



Mazatzal Wilderness Trails

"Mazatzal" to the Paiute means, "empty space between". The Mazatzal Wilderness Area is located in central Arizona between the Verde River on the west and the Beeline Highway (Arizona 87) on the east. It stretches from south of Strawberry to just north of Sunflower and lies in Gila, Maricopa, and Yavapai Counties. With 205,000 acres it is the second largest wilderness area in Arizona. The local pronunciation is Ma-ta-zel' and it seems to be widely used and accepted. The pronunciation found in Webster's Geographic Dictionary is Ma'sa-tsal'

Elevations range from 2200' along the Verde to 7000' in the highest passes along the north/south "Mazatzal Divide" near the eastern boundary. From the divide the land slopes west towards the Verde River in a series of rugged mountains, but deep, rugged canyons are the dominating feature of the landscape.

Weather and vegetation vary greatly in this rugged area. Extreme temperatures range from -15 to 120 degrees F. Vegetation ranges from Ponderosa Pine and Douglas fir in the high north facing slopes to cacti and desert shrub in the lower south facing areas. Dangerous winter storms and blistering summer heat (and dried up springs and creeks) make spring and fall the best times to hike the high country of the wilderness, while the trails on the western side can also be used during the winter months.

The Tonto National Forest administers this wilderness and the appropriate Ranger District can be contacted for more information, including trail starting and ending points, recent condition reports on the trail, and to register your party. The appropriate Ranger District Office for each segment is listed in the write-up included location and phone number. The Forest Service maintains 13 trailheads and 36 numbered / named trails within the wilderness, while many of these trails are referenced in the write-ups for the various segments other trails can also be used for extended hikes into the wilderness. The Forest Service also distributes the Tonto National Forest Map and the Mazatzal Wilderness Area Map for a nominal fee. The wilderness area map is essential for travel in the wilderness.

References:

- BSA "Guide to Safe Scouting" A units leader's guide for current policies and procedures for safe activities. Number 34416D
- BSA "Health And Safety Guide" number 34415B
- "Hiking Arizona's Superstition And Mazatzal Country" by Bruce Grubbs, A Falcon Guide
- "Arizona Trails 100 Hikes In Canyon And Sierra" by David Mazel, Wilderness Press

Deer Creek Segment

1. **TRAIL REQUIREMENTS:** Beginning at the Deer Creek Trailhead, hike one or more of the following trails to Forest Road 201: Deer Creek Trail # 45, 8.5 miles; South Fork Trail # 46, 7.5 miles; or Gold Ridge Trail # 47, 4.6 miles in its entirety. You must also visit Gowan Camp, Horse Camp Seep, or Maple Springs on this hike.
2. **TRAILHEAD:** The Deer Creek Trailhead is a short distance off Highway 87 opposite the Highway 188 turnoff for Roosevelt Lake. The trailhead has a parking area and logbook. All three trails are assessable on the western end by Forest Road 201.
3. **MAP OF TRAIL:** Topographic: Mazatzal Peak Quadrangle or USFS Mazatzal Wilderness
4. **TRAIL PROFILE:**
 - **Points of Interest:** Spend a night at Gowan Camp an old cattle line camp; look for the foundations and ruins of the old camp. Stop at Davey Gowan's grave, who was Davey Gowan?
 - **Intersections of Roads or Other Trails:** All 3 trails in this segment intersect Forest Road 201. FR 201 intersects with the Davey Gowan Trail # 48, which is a more controlled approach to Gowan Camp than the eastern end of trail # 45. The trail signs on Forest Road 201 are not well maintained and may require some searching.
 - **Campsites If Applicable:** Gowan Camp, Horse Camp Seep, and eastern end of trail # 47.
 - **Points of Available Water:** Water is general available at Pigeon Springs, Horse Camp Seep, and Maple Spring. During periods of spring run-off water is available in Deer Creek. Springs that are listed in many current trail guides are now dry because of the drought during the late 90's and early 00's. Except during the spring run-off following a winter with snow in the Mazatzal's, availability of water should be confirmed with the appropriate Forest Service Wilderness Ranger.
 - **Any Other Important Item:** Challenging backpack trip; hike trail 46 from trailhead, to Forest Road 201, FR 201 to Davey Gowan Trail # 48, trail # 48 to Gowan Camp, spend the night and hike back to the trail head on trail # 45 (watch out for the poison ivy).
5. **BEST TIMES FOR THE TRAIL:** Like other Mazatzal Trails the Deer Creek Trails should be hiked in late fall through early spring. Only the Deer Creek Trail # 45 has water along the trail and both Trail #45 and Trail # 46 have shade on most of the trail.
6. **WHAT TO EXPECT:** On trail # 47 expect steep, rock trails with little shade and no water until you reach the southwestern end. Trail # 46 is mostly wooded and your best route up to Forest Road 201, Pigeon Springs usually has water at the southwestern end. On trail # 45 expect massive amounts of poison ivy on the western end with 21-stream crossing during your hike along Deer Creek.
7. **ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:** The Deer Creek Trailhead is under the jurisdiction of the Tonto Basin Ranger District, Highway 188, HC02 Box 4800, Roosevelt, AZ (928) 467-3200. Large segments of the trail for this segment are outside of the Mazatzal Wilderness, but when you are within the wilderness group size is limited to 15 participants.

