

For more information, contact:

Chevelon-Heber Ranger District
P.O. Box 968
Overgaard, AZ 85933
(520) 535-4481
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
P.O. Box 640
Springerville, AZ 85938
(520) 333-4301



Black Canyon . . . Journey Through Time Auto Tour

Chevelon-Heber Ranger Districts,
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

How To Use This Guide . . .

This auto tour travels through Black Canyon on Forest Service Road 86 stopping at several historic and prehistoric sites. This brochure includes information about each of the different sites. It will be helpful to check your odometer at the intersection of State Route 260 (mile marker 303.7) and Black Canyon Lane. The distance to each stop from the intersection is noted with the information about that stop under "access." Each of the sites along Forest Service Road 86 is marked with a numbered sign. Trails are marked with blue diamonds.

The best time of year to take this historic journey is May through October.

Please Don't Erase the Traces of America's Past

Archeological and historic sites hold clues to America's past. If disturbed, a part of our heritage may be lost forever.

Sites and artifacts on public lands are protected by federal law. If you discover such remains, please leave them undisturbed. Report your discoveries to Forest Service personnel.

Site photography by W. Randall Irvine.
Historical photography courtesy of Leland J. Hanchett, Jr.
from his book "The Crooked Trail to Holbrook."



Polimana Pictographs

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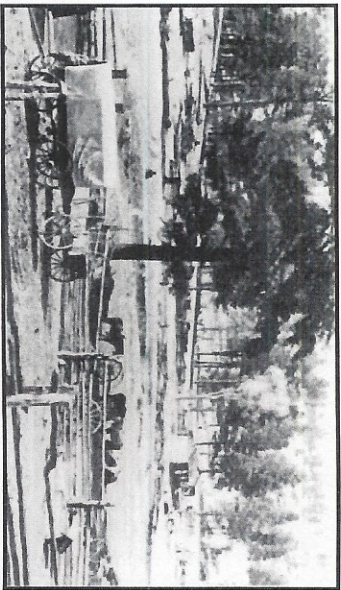
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once looked with lower portions of the walls being made up of stacked rocks and the upper portions of sticks plastered with mud. Pictographs can still be seen on the overhang above the rooms. Very likely, this family would have hunted the abundant game in Black Canyon and grown corn in its fertile flood plains.

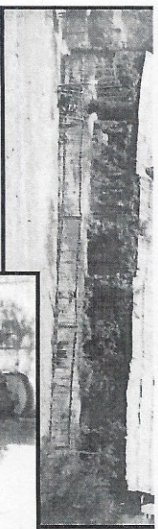


Stop 4: The Community of Wilford

Access: 6 miles. Park just past the bridgework to the west crossing of the creek.

The community of Wilford had a very short but intriguing existence. The community existed along the cattle trail which ran from Holbrook to Pleasant Valley. Wilford was founded in 1883 by Mormon settlers who relocated to the Black Canyon area after being unable to sustain a living in the communities of Joseph City, Brigham City, and Sunset along the Little Colorado River. The bright future the Mormons envisioned quickly disintegrated.

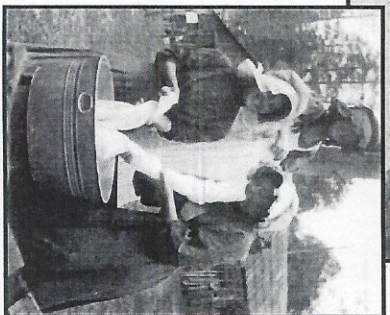
Several incidents combined to bring about the demise of the small communities along Black Canyon. Rowdy bands of cowboys began bringing their cattle into the valley which deteriorated the land and left many settlers afraid for their lives. Horse and house stealing became rampant. One story tells of the time when Edmund and Sadie Adam Richardson returned from a conference to find the Hashknife cowboys had taken their home. The final blow to the existence of the community came with the passage of the Edmund's Bill in 1882 which outlawed plural marriages.



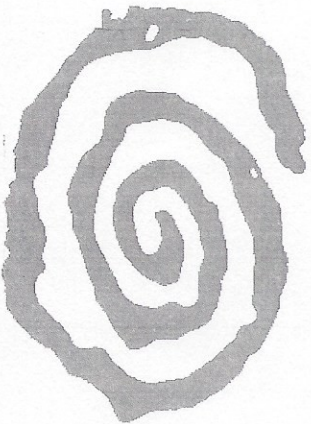
Stop 6: Baca Ranch

Access: 9.9 miles to Baca Meadow and grave site.

