

Canyon Creek Trail #31

Map and Trail Location Changes: <https://caltopo.com/m/7P1V27K>. Note the trail location and trailhead correction on the map. The trail does NOT start from the private property on Canyon Creek. It is accessed via the Flying V Trailhead.

Why this Trail: This trail travels through multiple ecosystems, offering a wide range of experiences. It is a short backpack/pack trip into the wilderness and it has water in the canyon and open spaces for camping. And once there, you will feel like you are in the middle of the Wilderness.

Getting there: The trailhead is located about 3.25 miles via road from the Aeroplane Mesa Trailhead and Campground. Two of these miles are on a road requiring a high clearance vehicle. It becomes quite slick when wet. This drive is not recommended for horse trailers. Instead, equine riders can ride the road part from Aeroplane Mesa Campground.

The Trail: Once at the Flying V trailhead with a wooden sign and a green gate, start down the Flying V Trail for the first mile as the trail travels through open grassland with occasional juniper or ponderosa trees. You will reach an opening in the gate where the Flying V Trail turns right, and the Canyon Creek Trail veers left through the gate. This is where Canyon Creek Trail #31 begins. A new sign was recently installed to distinguish the two trails.



Gradually, the junipers become more dense, giving way to a Ponderosa forest as you pass a tank. Due to a past fire, the remaining trail across the mesa alternates between pinon/juniper/oak and ponderosa forests. During the descent into Canyon Creek, the trail takes a steep route through ponderosa and oak. Once in the canyon, an expansive meadow with the trail leading downstream invites you further. The recent trail maintenance ends here but one can still continue downstream. Soon, the canyon narrows, and the rock cliffs grow taller. Some sections here may not be passable for horses. The trail in the

canyon, which is unmaintained but mostly followable, winds around willows and boulders. While you might lose the trail in short segments, you won't be lost in this narrow canyon. Eventually, after many bends, it reaches the Middle Fork at a beaver dam and some more impressive rock formations and cliffs.

Options:

- Day Adventure - Out and back - 4.5 miles one way
- Day Adventure – Loop – when combined with Middle Fork (not maintained) and Flying V Trail (maintained but still has a lot of rocks on the switchback part) – 11.5 round trip – hikers only
- Camping – 3 miles to Canyon Creek and then a day adventure down the canyon.
- Camping – Loop – see the day adventure loop notes and make it into a multiday – hikers only

