



# A Guide to the Rainbow Trails



## The Hiker's Path to Tsé'naní'á

A publication of the  
Navajo Trails Task Force

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# Welcome to the Rainbow Trails

The Rainbow Trails are nearing a century of service to the hikers, backpackers and trail runners of the Navajo Nation and from far beyond. Both trails are historic routes that date back to the early 20th century and before.

Kudos to all of those who have helped to maintain and restore the route over the past 100+ years. These include Naatsisaan Chapter summer youth workers, Shonto Boy Scouts, Ancestral Lands Program, Canyonlands Field Institute, local volunteers, Tour de Rez volunteers, American Conservation Experience and NavajoYES.

A hearty ahe'hee to Effie Yazzie, Klara Kelley, Rygie Bekay, Jim Crittenden, Kee Dayzie, Nealsa Curley, Frank Fatt, Gary Rock, June Hurley, Hank Stevens, Clarita Stevens, Lyle Jones, Lorena Atene, Tony Anderson, Eli Neztosie, Eric Atene, and so many others for their efforts in and in supporting and promoting the Rainbow Trail, and in making this guide a reality.

Enjoy your journey!

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# Introduction to the Rainbow Trails

There are two trails beginning on the flanks of Navajo Mountain – the North Rainbow Trail and the Rainbow Lodge Trail. Both of these historic trails wrap around the side of Navajo Mountain and join together in Bridge Canyon roughly two miles from Tsé'nani'á. In this guide is a description of trail conditions, expected weather, Leave No Trace principles and other information to make your hike more safe and enjoyable.



Backpackers carry lots of water



Hikers on the North Rainbow Trail

## Trail Conditions

These are stunning and spectacular trails, some of the finest landscapes on the planet! Hikers should, at the same time, be aware that these are rugged, wilderness routes. These trails should be hiked by experienced, healthy hikers. These trails are remote beyond what most of us experience in our normal lives, so securing help and getting out is a chore that is not to be taken lightly. Route-finding skills may prove useful on this hike. Both trails are marked with rock cairns, which help to mark the way, though some of these rock markers may be washed away or removed, so be alert on the trail and keep your maps handy. On the North Rainbow Trail, there are small wooden placards at Cha Canyon, Bald Rock, Surprise Valley, Oak Canyon and Bridge Canyon. It is advised to have the proper maps of the area (see below) to help navigate.



Naat'sis'áan as viewed from the south.



# Weather Considerations

The trails are both best experienced in the shoulder seasons of fall (September through November) and spring (March through May), when conditions are likely to be more moderate than in summer or winter. In summer, temps may reach the 100's and water sources may be scarce. Dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke are possible. It is better to avoid summer months, or plan hiking for early morning or evening hours. Redbud Creek, Bridge Canyon and Nasja Creek are the most reliable water sources, though Cliff Canyon, Oak Canyon and Bald Rock Canyon are generally flowing year-round, though with a lesser volume than the three previously mentioned. Cha Canyon has a very low and intermittent flow. All water should be treated by filter! Hot, dry conditions may exist from May through August, with more limited water during this period. Monsoon rains may lessen the heat and water concerns, though the rains do not always occur and these storms do bring other concerns.

Winter weather can be cold and snowy at any time. Strong winds can make for terrifyingly low wind chill temperatures. In other seasons, winds can also be very strong, with blowing dust and/or rain in the mix.



Winter storms are common at Natsisáán, though challenging weather may occur throughout the year.

# Medical and Safety



Here are a few tips to consider for your trek: have a first aid kit. Know the medical history of your group (For example, does someone have extreme allergies? If so, who has an epi pen?) Know everyone's medical training (Having folks who are WFR or Wilderness First Aid-trained is really great for this route). Be sure that someone knows your itinerary and route. Plan to have some decent communication and/or tracker device with you.

The fairly reliable presence of water in the canyon bottoms does not make the rest of the other places these hikes pass through any less dry. Heat exhaustion is a serious concern anytime between May and October. A quart-size water bottle with a sprayer head is essential in the hot season to help revive an exhausted or otherwise incapacitated hiker.

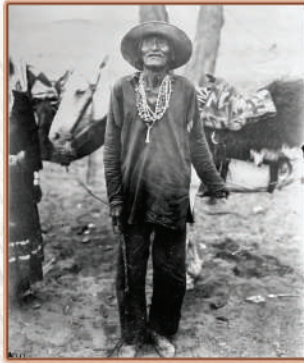
Anyone not used to desert hiking should know that we rapidly lose hydration- even in cooler weather- through direct evaporation into the dry air. Drink water often, even if it feels unusual to do. Educate yourself about desert first aid.



Some of the vast lands on the north side of Naatsis'áán in Spring.



# The Legend of Hashkè'neiníhí



In the middle of the 19th century, the interests of the Navajo and the United States government collided and there was conflict in the 1850s and 60s. Beginning in 1863, the U.S. established a policy of relocation, moving thousands of Dine' people from their traditional homeland to a poor relocation site at Fort Sumner in eastern New Mexico. In 1868, a treaty between the U.S. and the Navajo resulted in the return of the people to Dine' Bikeyah (the traditional lands of the Dine'). Today's Navajo Nation is based on the land to which the Dine' returned in 1868.

At the time of the Long Walk, there were several bands of Dine' who resisted the military incursion led by Colonel "Kit" Carson, and evaded relocation. One such band was a group of people from the area of Navajo Mountain, Paiute Mesa, Oljeto, Shonto and Monument Valley area. This group of resisters was led by a local headman named Hashkè'neiníhí who, with his followers, evaded capture. While their location during the Long Walk and Fort Sumner years is not precisely known, it is believed that you may be hiking and camping within the area in which they resided during these years. The remoteness and isolation of this area, even today 150 years later, makes it very believable.

When other Dine' returned to Dine' Bikeyah in 1868, Hashkè'neiníhí and his band were ready to greet their relatives with supplies of grain, livestock and other supplies that would be needed. To many of the local residents of the area today, Hashkè'neiníhí is their patriarch and they are his direct descendants. Along with other Navajo leaders (including Manuelito, Narbona, and Barboncito), the impact of Hashkè'neiníhí's leadership is certainly on an historic level.



Hashkè'neiníhí

# Before You Begin

Both trails are part of Lake Powell Navajo Tribal Park. You can obtain a permit from the Navajo Nation by calling (928) 645-0268 or (928) 871-6647. You must have a permit from the Nation to do this hike.

Check weather reports. Be aware of rain in the forecast, particularly in the monsoon season (roughly July through September), and watch out for extreme temperatures of hot or cold.

Arrange drop-off and pick-up in advance. If hiking one-way to Rainbow Bridge National Monument, you will need to arrange boat transportation out. You can contact Lake Powell Resorts at (888) 896-3829 for information about boat rentals and other information, including limited trips to Rainbow Bridge National Monument.





# Be Prepared

**B**e prepared on this hike. Search, rescue and evacuation can be time-consuming and expensive in this remote region of the Southwest. A helicopter evacuation may be the most viable, effective- and quite costly- option for major medical/trauma scenarios. It is advisable to carry a personal tracking device (SPOT device, for example) or a satellite phone. Cell service is extremely limited along the route.

There are various groups that assist in the maintenance of the Rainbow Trails. Please do your part by sticking to the trail, adding to the cairns where it is needed and applying *Leave No Trace* practices. Ahe'hee!



Hiking with others makes for a much safer backpacking experience

## Topo Maps

Obtain USGS 7.5' maps. These quadrangle maps are available at the Carl Hayden Visitor Center, Page, AZ, or by calling 928-608-6068.

