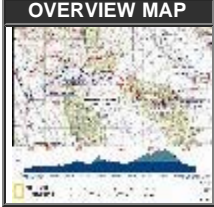
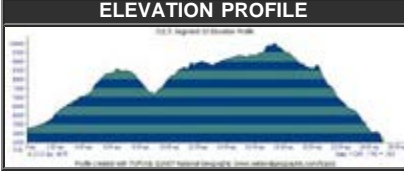


G.E.T. Guidebook

Segment 10: Pinaleno Mountains 25.9 miles

Segment Length	Segment Status	Season
25.9 mi.	finalized & accessible	spring, summer, fall
Resources		
 <p>OVERVIEW MAP</p>	 <p>ELEVATION PROFILE</p>	<p>Additional maps: Coronado N.F. Safford & Santa Catalina Ranger Districts (USFS).</p> <p>Land management agency: Coronado National Forest Safford Ranger District</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ G.E.T. Topo Maps 30-32 ▶ Water Chart ▶ Image Gallery: Album 3 		

Beginning access point

FR 286 at FR 675. From Safford, take US 70 west to Pima and turn left at sign for Tripp Canyon Road / FR 286. Reach an intersection with Patterson Mesa Rd within a half mile and turn left. FR 286 resumes at right within a quarter mile, marked by metal signs (brief easement through private land). A large swinging gate soon encountered should be left as it was found. Proceed southwest on dirt 2WD FR 286. In ~15 miles from Pima reach a junction with 4WD FR 351. Keep straight on FR 286, heading up Tripp Canyon. A dirt lot and car camping area is on the right at ~19 mi. from Pima, at a signed junction with FR 675. *(A 4WD vehicle could also get here via Klondyke Rd by following the directions for the "beginning access point" for segment 9, but turning off at FR 351, taking this 4WD road to the junction with FR 286, and continuing as described above.)*

Ending access point

FR 307 at Ash Creek Trailhead. From Safford, follow US 70 west to Pima, then take Main St south to its end. Turn right on Cottonwood Rd, then left on dirt 2WD Cluff Ranch Rd. Reach Cluff Ranch wildlife management area in 4 mi, where 2WD vehicles should park (~5 mi before the actual Ending Access Point for Seg 10). Suitable high-clearance vehicles such as Jeeps may continue on Cluff Ranch Rd. Keep left at the fork by main entrance to Cluff Ranch, then turn left at a 3-way junction onto signed Berry Patch Rd. Stay on the main road, which becomes Ash Creek Rd (FR 307) and follows an old water pipeline. The rough rocky road, which crosses Ash Creek three times, ends in ~4 mi from Berry Patch Rd jct, at a turnout nearby the trailhead, which is signed with a metal post. (The final 1.8 mi of this approach is concurrent with the route of the GET in Segment 11.)

TRAVEL ALERT - PLEASE READ

The 2017 [Frye Fire](#) and subsequent flooding in the Pinaleno Mountains has left the GET severely damaged in and along Ash Creek (from approximately mile 17.5 to the end of this segment). Trail conditions are verified hazardous, with some *class 4 climbing* necessary due to the tremendous degree of erosion. The GET will probably be permanently relocated away from Ash Creek, but a finalized reroute has yet to be determined.

In the meantime, a temporary alternate route is in place - the 2018 Ash Creek Bypass Route. This bypass is 36 miles in length, starting at GET Segment 10 mile 16.1 and ending at Segment 11 mile 9.7. The bypass route is thus 16 miles longer than the portion of the main GET (original route) it replaces. Hikers should plan their food carry accordingly and be prepared to hike a somewhat unvetted route (which nonetheless should be much safer and easier than the main / old route at this time). The bypass route does encounter patchy burn conditions from the Frye

Fire along the way, but likely nothing particularly problematic. There is also an "all roadwalking" option available via the Swift Trail (AZ Rte 366) that should be very straightforward. Please see the section on the Ash Creek Bypass Route at the end of this chapter and refer to the most recent version of the GET Topo Mapset (3.3) maps 31-34 for additional details.

SEGMENT OVERVIEW

The Pinaleños are a range defined by their considerable prominence. Rising to a height of nearly 11,000 feet above the sea, they are by a respectable margin the tallest of the true Southwestern Sky Islands. The range culminates atop Mount Graham, with a vertical relief of nearly 8000 feet the most prominent peak in the state of Arizona. According to the [Nature Conservancy](#), the Pinaleños traverse five ecological communities and "contain the highest diversity of habitats in the shortest vertical distance of any mountain range in North America." Prickly pear and agave are at home here, only a few trail miles below an old growth forest of spruce and fir - the southernmost such forest on the continent.

In this segment our route traverses a portion of this remarkable range, often nicknamed simply "the Grahams." Using a combination of foot trails and pleasant forest roads, the GET follows the main northwest-southeast trending ridgeline, passing near scenic Riggs Lake, climbing forested Webb Peak (10,030'), and passing within range of the historic summer cabins at Old Columbine, before descending sharply along the range's dramatic east face toward the Gila Valley. The route bypasses the summit of Mount Graham itself, as the trails there are presently off-limits for the purpose of protecting one of the mountain's rare fauna, the Mount Graham red squirrel, found only here. For nearly two decades the mountain and its endangered red squirrels have been the subject of unlikely controversy between wildlife conservationists and the astronomical community, since the Pinaleños are also now home to the Mt Graham International Observatory, and indeed the dark, clear skies atop the range make this among the world's premier locations for stargazing. Nature and science appear to be coexisting for now, however harmoniously; hikers will note the telescope housing atop one of Mt Graham's sub-peaks from several vantages along the route.