Twin Buttes Segment

1. **TRAIL REQUIREMENTS:** Start at the Twin Buttes Trailhead hike to the East Verde River using the Verde River Trail # 11.
 2. **DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD:** In Strawberry, turn west at the Strawberry Inn onto Fossil Springs Road which become Forest Road 708 at the end of town. Continue on FR 708 until you get to Forest Road 428, then travel south for about a half mile and then turn right at the sign for the Twin Buttes Trailhead onto Forest Road 194 and continue for about 5 miles to the trailhead. About a half mile from the trailhead is a large wash, which could be difficult for some vehicles to cross.
 3. **MAP TO TRAIL:** Topographic - Cane Spring Mountain and Verde Hot Springs Quadrangles or USFS Mazatzal Wilderness.
 4. **TRAIL PROFILE:**
 - **Points of Interest:** The section of the Verde River where you will be visiting is the only river in Arizona designated a “Wild River Area”.
 - **Intersections of Roads or Other Trails:** From the trailhead, until you reach the Verde River, you will not intersect any other maintained trails, but you will cross several abandoned ranch roads. At the Verde River you will intersect the Deadman Mesa Trail # 17 which goes north for 4.1 miles to a trailhead on Forest Road 591.
 - **Campsites If Applicable:** Campsites are available near the trailhead and near the junction of the Verde and East Verde Rivers. Crossing the East Verde is easy and camping on the sand bar is great.
 - **Points of Available Water:** Water is only available at the rivers. It is recommended to start the hike with 4 quarts of water.
 - **Any Other Important Item:** Depending on the time of year the trail may be difficult to follow due to heavy vegetation and flowers in bloom. Between miles 2 & 3 the trail is obscure and difficult to find.
 5. **BEST TIMES FOR THE TRAIL:** The trail for the Twin Buttes Segment should only be attempted from the late fall to early spring. The higher elevations of the trail used in this segment could be closed by snow following winter storms.
 6. **WHAT TO EXPECT:** The hike from the trailhead to the East Verde River is approximately 10 miles with a total elevation change in excess of 3,500 feet. The trail is poorly maintained and rocky, offering little shade and no water until you reach the river. The return hike will be strenuous with a 2,000-foot elevation gain in the first 3 miles as you exit the inner canyon of the Verde River. Depending on the level of experience of the group it could take 6-8 hours for the group to hike back to the trailhead.
 7. **ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:** The City Creek, Doll Baby, and Mineral Creek Trailheads are under the jurisdiction of the Payson Ranger District, 1009 E Highway 260, Payson, AZ 85541 (928) 474-7900. The trails for this segment are all inside of the Mazatzal Wilderness and group size is limited to 15 participants.
- SHEEP CROSSING**

Begin at Sheep's Crossing suspension bridge over the Verde River. Use Trail #22 to hike to Dutchman's Grave Spring. This trail runs through high desert from 2200 to 3100 feet elevation and is not suitable for summer hiking. This trail is shown on the Mazatzal Wilderness Map but not on the Topo or small scale trailhead map is shown below. (Topo: Chalk Mountain Quad)