### **South Trail maps are:**

Chaiyahi Flat (link: <https://www.rainbowstorm.org/yes/trailguide/ChaiyahiFlat1970.pdf>)

Rainbow Bridge (link: <https://www.rainbowstorm.org/yes/trailguide/RainbowBridge1987.pdf>)

### **North Trail maps are:**

Chaiyahi Rim NE (link: <https://www.rainbowstorm.org/yes/trailguide/ChaiyahiRim1970.pdf>)

Navajo Begay (link: <https://www.rainbowstorm.org/yes/trailguide/NavajoBegay1987.pdf>)

Rainbow Bridge (link: above)

# Principles for Minimal Impact Hiking

The two trails from Navajo Mountain are on Navajo tribal park land and Paiute grazing areas until they enter Rainbow Bridge National Monument. Utmost respect should be paid to homes, hogans, sweat lodges, and archeological sites along the way. When approaching Tsé'nani'á from the trails, please utilize the beautiful NPS trail that goes around the Bridge. Out of respect for local religious beliefs, do not pass under Tsé'nani'á. The trail around Rainbow was constructed in 2016 as a joint venture of the National Park Service, the Navajo Parks & Recreation Dept., and NavajoYes. It is a beautiful way in which to experience the Bridge.

Practice Leave No Trace backcountry ethics at all times. Please bury all human waste in a cathole at least six inches deep. Pack out all used toilet paper and pack out all trash. Do not bury human waste near water sources. Build fires in established fire rings only and do not create large fires. Burn only downed dead wood. Do not harass horses or livestock. Stay on the established trail.



Tuba City youth backpacking and doing trail maintenance



# Leave No Trace

The Center for Outdoor Ethics has developed the Seven Principles of Leave No Trace as guidelines for outdoor recreation. We encourage you to follow these principles throughout your visit.

## PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards and emergencies.

## TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses and snow.
- Camp at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made.
- Concentrate on existing trails and campsites.

## DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

- Pack it in, pack it out.
- Deposit human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or dishes, carry water 200 feet away from stream or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap.
- Scatter strained dishwater.

## LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

- Do not build structures or dig trenches.
- Examine but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.



# Leave No Trace, cont'd.

## MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a lantern for light.

Only have campfires if permitted, keep fires small and use established fire rings.

Burn all wood and coals to ash, and scatter cool ashes before leaving.

## RESPECT WILDLIFE

Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.

Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.

Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.

## BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.

Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.

Let nature's sound prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.



On the Rainbow Lodge Trail near Sunrise Pass



# A History of the Naatsisáán Area

Naatsis'áán (Navajo Mountain in Diné language) is sacred to Diné, Paiute, Ute, Hopi, Zuni, Western Apache, and other tribes. Their songs, prayers, and oral traditions mention the mountain and Tsé'nani'á , both of which people visit to make offerings and gather materials for ceremonies. In precolumbian times, Ancient Villagers, including some ancestral to members of various modern tribes (today's "affiliated tribes"), occupied the area. The ruins of their settlements are scattered around. These and all other archaeological sites, including recent structures of Diné and Paiutes, are protected by Navajo Nation and federal laws and are not to be disturbed.

In the 1700s-1800s, Spanish and Mexican exploring and trading parties crossed the plateau south of the mountain. They crossed the Colorado River at the Crossing of the Fathers west of the Mountain, pioneered by Spanish friars in 1776.

In the mid-1860s, the US Army under Col. Kit Carson waged war on the Diné, capturing many and marching them to Fort Sumner in New Mexico. But many Diné eluded the army by taking refuge at Naatsis'áán, including famed leader Hashkè'neiníhí. Many families living in the Naatsis'áán community today have stories about these ancestors. The mountain's status as a refuge enhances its sacredness.

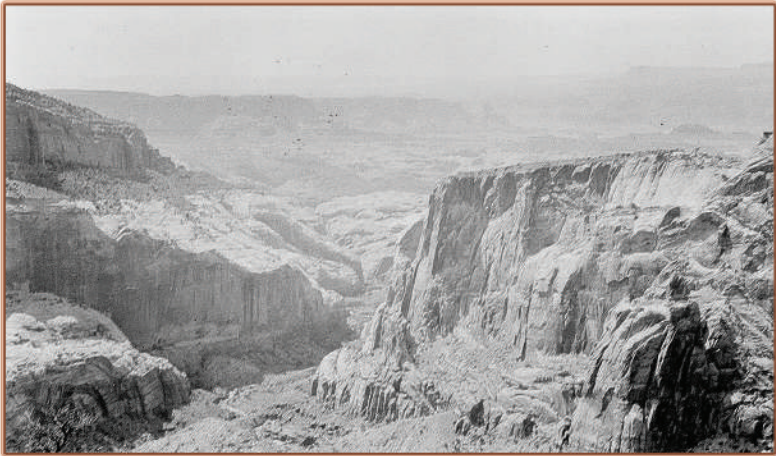


Between Shonto and Naatsis'áán

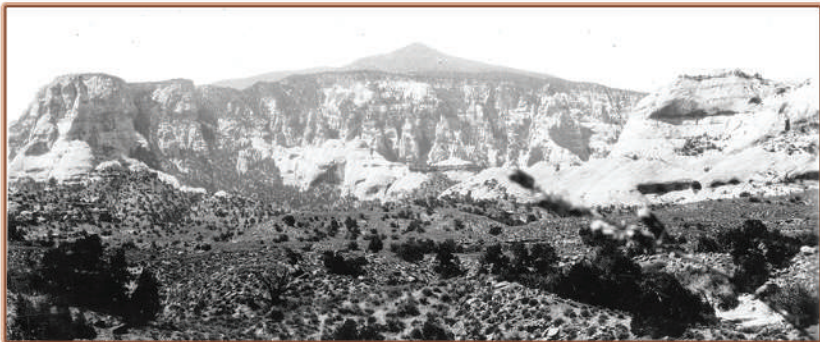
# A History of the Naatsisáán Area

In 1909, a group of scientists and explorers, including trader John Wetherill and Paiute Nasja Begay, located the legendary Rainbow Bridge north of the mountain. This 1909 expedition marked the beginning of a new era for Tsé'naní'á , though it is possible that non-Indigenous trappers had worked the Colorado River north of the mountain in the late 1800s and possibly saw the bridge. The National Park Service designated Rainbow Bridge a National Monument in 1910.

The Wetherills ran trips from their trading post at Kayenta, roughly 50 miles southeast, until 1928, when they established the Navajo Mountain Trading Post, near today's chapter house. A few years later, the US government built a school near the trading post. The historic boarding school is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of a larger Historic District and was the focus of limited restoration efforts in 2018.



Cliff Canyon view 1928



View of the northside of Naatsisáán, 1927



# Naatsisáán Nature Trail

AZ Hwy 93 to N16 to N488. Check in at the Chapter House office.



This is a challenging and scenic one-mile hiking trail located at Naat'sis'áán Chapter house. The trail begins right out of the Chapter House parking lot and heads up the wash, past huge, old cottonwood trees. It climbs up onto the high bench above the wash, with dramatic views of the distant landscapes. Take in the views before following the trail back down to the Chapter House.



A freshly-planted park bench for hikers.



Welcome to the Naatsisáán Nature Trail!  
Everyone is welcome to use.

Trails are beneficial to our physical, emotional and spiritual health and well-being. In addition, trail systems open to the public have well documented economic benefits and are catalysts of community wellness.

# Driving to North Rainbow Trail

## Getting To The North Rainbow Trailhead from Page, AZ

At the intersection of Hwy 98 and Coppermine Rd (Big Lake Trading Post), take AZ Hwy 98 East 51.1 mi (82.2 km) to the turnoff to Navajo Route 16. **Crossroads Sinclair gas station** is located at the junction. **Inscription House Trading Post** is 5 mi (8 km) north. Crossroads and Inscription House markets are the **last spots** to purchase fuel and supplies.

From Inscription House Trading Post, go North on N16 for 31.3 mi (50.4 km), to the turnoff for Navajo Mountain Chapter House. Continue straight on N16 for another 3.8 mi (6.1 km) to a 4-way intersection. (A GPS app is helpful in the back-country, which is a vast wilderness). Go straight through the intersection for 2.8 mi (4.5 km), where the road (N487) forks. Take the straight fork (across an earthen dam), the road forks again after 0.4 mi (.6 km) Take the left fork 1.6 mi (2.6 km) until the road ends at Cha Canyon. Park near the end of the road. There is an area for camping, a composting toilet, picnic table, a couple benches and a trail-head sign.



