



Skyline Serenity HIKE

DEER Creek Trail

about 16 miles South of PAYSON

We Hike Along a High Desert, Canyon, and Creek Trail to Just Outside the MATAZAL WILDERNESS.

Interesting Rocks Can be Seen Along the Trail. See the Windmill Water Pump and Riparian Areas as We Hike Along the Creekside.

**4th Saturday
May 25, 2024**

**Meet at
the Trailhead @ 9:45 AM**

For travel time, leave Mesa by 8:30

Directions:

From Phoenix Area Take Highway 87 North Toward Payson and Turn West (Left for those headed north from Phoenix) at the intersection with 188 (closed rest stop) at the brown DEER CREEK Trailhead sign. The trailhead is immediately off Highway 87. Hike to Start at 10:00 am



**BRING:
Newcomer, Water,
Snack, & PMA**

**Let us know if you plan to hike
Chuck H. 480-236-4859**

We Will Find A Cozy Spot To Have an NA Meeting

Info from HikeArizona.com

- Hike
- Deer Creek Trail (#45) reminded me of both the Barnhardt trail (a few miles north) and Secret Mountain trail in Sedona. Barnhardt (BH) has well-paced and relatively uniform elevation gain (at least for my tastes) and provides an excellent sampling of all the Arizona terra zones (high desert scrub up to pines). Deer Creek (DC) starts similarly but has a much more modest elevation gain (at least for the first 4 miles or so all the time I had that day). However, DC does have high desert, nice sections of riparian growth (cottonwood and sycamore trees, river grasses, ivy), a gurgling creek, gravesite (!), and a working windmill-powered water pump. I thought it was worth doing at least once.
- If I had to choose only one, I'd go with BH, but I decided to check out DC since I've already done BH a few times, and DC is closer to the valley. The trailhead is a stone's throw from Highway 87. The turnoff to the trailhead is well marked from SR 87, west of the highway 87/188 juncture (where the (closed) rest stop is roughly highway marker 235.5).
- There are sections of shade throughout (some pretty dense), and the trail more or less runs along the north side of a ridge/canyon, so going in, you've got ridge/shrub/trees rising to your left, creek to your right. I'd guess that in March/April, the sun is low enough in the sky that you're mostly in the shade once you're in the creek area. Cottontails, a harmless water snake, and probably 1,000+ lizards. Any Deer?
- Look for a sampling of desert cactus type veg, mixed with high desert scrub, and oddly colored rock, deep purple, red, green, blue, etc. Prickly pear cactus may be in bloom, as well as a few blooms of some orange wildflower near the creek. Notice the creek after about 3/4 of a mile. Around this area, look for the windmill-powered water pump that trickles water into a metal trough.
- Next, the trail alternates back and forth from being creekside to only being within earshot/view; brief sections of up/down over natural land contours. At the approx 1.5 to 2 mile mark, you'll find a single gravesite. 'David O. Cowan, 1843-1926'. At approx 3 1/4 miles, you 'officially' enter the Mazatzal Wilderness. At this point, you're heading back creekside, actually crossing it several times (I think the full hike involves about 20 creek crossings after this point). The water level was maybe ankle-high, no big deal. The terrain was really getting interesting about this point but had to turn back. Eventually, it climbs into pine country. It's 8.8 miles one way to FR201 and numerous connecting trails.
- Our Skyline Serenity HIKE is an out-and-back, till we are half-tired where we'll have an NA meeting then return to the trailhead fully tired.