One of the most interesting and charming families to ever



occupy Black Canyon was the Baca family. Juan and Damacia Baca, originally from Belen, New Mexico, began farming the upper reaches of Black Canyon in 1889. The Baca's had seven daughters and one son. Young women were in short supply and the ranch became a destination for many young men traveling along the Black Canyon wagon trail. Damacia loved the company and her hospitality was renowned. The older girls quickly began to marry. Mollie married John Nelson from Brookbank. John was her father's previous employer, and was the person who recommended they homestead this area. During the courtship, John and his friends built a road from Brookbank (north of Hwy. 260) to the Black Canyon wagon trail so that he could visit Mollie more frequently. The road was called the "Dugway" because it had to be dug out of the ground in several locations. Today the road can be seen just north of the bridge at Wilford.



one covers down, wrapped them in wagon sheeting, and buried them in the nearby glade.

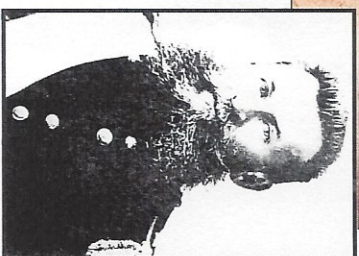


Stop 8: The General Crook Trail



Access: 15.3 miles to General Crook Trail (Forest Service Road 300).

Difficulty: Easy. The trail travels along Forest Service Road 300 and is signed with white "V" markers.



General George Crook came to the Arizona Territory in 1871 as commander of the military department of Arizona. He was an experienced and well-liked commander called "Gray Wolf" by the Apache, and described by soldiers as "the first man up in the morning, the first to be saddled, the first ready for the road, was our indefatigable commander, who... seated upon a good strong mule with his rifle... across the pommels of his saddle, led the way."

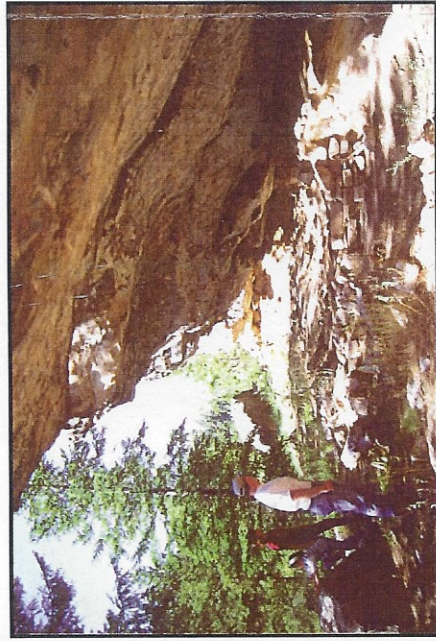
In August of 1871, Crook set out on an 11-day trip from Fort Apache to his headquarters at Fort Whipple. Traveling north toward Show Low on an old trail, the detachment turned west near McNary and pioneered a path along the Mogollon Rim. Formal construction along the route began in the spring of 1872. General Crook Trail became the third major road built in northern Arizona.



Stop 2: Polimana Pictographs

Access: 3.35 miles to the rock art.
Difficulty: Short, steep trail for closer view of rock art. Rock art can be viewed from the road with binoculars.

Look up at the rock face just under the rock overhangs. You will see painted images, called pictographs, left by some of the earliest inhabitants of Black Canyon—the Mogollon (*Muggy-own*) Indians! Notice the line of human figures on the right side of the overhang. We know these are women because of their typical pueblo hairstyle with hair whorls over each ear.



Stop 3: Black Canyon Rock Shelter

Access: 4.75 miles to the rock shelter.
Difficulty: The rock shelter is located across Black Canyon 100 yards from the road. The trail to the rock face is easy; however, the trail to the rock shelter is short but moderately steep. The shelter can be seen from creek level.

Barely discernible rock alignments and a few pieces of pottery and other artifacts are all

Mormon leaders instructed their followers that were polygamists to move to Mexico to avoid arrest. Three of Wilford's families migrated to Mexico in 1885. Others would follow. The foundation you see across the creek is likely to be the remains of a cabin built in 1911 by Fred Baca.



Stop 5: Black Canyon Ranch

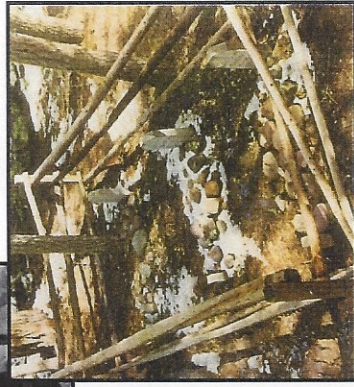
Access: 8.5 miles to Black Canyon Ranch, now a privately owned and operating ranch. Access is NOT available to the public. Please stay in your car.