Follow roads carefully, and beware of rain, snow, icy, and otherwise hazardous conditions.

*"It is not for many eyes to see. The tourist, the leisurely tourist, the comfort loving motorist, will never behold it. Only by toil, sweat and pain could any man ever look at Rainbow Bridge-Nonnczoshc."*



# North Rainbow Trail



## Mile

- 0 North Rainbow Trailhead
- .5 Cha Canyon
- 3.7 Bald Rock Canyon (tricky descent)
- 6.6 Nasja Canyon/Surprise Valley
- 7.1 Owl Bridge (tucked in rocks to the south)
- 9.1 Oak Canyon (shelter from the elements)
- 11.2 Bridge Canyon (the “furnace”)
- 13.0 Jct. with Rainbow Lodge Trail (keep right)
- 14.8 Echo Camp (nifty place!)
- 15.5 Tsé'nani'á (Rainbow Bridge)

Mile	Elevation
0	5124 ft./1562 m.
3.7	5048 ft./1539 m.
0.5	5274 ft./1608 m.
6.6	4521 ft./1378 m.
7.1	4530 ft./1381 m.
9.1	4691 ft./1430 m.
11.2	4481 ft./1366 m.
13.0	4009 ft./1223 m.
14.8	3838 ft./1170 m.
15.5	3742 ft./1141 m.

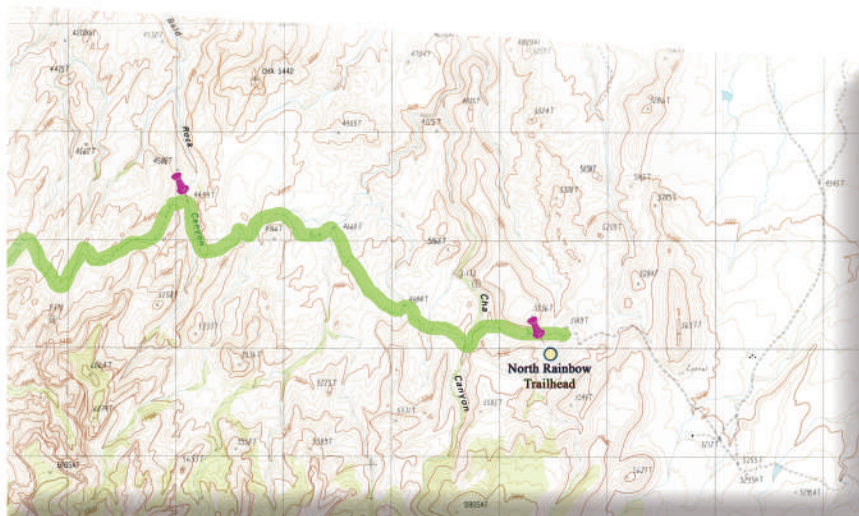


Looking down Bald Rock Canyon

# North Rainbow Trail

Trailhead to Bald Rock Canyon - 3.7 mi./6.0 km.

Elevation: 5124 ft./1562 m. to 5048 ft./1539 m.



At the end of the 4WD road, there is a nice camping area with ample parking for several parties, with stellar views of Navajo Mountain rising up to the west. There are several good camping spots, a couple benches, picnic table, some interpretive signage and an outdoor pit toilet. *There is no water available at the trailhead.*

There are a prominent pair of cairns at the trailhead; remember to keep your eyes focused on the cairns as you travel the trails to Tsé'nani'á. The trail quickly enters a small canyon and continues on the other side. Just before reaching the one mile point, you will drop in to Cha Canyon. *Please close gate behind you* as you start down canyon. (This will be common practice throughout the hike). There is usually water running in Beaver Creek, though in recent years it has been dry in late May, June, and July.....or until monsoon rains arrive.



A promising start to a springtime backpack trip



# North Rainbow Trail

**Trailhead to Bald Rock Canyon - 3.7 mi./6.0 km.**

*Elevation: 5124 ft./1562 m. to 5048 ft./1539 m. (continued)*

After crossing Cha Canyon, hikers experience one of the flatter sections of the trail. There may be water at an unnamed wash about one mile northwest of Cha, though this wash has been dry from May til monsoons for the past several years. As with all water sources in the hot season, do not pass drinking water without filling up the bottles.

The final section of this leg is the approach to and climb up on the Bald Rock Canyon rim. This rocky climb will get you to the super dramatic rim at 3.0 miles. You will have a view of the surrounding canyon country stretching out to the Colorado River to the north. The descent to the campsite is steep and at times precipitous; take your time and watch your footing. The campsite is located directly on the trail, at the creek crossing, which is roughly 3.7 miles from the parking area..

There are several good campsites in the area, along with a fire ring and a modest water source. Although Bald Rock Canyon stream is generally light and shallow, it generally runs through the summer. As with all sources, remember to top off your bottles if you have available water. There is reliable water ahead at Surprise Valley (Nasja Creek), which is another three miles beyond your Bald Rock campsite.

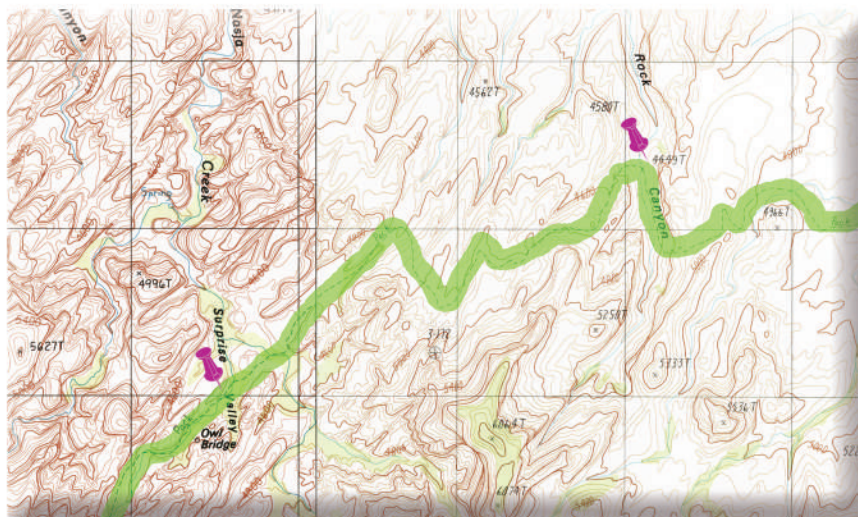


Hikers on the first leg of the North Railbow Trail

# North Rainbow Trail

**Bald Rock Canyon to Surprise Valley - 2.9 mi./4.7 km.**

*Elevation: 5274 ft./1608 m. to 4521 ft./1378 m.*



The climb out of Bald Rock Canyon to the west is much less severe than the descent on the east side of the canyon...but, it's still a grind. As you top of the climb, you will be rewarded with some of the finest views along the route. Sweeping views across the surrounding canyon country, the Henry Mountains and Kaiparowits Plateau are all in your view to the north, while Navajo Mountain looms large to the south. There are many fine, shady rest areas along the middle miles of this leg.

As you begin this descent, you will notice as you enter Surprise Valley, the rock has been notched out like stairs. This was done so that pack mules and horses wouldn't slip and fall on the slick rock. Some people believe that this may be "the Hashkeniinii steps", which were chiseled out during the Long Walk era. After this descent, the trail winds through a sandy half-mile section of trail to the campsites.

Once you arrive at Surprise Valley, you will find good established campsites, picnic table and ample water available from Nasja Creek. As with all campsites, but especially at this popular, busy spot, please remember to bury your waste in a 6-8" cathole at least one hundred feet away from water, and pack out the toilet paper. Ahe'hee!



6000 ft. of elevation



Surprise Valley camp area



# North Rainbow Trail

**Surprise Valley to Bridge Canyon - 4.5 mi./7.2 km.**

*Elevation: 4521 ft./1378 m. to 4481 ft./1366 m.*



Once leaving Surprise Valley, hikers travel through a scenic, shaded section of trail leading up to a narrow passage that we call Nasja Pass; it is a beautiful and rocky ascent. There are several small seeps in the section, though you will want to top off bottles before leaving Surprise Valley. If you are heading northeast (toward the trailhead), you may have enough water to wet yourself down, but likely not enough to hydrate very well.

