

Surprise Canyon - 2011

Loy Canyon Trailhead

4.5 Miles

971ft. Cumulative Elevation Change

2 h 26 min moving time

Counterclockwise

This loop veers off in an easterly direction from the Forest Service trail "Loy Butte" along the west wall of a side canyon with an alcoves. About halfway through the trip the hiker must find a cut in the side canyon wall that takes him westward up to a fine viewpoint and back into the canyon of the Loy Butte trail. An easy route then takes him back to the Forest Service trail and the trailhead.

Start at Loy Butte trailhead off FR 525. Take Loy Butte trail for 0.75 miles to a well-worn trail leading off to the right. This is just past the old fence line, about 15 min from the parking lot. **(1)** Follow this trail through Manzanita and woods and eventually to a wash. About 15 minute along this trail you will be close to a big red rock butte and a trail will lead you across the drainage to an alcove on left. **(2)** Continue to follow trail along the red butte up the wash. The trail will cross to the right side of the wash and then return to the wash. Look for a large pour off with desert varnish above you at the rim of the butte and when you are just below it, turn left to visit a beautiful grotto that makes for a nice resting point.

Return to the wash and work your way upstream. Often the trail leads above wash or crosses wash. Other washes branch off but you want to follow main wash upstream and keep the red butte to your left. (At a large Ponderosa pine by the wash, head up to a lovely shelf where you have great views.)

Continue along wash until red butte gets lower and you approach a "pass" between the high sections of butte. You may pass huge boulders that look like they are blocking the wash but you can work your way around and continue in the wash. An easier way is to head up on the right side of wash and work your way parallel to the wash for a bit. You will hit a place where there is a steep incline down to a branch wash coming down from the right. At this point, head left and work your way back down into the main wash or simply climb up the opposite bank of the side wash and continue to travel across the level area on the right of the main wash.

As you approach the "pass" in the red butte stay in the wash so you can find the trail leading up the butte. This trail will turn off just before the end of the lower section between the high buttes. The main wash will split into two and your trail leaves the wash (to left) just before this. Look for dead log on left side marking the trail. **(4)** Follow trail up the ledges to the top of the "pass." Note where trail heads down other side as you head to the left for a nice lunch spot **(5)** on the red rocks since you will need to return to this spot.

After your stop, return to trail and continue down the other side toward Loy Butte. Trail winds its way through cat claw and manzanita and then heads into a wash. Stay in the

wash as it works its way down the hill until you see the trail continuing to your right. Continue until trail takes you up along the red butte in front of you which contains another alcove. **(6)** Follow along the butte and take the trail until you enter a large wide rock shelf that provides good views. The trail continues off the right edge of the shelf down to another shelf to the left. Turn right and follow the trail right up against the red rock butte, walking along the edge, until you see a cairn (maybe) marking the trail heading up the small hill back into manzanita and cat claw. Take this trail to the top of the hill and down the other side. Follow trail through woods until it finally hits the main Loy Butte trail. **(7)** Turn left to head back to car.

To take trail in the other direction: 5-6 min past old fence line look for a pinyon pine on right. Also look to your left where there is an old dead tree with sawed off top in the wash. This is where you turn right to head up the incline to travel through woods and cat claw and go around the loop in the opposite direction.