

December 30, 2010 - January 2, 2011

The Superstition Mountains are about 100 miles to the north of Tucson, but are seemingly about 100 years in the past. Just the name is enough to awaken ancient fears. There is little to fear, however, in spending a long, lovely winter's weekend in the heart of this range. Please join me for this four-day, three-night trip to the Supes.

The Plan

We'll drive 140 miles to the Superstitions and the Canyon Lake Trailhead on Friday morning, December 24th. Leaving our vehicles in the parking lot, we'll begin the hike on the Boulder Canyon Trail (103), connecting to the Cavalry Trail (239) into Marsh Valley. We'll make our first camp in Marsh Valley just before we get to the more heavily-traveled Dutchman Trail. There should be water available at nearby White Rock Spring. (8.8 mi / 1500')



On Saturday, we'll fill our water containers before we leave camp, then pack up and head south on the Dutchman Trail (104). We'll loop around the south side of Black Top Mesa and Palomino Mountain. There, we'll pick up the Peralta Trail (102) and continue our trek south. We'll find a suitable campsite along that trail and make it relaxing six or seven mile day. We'll have to pick up water as and where we can, because there may not be a reliable source until we get to Willow Spring the next morning. (6.4 mi / 1050')

On Sunday, we'll once again pack up and continue south for a bit until we reach Fremont Saddle and the Robber's Roost (Dacite Mesa) Trail. There, we'll turn west for about a mile-and-a-half until we reach the West Boulder Canyon Trail. We'll turn back

north for several miles, stopping at Willow Spring to fill up our water containers. We'll keep going, however, as we rejoin the Dutchman Trail (104) for a bit, and turn north onto the southern section of the Boulder Canyon Trail (103). We'll continue for perhaps another mile until we get to a more suitable campsite in West Boulder Canyon. (7.5 mi / 800')

On Monday morning, we'll pack up our camp one last time and continue our trek north on the Boulder Canyon Trail (103) to the Canyon Lake Trailhead. (7.5 / 1050')

This trip is planned for a limited number of only six people, due to the small campsites available in the Superstitions. The Tonto National Forest charges fees, and I will find out what those fees are closer to the end of the year.

You'll need food for three dinners, three breakfasts, and four lunches.

Water and Weather

Water is always "iffy" in the Superstitions, depending on the monsoon season and the early winter rains. There *should* be water available at White Rock Spring on our first night in the wilderness, and again at Willow Spring in West Boulder Canyon on our third day. Any other water sources are seasonal and chancy. Be prepared to carry extra water on each of the four days we'll be out there.

The weather may also be "iffy." The 2009/10 rains were extraordinary in that they kept coming. They were also a bit later than usual. But this is December in Arizona. Generally, you can count on high temperatures in the 60s and lows in the upper 30s. Be prepared. Our campsites range from a low elevation of about 2,300' to Fremont Saddle at 3,800 feet. It may be a bit cooler than Tucson by as much as 5 degrees. You will need a colder weather sleeping bag.

The Hike

day	miles	elev gain	destination
Friday	0.0 / 0.0	0 ft / 0 ft	Canyon Lake Trailhead
Friday	5.6 / 5.6	1000 ft / 1000 ft	Cavalry Trail Jct
Friday	3.2 / 8.8	500 ft / 1500 ft	Dutchman Trail Jct / White Rock Spring
Saturday	2.4 / 11.2	400 ft / 1900 ft	Peralta Trail Jct
Saturday	4.0 / 15.2	650 ft / 2550 ft	Fremont Saddle / Robber's Roost Trail Jct
Sunday	1.6 / 16.8	700 ft / 3250 ft	West Boulder Canyon Trail Jct
Sunday	2.5 / 19.3	-400 ft / 3250 ft	Willow Springs
Sunday	2.5 / 21.8	-250 ft / 3250 ft	Dutchman Trail Jct
Sunday	0.7 / 22.5	100 ft / 3350 ft	Boulder Canyon Trail Jct
Monday	1.9 / 24.4	250 ft / 3500 ft	Cavalry Trail Jct
Monday	5.6 / 30.0	800 ft / 4300 ft	Canyon Lake Trailhead