Less than half a mile from Surprise Valley is one of the hidden gems of the route – Owl Bridge, which is -technically- an “arch” since there is no major water source involved in its formation. Though not hidden very well, Owl is tucked in the sandstone wall on the south side of the trail.



Owl Bridge



Autumn on the trail

# North Rainbow Trail

**Surprise Valley to Bridge Canyon - 4.5 mi./7.2 km.**

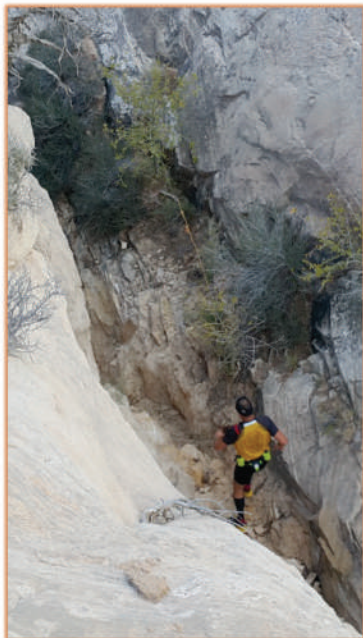
*Elevation: 4521 ft./1378 m. to 4481 ft./1366 m.*

If Oak Canyon is dry, that would indicate that the springs on the mountain are at historically low levels and you should proceed with caution. From Oak, the route ascends the rockier west side of the canyon and traverses a couple smaller drainages before beginning its mile-long descent in to Bridge Canyon. Sometime referred to as “the furnace” or “the cut”, this one mile section of trail is a gradual descent on your westward journey, with a fair bit of a sand, heat and limited air movement.....needless to say, this is not the most pleasant leg of the route. At the westernmost end of “the furnace”, the trail drops in on a rocky descent to Bridge Canyon, where you will find one of the finest campsites of the area.

This campsite includes a fire ring, multiple campsites and access to good water, both in camp and even more just downstream from camp. (If you get to camp early or want a cool-down dip, head just a bit downstream and enjoy some fine, cool pools ....perfect for soaking and cooling, especially if you happen to be there on a summer day.) Since Bridge Canyon camp-site is a bit snug, please adhere to Leave No Trace principles, particularly in regard to human waste and any micro trash – wrappers, packaging, zip locks, etc. – that you may create.



Rock cairns are helpful trail guides.



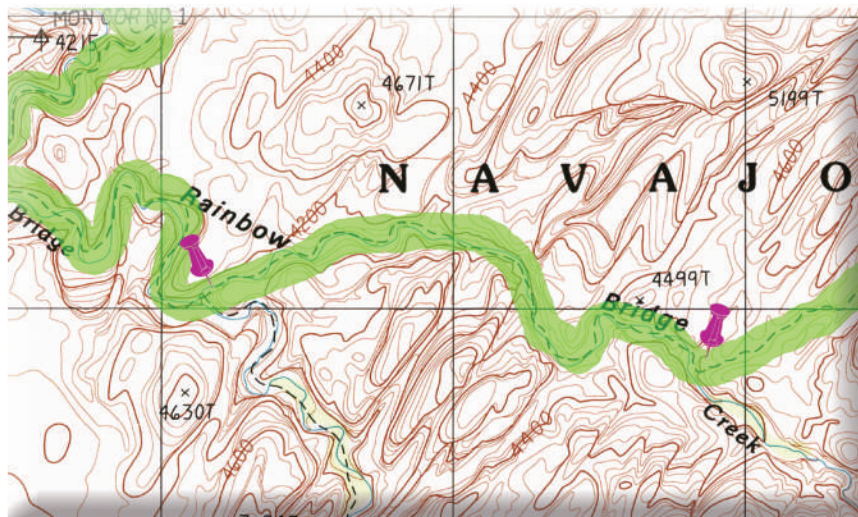
Troy Eid in “the furnace” in October.



# North Rainbow Trail

**Bridge Canyon to Rnbw. Lodge Trail Jct. - 1.75 mi./2.8 km.**

*Elevation: 4481 ft./1378 m. to 4009 ft./1223 m.*



Bridge Canyon Camp is on the upper section of the canyon, and hikers will head downstream just a tad shy of two miles to where Bridge Canyon is joined by Redbud Creek coming in from the south on your left. Upper Bridge Canyon has many modest water sources, which continue in the Lower Bridge Canyon 2½ mile trail section to Rainbow Bridge.

Both the Upper and Lower sections of Bridge Canyon have plentiful water sources. The trail crosses the stream multiple times throughout Bridge Canyon's journey to Rainbow.



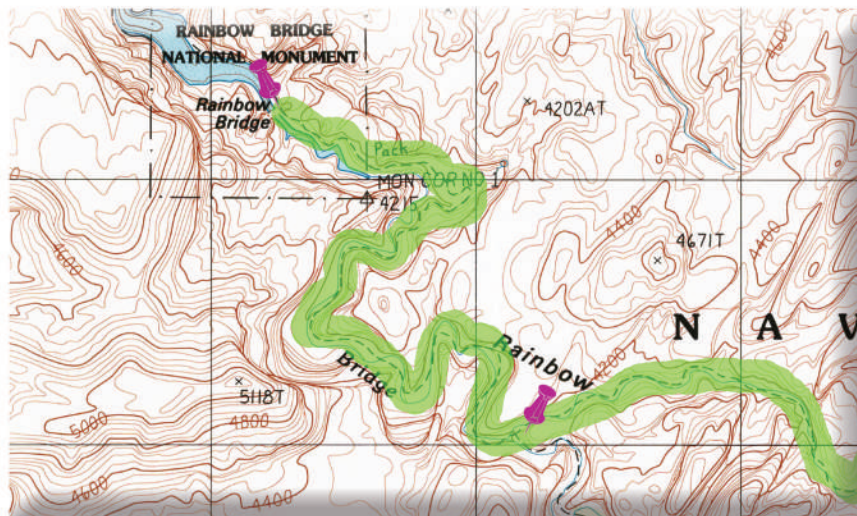
Near the junction of North Rainbow and Rainbow Lodge trails

Along Bridge Creek

# North Rainbow Trail

Rainbow Lodge Tr. Jct. to Tsé'nani'á - 4.5 mi./7.2 km.

*Elevation: 4530 ft./1381 m. to 3742 ft./1141 m.*



Echo Camp is the nearest campsite to Rainbow Bridge National Monument, and was the previous overnight site for horse trips from Rainbow Lodge. The camp is located in a large alcove just a few hundred meters past the first view of the Bridge. Remember, there are no services (including water or restrooms) available at Tsé'nani'á, and you are likely to encounter few other visitors at the Bridge.



“You could not guess in what a fantastic place I am. I stand in the shade of an ancient juniper. On all sides, the burning sun beats down on silent, empty desert. To the right and the left, long walls of sandstone reach away into the distance. Before me, the desert drops away onto a vast valley, in which strangely eroded buttes of all delicate and intense shadings of vermillion, orange and purple, tower into a cloudless turquoise sky.”