Doll Baby Segment

1. **TRAIL REQUIREMENTS:** Begin a hike at Doll Baby, City Creek or Mineral Creek Trailhead and visit at least one of the following: The Park (Pete's Pond area), Fuller Seep, or Bull Spring.
2. **DIRECTIONS TO THE TRAILHEADS:** Both the Doll Baby and City Creek Trailhead are on Forest Service Road 406, which starts as Main Street in Payson at the light in front of the Payson Chamber of Commerce. Mineral Creek Trailhead is on Forest Road 414 and is reached by turning west at Rye across from the "bicycles" and then turning right after passing the frontage fence. Just follow Forest Road 414 for about 9 miles to the trailhead. The roads to all three trailheads should be passable for any high clearance vehicle.
3. **MAP TO TRAIL:** Topographic: North Peak and Cypress Buttes Quadrangle or USFS Mazatzal Wilderness
4. **TRAIL PROFILE:**
 - **Points of Interest:** The North Peak Trail # 24 offers some great views of the Tonto Creek drainage. The Mazatzal Divide Trail # 23 south of Pete's Pond has views of Humphrey's Peak near Flagstaff and during the spring run-off several waterfalls can be viewed from the trail. The Bull Spring Trail # 34 ends near a spring and historic cattle camp. Remember the cabin and its surroundings are part of the history of the area and should not be disturbed.
 - **Intersections of Roads or Other Trails:** From the Dolly Baby Trailhead you follow the closed road for 3.7 miles to the intersection with the Bull Spring Trail # 34. The Trail 34 intersects with the Brush Trail # 249, and ends at Wet Bottom Trail #269 near Bull Springs.
From the City Creek Trailhead you head south on the Mazatzal Divide Trail # 23, which intersects with the Red Hills Trail # 262 which you can follow to Dutchman Grave Springs. Trail # 23 intersects with the North Peak Trail #24, which returns you to the Mineral Creek Trailhead. Trail #23 continues to Pete's Pond area where you could connect with the Willow Springs Trail # 223, which would take you to Sheep Bridge. Trail # 23 continues south through the wilderness connecting you with the trails listed in both the Barnhardt and Deer Creek Segments.
From the Mineral Creek Trailhead the North Peak Trail connects with the Mazatzal Divide Trail # 23, discussed above, near Pete's Pond.
 - **Campsites If Applicable:** Campsites are available at all three trailheads, and in the area of The Park, Fuller Seep, and Bull Spring.
 - **Points of Available Water:** Water is dependent on the time of the year, recent precipitation, and prolonged drought conditions. During periods of spring run-off water is available in most of the creeks shown on the map. Little or no water is available except during spring runoff following winter snow. Springs that are listed in many current trail guides or shown on maps of the wilderness may now be dry because of the drought during the late 90's and early 00's. Except during the spring run-off following a winter with snow in the Mazatzal Mountains, availability of water should be confirmed with the appropriate Forest Service Wilderness Ranger
 - **Any Other Important Item:** The lower elevations of the trails used in this segment are rugged and offer little shade. This segment is not suited for day hikes; these trailheads should be used as starting points for longer trips into the wilderness.
5. **BEST TIMES FOR THE TRAIL:** The trails in the Doll Baby Segment should only be attempted in the late fall and spring. The higher elevations of the trails used in this segment will be closed by snow for several weeks following winter storms.
6. **WHAT TO EXPECT:** Your departure from any of the trailheads in this segment contains significant elevation change, with no trailside water in the lower elevations. When you reach the interior of the wilderness, panoramic views of the Verde River drainage and peaks the Mazatzal Mountains await.
7. **ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:** The City Creek, Doll Baby, and Mineral Creek Trailheads are under the jurisdiction of the Payson Ranger District, 1009 E Highway 260, Payson, AZ 85541 (928) 474-7900. The trails for this segment are all inside of the Mazatzal Wilderness and **group size is limited to 15 participants.**

