

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/trails 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. Unless noted, probably the two best maps are the National Geographic Trails Illustrated Maps or the Arizona Strip Visitor Map, produced by BLM. The [Paria Canyon Kanab Trails Illustrated Map](#) show all of the following rides, **except** the #1 East Virgin River Canyon Ride and the #6 Cottonwood Canyon Ride.

1. East Virgin River Canyon Ride. ((The best map is the USGS Mt. Carmel Junction 7.5 minute Quad map is best map for this ride. Shown on maps as Parunuweap Canyon.) The access is just south of Mt. Carmel Junction community on Highway 89. Approximately ¼ mile, turn west off Highway 89 onto the dirt road. There is a good parking place within a mile of the highway at the Historic Barracks Corrals. The Historic Corrals is a good place to camp. Two smaller corrals for horses, water for horses from stream and plenty of place to park. If you drive further there are signs warning you not to park on private property along the dirt road. There is considerable 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 your trailer. Don't miss riding into Bay Bill Canyon, 3rd major canyon on left going downstream. Ride up Bay Bill Canyon about 30 minutes. There is a slot canyon you can ride into in Bay Bill Canyon. There are places wide enough to turn a small number of horses around. Don't enter this slot canyon if thunderstorms are threatening or predicted, as a flash flood would ruin your day and probably your life.

2. Paria River Canyon. From the junction of US89 & 89A at the stoplight in Kanab drive east 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 usually has washboards. Because of washboards, you 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 if you have a smaller rig and trailer drive north until just before the dirt road drops into the canyon. Dispersed Camping is permitted outside the day-use picnic area. Fill out the camping permit in the Trailhead Box.

Unload beyond the day-use picnic area and ride down road past the cemetery. You can ride up the Paria River, water available, at least in places. The wide canyon 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 downstream along the Paria River through the "Paria Box", a narrow gap in the canyon walls where the Paria cuts through the sandstone walls and joins Cottonwood Wash. Look for old stone buildings leftover 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. Then ride up the beautiful, narrow Hackberry Canyon about 3 miles to an old Homestead Cabin. (A second way to access Hackberry Canyon is to drive Highway 89 to the Cottonwood Canyon dirt road and drive up the road to Hackberry Trailhead. Get information at BLM visitor center.)

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 4.2 miles on House Rock Valley Road to Buckskin Gulch

Trailhead. A slow, dirt road but passable with horse trailer. There is a day-use fee of \$6.00 per person and another \$6.00 for a dog. Deposit fee in the Iron Pipe. After about 1 hour ride, Buckskin Gulch becomes a spectacular, 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. The confluence of Buckskin Gulch and Wire Pass Slot Canyon is about 4.5 miles or 1.5 hr. ride from the trailhead. Have lunch at the confluence and look for small, but beautiful petroglyphs on south canyon wall of Wire Pass Slot Canyon (low on the wall). Beyond this confluence, Buckskin becomes real rocky. Wye Pass is too narrow for horses but fun to explore on foot. Return back up Buckskin with your horses to the trailhead.

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. Ride about 45 minutes and start looking 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 June through the summer. Usually there is no water available for horses in the Gulch.

6. **Cottonwood Canyon.** (The best map is the one page trail flyer labelled “Cottonwood Canyon/Bunting Adventure Map” produced by the Kane County Visitor Center and available at Kane County Visitor Center or at various businesses in Kanab.)

A new trailhead constructed in 2009 by the High Desert Backcountry Horsemen in cooperation with Kanab City and BLM. Additional major work done in Fall 2017 by A.C.E. Conservation Corps improved the trail. Go south 0.8 miles from the Kanab stoplight 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 up the hill straight through the 4-way stop. As Kanab Creek 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 and city water tank. Large parking area with a trailhead sign and a beautiful picnic area. Study the map before starting on the trail. Use the unlocked swing gate to start the ride. 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 but the trail is well used. The first part of the trail includes 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 an **Iron Gate**.

From this gate, ride south a short distance watching for the trail that leaves the old abandoned road and go westerly down into a drainage and back out. You will cross three old roads but stay on the trail, enjoying a beautiful ride below the Vermillion Cliffs. As you get out into flatter country with blue-gray soils, pay close attention to following the trail. There are a few large cairns and smaller cairns that will help guide you. After about an hour ride you will come to a wooden sign indicating the end of the trail at a two-track road headed north into Cottonwood Canyon or south to the State Line Road. **Here you have a decision to make.** Go north into Cottonwood Canyon; go south down to the State Line Dirt Road; or turn around and follow the trail back to the trailhead.

Going North into Cottonwood Canyon: This 2-track 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 to the locked gate. At this gate, follow the fence line west down to Cottonwood Wash where you can get around the fence and follow the fence back uphill to the Cottonwood Canyon Road. Please respect the landowner's requests that horse riders stay close to the fence and when you reach

the road, please stay on the road. The further north you ride the prettier the canyon gets. But you need to turn around at some point as there is no northern horse access out of Cottonwood Canyon because of private property locked gates.

Going South toward the State Line Dirt Road: This is the quickest and easiest way back to your trailer. It is a few minutes ride south to the State Line Road. As you approach the road, there is a tank that may have water for the horses. Get on the 2-track dirt road and follow the double fence line to the east. This fence is the UT-AZ border. No need for passports. Please stay on the State Line Road as you are on private property. You will come to an area that has some remains of development and rarely the landowner might be camped in this area. In the middle of the junk, take one of the 2-track roads to the north and go pass the Old Movie Fort Site. Numerous movies filmed here. The last movie filmed here was "*Apple Dumpling Gang Rides Again*" in 1979. Do not enter any of the buildings as it is dangerous. Watch out for rattlesnakes as they are common around collapsed buildings. Also look for barbed wire and lumber with nails protruding. Immediately north of the Movie Fort there is an old dirt race track for ATVs. On the north end of this track there is the abandoned 2-track road that will lead you northwards back to the **Iron Gate**. From the Gate your horse should find the way back to your trailer at the Trailhead.

Developed 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.

Dispersed camping is permitted anywhere on BLM administered lands. Please clean you campsite as you leave so others can also enjoy it. Leave No Trace of your activities. Be extremely careful with fires.

Horse Boarding Availability:

"Sand Creek Stables" Cody and Britney Judd, 1855 North Highway 89A, phone: 928-643-7088; Email: Britneyscs@yahoo.com. Location between Kanab and Fredonia, Arizona

Equestrians may also board horses and camp at the Kaneplex (Rodeo Grounds) if they are not be used for events. Contact the Kane County Clerk to get information on using the Rodeo Grounds. No open fires permitted on the rodeo grounds. Corrals available and water may be available. Call County Clerk at 435-644-2458 during weekday office hours.

This information available on: www.bchu.com On the Main Page, click on "Utah Horse Trails" page, scroll down to "High Desert" and click on "High Desert Trails." Happy Trails to You!