- Everett Ruess





# Driving to Rainbow Lodge Trail

## Getting To The South Rainbow Trailhead from Page, AZ

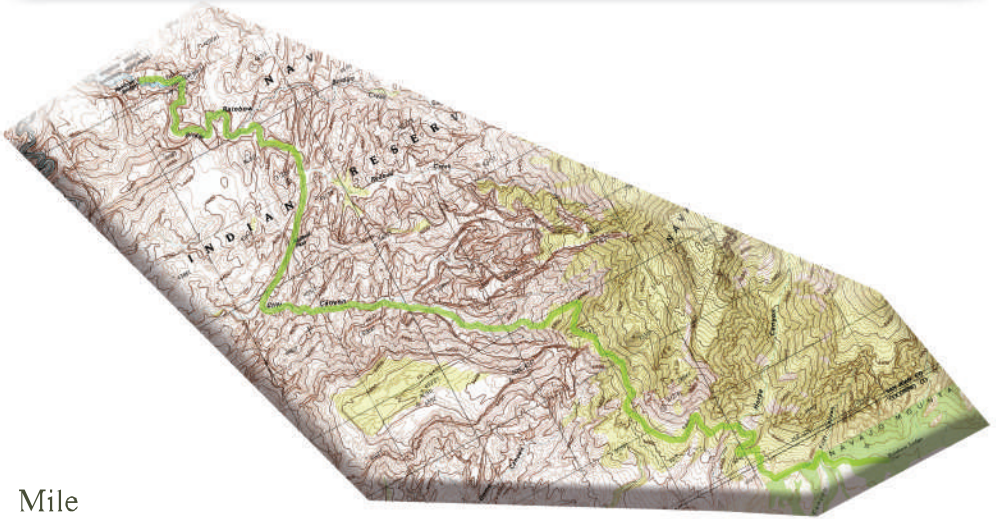
At the intersection of Hwy 98 and Coppermine Rd (Big Lake Trading Post), take AZ Hwy 98 East 51.1 mi (82.2 km) to the turnoff to Navajo Route 16. From The intersection of AZ98 and N16 (**Crossroads Sinclair Store**), go north on N16, past **Inscription House Trading Post** for 31 mi (50 km) to the intersection of N16 and N161. Crossroads Store and Inscription House Trading Post are the **last places** for food and fuel. At the intersection of N16 and N161, leave the paved road and continue on N161 for about 5 mi (8 km) to the main parking area before entering the Lodge road (N6301). Look for residences nearby: the Jones/Graymountain family and Bitsinnie residences are closest. Either of these local families will keep an eye on your ride during your journey. A modest gratuity (\$20-40), whether verbally expressed by them or not, is common practice. If no one is there, then tuck the money in their door. Be respectful of the area, keep it clean.

The historic Lodge road to Rainbow Lodge is an adventure unto itself. Having not been maintained for nearly 70 years, this rocky, gradual ascent is more easily traversed on foot than in a vehicle, unless you happen to be riding around in a dune buggy or moon crawler. A stout 4WD with high-clearance (and a driver with nerves of steel) is a close and probably more realistic second to the dune buggy! Keep in mind that any offroad rescue may be anywhere from hours to days in happening, and will be very expensive. Beware of hazardous weather conditions on any of these unpaved roads.



The final stretch of road (nearly two miles) is high-clearance 4WD only.

# Rainbow Lodge Trail



Mile

- 0 Rainbow Lodge
- 2 Horse Canyon (about 800 ft. deep)
- 5 Yabbut Pass (sometimes called Sunsect Pass)
- 7 Cliff Canyon (mellow section of trail)
- 8 First Water Campsite (to' at last!)
- 9.5 Redbud Pass (a little tricky, don't miss it)
- 10 Redbud Creek (nice camping and good water)
- 11 Junction with North Rainbow Trail
- 12.8 Echo Camp (nifty place!)
- 13.5 Tsé'nani'á (Rainbow Bridge)

Mile	Elevation
0	6291 ft./1917 m.
2	6359 ft./1938 m.
5	6405 ft./1952 m.
7	4672 ft./1424 m.
8	4402 ft./1342 m.
9.5	4343 ft./1324 m.
10	4460 ft./1359 m.
11	4154 ft./1266 m.
12.8	3821 ft./1165 m.
13.5	3877 ft./1182 m.



Trail crew celebrating the Rainbow Lodge Trail



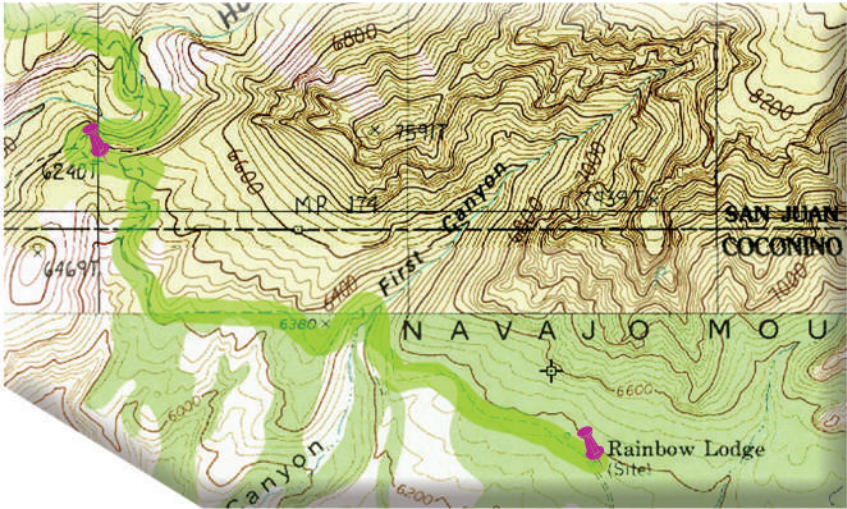
Trailhead sign for the Rainbow Lodge Trail



# Rainbow Lodge Trail

**Trailhead to Horse Canyon - 1.9 mi./3.1 km.**

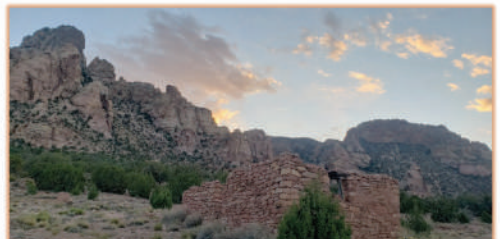
*Elevation: 6335 ft./1931 m.*



The hike from Rainbow Lodge travels out of the camp, through pinon and juniper forest to the edge of First Canyon. The canyon seems to leap off the side of Navajo Mountain (aka Naatsisáán, in the Dine' language), rising from the rock towers of Navajo Mountain while diving out of sight to the canyon west of the trail. The canyon seems to be laid diagonally between the mountain and the desert lands below. After climbing out of First Canyon, hikers enjoy a bit of respite, as they contour along the relatively flat terrain between First and Horse Canyons. Not to be disappointed: the trail rises up sharply to a rim overlooking Horse Canyon, before dropping again in to that canyon. To the East, you can see remnants of the 2015 fire on the upper slopes of the mountain. The south end of Horse Canyon has plentiful flat spots with shade and sweeping views, making it a perfect spot for a break or turn-around point on a day hike.



Remnants of Rainbow Lodge

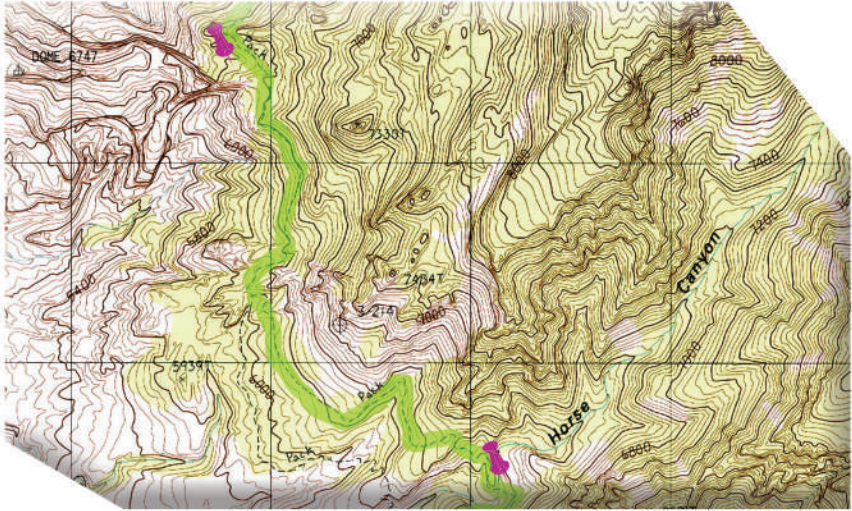


Sunrise behind Naatsisáán

# Rainbow Lodge Trail

**Horse Canyon to Yabbut/Sunset Pass-2.8 mi./4.5km.**

*Elevation: 6405 ft./1952 m.*



The route from Horse Canyon drops abruptly 800 feet into the chasm, into a large, stunning basin opening on the mountain side. The climb both in and out is a bid precarious, with some exposure on the south side of the canyon. Once topping off on the north side of Horse Canyon, hikers enjoy a flat section before dropping in to a third (unnamed) canyon. After exiting the third canyon, the trail traverses along the west-facing slopes of Naatsisaan before coming to Yabbut Pass, also known as Sunset Pass (it will be called Yabbut Pass for the duration of this guide). This segment offers some stunning views of a maze of canyon domes below you. The trail tops off at Yabbut Pass, which sits between the slope of the mountain and No Name Mesa. As you gaze into the route below, you quickly realize that the upcoming 1800 foot descent is going to test your joints and find out where your strong spots are!