Sheep Crossing Segment

1. **TRAIL REQUIREMENTS:** Starting from the Sheep Bridge Trailhead hike to Dutchman Grave Spring using trail # 22, or to Willow Spring using trail # 223.
2. **DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD:** From the junction of Pima Road and Cave Creek Road go right on Cave Creek Road towards Seven Springs until the pavement ends. Cave Creek Road becomes Forest Road 24, when it enters the National Forest, which continues north through Seven Springs campground, Cave Creek Campground, and north past the 51 Ranch until the road ends at Bloody Basin Road / Forest Road 269. At Forest Road 269 turn right and follow the road to Sheep Bridge Trailhead. For people starting to the north of Phoenix they can take Exit 259 off I-17 about 4 miles south of Cordes Junction and take the Bloody Basin Road / Forest Road 269 east to Sheep Bridge Trailhead. Only high clearance vehicles should attempt the last 8 miles of Forest Road 269.
3. **MAP TO TRAIL:** Topographic: Chalk Mountain and Table Mountain Quadrangle or USFS Mazatzal Wilderness. NOTE: The trails to Dutchman Grave are not shown on the topographic map.
4. **TRAIL PROFILE:**
 - **Points of Interest:** Sheep Bridge. The old sheep pens near the bridge and the historic information furnished by the Forest Service at the bridge. The hot spring beneath the bridge. The site of the old HK Ranch on Sycamore Creek, the Indian ruins on HK Mesa. The remains of the cattle ranching industry around both Dutchman and Willow Springs. Because of the remoteness of the area numerous wildlife signs and sightings are possible.
 - **Intersections of Roads or Other Trails:** On the east side of the bridge the Verde River Trail # 11 heads north to meet the East Verde River. Both Dutchman Grave Spring and Willow Spring are good first night destinations for longer trips into or across the wilderness. They both connect with several other trails in the interior of the wilderness.
 - **Campsites If Applicable:** Because of the availability of water most usable campsites are either near the bridge or in the areas near the springs. At both Dutchman Grave Spring and Willow Spring are large cottonwood and Sycamore Trees that make the area a Sonoran Desert oasis.
 - **Points of Available Water:** Water is generally available in the spring and stream near both Dutchman Grave Spring and Willow Spring. Springs that are listed in many current trail guides or shown on maps of the wilderness are now dry because of the drought during the late 90's and early 00's. With the sole exception of during the spring run-off following a winter with snow in the Mazatzal Mountains, availability of water should be confirmed with the appropriate Forest Service Wilderness Ranger.
 - **Any Other Important Item:** Sheep Bridge Trailhead is in a remote isolated location that is reached over poorly maintained mountainous roads. Pre-trip consideration should be given to the condition of vehicles and tires, and the backcountry driving experience of the drivers. Forging of the Verde River should be left to experienced drivers without scouts in their vehicles.
5. **BEST TIMES FOR THE TRAIL:** The trails in the Sheep Bridge Segment are of low elevation and without shade. They should only be attempted in the cooler months of late fall through early spring. These are appropriate trails for a winter desert backpack trip.
6. **WHAT TO EXPECT:** Once you reach the Sheep Bridge Trailhead you can expect a visit to Sonoran Desert foothills, little changed in the past 50 years. The trails will moderately challenging and rocky, water will be available if you know where to look. Be careful just to the east of the bridge to stay on the trail until you reach the first signed trail junction. Most of the signs near the bridge have been vandalized.
7. **ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:** The Sheep Bridge Trailhead is under the jurisdiction of the Cave Creek Ranger District, 40202 N. Cave Creek Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85262 (480) 595-3300. Segments of the trail for this segment are outside of the Mazatzal Wilderness, but when you are within the wilderness **group size is limited to 15 participants.**