One of the more famous Arizonans to live in Black Canyon was J.D. Houck, who moved there in 1886. Houck named the ranch "Black Canyon" and built a cabin in 1889. Houck was the Apache County representative, and when his term ended in 1887, he became a sheriff's deputy for Apache County. He was a feared gunman and participated in the Pleasant Valley War, killing many people during the feud. To make a living, he ran sheep in the canyon. Houck's brother, Chet, moved to the canyon in 1897, and after a falling out 2 years later, he took over the ranch while J.D. moved to Cave Creek near Phoenix. J.D. Houck went on to revolutionize the sheep business by establishing a centralized shearing operation at Cave Creek. Chet, contrary to his brother, was very well liked and was elected sheriff in 1901. Chet later sold the ranch to Fred Purcell who took legal ownership in 1921. The green, wooden frame home still remaining on the property was built by Purcell.



Stop 7: The Grave Site of Stott, Scott and Wilson

Access: 13.5 miles to the grave site.
Difficulty: One mile to the grave site off Forest Service Road 86; an easy walk. The road can be driven, but 4-wheel drive is required.



The ruthless vengeance of the Pleasant Valley Feud haunted the Mogollon Plateau and the Tonto

Basin country in the late 1800's. After the Civil War, law and order in the Arizona Territory was in short supply. Outlaws, thieves, and bandits drifted from Texas to Arizona, threatening the safety of early settlers. The Pleasant Valley Feud, a vendetta between the Graham and Tewksbury families, was described as a range war resulting from cattlemen and sheepherders fighting for grasslands to graze their stock. On the morning of August 11, 1888, lawman James Houck and a posse rode to Jamie Stott's ranch and arrested Jamie Stott, Jim Scott, and Billy Wilson. The men were accused of stealing horses. On the way to the county seat at Prescott, a group of masked men intercepted the posse. The masked men, known as the "Committee of Fifty," were vigilantes who, historians believe, had arranged in advance to take Stott, Scott, and Wilson from the posse. The vigilantes lynched the three men from a



The Journey Through Time Auto Tour . . .

is a self-guided auto tour that will take you through beautiful Black Canyon with stops at several historic and prehistoric sites. For centuries,

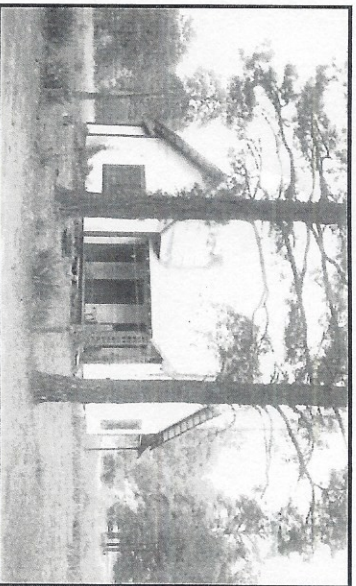
people have been drawn to the canyon for its water and abundant wildlife. The road that winds its way through the canyon was an original route from the deserts below the Mogollon Rim country to settlements on top of the plateau. Later, the old wagon road was used to herd cattle to market. Mormon freighters supplied the needs of cattle ranchers in Pleasant Valley from stores in Holbrook. Even a stagecoach bounced along the trail on Mondays and Thursdays. Today, travelers can trace the history of the people that have inhabited Black Canyon. Pictographs mark the time of the Mogollon Indians, the first settlers of the canyon, and grave sites give testimony to the ruthless vengeance that lashed across the Mogollon Rim country during the Pleasant Valley Feud. The black rocks of the canyon, the canyon's namesake, have witnessed the history of five cultures of people that have called the canyon home. Now, visitors can trace this history with this auto tour that visits the occupation sites of Black Canyon.



Stop 1: Original Heber Ranger Station Site

Access: 2.2 miles to Old Heber Ranger Station.
Difficulty: Easy walk to the site.

The first ranger districts were not well defined, and as for ranger headquarters, they were usually where the ranger kept his hat and horse. Some were in tents, others in abandoned cabins, some in settlements, some in 1-room shacks, and others at ranches or in mining camps. It was not until 1907-1909 that the Forest Service began to erect ranger stations to house its forest rangers. The first Heber Ranger Station was located in Black Canyon from 1915-1949.



At this site, there was a house, barn, well, hen house and outhouse.