In June and July of 2004, the lightning-caused Nuttall Complex fire burned some 30,000 acres of forest and brush, mostly on the Pinaleños' steep east-facing slopes. This fire and attendant erosion have caused considerable damage to the trail network as well as the ecology on this part of the range. ~~Thankfully, Ash Creek Trail, which the GET uses here, received major trail rehabilitation in 2009 and 2010, resulting in a much improved hiking experience. (Forested Ash Creek Canyon was largely spared the direct effects of the fire, but not the subsequent flooding.)~~ (See *Travel Alert* above - the 2017 Frye Fire, some 13 years later, ultimately tested the resilience of Ash Creek Canyon to the break point.) Still, several small burn areas and sections of vague or overgrown tread create ongoing challenges elsewhere in this segment; in addition to this guide description and the topo map set, plan to pack along an adventurous attitude - the rugged scenery here will reward those who are willing to persevere.

Spring season snowpack potentially poses another challenge. Snow on the Pinaleños often lingers above 9000 feet well into April, or later following an especially wet winter. As such, hikers at that time of year can expect to encounter at least some snowpack between milepoints 9 and 21 in this segment, and may want to remain open to the idea of detouring to avoid some or all of it. The primary concerns are the labor of postholing through saturated spring snow and the challenge of following snowbound trail, although slope exposure may also be of concern near Clark Peak, largely avoidable with care. Refer to the route details below for more specific info, as well as the [Snow Travel](#) chapter of the GET Trek Planner.

ROUTE DETAILS

Hikers intending to traverse this entire segment may prefer to make use of the **Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate** in the segment's early miles. This alternate route avoids Johns Canyon Ridge Trail 313, which can be difficult to follow for a mile or more due to ill-defined and overgrown trail. Elsewhere this primitive trail may be in more reasonable condition, if a bit vague and brushy. The Trail 313's allure, compared with the alternate route, is that it offers a more trail-intensive, scenic, and remote hiking experience on the way up to the crest. It may be particularly attractive to westbounders, who get to descend this trail from the crest so are less affected by its scant water resources (see below). In any case, the main route of the GET - between MP 0 of this segment and its reconvergence with the Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate at MP 7.4 - is described first, below, followed by the alternate route description. Whichever way you opt to begin this segment, be sure to avail yourself of the water often found in [Tripp Canyon](#) - described at the start of the Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate Route description - as there are few convenient, reliable sources between here and Riggs Lake 14 steep, uphill miles away.

To follow the main route of the GET between MP 0 and 7.4 in this segment, rather than the Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate Route, take FR 675 southwest (from the unsigned junction with segment 9's 2-track road (waypoint 09160,

elev. 5260'). FR 675, a pleasant, little-used 4WD track, heads up the pinyon-juniper-live oak-shaded bottom of Tripp Canyon, soon crossing the main drainage to follow its north side (**water** in wetter times). It crosses back in about a half mile, near where the side drainage of Johns Canyon enters from the left (**water** in wetter times). Above this confluence, the main canyon changes names from Tripp to Bellows Canyon. Ignore several left-forking tracks off the main road, which gradually climbs with the canyon bottom. Note occasional camping potential near roadside in this area - a safe enough bet for solitude. FR 675 ends at a small "turnout" (if that) along the boulder-strewn east bank of Bellows Canyon's drainage (**1.2**, waypoint 10015), the unsigned trailhead for Johns Canyon Ridge Trail 313.

Possibly marked by a cairn but otherwise unsigned, Trail 313 first runs south through woods near the drainage's left bank, then crosses it in less than a tenth of a mile, follows along it briefly, then makes a sharp right away from the drainage at a t-junction of sorts. The wide swath of a trail eventually meets the drainage again, narrowing to a primitive pack trail. Soon note an old stock trough, no longer functional, and a little **cement dam**, which holds back a modest-sized pool of good water in wetter times (other times dry). Natural **pools and drainage flow** at a final drainage crossing (**1.8**, waypoint 10020) are likewise ephemeral, though fairly likely in early to mid spring following an average or better winter. Top off water bottles if fortunate here, as Riggs Lake is your next likely near-route water source.