Heading east toward Yabbut Pass



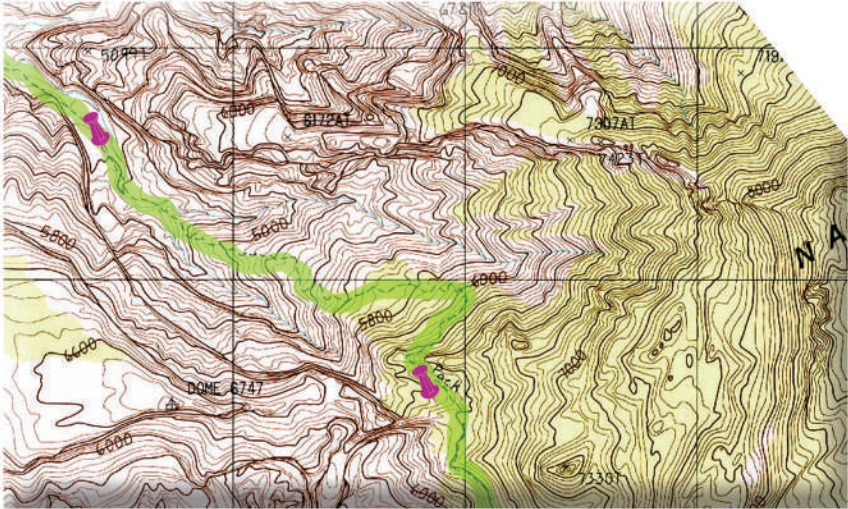
Naatsis'áan from Horse Canyon



# Rainbow Lodge Trail

**Yabbut Pass to Cliff Canyon - 2 mi./3.2 km.**

*Elevation: 4672 ft./1424 m.*



The view from Yabbut Pass and the trek to Cliff Canyon is a world-class adventure! It is just over two miles to the first camp in Cliff Canyon, which lies at the bottom of Yabbut Pass. Hikers traverse 1800 feet in two miles from the top of the Pass to the floor of Cliff Canyon, with very rough, rocky terrain for the majority of the segment. It is in this section of the trail where many tired, dry hikers begin to feel their exhaustion. And needless to say, this is a poor place to be wobbly or tired. Enjoy your camp or rest area!

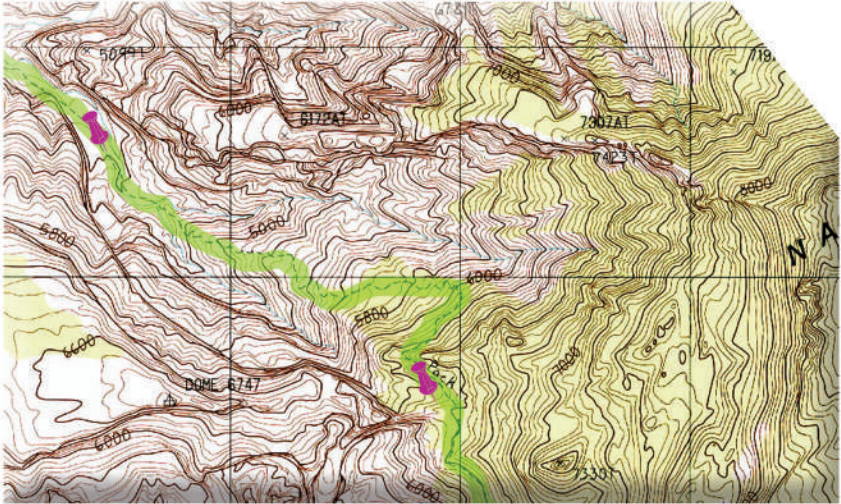


The 'cliffs of insanity'

# Rainbow Lodge Trail

Cliff Canyon to First Water Camp - 1 mi./1.6 km.

*Elevation: 4402 ft./1342 m.*



Arriving at the base of Sunset Pass is a relief for the entire body! The brakes have been burning for almost two miles and 2000 vertical feet, and now the trail levels off as it travels through Cliff Canyon. There is a stellar campsite at the base, just as you enter Cliff Canyon. There is no water but there is shade and good campsites established. If you have another 1½ miles in you, go for it and you will end up at a campsite with water!



Looking into Cliff Canyon



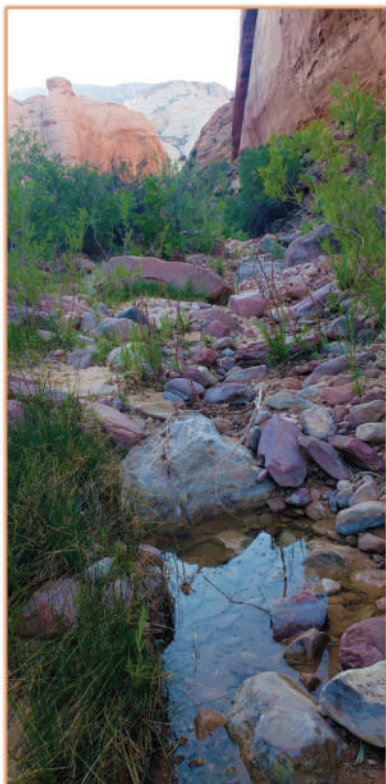
# Rainbow Lodge Trail

## Cliff Canyon to First Water Camp - 1 mi./1.6 km.

*Elevation: 4402 ft./1342 m.*

The first segment once you arrive at the bottom of the Cliff Canyon is roughly 1½ miles to First Water Camp. This segment is a touch rough and is not a fast or easy stretch, but the beautiful First Water campsite is worth it. Be prepared for some brushy areas; gaiters or long pants are advisable for this section. At First Water Camp, there are several established campsites with fire rings, an outhouse across the wash and running water.

The second segment in Cliff Canyon is just shy of one mile, from First Water Camp to Painted Rock Camp at the Redbud Pass junction. This is a beautiful open spot in Cliff Canyon and a campsite with ample water is a real plus. If you are interested in seeing some well-preserved petroglyphs, take a gaze at the northwest wall of the canyon near the turn toward Redbud Pass.



Fresh water still needs to be treated.



Heck of a place to lose a cow.

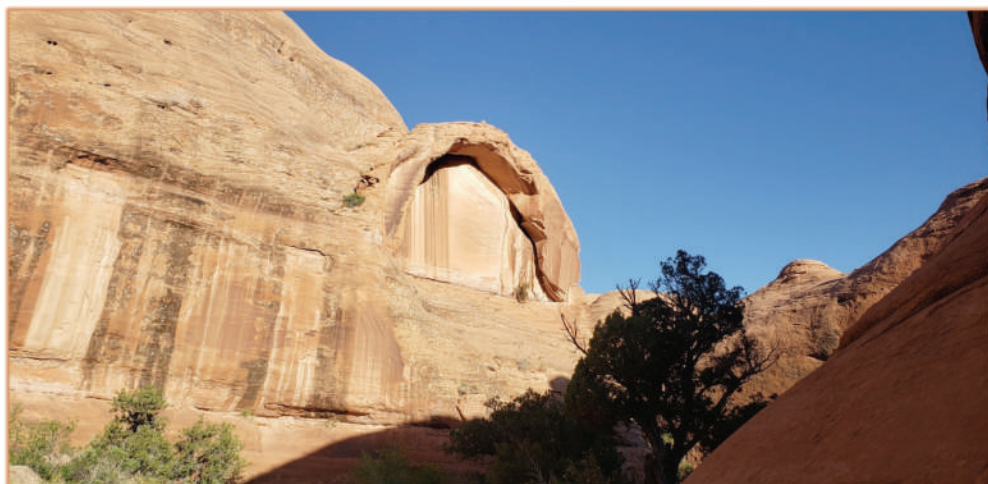
# Rainbow Lodge Trail

**First Water Camp to Redbud Pass - 1.5 mi./2.4 km**

*Elevation: 4343 ft./1324 m.*



At Redbud Pass, the campsite looms in the shadow of what appears to be a young or imitation Rainbow Bridge. Though it doesn't have all of the fixins of a future natural bridge, it may have potential, cons down the geologic timeline.



