

## **Soldier Heights - 2011**

**Brins Mesa TH on Dry Creek Rd**  
**1287 Cumulative Elev Change**  
**3 h 26 min moving time**  
**6.1 miles**

This loop circumnavigates the “Soldier Heights” formation, affording views of the Dry Creek drainage features to the west and the Brins area to the east. As described here the route starts at the Brins Mesa TH on Dry Creek Road. It may also be started from Soldier Pass TH but this adds a long climb along the Forest Service (FS) Soldier Pass trail. The unpaved portion of Dry Creek Road has in recent years been poorly maintained by the FS. High clearance vehicles are recommended.

About two hundred feet down the FS Brins Mesa trail your route turns off to the right. Follow this trail keeping the wash to the right of you at the beginning and steadily climb up to ledge level on the Heights. On your way up you will encounter a large rock face ahead of you. Turn left at the face and follow the trail along the face and then up. Once at ledge level simply follow the contours around to your right. The rest of the loop follows a ledge at this height affording wonderful views of the Dry Creek Drainage to the east, north, and then west.

At the first major U-turn along the ledge there is a wash leading up to your left. You can bushwhack up this wash and catch a great view over the saddle. Below you, just under the U-turn, there is an alcove with a great curved wall. You can see this from the ledge just before you get to the turn. Also, to your left up in the rock face is another alcove. There is a trail leading up to it just before the turn.

Continue along the ledge following the contours until you can just make out Devil’s Bridge across the valley. (It is possible to climb down into that valley and hike out Devil’s Bridge trail. The trail down starts within sight of the red rock anvil along the trail ahead of you. It leads down in the crevice of a small peninsula that juts out into the valley.)

Continue along the Soldier Heights route toward the red anvil ahead of you and watch for a route leading off to the left. You will climb up to the anvil along this trail staying to the left of the red beehive rock formation between the anvil and the main cliffs of Soldier Heights. At the crest, take in the view. Descend through “Norm’s Notch” along the rock face (steep and difficult scramble) and turn left at the bottom. Your trail continues along the ledge around to NE side. Stay high as you make the turn and follow the trail around the contours, past Lover’s Leap (can by-pass by staying above it) until you see the Ponderosa pine growing in the crack below you. After you make the U-turn around the Ponderosa you will head down from the ledge level. (Nice overlook to the right toward Sedona.) Ahead and below you there is a sandy patch. Work your way down to it. Your trail continues on the far right side of this sandy patch. Follow the trail down to Arizona Cypress woods until you are very near the FS Soldiers Pass trail. Turn left just before

you reach the Soldier's Pass trail and take this route back through the woods to join the FS Brins Mesa trail.

Five minutes after you join the Brins Mesa trail watch for an alligator juniper on your left. Shortly after this juniper you will see a large log across a route on left side. This trail leads up to an alcove after a steep scramble. Return to Brins Mesa trail the same way. You are about twenty minutes from your car when you rejoin Brins Mesa trail.

*Alternate Route:* Also possible to continue along red rocks past alcoves and climb up to ledges and join the loop in that direction.