/2 mile to FR 474. Turn right on FR 474 for approximately 1/2 mile to a parking area. The **Sears Trail 90** and **Davenport Trail 89** (and an old jeep road) are accessed via this trailhead.

SHEEP BRIDGE TH — From the town of Carefree, continue east and north on the Cave Creek Road (FR 24) for approximately 35 miles to a T-junction with FR 269. Turn right for approximately 12 miles to the trailhead. High-clearance vehicles are recommended for this road; however there are times (after rains, etc.) when even a 4x4 has trouble. The Verde River Trail 11, the Dutchman Grave Trail 22, and the **Willow Trail 223** are accessed via this trailhead.

TWIN BUTTES TH — From Payson, continue north of Highway 87 (the Beeline Highway) approximately 19 miles to Strawberry. Turn left at the Strawberry Lodge on FR 428 for approximately 5 miles; turn left on FR 427 for 6/10 miles, then right turn on FR 194. Continue down FR 194 for approximately 5 miles to the trailhead. **High-clearance or 4WD vehicles are recommended.** The **Verde River Trail 11** is accessed via this trailhead.

There are a number of other points besides the above trailheads that can provide access to this Wilderness Area. Contact a local Forest Officer if you have any questions.

“Alone in the silence, I understand for a moment the dread which many feel in the presence of primeval desert, the unconscious fear which compels them to tame, alter or destroy what they cannot understand, to reduce the wild and pre human to human dimensions. Anything rather than confront directly the ante-human, that OTHER WORLD which frightens not through danger or hostility but in something far worse—its implacable indifference.”

—Edward Abbey (1 92 7-1989)