

SPREE HIKING TIPS – 2016

These tips are intended to help you understand the various Spree documents, including the maps, and for you to get the most out of your hikes. If you like these Tips, print out a copy so you can easily refer to them whenever the need arises. Let us know if you find errors or misleading information on these two pages. Many of these tips are not just specific to the Spree but of general use for any hiking you do.

So we can keep track of hiking numbers, each time you take a Spree hike, please send a brief e-mail to the Highlands Center (HikeSpree@HighlandsCenter.org). In the Subject line, copy the title from the map (e.g., 1. Embry Riddle). Give your name, the number of people you usually hike with, a brief comment on what you liked/disliked about the hike and how many Spree hikes you've done so far this year. This information is for internal use only. If you are not a member of the Highlands Center, please consider joining us or sending a donation. Thank you.

ABBREVIATIONS: The following abbreviations are used in various Spree documents, including the maps.

- **MP = Mile Post:** those small green signs along various highways. Where a MP is given as 222.4 it means 0.4 miles past MP 222 (or 0.6 miles past MP 223 if you are traveling in the other direction).
- **TH = Trail Head:** the start of a trail, usually with parking there or close by.
- **FR = Forest Road:** for example, "FR 52A" is forest road 52A, which is also the Spruce Mountain Road.
- **YC = Yavapai County:** for example, "YC 5" is county road 5, which is also Williamson Valley Road.
- **HCNH = Highlands Center for Natural History** 1375 S. Walker Road, Prescott AZ 86303 (928 776-9550)
- **PNF = Prescott National Forest** 344 S. Cortez Street, Prescott AZ 86303 (928 443-8000)
- **GPS = Global Positioning System:** GPS grids are shown on the maps. If you are an expert, all you need to know is that the datum is UTM NAD 83. If you are a relative novice or don't even own a GPS unit, read the two GPS document on the Highlands Center website and find out how a GPS can help you on your own hikes as well as on the Spree hikes.

PARKING & PARKING FEES: On the maps, the pink "P" parking symbol shows where to park. Because of the facilities provided, some THs in the Prescott National Forest require a Day Pass of \$5 to be paid when you park. In 2016, no Spree trail heads in the PNF have a fee. In 2016, none of the Spree trailheads in the City of Prescott require a fee either.

HIKING HINTS: The most important item of hiking equipment is your footwear. If you plan to hike regularly, visit one of the many hiking/outdoor shops in the area and talk to one of their experts about what would be best for you. Be aware that good hiking shoes or boots will probably cost you over \$100 – this will be a good investment in your comfort! Other items to take on a hike include headwear to shield you from the hot sun or even the occasional rain (a wide-brimmed hat is good), a waterproof cape or equivalent (lightweight plastic works well), **plenty of water** and sunscreen. To carry all this good stuff, a small back pack or fanny pack is needed. Some people also like one or two hiking sticks or a pair of hiking poles to steady their progress, especially on loose rock or steep descents.

It is best to hike with one or more companions so you can help each other in case of a problem. If you hike alone, always tell a friend or family member where you are going and when you plan to be back. This could be a life saver if you encounter a serious situation. Take a whistle with you – it weighs very little but is a better way to attract help than yelling your head off! A cell phone is another way to call for help, but it won't always work if you are in a canyon or a long distance from a cell tower. A GPS and map can tell you exactly where you are, and where you have come from.

Some trails are marked with cairns (hand-built piles of rocks). They can be useful in helping you find your way. Do NOT make new cairns unless you are 110% sure you are on the trail! Sometimes a dead branch or cut brush across a path at a junction indicates that path is not the right path. In general, if you are not sure which way to go at a junction, continuing in the same direction as before is often the best choice. None of these suggestions are guarantees! If you do get lost, go back the same way as you came in, all the way to where you started, unless you can spot for sure where the trail you want goes forward.

The Forest Service often uses prescribed burns in the fall to reduce wildfire danger, and to burn up piles of dead wood and brush from previous clearance operations. Call 928 443-8000 for information on possible closures.

DIFFICULTY: The difficulty in hiking a Spree trail (not in finding the route) has been categorized as Easy, Moderate or Strenuous. There are more descriptions about each Spree trail on the maps, under Trail Head Directions or on the map itself – read this information before deciding on a hike so you know what to expect.

