

Hartwell Canyon - 2011

FR525 TH

1445 Cumulative Elev. Change

6.0 miles

3 h 1 min traveling time

A magical place east of Loy Canyon, seldom-traveled Hartwell Canyon offers a variety of terrain including dry washes, mixed forest, quiet alcoves, and high shelves. The (sometimes obscure) route described here proceeds up canyon for about a mile and a half to a clamber-up on its west side to ledges that eventually are five hundred feet above the canyon floor. After this short climb the hike proceeds on high shelves down canyon for another mile or so to views of Bear Mountain to the east and the Verde Valley to the southwest. To find the trailhead, take Boyton Pass Rd. to FR 525. Turn right and take FR525 following directions to Loy Canyon and the Honanki ruins. Before Loy as you approach a red butte ahead of you, you'll see a track turning to the right with an old cattle chute and a cattle tank. Turn here and park at the end near the tank.

Start in an easterly direction from parking, keeping the tank on the left. A walk along a gradual rise leads to a low dead tree branch that hangs over trail to your left. Take this trail along the wash and then turn left and climb the rise behind tank. Make your way close to the red butte and step across a low barbed wire fence. Continue to head up canyon and cross another barbed wire fence (have to crawl through this one) and a third that is wrapped up in a big tree that fell over the path. As you look across the canyon mouth you can see a ranch house compound and a "rock" house further along. You will cross several washes as you travel up-canyon.

After you are past the level of the rock house you will cross another barbed wire fence that is down on the ground. Turn left right after downed fence and go steeply down the hill along the remainder of the fence line. Continue in that direction over a big wash and then toward a second smaller wash. Turn right, either in wash or along trail that mostly leads alongside the wash. After about 10-15 minutes along wash you will encounter an agave growing in a dead tree trunk. Shortly after, you will see a rockslide to your right next to the trail. About five minutes later, after the trail makes sharp left away from wash, you will see another trail leading up to left. This trail leads to an alcove and pour-offs. Climb up or continue along the main trail. A short distance later the main trail will descend into a side wash coming down from the left. Follow this wash upstream to the first bend (20-30 steps) where you will see a steep trail climbing up to rock ledges above you. At the top of your climb you climb up some rocks past a dead tree and onto the ledges.

As you reach the ledges make a note of where you are so that you can find this place again to get down. This is the only route off the ledges so be sure you have marked it with cairns for the return trip. Take these rock ledges back toward the canyon mouth. Your trail will shortly turn right to climb up some more until you are right up against the rock face. Continue to work your way along the rock face to the canyon mouth. Again, be sure to note where you will need to turn for the return trip. Work your way along the face and along ledges until you pass between the capstan (round rock) and the main wall.

(You can walk around the capstan and see down to where the rockslide is that you passed on the canyon floor.) Turn right to continue along ledges to an alcove. Good lunch spot. (*For the ambitious*: continue past the alcove and work your way around to the far reaches of the ledges, almost back to the canyon opening. Some bushwhacking required and a difficult rock face to climb.)

Return, backtracking until you are near the place where you first entered the second wash on your way in, 30 minutes from the trailhead. You will see a trail climbing out on the opposite side of the wash. Take this trail and follow it to an old jeep road, shortly after passing an agave pit. Turn right at the road and right again shortly after to climb up short hill to an alcove. Scenic area. Return to agave pit and turn right to make your way through the trees to the wash to find the trail leading up along the fence line and back to parking area.