Trail 313 soon switchbacks out of the drainage bottom - leaving it for good - and begins a sidehill ascent of the canyon's west slope. Although somewhat brushy with live oak, manzanita, and mountain mahogany, the tread along this portion tends to be good and the trail is fairly scenic. Occasional blowdowns pose just a minor nuisance as the trail gains elevation, eventually trending east through a shady side canyon, then up to a pleasant saddle, with camping potential (**3.4**, waypoint 10030, elev. 6803'). The trail leaves the saddle at the 10 o'clock position (southeast), where it runs near a fenceline for a time, with impressive first views away to the south and west that include upper Aravaipa Valley and the Galiuro Mountains. (*Westbounders, the trail descends from the saddle on its north side.*)

Now the trail sidehills around a steep portion of its namesake Johns Canyon Ridge, bending southeast and then south, and deftly negotiating around several crags, more of which are visible in Johns Canyon below. FR 286 can also be seen from this area, its torturous bends gouged from the ridge beyond Johns Canyon. The trail becomes increasingly faint due to lack of use and occasional obscuring deadfall, but remains followable with care. Top out on the forested crest of Johns Canyon Ridge at **4.4** (waypoint 10040, elev. 7143'), and follow it southeast, the trail playing hide-and-seek among corridors of brush. At **4.7**, watch closely for where the trail leaves the ridge crest on the left (the crest becomes impassably steep), again sidehilling, though awkwardly now. (GPS at MP4.7: 32 44.014 110 03.498) (*Westbounders, join a narrow portion of the ridge crest at this waypoint and follow the ridge south to 4.4, where the trail leaves the ridge again to sidehill once more on its right side, and gradually improving in character.*)

For the next half mile or so the trail is considerably harder - sometimes impossible - to follow, due to an old burn scar (albeit regenerating well) and attendant erosion of the tread, brushy regrowth, and the like. Watch for flagging and cairns, and follow this description carefully. After briefly contouring southeast on a sidehill slope from 4.7, the trail climbs south and quickly becomes lost among the oaks. However the tread resumes several yards in elevation higher along the slope to your right - look for flagging leading up there, or seek out an obvious copse of mature saplings with a little tunnel recently "lopped" through it. (*Westbounders, losing the trail beyond this copse, head directly downslope a few yards then turn left along your original bearing to soon relocate tread.*)

The trails contours south through the copse of saplings to begin a section of switchbacks that head generally up the broad "drainage" here. However some of the switchbacks have been lost to time and the elements. In any case, look for flagging, which first leads steeply uphill without the aid of switchbacks. Then, several switchbacks later, the trail turns sharply left by a low-branched Douglas fir. If you accidentally continue straight here, you'll reach some prominent outlooks to the south and west but will need to turn back as the side trail leading there abruptly dead-ends.) (*Westbounders turn right by the Douglas fir.*)

Again the trail becomes faint as it heads directly up the broad ridge, now in a more open area. Soon, though, at around **5.1** (waypoint 10045), we are finally relieved of trail-finding duties, as a 2013-maintained section of tread emerges - slowly at first, and then definitively - granting comparatively easy passage via defined switchbacks up the remainder of the steep slope before us. As the grade slackens, the trail meanders out toward a westward aspect offering far-flung views, then returns, contouring up to a prominent cairn on a ledge (GPS: 32 43.970 110 03.127). The trail turns right (south) just above the ledge cairn to pick up the sidehilling trail. More cairns soon greet you at another turn - this time left (west). Now a line of cairns marks the trail at intervals leading to a broad, park-like setting with scattered pines, some with i-blazes cut into the bark. Again the trail turns - here toward the right (south) - ascends a little rise, then contours with sporadic cairns toward a somewhat faint switchback that climbs left (west). Trail 313 soon reaches the edge of the old burn area, heading obviously back into mixed conifer forest cover at GPS: 32 43.906 110 02.907 (MP **5.8**). Good camping prospects are in the vicinity. (*Westbounders, from this waypoint follow faint tread west to a switchback, then look for cairned trail contouring north, soon over a little rise, then dipping to a park-like setting. Here note i-blazes on trees with cairned trail heading west, then turning south to reach a prominent cairn on a ledge, with*

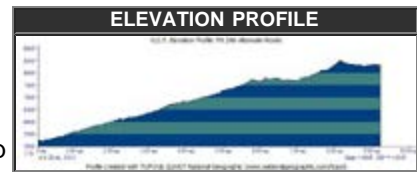
GPS waypoint listed in the previous paragraph above.)

Routefinding challenges - and most of the elevation gain - now behind you, follow Trail 313 as it wends its way west and south, first back into park-like terrain to a minor saddle with camping prospects - then on a brushy westward contour. A junction with Durkee Ridge Trail 323 at **5.9** may feature an old, fallen signboard. Another signboard, still standing at last check, marks the junction with equally-moribund Trail 312 farther ahead at waypoint 10060, with a reference to **Coulter Spring** (2500 vertical feet below according to maps, unvisited). Our trail - still Johns Canyon Ridge Tr 313 - turns left at the sign, climbing through another old burn area via several cairned switchbacks, and ending at a signed trailhead turnout along 4WD West Peak Road at **6.4** (waypoint 10070, elev. 8587'). (*Westbounders, turn left into the turnout for Trail 313 just before West Peak Road goes through the notch on the ridge.*) (A brief detour south on West Peak Rd (aka FR 286) leads to a gated side road accessing the summit of West Peak and its old firetower, which may be locked, but the views are good from ground level, as is the camping, albeit dry except when rain has been plentiful, when you may find harvested runoff water in a **metal storage can** along the back wall of the fire watch's cabin located 100 yds east of the firetower. **Lookout Spring**, located in the trackless headwaters of Johns Canyon, was unfindable in 2006.)