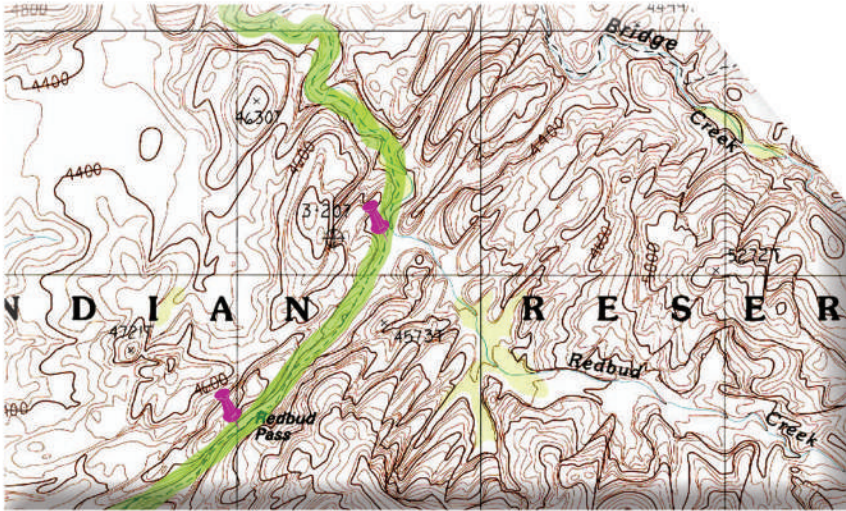
Future bridge in the works in Cliff Canyon.



# Rainbow Lodge Trail

## Redbud Pass to Redbud Creek - 1 mi./1.6 km.

*Elevation: 4460 ft./1359 m.*



From the campsite at Redbud/Cliff Canyon Jct (aka Painted Rock Camp), the trail climbs up and over Redbud Pass. This route is rugged and relatively steep on the west side and super rocky and jagged on the east side of the Pass. Watch for the cairns as you go, and be patient on both side of the Pass. As you traverse this challenging section today, imagine its remoteness and the difficulty in hauling all of the gear, supplies and explosives to this site a full century ago!

Redbud Pass is the essence of the Rainbow Lodge Trail. Without it, there would be no access to Tsé'naa Nani'áhi from the west side and likely no Rainbow Lodge. Charles Bernheimer and John Wetherill spent parts of three years exploring for a route from Cliff Canyon. There didn't seem to be any options, as the cliffs were daunting and there was no apparent way to get from Cliff/Forbidding Canyon to Rainbow. But finally, the men realized that they could work their way over from Cliff Canyon to Redbud Creek, with the help of a hearty crew, some serious tools and.....a little dynamite. So, from 1923 on, there were now two routes to Tsé'naní'á.

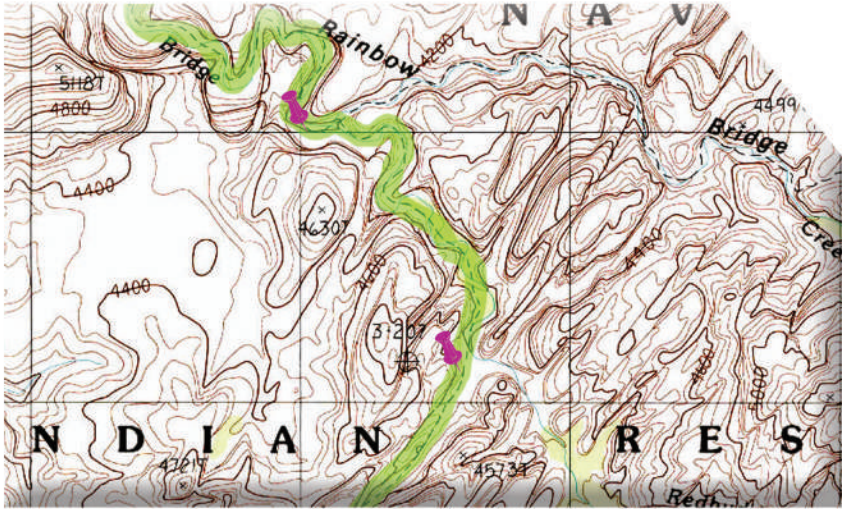


Redbud Pass

# Rainbow Lodge Trail

Redbud Creek to North Trail Jct. - .9 mi./ .5 km.

*Elevation: 4154 ft./1266 m.*



Once you arrive on the east side of the Pass, the route continues through a very brushy segment of trail along beautiful Redbud Creek. Water is intermittent here, much as it was in Cliff Canyon, on the other side of the Pass, though in this writer's experience Redbud Creek has never run dry. Redbud Creek joins up with Bridge Creek at the junction of the two canyons, at the appropriately tagged "trail conjunction". Approaching from Redbud Creek, hikers should head left at the conjunction for a downstream hike for Tse'nani'a; a right turn at the junction will lead you upstream in Bridge Creek toward the North Rainbow Trailhead. There are large cairns designating the routes, plenty of shade and a large designated campground. A pit toilet is planned for placement at this location in the near future.



Moving up toward Redbud Pass



Near the Junction campsite



# Rainbow Lodge Trail

North Trail Jct. to Tse'nani'á - .9 mi./.5 km.

Elevation: 4530 ft./1381 m. to 3742 ft./1141 m.



The trail from the junction travels in Bridge Canyon about 2¼ miles to Tse'nani'á. Water is intermittent, but you are virtually guaranteed to have some water at various spots along the way. The route is marked with cairns, but there may be some spots within or when crossing the creek where you will need to test your basic route-finding instincts. You will pass through two gates as you get near to Tse'nani'á: the first is a closed Navajo stock gate which you will encounter shortly before the first glimpse of the Bridge. *Please close the gate behind you.* The second gate marks the boundary between the Lake Powell Navajo Tribal Park (Navajo Parks) and Rainbow Bridge National Monument (NPS). Once you are in the park, please adhere to the wishes of the Rainbow Bridge Affiliated Tribes by hiking around the Bridge on the beautiful new trail, rather than under the Bridge.



# Observer's Checklist

## Plants and Animals seen on the Rainbow Trails

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Navajo Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Navajo Name</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Soapweed Yucca	Tsa'aszi'ts'ooz	<input type="checkbox"/> Red-tailed Hawk	Atseeltsoii
<input type="checkbox"/> Milkweed	Ch'ilabe'é	<input type="checkbox"/> Deer	Bijh
<input type="checkbox"/> Prickly Pear Cactus	Hosh Niteelí	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Bear	Shash
<input type="checkbox"/> Juniper Tree	Gad	<input type="checkbox"/> Cougar	Náshdóitsoh
<input type="checkbox"/> Globemallow	Azee' Ntl'iní	<input type="checkbox"/> Rabbit	Gah
<input type="checkbox"/> Ponderosa Pine	Nídíschii'	<input type="checkbox"/> Squirrel	Dloziłgaii
<input type="checkbox"/> Cliffrose	Awééts'áál	<input type="checkbox"/> Raven	Gáagii
<input type="checkbox"/> Sagebrush	Ts'ahtsoh	<input type="checkbox"/> Eagle	Átsá
<input type="checkbox"/> Pinon Pine	Chá'ol	<input type="checkbox"/> Snake	T'iiish
<input type="checkbox"/> Yucca	Tsa'ászeh	<input type="checkbox"/> Frog	Ch'ał
<input type="checkbox"/> Cottonwood	T'íis	<input type="checkbox"/> Coyote	Ma'í
<input type="checkbox"/> Gambel Oak	Che ch'il	<input type="checkbox"/> Bighorn Sheep	Tse'tah Dibe'
<input type="checkbox"/> Navajo Tea	Ch'ilgohwéhi'déi	<input type="checkbox"/> Scorpion	Séigo
<input type="checkbox"/> Native Paintbrush	Dahiitijhídaq'tsoh	<input type="checkbox"/> Red Fox	Máii iiltsoi'
<input type="checkbox"/> Daisy	Nidfyiliitigaii	<input type="checkbox"/> Antelope	Jadí
<input type="checkbox"/> Beeplant	Waa'	<input type="checkbox"/> Spider	Na'ashjé'ii'
<input type="checkbox"/> Rabbitbrush	Ch'ildiilyésiits'óóz	<input type="checkbox"/> Ant	Woláchíí'
<input type="checkbox"/> Wild Rose	Chqoh	<input type="checkbox"/> Falcon	Giní



