



## G.E.T. Guidebook

### Segment 21: West Fork Gila River 17.2 miles

Segment Length	Segment Status	Season
17.2 mi.	finalized & accessible	spring, summer, fall
<b>Resources</b>		
 <p><b>OVERVIEW MAP</b></p>	 <p><b>ELEVATION PROFILE</b></p>	<p><b>Additional maps:</b></p> <p>Gila National Forest (USFS)          Gila Wilderness (USFS)</p> <p><b>Land management agencies:</b></p> <p>Gila NF Wilderness Ranger District</p>
<p>► <a href="#">G.E.T. Topo Maps 57-60</a></p> <p>► <a href="#">Water Chart</a></p> <p>► <a href="#">Image Gallery: Album 6</a></p>		

#### Beginning access point

**Trail 151 at White Creek Administrative Site.** This segment begins within the Gila Wilderness, at a remote location accessible only on foot or horseback. For the nearest vehicle access to the east, see the Ending Access Point for this segment, at right.

#### Ending access point

**NM 15 at Gila Cliff Dwellings contact station.** From Silver City NM, follow NM 15 north (narrow and winding, with some steep grades\*) 43 miles to t-junction and turn left, remaining on NM 15. Parking is available at TJ Corral trailhead on the right in 0.8 mi. (access to Seg 21 Highwater Bypass trail network). Otherwise continue additional 0.8 mi to Gila Cliff Dwellings contact station and parking for West Fork. \*Those wishing to avoid mountainous portions of NM 15 can instead use NM 35: turn north onto Highway 152 from Highway 180 at Santa Clara, NM. Follow 152 to the junction with 35 and follow 35 to the junction w/15.

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS CHAPTER REMAINS UNFINISHED. SEGMENT OVERVIEW AND ROUTE DETAILS INFO BELOW ARE IN DRAFT FORM AND HIGHLIGHT ONLY THE ESSENTIALS NEEDED FOR NAVIGATING THIS SEGMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE TOPO MAP SET.**

#### SEGMENT OVERVIEW

Main route follows sheer, serpentine, pinnacled canyon of W Fork Gila River for 15+ miles, with option to visit Gila Cliff Dwellings beyond or follow singletrack trail above river to TJ Corral trailhead. 60+ fords of river en route, knee-thigh deep in wet spring, or ankle-shin deep in fall or dry spring. Current not usu. major concern, but some of the earlier fords (eastbound) can be a bit slippery underfoot. Water can be quite cold during snowmelt or in late fall. Navigation straightforward; trail fords, then heads back into bordering riparian woods, sometimes vague or washed out following floods.

Highwater Bypass route avoids all but one ford of W Fork Gila River at White Creek Admin Site, not usually problematic. Route is leisurely on mesas, in open pine forest with limited views, but quite dry with only occasional water in area tanks/ponds some distance off trail. Feeder trails off Bypass route connect with main route; one heads up from Hell Hole area, intended for eastbounders who've lost interest in fording (only 6 more fords en route vs the one required ford when following Highwater Bypass in full, so a good option whenever the river is somewhat high / swift but not dangerously so), or westbounders in need of water at river. Other feeder uses CDTs route, mainly for westbounders, or eastbounders planning to visit the Cliff Dwellings; involves several river fords for westbounders before joining.

#### ROUTE DETAILS

To follow Highwater Bypass involves one ford of **W Fork Gila River** from White Creek Admin Site (Bypass begins at end of Seg 20).

Main GET follows Tr 151 south from White Creek Admin Site passes meadowy camp sites, then fords river to meet junction. Bear left at sign (right is former route along river in this area, now abandoned). After well-graded climb to a bench, gradual descent back to river at **1.8**. Now begins routine fording at intervals, however still intermittent all the way to the Hell Hole area, with predominantly forested walking on benches either side of creek. (*Westbounders ignore side trail marked "Dead End" on your left just before 1.9.*) Bear right at signed jct at **3.7**, or left to join Bypass route. Good camp just before **4.3**. (*Westbounders bear left, remaining on Tr 151.*) Camping and water never far away continuing eastbound, with frequent fords in this most dramatic section of the canyon (50 or so fords between MP 4.3 and 15.1). The mapset highlights some of the better camping locations, all of which are dry, level, and amply forested, albeit many of them aren't established camps per se but simply favorable areas.

Cliff dwelling (waypoint 21090) on eastbounder's right, south side of canyon, heavily weathered, not part of GCD National Monument proper. Might be approachable with care via rough use trail.

CDTS route (northbound) at **15.1**, (after several fords for westbounders); connects with Highwater Bypass following prolonged, fairly shadeless ascent out of canyon. Occasional camps between here and 16.6 on main route; trail (and river!) in this area occasionally relocated in places due to flooding.

At **16.6**, Trail 792 continues in canyon bottom to trailhead at segment's end (**17.2**, waypoint 21130) (previously without fords en route but at last check requiring two due to flood plain changes) and access to Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument. Developed water and toilet at GCD contact station. Dwellings accessible via short paved loop trail during Nat Mon daily operating hours only (generally until 4:30 or 5pm). First time visitors should plan not to miss this side trip. Otherwise, since the start of Segment 22 beyond requires a stretch of paved roadwalking, another option from 16.6 is to continue via Trail 151, contouring along scenic grassy hillsides and side canyons above the W Fork drainage to TJ Corral trailhead, here rejoining the main route at MP 0.8 of Segment 22.