From the Trail 313 trailhead turnout, West Peak Road heads southeast, downhill, with the undulating backbone of the Pinaleno crest unfolding away toward still-distant, higher Mount Graham. The little-used but well-defined dirt road soon bends northeast, descending easily through open forest and meadow. It rounds the south-facing flanks of Blue Jay Peak, which are incised by several shallow drainage heads. Watch carefully just downslope from the road for **Government Spring**, a cement tank in an ancient corral, which is worth a look but rarely holds any usable water, and the surrounding drainage is typically damp at best. A bit more than a tenth of a mile beyond, at **7.4** (waypoint 10120, elev. 8325') an unpretentious signboard for Clark Peak Trail 301 on the right heralds our soon return to foot trail. (Main route description resumes below Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate Route info below. See the end of the Sawmill - Blue Jay Alt. description for more info about potential water options in this area.)

ALTERNATE ROUTE: SAWMILL - BLUE JAY

The 8.3-mile **Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate** begins at MP 0 (waypoint 09160, elev. 5260') of the main route in Segment 10 and follows a combination of Forest Route 286 and an old waterline trail in secluded Sawmill Canyon, trending uphill in the north-facing shadow of West Peak. An option exists to then remain on FR 286 all the way to the top of the 8700-foot peak and a resumption of the main GET just beyond, while the Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate itself leaves the road part-way up in order to rejoin foot trail again as soon as possible (Blue Jay Ridge Trail 314). **Use of the Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate Route adds about a mile to this segment's total length as stated at the head of this page, though without the routefinding concerns and dryness associated with the main route on Johns Canyon Trail which it bypasses.**



Begin by heading west on FR 675 and passing through a vehicle camping area in forested Tripp Canyon. In 0.1 mi, at a junction, (signed in 2010) (waypoint 10010, elev. 5200') FR 675 meets better FR 286, onto which we turn right. (Water is often available just east of this junction and left of the parking area; continue past a concrete slab then down into the **main drainage of Tripp Canyon**, a grassy stringer among sycamores. Waypoint 09155. If the drainage is polluted by cattle, seek out a small corral at the east end of the car camping area, where a **trough with float valve** sometimes holds good water. More water is potentially ahead, along the alternate route itself, at MP 0.5 and again at 2.4 and 2.8)

2WD FR 286 climbs out of Tripp Canyon toward the southeast. Just before it bends sharply right at 0.5, note the first of two side roads on the left (east). The first is typically a faint 2-track road and it dead-ends at a **pipe-fed water tank** in a hundred yards or so (waypoint 10072). The camo-painted metal tank is open on top and was filled to the brim with good water from way up Sawmill Canyon on first observation in Fall of 2014. Our alternate route follows the waterline for the next 2 miles, but to do so, first return to FR 286. Turn left on the main road here, then just ahead note another side road on the left (**0.5**, waypoint 10074). Take this 4WD track, which heads southeast. The track becomes increasingly primitive and eroded, by and by discouraging vehicle use, until crossing a side drainage of Sawmill Canyon, beyond which it is effectively a pack trail (and not eroded).

The trail continues to follow the waterline, both an old metal pipe - now defunct - and a newer, synthetic one of the standard rancher variety. Increasingly secluded, the sunny canyon bottom is initially the realm of live oaks and scattered pines, but gradually assumes the character of a more coniferous forest fittingly

named for a sawyer's trade (no evidence of an actual historic sawmill was noted), and affording good camping opportunities along the banks of the normally-dry drainage. Eventually the primitive but easygoing waterline trail commits to the opposite (eastern) side of the drainage, still ascending at a gradual pace, as it approaches our departure point at around **2.4** (waypoint 10076). This is where we'll ultimately climb out of the canyon bottom en route back to FR 286, which we'll accomplish by way of the "connector trail" indicated on the map. At waypoint 10076 note an open area along the banks across the drainage to the west with cut logs, as if from a blowdown removal operation. This is the vague terminus of the trail, which is more of a wide swath here. With this departure point in mind, now continue up the waterline trail another 100 yards or less in search of **Sawmill Spring**, an area of good trickling pools in the rocky drainage (waypoint 10078). (Maps show the spring farther north, down the canyon, but no water has been noted there.) You should hopefully find water where described and won't need to continue farther up the drainage around a cliffy obstruction (which the waterline climbs over), although water may also be present above this area (where the waterline actually terminates is unknown).