Cross-F Ranch Segment

1. **TRAIL REQUIREMENTS:** To earn this segment do all of the following.
 - A. From the Cross-F Trailhead hike Trail # 244 to its junction with Trail # 91.
 - B. Hike Trail # 91 to its junction with Trail # 88.
 - C. Hike Trail # 88 to its junction with Trail # 87
 - D. Visit Potato Patch
2. **MAP TO TRAILHEAD & PICK-UP POINT IF DIFFERENT:** With the realignment of Highway 87 north of Sunflower the directions to the trailhead have changed significantly. Between milepost 222 and milepost 223, about 4¾ miles north of Sunflower turn west at the sign for Sycamore Creek. This is a left turn for northbound traffic. Follow the paved road about 3 miles to a trailhead sign for the Arizona Trail, and Trail # 244 starts across the road from the parking lot.
3. **MAP TO TRAIL:** Topographic: Reno Pass and Lion Mountain Quadrangles or USFS Mazatzal Wilderness.
4. **TRAIL PROFILE:**
 - **Points of Interest:** The Little Saddle Mountain Trail # 244 follows a seasonal creek for most of the first 4 miles with several specimens of the Arizona Smooth Bark Cypress along the higher portion of the trail. At the junction with the Saddle Mountain Trail # 91 the trail follows an old mine road for the next 3 miles. It is along this section of trail that you will find Potato Patch, be sure to check the view from the far side of Potato Patch. At the junction with Sheep Creek Trail # 88 turn west and hike for about a mile until you reach the junction with the Thicket Spring Trail #95, continue on Trail # 88 for another 2 miles until you reach the junction with the Copper Camp Trail # 87. This completes the requirements for the Cross-F segment.
 - **Intersections of Roads or Other Trails:** In addition to the intersections with other trail mention above, the junction of Trail 244 and Trail 91 is a half-mile from the Mormon Grove Trailhead. Using this trailhead makes the upper portion of this segment a great day hike but doesn't meet the requirements for the segment.

At the junction of trails 91 and 88 you can continue on and visit the ruins of the Story Mine. From the junction of trails 88 and 95 you can continue on trail 95 to its junction with the Mazatzal Divide Trail # 23 and go all the way north to the City Creek Trailhead on the East Verde or cut over to Forest Road 201 and return by the Deer Creek Trail # 45. Trail 88 continues on and ends at a junction with the Davenport Trail # 88 a couple of mile west of Cub Cabin.
 - **Campsites:** Some campsites are available along trail 88 between its junctions with trails 95 and 87. Campsites are also available at the junction of trail 244 and 91.
 - **Points of Available Water:** There is a spring near the junction of trails 244 and 91, but the water is not visible from the trails. The stream that flows along trail 88 between its junctions with trails 95 and 87 generally has water. Springs that are listed in many current trail guides or shown on wilderness maps may now be dry because of the drought during the late 90's and early 00's. Except during the spring run-off following a winter with snow in the Mazatzal, availability of water should be confirmed with the appropriate Forest Service Wilderness Ranger.
 - **Any Other Important Item:** Watch for poison ivy along trail 88 in the area where it follows the stream.
5. **BEST TIMES FOR THE TRAIL:** Like other Mazatzal Trails the trails of the Cross-F Segment should be hiked in late fall through early spring.
6. **WHAT TO EXPECT:** This segment contains significant elevation changes and several miles of trail with little or no shade. But on the plus side, you will be hiking in two different riparian areas, enjoying great views of the wilderness, and examining several sites from Arizona's historic cattle and mining industries.
7. **ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:** The Cross-F Trailhead is under the jurisdiction of the Mesa Ranger District, 26 N. MacDonald, Room 120, PO Box 5800, Mesa, AZ 85201-5800, (480) 610-3300. Large segments of the trail for this segment are outside of the Mazatzal Wilderness, but when you are within the wilderness group size is limited to 15 participants.

