

Gibraltar Loop – 2011

Chapel Trailhead

3.5 mile

1007 ft Cumulative Elevation Change

2 h 16 min travel

3h total

After a pleasant jaunt on the Forest Service Chapel Trail, this route moves through low scrub to meet another route coming up from the junction of the Llama Trail and the Little Horse trail, then continues up to a saddle between the Gibraltar formation and its lower neighbor to the northwest. The route then descends to meet the Little Horse trail which joins the Chapel Trail, homeward bound.

Park at the Chapel in the lower parking lot and find the trail leading off to the southeast from the parking lot. Take Chapel trail to the Little Horse trail (1). At this point continue heading off the FS trail in the southeast direction (or take about 30 steps down the trail where there is a faint trail) and bushwhack your way through in the same direction as you were going on the Chapel trail. You may find a trail or follow animal tracks through the brush. Head toward the large red rock ledges you see ahead of you. You will cross several small washes along the way. Climb to the top of the ledges and keep going until you cross a larger wash. You may see some cairns and trails in this area. Across the larger wash you will then encounter the main trail coming up from the Llama trail leading up to the Gibraltar saddle (2). Head up the trail which will climb steeply up to the saddle generally staying along the main wash coming down from the saddle.

At the saddle you have great views into Jim Bryant Canyon toward Munds Mountain. Go over the saddle and at a junction there take either trail (but right, that is straight ahead, is easier—they soon join). The trail will follow the contours of the mountain around to the left and stay high enough to give great views of Jim Bryant canyon and the red rocks of Munds Mountain. You will enter a very rocky wash at a steep incline after about 10 minutes. The trail continues out the other side of the wash down just above the pour off. You will pass some trails off to your right which go straight down into the canyon. Stay high and continue around the butte past some nice red rock shelves and eventually you will be facing the Broken Arrow valley and Wilson Mountain. At one point, as you approach some large rock shelves blocking your way, the trail will head steeply down for some time before turning left at a junction to continue its path around the mountain. (Note: the trail which continues down will head into the valley, so watch for the junction.) You will pass a trail climbing up to your left which takes you up to a higher ledge but is a dead end. If you chose to explore this you will have to return to the main trail. As you near Chicken Point the trail will turn down and head in the direction of the Point. Just before the Point take the Little Horse trail left (3) to return to the Chapel trail (1). Turn right to get back to your car.

Alternative route to go up: At the Little Horse – Chapel trail junction, turn right and go down the trail to the junction with the Llama trail. (Alternatively, start from 179 at the Little Horse trail parking lot.) At the Llama trail junction look to the SE corner and you will see a trail starting under the trees a few feet from the main trail. Head along that trail to get up to the Gibraltar saddle. (Add about a mile to the total distance.)