

## Narrow Canyon – 2011

### Dry Creek Trailhead

**4.5 Miles**

**Cumulative Altitude 655 ft.**

**2 hours 20 minutes traveling time**

**4 hours total**

Rising over rock shelves and through manzanita stands past majestic pour-offs into deep side canyons, this route connects Dry Creek Trail with Vultee Arch Trail, beginning and ending at the last trailhead on Dry Creek Road, a rough four miles from the paved portion of Dry Creek Road. Years ago this trailhead was accessible under dry conditions by ordinary vehicles but the Forest Service maintenance recently is at best haphazard. The road is often closed, a pity, because it provides access to some of the best trails in the Sedona area. The route described here crosses Dry Creek many times before leaving the Forest Service trail; these crossings can be tricky when the waters are high.

Take Dry Creek trail to Bear Sign cut-off. Continue on Dry Creek trail (right fork) and follow the trail through Dry Creek wash and along a ledge of layered rock on the right bank of creek and a long flat rock ledge while crossing the creek several times. Eventually the trail crosses to left side of creek, and then heads back down into creek at a point where the creek appears to be divided into two branches. The main Dry Creek trail continues on the left side of the creek. You now leave the FS trail on a route that turns east up out of the creek bed on the opposite shore of the creek just above the end of the island in the middle. Climbing to a new level, follow cairns through woods until you reach some rock ledges in the open. Turn right and follow the ledges around. Eventually you will enter woods again (look for a small opening marked with a cairn at the end of the rock shelves) and follow a small wash downstream until you reach a pour-off where your trail joins an old trail coming in from the right. After reaching the pour-off you may wish to turn right and follow the old trail back a bit to a nice lookout point.

After crossing the pour-off the trail will head up (to left) and through manzanita woods and eventually you will come to another long rock ledge. Walk along this ledge and continue on the trail on the left side of the big sprawling cypress at the lower edge of ledge. Continue through manzanita for another ten to fifteen minutes when you will see large gray slabs of rock ahead of you. Before the rocks you will see a junction in the trail. Make a note of it because you will need to return to this point. Take the right fork over the large rock slabs to another rock ledge that is a nice place to stop. Below the ledge is an alcove that can be reached by going down the right edge of the ledge and following the rock edge back. After your stop, head back, over the large gray slabs, and back to the trail junction (about four minutes.) This time take the right fork and continue along the trail through high manzanita woods to a second big pour-off into Narrow Canyon. Cross the pour-off and follow contours to a small rock ledge from which you can now see the ledge and the alcove from which you came.

Continue along the trail toward the Lost Wilson rock face and soon you will encounter another junction. The left, main fork (actually heads straight ahead) will take you directly through manzanita brush to a slot where you descend to meet the Vultee Arch trail. The right fork (the excursive route described here) takes you to the same slot in a roundabout way that leads around the perimeter of the shelf to some wide ledges that provide excellent views of the Dry Creek drainage. Some bushwacking through manzanita may be required here as the trail is not well marked. Continue along these ledges and make your way toward Lost Wilson. As you approach ledges with a dark patina along their edges, look for a trail that leads up a small butte on your left. Climb over this butte and meet the main route that leads down the steep slot to an alcove at the end of a wash. As the alcove, sit and enjoy the ambience. Then climb down into the wash and follow it until it hits the Vultee Arch trail. Turn right and take this trail about 10 minutes to return to the trailhead.