Barnhardt Segment

1. **TRAIL REQUIREMENTS:** Beginning a hike at Barnhardt Trailhead, visit one or more of these areas; Chilson Spring, Bear Spring, Fisher Spring, Windsor Spring, or Hopi Spring.
2. **LOCATION OF TRAILHEAD:** Approximately 4 miles north of the junction of Highway 87 and Highway 188, take Forest Road 419 west about 5 miles to the trailhead. Except after heavy rain or snow this road is passable by any vehicle.
3. **MAP OF TRAIL:** Topographic: Mazatzal Peak Quadrangle or USFS Mazatzal Wilderness.
4. **TRAIL PROFILE:**
 - **Points of Interest:** During the time of spring snow melt and run-off the first 3 miles of the Barnhardt Trail # 43 has several waterfalls that can be seen from the trail and interesting geological rock configurations in the north canyon wall. On the Barnhardt Trail #43, about 3 miles from the trailhead, is a box canyon to the left of the trail with a waterfall during times of spring run-off and a cool place for a break after gaining several hundred feet of elevation from the trailhead.
 - **Intersections of Roads or Other Trails:** The Barnhardt Trail # 43 dead-ends at the Mazatzal Divide Trail # 23 about 6 miles from the trailhead. The Mazatzal Divide Trail # 23 travels south and connects with the Y Bar Trail # 44, which returns to the Barnhardt Trailhead. In addition to these trail, which create a loop route around Mazatzal Peak, the following trails are also available: Sandy Saddle Trail # 231 connects the Barnhardt Trail # 43 to the Mazatzal Divide Trail #23 south of Horse Camp Seep. Half Moon Trail #288 goes north from the Barnhardt Trailhead and connects with the Rock Creek Trail #42 at the Rock Creek Trailhead.
 - **Campsites If Applicable:** Chilson Camp is an old cattle line camp located a ¼ mile south of the Mazatzal Divide Trail # 23 and a mile west of the end of the Barnhardt Trail. It is about ½ mile from Chilson Spring and a great place to camp. The area around Windsor Spring (which has been dry for several years) has campsites with great views. Camping is also available near Hopi Spring, Bear Spring, and Horse Camp Seep.
 - **Points of Available Water:** Water is a concern on the Barnhardt Trail connecting Mazatzal Divide Trail, and Y Bar Trail and in many cases is dependent on the spring run-off. Springs that are listed in many current trail guides are now dry because of the drought during the late 90's and early 00's. Except during the spring run-off, following a winter with snow in the Mazatzal's, availability of water should be confirmed with Forest Service Wilderness Ranger.
 - **Any Other Important Item:** The Barnhardt Trailhead and connecting trails are under the jurisdiction of the Payson Ranger District, 1009 E. Highway 260, Payson, AZ 85541 (928) 474-7900. **Group size is limited to no more than 15 persons.**
5. **BEST TIMES FOR THE TRAIL:** The trails in this segment are best suited for hiking in late winter, early spring or late fall. Portions of these trails can be closed by snow following winter or early spring storms.
6. **WHAT TO EXPECT:** Expect steep, rocky trails with minimal shade and water until you reach the higher elevations, and then expect rocky poorly maintained trails and limited sources of water. Then forget about trail conditions and enjoy the magnificent views and scenery.
7. **ANY OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:** Hiking the Barnhardt Trail #43 to the Mazatzal Divide Trail #23 and on to Chilson Camp makes a good one night backpack outing. Chilson Spring usually has water and is located about a ½ mile from the camping area. To create a three-day trip, return to the Mazatzal Divide Trail #23 and hike to the junction of the Mazatzal Divide Trail #23 and the Y Bar Trail #44 and camp in the area of Windsor Spring or Bear Spring. Then return to the trailhead by the Y Bar Trail #44 for a challenging three-day outing.

Requirements:

1. You must be a registered Boy Scout, Scouter or parent of a registered scout.
2. **Hikes must be completed.** Weather, trail closure, tired boys or leaders who cannot go on, equipment failure, etc., may make it wise to stop short of completing these hikes, but do not justify granting the award.
3. Comply with the Boy Scouts of America principles of “LEAVE NO TRACE” and “OUTDOOR CODE”.
4. All hikes must be supervised by a minimum of 2 adults; at least one must be over 21, with at least 2 adults for each 12 boys.
5. Recommended that all Scouters have a current “Trek Safely” certification.
6. Awards will be denied for misconduct.
7. Only one patch will be issued to each participant.
8. Wearing Awards. Trail award patches may be displayed on the jacket, pack, camping gear, or worn as a temporary insignia on the right shirt pocket. Use Cub Scout Den numerals on trail medals as “repeater” numbers for those earning trail segments more than once.

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