Back at the connector trail junction at 2.4 - which may feature a cairn - climb out of Sawmill Canyon via the wide swath on a steep switchback. This connector soon reveals itself to be a hodge-podge of actual trail and open drainage travel, with the trail serving to link a series of low-angle side drainages that lead uphill away from the bottom of Sawmill Canyon. The way forward should be mostly self-explanatory. The climb ends with another steep section of "swath" that opens into a sunny ponderosa flat. This is the Dry Lake Tank undeveloped camping area, seldom used by vehicles outside of hunting season. Follow a dirt road around the west side of **Dry Lake Tank** itself, a manmade pond that ironically holds water with some frequency (waypoint 10090). (The tank isn't reliable in times of drought, though. And in any event, better quality water is usually available at Sawmill Spring.) Beyond the tank, keep left as the "campground" road occasionally splits, to a rejoining with FR 286 at **2.9** (waypoint 10080). *(Westbounders, where FR 286 meets the Dry Lake Tank undeveloped camping area at 2.9, follow the "main" road (FR 286A) through the "campground" to Dry Lake Tank (waypoint 10090). Then walk southeast from the far end of the tank into the head of a minor drainage. A de-facto trail starts here and heads down the drainage, which soon steepens. Take the most obvious line of travel - a combination of trail, swath, and x-c in the drainage, finally bottoming out in the main drainage of Sawmill Canyon at 2.4 (waypoint 10076). Cross the drainage to find an impromptu waterline trail and adjacent black pipe. Now head up the canyon bottom to find Sawmill Spring within 100 yards, several pools and some possible flow in the rocky drainage. The Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate proceeds back down the waterline trail for 2 miles.)*

Follow FR 286 south as it climbs at a noticeable grade among lush mixed conifer forest. The dirt road becomes increasingly primitive, especially beyond milepoint **4.5**, where it's essentially 4WD-accessible only. Here, at a switchback in the road, (waypoint 10100) the main GET route turns left onto Blue Jay Ridge Trail 314. (A new trail sign was installed here in 2013, but the mileages and destinations shown were incorrect.) Blue Jay Ridge often holds snow into spring, but the route is very scenic and biologically diverse, and also the trail received a work crew in 2011, helping to improve - but not eliminate - its inherently primitive condition. (Otherwise, one could remain on FR 286, passing close by the summit of West Peak and its viewful summit firetower. At the height of land, FR 286 becomes West Peak Road and immediately passes the upper trailhead for Johns Canyon Trail 313, where resumes the main GET route eastbound via West Peak Rd.)

Joining the Blue Jay Ridge Trail, note the forest of spruce, hemlock, and douglas fir - exceptionally lush for the 7500' elevation, and more typical of the environment near Webb Peak ahead in this segment. The trail contours around the drainage of Sawmill Canyon, then turns northward onto a sunnier slope, where the vegetation quickly changes to ponderosa, gamble oak, mountain mahogany, and beargrass, and interesting views open toward the Santa Teresas.

Contour along the base of a rocky bluff to gain the crest of Blue Jay Ridge by a trail sign at **6.4** (not a junction). Turn sharply right (south) and continue on the trail, switchbacking briefly uphill, then dipping to a camp-friendly saddle among the pines (waypoint 10115). The views along this side of the ridge, down to the Gila Valley, are deep and impressive. The trail now ascends rather roughly with the aid of short switchbacks, descends to another saddle, then switchbacks uphill again, taking the only feasible line through this difficult terrain. Top out just shy of peak 8529, then descend moderately to reach the trailhead at the end of West Peak Road. (**7.8**, waypoint 10118). When snow is melting you might find a **little rill** in the shallow drainage just before trailhead.

Follow 4WD West Peak Road south, with expansive views of the Pinaleño crest ahead. About 100 yards after passing through an open gate, rejoin the main GET route and turn left off the road onto Clark Peak

Trail 301. (**8.3** of alternate route, waypoint 10120, elev. 8330') (*Westbounders, turn right here to follow the Sawmill - Blue Jay Alternate Route, or left to follow West Peak Rd on the main GET route.*) This is milepoint 7.4 along the main GET route. **Government Spring**, a cement tank in an ancient corral, visible just downhill off West Peak Road to the west, rarely holds any usable water, and the surrounding drainage is typically damp at best.

Back on the main GET route, (7.4, waypoint 10120, elev. 8325') Clark Peak Trail 301 begins on an old road bed closed to vehicles, but soon becomes a more definitively singletrack trail. (This trail received a work crew in 2010 as far as Taylor Pass, as well as the last 2 miles to the eastern trailhead along FR 803.) Improved with occasional cairns, the trail descends a southeastern ridge of Blue Jay Peak among pinyon pine, live oak, and manzanita toward Taylor Pass, with frequent short switchbacks easing the gradient. Hikers in desperate need of water might consider bushwhacking over to **Manzanita Spring** (map-derived waypoint 10130), an unverified source; otherwise, your best bet would probably be to avoid the extra effort and press on with a purpose toward Riggs Lake (or Sawmill Canyon, for westbounders).

A barbed wire fence follows the ridgeline at Taylor Pass (**9.2**, elev. 7150', waypoint 10140). Eastbounders here turn left to pass through a gate in this fence, rather than continue more obviously straight on Trail 306. Once through the gate, continue eastbound on Trail 301 up along the ridge. (*Westbounders would likewise turn left through the gate, then right to remain on Trail 301.*) Trail work was incomplete between Taylor Pass and about milepoint 10.5, so the trail was rougher here, and especially so beyond another saddle at **9.7**, also with potential camping prospects. Continue climbing via switchbacks, now entering a portion of the Taylor Fire burn area. The unmaintained switchbacks may be eroded and rather indistinct, though the route should be more or less obvious due to user traffic and/or flagging tape. After the first set of switchbacks the trail rounds the east side of the ridge then climbs via more switchbacks through some thorny vegetation and gamble oak. Some impromptu whacks and cuts at the vegetation had helped to define the trail corridor here. The trail reaches the edge of a meadowy area near **10.5**. The next half mile continues through an older, more extensive burn, now mostly recovered by grasses and ferns, where occasional large cairns help guide the way.

