



Boucher Trail

Locations/Elevations

Hermit trailhead (6640 ft / 2024 m) to (via Boucher Trail):

Boucher Trail Junction (5280 ft / 1609 m)

Yuma Point (5429 ft / 1655 m)

Top of Redwall (4500 ft / 1372 m)

Tonto junction (3100 ft / 945 m)

Sites at Boucher Creek (2760 ft / 841 m)

Boucher Creek (2760 ft / 841 m) to Hermit Creek, BM7 (2900 ft / 884 m) via Tonto Trail

Mileages

2.7 mi (4.3 km)

5.2 mi (8.4 km)

7.6 mi (12.2 km)

8.9 mi (14.3 km)

9.3 mi (15.0 km)

5.0 mi (8.1 km)

Trailhead Access

The Hermit and Boucher Trails are accessed by way of Hermit's Road. This road is open to all traffic from December 1st through the end of February, but during the rest of the year this road is restricted to the Shuttle Bus and to Backpackers with a valid backcountry permit for either the Hermit or Boucher Trails (they should enter the gate code which is listed on their backcountry permit). Take the paved Hermit Road 8 miles west to where it ends at Hermit's Rest, then continue on the dirt road ¼ mile to the trailhead.

Two alternative trailheads also provide access to the Boucher Trail via less used and less distinct trails. One is the Waldron Trail which starts at the head of Hermit Creek and is accessed by way of forest service roads (no parking available). The other is Louis Boucher's Silver Bell Trail which starts on the rim above Dripping Spring and can be quite difficult to follow. Vehicle access to these two remote trailheads is from West Boundary Road which is closed and gated before the trailhead requiring a walk along the road.

Water Sources

The only reliable water along the Boucher Trail is Boucher Creek and the Colorado River. The Colorado is often sediment laden and may be difficult to purify. Do not rely on the Colorado river. Water may be available at Santa Maria or Dripping Spring, but neither is considered permanent. Potholes at the top of the Supai north of Yuma Point may hold water for a few days after precipitation but dry up quickly, may be frozen in winter, or green and unpleasant in spring/fall.

Campsites

The Boucher Trail is contained within "at-large" use area BN9. Nice (but dry) sites can be found where the trail rounds below Yuma Point and, on the saddle, just south of Whites Butte (which is located near the top of the Redwall Limestone descent). Camping near water is possible along Boucher Creek near the Tonto Trail crossing and at the Colorado River. West of Boucher is the at-large use area Slate (BO9). East of Boucher is Hermit Creek (BM7) and Hermit Rapids (BM8) both of which are zoned as designated campsites.

Important Notes

The Boucher Trail is one of the most difficult and demanding of the south side trails. The degraded condition of the trail, especially in the Supai and Redwall Formations, presents an obvious hazard. The trail through the Supai is hard to follow when covered with fresh snow. Navigation skills are recommended. The Boucher Trail is best left to experienced canyon hikers.

Trail Description

Hike the Hermit Trail two miles through the Kaibab, Toroweap, and Coconino Formations to the Dripping Springs Trail junction. Turn west (left) and follow the narrow Dripping Springs Trail for 1 mile as it rounds the bays at the head of the Hermit Drainage before intersecting the Boucher Trail proper. Striking views of the often-overlooked Esplanade Sandstone which is the topmost member of the Supai Group are visible and quite impressive in this area. If time allows, take the short detour to the lovely Dripping Springs which Boucher called home. The Boucher Trail departs in a northerly direction continuing the long traverse on the rim of the esplanade. The route crosses numerous small, steep drainages complicated by rockslides from the Coconino cliff above. Finally, the spectacular camp below Yuma Point is reached. This indeed is one of the finest upper canyon camps with soaring openness and classic seasonal "Esplanade water pots." This area is directly below the Dragon Corridor; between 8 and 5, the constant drone of sightseeing overflights can be a major distraction.

The trail continues on the flat Esplanade as it rounds the corner below Yuma Point into the head of Travertine Canyon. Continue at this level for perhaps half a mile, then start looking for where the route drops abruptly down the slope toward the bed of Travertine Canyon. A break in the upper cliff requires an incredibly steep, risky hand and toe climb. It is tough going throughout the Supai. The trail is being slowly reclaimed by erosion – steep, narrow, and covered in a layer of ball bearing-like pebbles. Take your time!

The route drops to the Redwall rim of Travertine Canyon, crosses to the west side of the drainage and wanders across the open saddle between Cocopa Point and Whites Butte. Watch for ticks through this region. It then plummets through the Redwall Limestone southwest of Whites Butte. The descent to the Tonto Trail is difficult and steep. The Tonto Trail intersection is marked by a large cairn (no sign). Go right (north and east) along the Tonto Platform toward Hermit Creek or turn left (west) and continue down through the Tapeats Sandstone to Boucher Creek and permanent water. If time allows it is an easy walk down the creek to the Colorado River.

The Tonto Trail could be used to complete a loop hike from Hermits Rest down the Boucher Trail and up the Hermit Trail (or vice-versa). It is about five waterless miles between Boucher and Hermit Creeks, and the trail is well-defined. Great canyon views and spectacular travertine deposits near the bed of Travertine Canyon provide diversion en route.

General Information & History

The Boucher Trail (pronounced Boo-shay) offers access to a charming and secluded part of the Grand Canyon, but the beauty has a price. The Boucher challenges even experienced canyon hikers. The trail consists of tough traverses linked together by precarious, unsafe descents, with a section of exposed hand and toe climbing thrown in for good measure. On the other hand, the canyon always seems to compensate physical effort with spiritual rewards, and opportunities abound to explore side canyons, encounter wildlife, examine ancient geology, and touch the Colorado River at the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

The Boucher Trail was the creation of Louis D. Boucher, the "hermit" of the Hermit Creek basin. Boucher was born in Canada and moved to the Southwest in search of silver. At Grand Canyon, he guided for Hance Ranch then moved to the western section of the South Rim. Boucher maintained seasonal residences at Dripping Spring and near Boucher Creek and lived in the area for 20 years. Labeled a hermit because he lived alone, Boucher was in fact well known and socially active within the South Rim community during the latter part of the 19th century. Boucher called his trail the "Silver Bell". Very few modern hikers follow the original Silver Bell Trail from the rim above Dripping Spring. For all practical purposes, the Boucher Trail, as we know it today, starts at the intersection below Dripping Spring.

Maps

7.5 Minute Grand Canyon Quad (USGS)
Grand Canyon Trails Illustrated Map (National Geographic)
Sky Terrain Trails Map, Grand Canyon (Sky Terrain)

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