

## Backcountry Rides in the Kanab Area

Following is general information about good rides in the Kanab Area. One can ride anywhere on BLM land but the following are some good routes to start using. Check with the BLM visitor center on Kanab's east side along U.S. 89 (near Wendy's Restaurant) or the USFS office in south Fredonia for maps and up-to-date info. Probably the best map is the Arizona Strip Visitor Map, produced by BLM.

1. **East Virgin River Canyon Ride.** (Shown on maps as Parunuweap Canyon). The access is just south of Mt. Carmel Junction community on Highway 89. Turn off the highway onto the dirt road. Drive as far as you want until you find a good parking place for the trailer. There is a good parking place within a mile of the highway or you can go further down the canyon to park. Lots of ATV traffic on the dirt road but you can find horse/cow trails to ride on away from the road. Several fences to go through and you might have to search for the gate as there are cattle guards along the road. A beautiful canyon with water in the river. Beautiful Fall colors. Ride as far as you want and return back up the canyon to the trailer.
2. **Paria River Canyon.** This access and trailhead is not shown on the Arizona Strip map. If you want a map, buy either a USGS topo or "Smoky Mountain Surface Management Status." From the junction of US89 & 89A at the stoplight in Kanab drive 33 miles on Highway 89 to a well marked junction that says Paria Townsite. The dirt road from the highway to the old movie set location is not well-maintained and usually in a washboard condition. Because of washboards, you probably should have 4-wheel drive to pull the horses & trailer back up the hill from the Paria River trailhead. If you don't have 4-wh drive, park at the large parking lot next to the Highway 89 and ride in, about 5 miles or drive north until the dirt road drops into the canyon.

At the Paria River Trailhead there are information signs and a picnic area with vault toilet. You can ride up the Paria River, water available, at least in places. Wide canyon that gets narrower as you ride north. Some interesting side canyons to explore. Come back the same way.

3. **Paria Box & Hackberry Canyon.** Another interesting ride out of the Paria Trailhead is to go south along the Paria River through the "Paria Box", a narrow gap in the canyon walls as the Paria cuts through the sandstone walls and joins Cottonwood Wash. Look for old stone buildings left over from a "flour" gold mining era. The "Box" was site of filming for "McKenna's Gold." If you want, you can ride up Cottonwood Wash about 2-3 miles to Hackberry Canyon and ride up Hackberry about 3 miles to an old Homestead Cabin.
4. **Buckskin Gulch.** Drive 4.5 miles beyond Paria turnoff to House Rock Valley Road junction with 89. (Total of 37.5 miles from Kanab stoplight.) At the big curve and before the "Cock's Comb" leave 89 and go south 4 miles on House Rock Valley Road to Buckskin Gulch Trailhead. A slow, rough road but passable with horse trailer. Buckskin Gulch is a narrow canyon. (As narrow as I would want to take our horses.) Do not enter if there is any possibility of rain as a flash flood would ruin your day and probably your life. You can ride as far as the confluence with Wye Pass Slot Canyon. Beyond this confluence, Buckskin becomes real rocky. Wye Pass too narrow for horses but fun to explore on foot. Return up Buckskin.
5. **Snake Gulch.** Take Highway 89A (alternate) south out of Kanab through Fredonia, AZ. About 1 mile south of Fredonia, turn right (south) onto FS22, a paved road. Take FS22 several miles south across the desert. When the pavement ends, continue a short distance to FS423 – turn west (right) onto FS423. Go about 1.3 miles and turn north (right) onto FS642 and go about 3 miles to the trailhead. From there ride into the canyon. Look for rock art on the

canyon walls as you ride down the canyon. Go as far as you want and return back up the canyon. This beautiful canyon gets hot from mid-June through the summer.

6. **Cottonwood Canyon.** A new trailhead constructed in 2009 by the High Desert Backcountry Horsemen in cooperation with Kanab City and BLM. Go south 0.8 miles from the stoplight in Kanab at the junction of Highways 89 and 89A. Look for a large sign on the west side of 89A that says “Kanab Creek Ranchos.” Turn right (west) on Kanab Creek Drive, go down into Kanab Creek and back up. Continue straight through the 4-way stop. As Kanab Ck Drive turns to the left (south) turn right on the next street, Stansfield Drive, and continue to the west. You go down the hill to Bunting Trailhead (hiking only) and back up the hill to the Cottonwood Canyon Trailhead.

Large parking area with a trailhead sign and a beautiful picnic area. Study the map before starting on trail. The ride-through swing gate is unlocked. Be sure and fasten the chain clip to keep the cattle from getting out of the BLM pasture. You will see the hiker-horse trail signs. Pay attention as you ride and look for rock cairns along the trail. There are not a lot of signs on the trail. There is some flagging along the trail but it may be faded or missing.

The first part of the trail is difficult with a lot of steep ups and downs. Basically you are following an old ATV trail. (The area is now limited to non-motorized access.) Eventually you will come to a small ride-through iron gate. From there go southerly along an old road until you see a large cairn. Turn right and follow the trail down into the wash. You will follow the wash bottom until you come to a large pile of lumber left over from the movie set. Leave the canyon and go west cross-country. You will cross three old roads and within an hour come to a more-used two-track headed north towards Cottonwood Canyon. This road also has a Fredonia City buried water line and occasionally you will see evidence of the water line. Eventually you will join the Cottonwood Canyon road and continue north. There is a locked gate. Get the combination before you leave by calling either 435-818-0005 or 435-644-5694 (two members of the High Desert Backcountry Horsemen Chapter). When you go through the locked gate, you are entering private land. Please respect the landowner’s demands that we stay on the road, lock the gate behind you, and do not give the combination to others. The further north you ride the prettier the canyon gets. But you need to turn around and come back out before dark.

### **Public Campgrounds:**

Ponderosa Campground on Hancock Road to Coral Pink Sand Dunes (no highway number). Stateline Campground in House Rock Valley BLM Road 700. (Recommended you drive over Kaibab Plateau on 89A and enter House Rock Valley from the south by driving north.) USFS campground at Jacob Lake on Highway 89A within the Kaibab National Forest. Note Ponderosa and Stateline Campgrounds do not have water available.

Camping is permitted anywhere on BLM administered lands.

See or ask for the High Desert Backcountry Horsemen’s flyer on Private Horse Boarding Facilities in the Kanab Area.

### **Visitor Center:**

There is a nice BLM visitor center east of Kanab on Highway 89 going to Page. It is near the Wendy’s Restaurant. A good selection of maps and information are available there.

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