Better trail resumes about half way through the meadow area. Heading back into living forest beyond a height-of-land, Trail 301 contours along a west-facing slope, which tightens into a narrow ridgeline defined by the rocky prominence of Clark Peak. The Carter-Nuttall Trail, which heads downhill to the north at **11.4** (elev. 8600'), might (or might not, depending on trail conditions) offer a bomb-off option for springtime hikers confronting snowpack around Clark Peak, where the trail is forced to weave back and forth on either side of the crest. (Another unconfirmed bomb-off is back at Taylor Pass, where the North Taylor Trail 306 heads downhill to the north.) Often, however, the spring snowpack ahead can be negotiated, for example where the trail crosses the ridge to its east side, by leaving the bench-cut trail to climb directly up the slope among the comparative safety of the trees. The trail can then be regained where it intersects the main ridge once again, crossing back to its sunnier west side.

Reach the trailhead terminus for Clark Peak Trail 301 at **12.6**. This is also the terminus of FR 803, more popularly known as the Swift Trail. Constructed by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, this portion of the scenic road (graded dirt) is accessible to passenger vehicles when open, typically mid April to mid November. Traffic is generally very light. The rest of the year the road is gated and often snowbound. The suggested route of the GET actually joins up to follow the Swift Trail in about a mile; instead it follows a more primitive road from the trailhead area: signed FR 730, which heads south, forming a semi-loop with the Swift Trail. FR 730 passes near an expansive westward outlook over the Sulphur Springs Valley, then heads more easterly where we encounter an equally expansive copse of quaking aspens, among the finest such stands on the mountain range. Meadowy campsites are found near an unsigned junction with another 4WD road heading south. The GET continues east on FR 730, which then bends left, north at another junction. During snowmelt season in spring you may find water in the **adjacent drainage**. FR 730 ascends gradually with the drainage (side roads head to vehicle camping spots), topping out at its terminus with the Swift Trail once more, at **13.6**.

The GET now joins the Swift Trail's graded dirt track, proceeding southeast, and occasionally by dispersed camping areas along the road, to reach a signed junction with FR 287 at **14.0** down to **Riggs Lake**. The first reliable water in this segment, the manmade lake is located in a very attractive forested setting, and even sports a small sand beach. At the very least, pause to fill water bottles here as needed, then continue along the Swift Trail. (The lake's inlet, along its eastern shore, a small, pristine creek that drains from a densely forested area, may also be reliable.)

The road arrives at the pleasant meadow of historic Chesley Flat at **16.1** (waypoint 10220, elev. 9260'), named for a pioneer-era family who lived and worked on the mountain. Here the unsigned Chesley Flat Trail 311 leaves the road at left (east-northeast), the main route of the GET, bound for 10,000-foot Webb Peak and its scenic lookout tower. (*However, in springtime of heavy snow years, hikers may prefer to remain on the Swift Trail, which keeps generally below 9500', rejoining the main route below the Ash Creek trailhead at Columbine Corrals. Distances are comparable*

along either route.)

TRAVEL ALERT: Due to flooding in Ash Creek as well as burn damage in its headwaters around Webb Peak, hikers should leave the main route of the GET either at 16.1 or at 17.3, then follow the Ash Creek Bypass Route as shown on the most recent (version 3.3) GET Topo Mapset. Read ahead to the end of this chapter for an overview of the alternate route.

Indistinct at first, Trail 311 skirts the southern edge of the meadow, ducking into the woods within 50 yards or so, then reaches a signed junction with Blair Trail 304. Keep right here, remaining on Chesley Flat Trail 311, which begins a switchbacking climb through a dense forest of spruce, fir, and aspen. This section of the trail saw maintenance in 2010; previously Trail 311 had served as a successful fire-break during the large Nuttall Complex Fire of 2004, helping to spare the forested west side of the range a similar fate as the east, but the trail was tree-littered and hard to follow as a result. As the grade slackens, the trail heads along the height of the broad ridge in an open area just out of the forest, the burned terrain to the north offering up distant views. Chesley Flat Trail 311 ends at a signed junction with FR 88 at **17.3**.

Follow FR 88 (closed to vehicles) to the summit of Webb Peak (milepoint **17.5**), at 10,030 feet the highest point on the GET in Arizona. Views from the top of the fire tower are all-encompassing: to the south rises Mt Graham with its summit telescope housing plainly visible; on the western horizon, the rugged profile of the Galiuro Mountains frames more distant Rincon Peak, the Santa Catalina and Santa Rita Mountains; northward stand the Santa Teresas and Pinal Mountains; eastward, the folds of desert ranges along our route extend to the edge of Gila Country, while the town of Safford lies some 7000+ vertical feet below, alongside the Gila River on its long and adventurous (and sometimes subterranean!) journey from New Mexico to California.

