

SPREE HIKING TIPS – 2018

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.

Each time you take a Spree hike, mark up the appropriate part of the Spree Brochure with you initials and the date. Hand in this part of the Brochure at the end of the Spree. 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 on a map (under TH Directions) as 222.4 it means 0.4 miles past MP 222 (or 0.6 miles past MP 223 if you're traveling the other dir'n).
- **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.
- **HCHN = 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're an expert, all you need to know is that the datum is UTM NAD 83. If you're a relative novice or don't own a GPS unit, read the two GPS docs on the Highlands Center website and find out how a GPS can help you on your own hikes as well as on Spree hikes.

PARKING, PARKING FEES, PARKING PERMITS: 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 (e.g., hike #1 Clark Spring). The PNF no longer allows free parking for Spree hikers.

- Hike on a Wednesday -- there is no fee on this day (no fee for the City of Prescott either).
- If you've purchased one of the following cards: Annual or Four Month Prescott National Forest Pass, Interagency Annual Pass (e.g., America the Beautiful, Golden Eagle, Golden Access), Interagency Senior Pass (e.g., Golden Age Passport for over 62) or Access Pass (e.g., Golden Access Passport for disabled), put the card on your dashboard. For more details stop at a forest office or go to www.fs.usda.gov/main/prescott/passes-permits

The City of Prescott requires a \$3 fee when you park at some trail heads (e.g., hike #3 Willow Lake).

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 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. However, 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.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: The Trail Head Directions on the maps give driving distances to the TH (including any dirt roads that may be involved). These distances are measured from downtown Prescott (the Courthouse Square/Plaza). Where a tilde symbol (~) is used, this means "approximately." Also see explanation above under ABBREVIATIONS (MP). These Mile Posts can help you regarding where to turn or when you have reached your destination.

DIFFICULTY: The difficulty in hiking a Spree trail (not in finding the route) has been categorized as Easy or Moderate or Strenuous. Before deciding to take a particular hike, look at the map and read the description under the Trail Head Directions so you know what to expect. Also look at the contours and assess the elevation change, or the steepness of the trail. Difficulty ratings are given on the Brochure too.

These 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, often with many steep sections.

Where a trail overlaps two descriptions, it has been 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 (also, see information on the maps for suggestions giving longer options). If you are tired, turn around earlier (some maps indicate shorter or easier options). 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 legend on the maps indicates the symbol that shows 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 on the Spree maps. When you are hiking, it is difficult to judge how far you have walked, so try the following tip using your watch as a timer. Most people average about 2 ½ miles per hour for a normal hike, not including stops for a rest or to enjoy the view. Some of you may hike more quickly, especially on the flat. 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 ½ mph speed, this translates into 2 ½ minutes for 0.1 miles, 12 minutes for 0.5 miles and 24 minutes for 1 mile. So, if you note the time when you start from the TH or a trail junction, you can estimate when you should reach the next junction or point of interest, when you should reach the turn around point on an Out & Back trail. (A GPS device can help you locate a turn-around point or a junction, and measure distances accurately but many people don't have a GPS or know how to use it on their smart phone.) 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, or turn-around point, 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 these maps shows your current location.
- Where trails are indistinct, look for cairns that mark the route – hand-built piles of rocks (sometimes inaccurate).
- For “Out & Back” trails, use the information 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 Events then Hiking Spree). These Spree maps also give directions for driving to the trail head, the mileage from downtown 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 usually 20 foot apart, but maybe 100 foot apart in mountainous terrain.
- 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). Maps are also available for free at various locations as indicated in the brochure (e.g., PNF office, Prescott City Parks 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 I 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!!!