At the Rainbow Lodge trailhead



# Activities in the Naatsisáán Area

## Day Hikes, Picnics, Car Camping and Other Activities

Backpacking is very popular on the Rainbow Trails, though shorter day hikes offer hikers incredible experiences. The best options for day hikes are on the Rainbow Lodge trailhead are First Canyon (a 2-mile roundtrip) that gives you stunning views of the mountain looming above you and the canyons below. Horse Canyon is a 4-mile roundtrip to the south rim and back, while a more challenging 12-mile hike out-and-back to the saddle (aka Yabbut Pass) gives you a stunning view of the sheer walls and 1600-foot depths of Cliff Canyon below. The North Rainbow Trail has two popular day-hike destinations: Cha Canyon (2 miles roundtrip) and a 6-miler(rt) to the stunning east rim of Bald Rock Canyon.

Both trailheads provide nice opportunities for picnics and car camping. There are picnic tables, benches, interpretive signage, portable toilets and shade structures at both trailheads. Both trailheads are dry, so plan accordingly. There are several excellent sites for car camping, particularly on the Rainbow Lodge side, and the picnicking possibilities are endless.

Eehaniih Days Celebration takes place the first weekend of August and is a Navajo Mountain tradition dating back 50 years! The horse races, field day events and amazing food are among the highlights. There are often horseback riders that travel in from Narrow Canyon and a mountain bike race that kicks off Saturday's activities.

The Naatsisáán Trail Ultra is a weekend of running and family activities held the last weekend of October annually. The races included a variety of distances, including ultra and competitive shorter trail runs. There is also a live music stage, a community cook-out, trunk-or-treat for the kids and school-based activities throughout the weekend.

The Hashkeniinii Bike Race is a road race that takes place in the spring each year in the Naatsisáán area. The event offers 50-mile and 10-miler events in tribute to the life and legacy of the great Dine' leader Hashkeniinii.



Storm design blanket

# Map of the Naat'sis'áán Area





# Emergency Contact Numbers

The first and foremost element of any emergency situation in the area of the Rainbow Trails is to remain aware that you are in a very remote and minimally accessible area. An emergency on the mountain side of the trails is particularly challenging, while incidents closer to the lake are a bit more accessible, though fluctuating water levels can affect access from the lake.

A personal locator device and/or satellite phone are recommended for this trek and will be helpful in case of emergency. **Cellular phones have limited viability on the trail. In an emergency situation, a 911 call from the trail may be routed to Page dispatch or National Park Service dispatch.**

## Additional Area Contacts:

### **Utah-Navajo Health Service**

EMS ambulance: (435) 651-3700

### **San Juan County Search and Rescue**

Emergency Dispatch: (435) 587-2237

### **Kayenta Health Center**

Navajo EMS ambulance (roughly 90 minutes to trailheads): 928-697-4074

### **Classic Air Medical**

Emergency Dispatch: (800) 444-9223

### **Tuba City Regional Health Care**

Major medical facility, about two hours from trailheads: (928) 283-2501

### **Page Hospital**

Closest medical facility open to non-native hikers in emergency or non-emergency situations: (928) 645-2424

### **Coconino County Sheriff**

Emergency Dispatch: (928) 774-4523



For those times when a wing and a prayer is all that's left.

One of the remotest yet spectacular sights in nature is Tsé'naní'á. Practically inaccessible before Lake Powell, low lake levels have once again made Tsé'naní'á very hard to reach. This guide contains directions for the two overland trails that lead there. One, the North Rainbow Trail, begins East of its destination. The second trail, called the Rainbow Lodge Trail, approaches Tsé'naní'á from the South.



An easy to follow companion guide with trail descriptions and basic maps for each segment. Included are directions to the trailheads, weather information, history, and other items of interest.

A publication of the Navajo Trails Task Force in cooperation with Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation, Naatsisaan Chapter, and NavajoYES





# CAMPSITES & WATER SOURCES

## North Rainbow Trail

Water sources along the North Rainbow Trail are a bit less predictable. The first water is generally at Cha Canyon (roughly one mile from the TH), though it can be dry in summer months. Horse Flats (a tad over two miles in) has good shade and has water most of the year, particularly just above or below the crossing of the wash. Bald Rock Canyon has perennial but low volume water flowing through the canyon's floor near the scenic campsites.

The trail is dry between Bald Rock and Surprise Valley, with Nasja Creek flowing strong throughout the year in Surprise. The trail is dry after leaving Surprise Valley, with the next steady water source in Oak Canyon. There are ongoing water sources from Bridge Canyon upper campsite all the way to Rainbow Bridge.

There are several established campsites along the route, all of which are readily accessible to water sources –

- Bald Rock Canyon – beautiful campsites nestled in narrow, deep canyon, surrounded by massive sandstone alcoves
- Surprise Valley – major campsite with good water; popular spot for dayhike to Rainbow Bridge and back
- Oak Canyon – Small campsite with good water and nice sites
- Bridge Canyon – Large campsite with modest water source
- Junction Camp and Echo Camp – same as on Rainbow Lodge Trail

“I realized that long before there was life on Earth, this bridge had spread its grand arch from wall to wall, black and mystic at night, transparent and rosy in the sunrise, at sunset a flaming curve against the heavens.

“It is not for many eyes to see. The tourist, the leisurely tourist, the comfort-loving motorist, will never behold it. Only by toil, sweat and pain could any man ever look at Rainbow Bridge, Nonnezoshe.

“It seemed well to realize that the great things in life had to be earned.”

- Zane Grey



# CAMPsites & WATER SOURCES

## Rainbow Lodge Trail

The Rainbow Lodge trail is very dry, particularly on the first half of the route from the Trailhead to First Water Camp at mile 8 in Cliff Canyon. These eight miles are challenging, with several canyon crossings and very rocky terrain. Once arriving at the bottom of Cliff Canyon, the first water source is an additional 1.5 miles from the fine shady but dry campsite/rest area at the bottom, so be prepared for that.

Once you arrive at the first water source in Cliff Canyon, there will find water fairly consistently through the canyon until the trail veers right toward Redbud Pass. Once you cross over dry Redbud Pass, you will find water throughout Redbud Creek, past Junction Camp and all the way through Bridge Canyon to Rainbow Bridge itself.

Campsites on Rainbow Lodge Trail, including three dry camps and three with water sources –

- Yabbut Pass – high camp in saddle between No Name Mesa and mountain
- Buck's Landing – flat campsite below Yabbut Pass
- Cliff Canyon – scenic, shaded spot at base of descent
- First Water Camp – water, shade and nice campsites
- Redbud Creek Jct Camp – scenic large area on the creek
- Junction Camp – large campsite near water where two trails converge
- Echo Camp – historic campsite about one mile Rainbow

“Rainbow Bridge – a perfect gem in a perfect setting. It is more graceful yet more powerful and perfectly symmetrical than any photographs seen. It is the most remote, the loneliest and the most beautiful single natural wonder of America.”

- Hoffman Birney