Find Webb Peak Trail 345 by a trail sign behind the lookout cabin. The trail descends eastward, soon reaching a junction where the trail splits (forming something of a loop trail from Ash Creek trailhead). The left (northward) option, the main GET route, is somewhat nicer for its varied forest and how it keeps to the backcountry. *(However, this portion of the loop probably holds onto snowpack later in the season, so the other fork, trending southeast toward Ash Creek trailhead, may be the better choice in heavy snow years. It reaches the trailhead in about a mile, from which Ash Creek Trail starts north. In addition to the hiker/equestrian trailhead, this area serves as a developed campground (fee), with tables, fire grates, and vault toilets.)* The main GET-fork of Webb Peak Trail trends north downhill through several switchbacks, briefly in burned terrain here, then crosses the first of several pleasant rills, likely flowing in springtime and following monsoon rains. It now heads more directly down a forested ridge, then eases into an eastbound-trending contour. This trail apparently saw a blowdown crew in 2010, as evidenced especially by the big log cuts on the final descent toward the southeast, where it joins up with Ash Creek Trail 307 (**19.4**, waypoint 10280, elev. 9120').

Traveling from the pines and aspens all the way to the desert below, Ash Creek Trail descends 4800 net vertical feet in nearly 7-8 miles, a prolonged and noteworthy grade, certainly, but also a remarkable one thanks to nature's handiwork on display in Ash Creek Canyon. Ahead lie waterfalls, towering pinnacles, and much of the mountain ambience that one associates so fondly with the American West. But be forewarned: due to the shady northeastern exposure here, residual snowpack may persist in springtime all the way down to the 8000 foot elevation; plan on a pace of no better than one or perhaps 1.5 miles per hour when snow is a problem. (A detour via AZ 366, with a possible hitchhike into Safford about 35 miles away by road, may be worth considering when the trail here is deeply snowpacked. AZ 366/Swift Trail is generally open to vehicle travel all year along its paved portion, which begins about 7 undulating miles beyond the turnoff to Columbine Corrals.) Trail work on Ash Creek Trail in 2009 and 2010 provided a smooth, well-defined tread with very few obstacles, for as long as it lasts.

Trail 307 immediately crosses perennial **Ash Creek** at **19.4** (*westbounders join signed Webb Peak Trail 345 at the junction to follow the main GET route up to Webb Peak*). An old relict here must be a boiler for a steam engine commonly used by early logging operations. Ash Creek tends to be lively and cold during the snowmelt season, though is usually manageable with care. Continue downhill on Trail 307, gently contouring and notably wide ahead as it follows a former logging route. Cross a tributary of Ash Creek at **19.4**, where a side trail points up the drainage to the Southern Arizona Bible Camp surrounded by national forest land (the trail is virtually non-existent after a few yards). Ahead, Trail 307 fords **Ash Creek** again, here at the site of the former Mount Graham sawmill, now a pleasant sunny meadow with fine camping prospects.

At **20.6** (waypoint 10300), the recommended GET route turns left, climbing out of the drainage on the Ash Creek "bypass trail," while the old Ash Creek Trail itself continues down the drainage toward Ash Creek Falls and "Slick Rock," a sloping creekside monolith which the trail has been engineered to cross. However, this drainage-hugging section of trail in recent years has been damaged by floods and is potentially unsafe during times of higher water. (In 2009 the so-called bypass trail had been resigned as the main Ash Creek Trail, and the old drainage route abandoned - at least officially so; in reality, it's still a popular route for "locals" on a warm summer day.)

The "bypass trail" ascends the sunny southeast-facing wall of the canyon, offering a potential reprieve from any snowpack. The gradual, traversing climb gives way to a switchbacking descent, presenting good views of the canyon below and Pinaleño crest above. Return to the main Ash Creek Trail by a brown sign with an arrow on it at **21.3** (waypoint 10310). Turn left here at the switchback (or right, to check out the lower end of the Slick Rock feature, with its pretty cascade). (*Westbounders, to proceed on the recommended GET route, turn right, heading uphill at the switchback.*)

Now Trail 307 traverses north, perhaps again with snow patches in spring. Look and listen for 200-foot-high Ash Creek Falls in the drainage far below; you can edge your way down a short use-trail to an outcrop overlooking the falls, but for safety's sake consider dropping your pack first. Views ahead to the lower peaks and ridges of the range present a striking scene, with the massive granite exposures of The Pinnacles especially impressive. Shingle Mill Mesa Trail heads left at **21.7** (waypoint 10320, elev.7640'), the T-junction marked by a dilapidated wooden signpost. (*Westbounders, turn left here, remaining on Trail 307.*) A long series of short switchbacks doesn't quite relieve the steep descent back down to **Ash Creek** on our Trail 307. Reach the drainage at **22.1** near a possible campsite (elev. 7049').

