



Skyline Serenity

HIKE Barnhardt Trail RYE, south of PAYSON

WE HIKE ALONG A MOUNTAIN TRAIL TO ENTER THE MAZATZAL WILDERNESS. Hope it doesn't make you Mad As Hell. "MAZATZAL" MEANS 'LAND OF THE DEER'. INTERESTING ROCK FORMATIONS CAN BE SEEN FROM THE TRAIL.



4th SATURDAY
May 27, 2023

Meet at
the Trailhead
@ 9:45 AM

Directions:

Take Highway 87 North Toward Payson 4 miles north of the 188 (rest stop) turn left at the brown Barnhart Trail sign.

OR - From Payson drive south on 87, 14.5 miles south of 260 is the brown sign for Barnhart trail.

The trailhead is 5 miles down the dirt road.
Hike to Start at 10:00 am

BRING:
Newcomer, Water,
Snack, & PMA

Let us know if you plan to hike
Chuck H. 480-236-4859

Barnhardt Trail is considered to be one of the "expressways" to the Mazatzals. It starts at Barnhardt trailhead and proceeds westward to the ridge of the Mazatzal range or "Divide" where it intersects the N-S Mazatzal Divide Trail, which is part of the Arizona Trail. The Forest Service office in Mesa has a nice plasticized Mazatzal Wilderness map that shows all the numbered trails with the names on the back. Check out the Official Route too.

Our NA hike goes from the trailhead up to Garden Seep area and back, about 2 to 3 miles round-trip for an elevation gain of 300 to 400 feet. The first thing you'll probably notice about this hike is its a "climber." The good news is this: the beauty overwhelms any pain, and there isn't much pain because the grade is so "friendly" (moderate and consistent). "If you're in decent shape and your legs are thirsting for a little action, it just feels good." Likewise, coming back down is surprisingly easy on the knees.

Starting, you'll be ever so briefly in desert scrub before entering Pinon Pines and Juniper. At about a half-mile in, you'll come to a sign denoting the Wilderness Area boundary. Shortly after that, you may notice a side trail dropping down to the right. This MAY be an access point to the canyon floor.

As the trail continues to gain elevation, it'll gradually come into Ponderosas and small Oaks. The climb contours high along the Barnhardt Canyon wall in some very creative ways making for great views from small promontories and ledges. You get a hawk's eye view of the panorama and the canyon far below which has many unusual features and inviting, but inaccessible pools.

Continuing past our NA hike turnaround point, the trail will turn south at about 1.5 miles and begin a series of switchbacks into a secondary canyon. At this point you'll find a very aesthetic rock formation making a great rest spot. As you begin the switchbacks, you may notice your last chance to access the creek bed from a small break in the trees. A side trip up this canyon bottom would bring you to a point where the water must descend a huge wall but is well hidden from sight on the trail, although the sound is very noticeable.

At about 2.5 miles is one of the highlights of the hike in the form of a seasonal cascading waterfall with a sheer drop of about twenty feet at the bottom. It's in a grotto tucked back from the trail about twenty yards and enclosed by sheer rock walls on three sides.

From here, the climb continues unabated for another mile until you reach the Sandy Saddle trail at 6000'. From the falls to the 4mi point is mostly bush with Manzanita predominant. At about 4mi, you'll come to a rather lovely Ponderosa forest.

At 5mi, you top out at about 6200' then at 5.5mi is the intersection with the Mazatzal Divide trail entering from the south (this is not shown on any but the latest revised maps).

From here, you begin descending on what is now technically Mazatzal Divide trail into Chilson Spring, which is a nondescript little well on the north side of the trail. From this spring, they piped the water down to Chilson Camp, which you can reach by cheating and following the pipe or continuing till you hit the Brody Seep trail, take a left and go a quarter-mile. The Camp is a very scenic open area that was obviously once used as a cattle corral. It is an ideal spot for an overnight or just some lunch.

The return goes a little faster and offers many views you may have missed on the way up. A delightful hike, and I personally look forward to the opportunity to explore this area further. Take care, and may the winds be always at your back.