The three Difficulty categories are subjective, based roughly on the following factors:

- Easy trails are usually under 3 miles in length and fairly flat, with less than 250 feet difference in elevation between the highest and lowest points on the trail.
- Moderate trails are usually 2 to 5 miles in length and may have up to 500 feet difference in elevation between the highest and lowest points on the trail, often with a few steep sections.
- Strenuous trails are usually over 4 miles in length and may have 1000 feet or more difference in elevation between the highest and lowest points on the trail, usually with many steep sections.

Where a trail overlaps two descriptions, it will be categorized as “easy to moderate” for example.

TYPES OF TRAILS: For the Spree, trails are either Loop Trails or Out & Back. For Out & Back Trails, a turn-around point has been defined on the map. If you want a longer hike, feel free to continue farther (see information on the maps for suggestions giving longer options). If you are tired, turn around earlier (some maps indicate shorter or easier hikes). Most Spree routes are on “non-motorized” trails, which means the trail is not open to ATVs or dirt bikes. Short segments of some Spree routes are on motorized trails or forest roads, so be prepared to encounter motorized vehicles on these segments even though motorized traffic is usually quite low. The maps (or its Trail Head Directions) indicate where a trail segment is on a motorized trail or a forest road.

DISTANCES: The length in miles of each Spree trail, or part of a trail, is given in the Spree documents and maps. Note that 0.1 miles is 176 yards or a little over 500 feet. When you are hiking, it is difficult to judge how far you have walked, so try the following tip. Most people average about 2 miles per hour for a normal hike, not including long rest stops, though some of you may hike more quickly at 2.5 mph or more. On the flat, most people walk a little faster. If it's a steep climb, or if you stop frequently for photos or to catch your breath, you may be a little slower. Based on the 2 mph speed, this translates into 3 minutes for 0.1 miles, 15 minutes for 0.5 miles and 30 minutes for 1 mile. So, if you note the time when you start from the TH or a trail junction, you can estimate where you should turn around on an Out & Back trail, or when you should reach the next junction or point of interest. (A GPS device can help you locate a turn-around point or a junction, and measure distances accurately.) Try timing yourself on a forest trail where you know the mileage so you can judge your average hiking speed (don't do this on a sidewalk near where you live or you will probably get incorrect values – walking on a smooth sidewalk is very different from walking on a dirt trail).

TRAIL SIGNAGE: The start of each Spree trail is not marked with any Spree markers.

- For National Forest trails, trail heads will usually have a standard brown sign (carsonite post) near the start, giving the trail number and the allowed usage. These carsonite posts may also be found at most trail junctions, but sometimes there will be wooden signs instead (or as well).
- For City of Prescott trails, the signs at most trail heads and trail junctions are laminated maps with an aluminum backing, mounted on metal posts. A dot on the map shows your current location.
- Where trails are indistinct, look for cairns that mark the route – hand-built piles of rocks.
- For “Out & Back” trails, use the instructions on the map to recognize the turn-around point.

MAPS: The Highlands Center website has a colored map for each Spree trail to help you find your way on the hikes (go to www.HighlandsCenter.org then click on Programs then Community Programs then Hiking Spree). These maps also give directions for driving to the trail head, the mileage from the center of Prescott, and how much of this driving is on dirt roads (may be impassable after heavy rain). By ‘reading’ ALL of the information on a map BEFORE you go on a hike, you will know what to expect, what to look for while you are hiking and what other resources may be useful.

- The maps include contours and many other items in color, so are best if printed in color.
 - Contours are 100 foot apart in higher mountainous terrain, 20 foot apart elsewhere.
- The maps can be printed on standard 8” x11” paper on your home printer. Color makes them easier to use.
- The maps are available at the Highlands Center (a set of colored maps, plus other useful text pages, costs \$10) and are also available for free at various locations as indicated in the brochure (e.g., PNF office, Hike Shack) but will probably be in black and white.

If you find a significant error on a map, please send an e-mail to nigelzz@commspeed.net and we will try to correct the online map ASAP.

ACCURACY: A few trails may not have been GPSed to provide a highly accurate path for the map, and the length of some trail segments has not been checked with a measuring wheel, so be prepared to deal with minor inaccuracies!

HAPPY HIKING!!!