The trail was formerly flood-damaged and quite rough as it headed down the drainage from here, but was in good shape following aforementioned trail maintenance. Nevertheless, the footing tends to be rocky, with frequent fords of Ash Creek, and with little climbs and descents in between. Pass the first good camp at Oak Flat - on the left (west) side of the creek - at **23.2** (waypoint 10340). This is one of the few feasible spots to camp until reaching Ash Creek Road at segment's end. It's also a good spot to watch for raccoon-like coatimundi, which sometimes forage in large packs along the open forest floor. A **seasonal spring** sometimes floods the trail just ahead, slightly more accessible than Ash Creek itself. Finally the trail leaves the drainage for a spell, descending along viewful switchbacks. Near the steeply-graded bottom of the pitch, up-close views of a spirited cascade delight the senses, before the trail returns once more to the drainage (**24.2**, elev. 5646').

For its elevation, the creekside forest of Douglas fir and ponderosa pine remains surprisingly lush as you persevere in the drainage for just a little longer. With a final crossing of **Ash Creek** at **24.9** (waypoint 10360) the trail promptly climbs out into the surrounding high desert, contouring east along open slopes. A northward tack on good tread soon reveals the full grandeur of Ash Creek Canyon and of the Pinaleños' eastern face in total - a great, towering upheaval of granite and gneiss.

Trail 307 at last descends a low, blocky ridge to reach 4WD Ash Creek Road by a cairn and metal post at **25.9** (waypoint 10370, elev. 4672').

ALTERNATE ROUTE: ASH CREEK BYPASS ROUTE

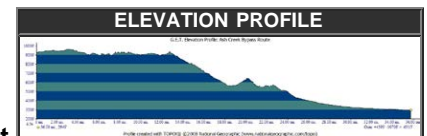
TRAVEL ALERT

The 2017 **Frye Fire** and subsequent flooding in the Pinaleño Mountains has left the GET severely damaged in and along Ash Creek (from approximately mile 17.5 to the end of this segment). Trail conditions are verified hazardous, with some *class 4 climbing* necessary due to the tremendous degree of erosion. The GET will probably be permanently relocated away from Ash Creek, but a finalized reroute has yet to be determined.

In the meantime, please use this temporary bypass route in order to complete Segment 10. This bypass is 36 miles in length, starting at GET Segment 10 mile 16.1 and ending at Segment 11 mile 9.7. The bypass route is thus 16 miles longer than the portion of the main GET (original route) it replaces. Hikers should plan their food carry accordingly and be prepared to hike a somewhat unvetted route (which nonetheless should be much safer and easier than the main / old route at this time). The bypass route does encounter patchy burn conditions from the Frye Fire along the way, but likely nothing particularly problematic. There is also an "all roadwalking" option available via the Swift Trail (AZ Rte 366) that should be very straightforward.

In abstract, from Chesley Flat the Ash Creek Bypass Route follows the Swift Trail (aka graded dirt FR 803 / AZ 366) for 5 additional miles, with likely water at **Peters Flat**, **Post Creek** (the drainage below Hawk Peak Spring) and **Moonshine Creek**. It then optionally joins a network of old logging roads that widely parallel the Swift Trail on its east side, mainly for the sake of more primitive tread, although the current condition of these roads is unknown. The headwaters of **Grant Creek** may offer water here. The route then rejoins the Swift Trail for an additional 2 miles, or you might be able to use the Grant Hill trail network and other jeep roads and/or cross-country travel to again roughly parallel the Swift Trail for a more aesthetic experience (albeit the Swift Trail is a pretty nice walk itself). Water would normally continue to be available at regular intervals throughout this area.

Joining Arcadia Trail (a National Recreation Trail), the alternate route enters the old Nuttal Fire burn zone from 2004.



Some of this terrain likely burned again in the Frye Fire, and although trail conditions were reportedly good just prior to the Frye Fire, it's possible that this has changed or could change in the future. So, if you happen to find the way ahead problematic, you could opt to remain on the Swift Trail, intercepting the bypass route again farther ahead (a couple of caveats being that the Swift Trail is paved ahead and is normally open year-round to vehicle traffic, whereas the graded dirt portions are gated to vehicles between November 15 and April 15 annually).

The most primitive portion of this trailed section of the bypass is likely to be along upper Noon Creek Ridge Trail, if not directly due to fire then simply because it receives less use and maintenance. If this trail is an issue, then continue on Arcadia Trail down to Arcadia Campground and join the Swift Trail there, taking it for as long as you deem necessary. Both **Wet Canyon** and **Noon Creek** often have water. By the time the route joins Round-the-Mountain Trail, elevations are sufficiently low that forest (burned and unburned) has given way to a much more open transitional environment. This part of the mountain burned in the Frye Fire as well, but the negative impacts should be lower overall. Find water in **Marijilda Creek** and **Gibson Creek**, and then near the bottom of Gibson Canyon Trail where, some 13 miles after joining trail at upper Arcadia, the bypass trades trail tread for mostly dirt roads the remaining 10 miles to the outskirts of Safford and a resumption of the main route in Segment 11. Views up to Mount Graham are all-encompassing here along the edge of the Gila Valley, but plan to tank up on water before leaving Marijilda environs as the low desert front country tends to be dry with very limited exception.

Eastbound, rejoin the main route of the GET in Segment 11, mile 9.7 (skip ahead to this part of Guidebook Chapter 11 to continue reading). And please refer to the most recent version of the GET Topo Mapset (3.3) maps 31-34 for further details on the Ash Creek Bypass Route.