

Waldron Trail

Before construction of the Hermit Trail in 1912, The Waldron Trail was the main route into Waldron Basin. Human history in this area is rich and there is some evidence to suggest that, prior to Louis Boucher's arrival in 1892, horse thieves used this secluded basin to alter brands. The trail's current course was built by several of the early prospector/tourism entrepreneurs; originally to access a 5 acre mill site associated with the Orphan mine. They developed a dirt dam reservoir at the head of today's Waldron Trail in 1895 or 1896. That reservoir is called Horsethief Tank. The dam is still there, although it rarely has any water. Within a few years they had also built the trail down to Waldron Basin where it met up with Louis Boucher's trail to Dripping Springs. The Waldron Trail would facilitate prospecting forays and perhaps some tourism along the western south rim, and the reservoir at the top would supply water for the trail stock.

Waldron himself is a slippery historic character. It is uncertain who he was, when he may have lived here, and why the trail is named after him. Some research has been done trying to find out his identity (or if the word was a person's name at all), and it was discovered that a man named Waldron worked for Bill Bass probably with tourism. He also worked for James Thurber who was himself involved with Hance Ranch and the construction of the Bright Angel Hotel.

Locations/Elevations

Parking Area to historical Trailhead (6456 ft / 1995 m):

Waldron Trailhead (6456 ft / 1995 m) to Intersection with Hermit Trail (5400 ft / 1646m):

Hermit Trail Intersection to Dripping Springs (5240ft / 1597 m):

Hermit Trail Intersection to Santa Maria Spring (5000 ft / 1524 m):

Intersection to Hermit Creek Camp (BM7) (2900 ft / 884 m):

Intersection to Monument Creek Camp (BL7) (2995 ft / 913 m):

Mileages

0.7 mi (1.1 km)

1.7 mi (2.7 km)

1.7 mi (2.7 km)

1.1 mi (1.8 km)

7.1 mi (11.4 km)

8.2 mi (13.2 km)

Maps

7.5 Minute Grand Canyon Quadrangle (USGS)

Grand Canyon Trails Illustrated Map (National Geographic)

Sky Terrain Trails Map, Grand Canyon (Sky Terrain)

Water Sources

Dripping Spring and Santa Maria Spring are perennial. A method to treat water is recommended (also patience). Hermit Creek and Monument Creek are also perennial.

Campsites

There is no camping allowed at or near Waldron Trailhead and in the Waldron Basin. The closest legal campsites are at the Hermit Creek designated camp (BM7), in the Boucher use area (BN9) and on the rim west of Waldron Trailhead in the Erimeta Mesa use area (SC9). Backcountry permits are required to camp in any of these areas.

Trailhead Access

No overnight parking allowed at trailhead. High clearance and/or all-wheel drive is recommended and may be necessary during certain times of the year.

To access the Waldron Trailhead you will need to drive to the Maswik lodge and look for a sign that says kennels (turn). Drive no more than 30 feet and look for another sign that says Kennels (turn left). Continue 300 feet to a stop sign (another Kennels sign) and turn right. Continue down the hill and across the railroad tracks to a stop sign. Turn left on Rowe Well Road and set your Odometer to 0. Note that the road surface soon turns into an improved dirt road. At 2.2 miles a burned out Ramada (a historic roofed structure with an old fireplace) is reached. Turn right (west), resetting your speedometer to 0 and continue up the hill. At the first fork in the road (0.3 miles) continue straight ahead (avoid taking the more well-traveled road veering to the left). At the second fork (0.35 miles) again continue straight. At the next intersection (0.8 miles), a perfect four-way intersection, you will be crossing the W1 Road and continuing west for an additional 1.4 miles

Trail Description

From your vehicle walk around the gate marking the wilderness boundary and continue down the road for 0.7 mile to the official start of the Waldron Trail. The single track leaves the road just after crossing a dry wash. After a half-mile you may be tempted to take a false trail along the right (east side) but it is better to stay left (west side) of the wash. By the time a hiker reaches Horsethief tank the trail should be clear and easy to follow. From the tank, the trail descends steeply to cross the drainage, then ascends to a small ridgeline along the rim at the head of Waldron basin. From the rim the trail descends on short, steep, rocky switchbacks through the Toroweap and Coconino formations. The trail gently descends through the Hermit shale into Waldron Basin, ultimately connecting up with the Hermit Trail.

Important Notes

Due to loose rocks, use caution while descending the switchbacks. This unmaintained trail is seldom used and some many find it difficult to follow in places. There are numerous historical artifacts in the basin. Please be sensitive to the cultural value of this area by staying on the trail and leaving any artifacts you might find.