

SEVEN SPRINGS RECREATION AREA

Bronco Trail #247 (Seven Springs Rec Area). Rating C-B. This is a 6.2-7.6 mile hike with an elevation change of 550 ft. The 6.2 mile hike has an 1100 ft. elevation gain while the 7.6 mi hike has an ascent of 1600 ft. The trail rises up about 400 ft to the ridge line within 1.5 miles and then travels along the ridgeline before dropping into a valley with a small pond before rising up to a saddle. The C hike takes their break at this point, while the B hike continues down the other side to meet up with Trail 248. There is no park fee despite approach signs along the road stating fees are required – this fee is for other forms of recreation, not hiking. There is a restroom at the trailhead and no park fee. Driving distance is 130 miles RT (the last 3 miles are on an unpaved dirt road).

Directions to Cave Creek - Bronco Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn North (left) on I-17.

Turn right (east) on Carefree Hwy (Hwy 74) and drive to the end.

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road (just in front of the Boulders Resort)

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road past the turnoff to Bartlett Reservoir.

Drive about 8 miles to the Bronco Trailhead on the left.

The last several miles is a dirt road.

Restrooms are at the trailhead. No park fee.

Cave Creek Trail #4 (Seven Springs Rec Area). Rating C. This is a 7 mile out and back hike, with an elevation gain of about 880 ft. At about .8 miles the trail splits: Cave Creek (#4) to the right, Skunk Tank (#246) to the left across a small creek. At 1.8 miles we encounter a gate (fence). At 1.9 miles we encounter the first creek crossing – you step across via a number of large rocks. At 2.1 miles the first of two Crested Saguaros can be seen along the hillside to our right (about 3 o'clock). You need binoculars or a good telephoto lens to fully appreciate this oddity of nature. At 3.0 miles we encounter the second creek crossing. A quarter mile further up the trail is the second crested Saguaro cactus, just off the trail. A little further along the trail is a nice waterfall and shaded area where we will turnaround. You have to drive on a 10 mile dirt road with 2 possible creek crossings to reach the trailhead, but a 4WD is not needed. Restrooms are at the trailhead. There is no park fee for hiking. Driving distance is 140 miles RT.

[SCG=6.5/1100/3.2].<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SevenSpringsRecreationArea/Cave-Creek-Trail>

Directions to Cave Creek - Seven Springs/Skunk Tank Trailhead

Take Loop 303 to I-17.

Go North on I-17.

Turn right on Hwy 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Directions to Cave Creek - Skunk Tank Trailhead – Alternate

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

Turn right (east) on AZ 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Bloody Basin Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Cave Creek Trail #4+Skunk Tank+Cottonwood+#4 Loop (Seven Springs Rec Area).

Rating B. This is an 11.1 mi. loop hike, with an elevation gain of about 1800 ft. At about .8 miles the trail splits: Cave Creek (#4) to the right, Skunk Creek (#246) to the left across a small creek. You have to drive 10 miles on a dirt road with 2 possible creek crossings to reach the trailhead, but a 4WD is not needed. Restrooms are at the trailhead. There is no park fee for hiking. Driving distance is 140 miles RT.

<https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SevenSpringsRecreationArea/Cave-Creek-Trail>

Directions to Cave Creek - Seven Springs/Skunk Tank Trailhead

Take Loop 303 to I-17.

Go North on I-17.

Turn right on Hwy 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Directions to Cave Creek - Skunk Tank Trailhead - Alternate

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

Turn right (east) on AZ 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Bloody Basin Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Cave Creek Trail #4+#247+#248+#250+#246+#247+#4 Loop (Seven Springs Rec Area). Rating B. This is a 13.6 mi. loop hike, with an elevation gain of about 2860 ft. At about .8 miles the trail splits: Cave Creek (#4) to the right, Skunk Creek (#246) to the left across a small creek. You have to drive 10 miles on a dirt road with 2 possible creek crossings to reach the trailhead, but a 4WD is not needed. Restrooms are at the trailhead. There is no park fee for hiking. Driving distance is 140 miles RT.

<https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SevenSpringsRecreationArea/Cave-Creek-Trail>

Directions to Cave Creek - Seven Springs/Skunk Tank Trailhead

Take Loop 303 to I-17.

Go North on I-17.

Turn right on Hwy 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Directions to Cave Creek - Skunk Tank Trailhead - Alternate

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

Turn right (east) on AZ 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Bloody Basin Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Cave Creek/Cottonwood Trails (Seven Springs Rec Area). Rating B. This is a 10 mile in and out hike. From the Cave Creek Trailhead pick up the Cave Creek Trail #4 as it travels behind the campgrounds paralleling the road. The path crosses a dirt road (ignore the unsigned junction on the left, and remain on #4) and drops down beside Cave Creek to a junction with the left branching Cottonwood Trail #247. Turn left on #247 which crosses the stream then climbs a hill to the junction with the Skunk Creek Trail #246 which branches right. Stay left on the Cottonwood Trail which climbs a grassy slope dotted with: juniper, prickly pear and cholla cacti, scrub oak, cat's claw and sugar sumac. The path bends right and enters a wide gully, traveling along a hillside; first on the right, then on the left side, until you eventually reach a junction with the left branching trail #245 (which is not shown on the map, but I believe it leads to the Bronco Trailhead). The trail then begins climbing gently through an area of low rolling hills, past a fence then down the other side to follow a wash. Shortly after climbing out of the wash on the right,

you'll reach a junction with the right branching Skull Mesa Trail #248 (5 miles). Turn around at this point. Restrooms are at the trailhead. No park fee for hiking. Driving distance is approx. 140 miles RT. [SCG=9.3/2200/4.9].

<https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SevenSpringsRecreationArea/Cave-Creek-Trail>

Directions to Cave Creek - Seven Springs/Skunk Tank Trailhead

Take Loop 303 to I-17.

Go North on I-17.

Turn right on Hwy 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Directions to Cave Creek - Skunk Tank Trailhead - Alternate

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

Turn right (east) on AZ 74 (Carefree Highway).

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.

Turn right on Bloody Basin Road.

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Maricopa Trail South from the Bronco Trailhead (Seven Springs Rec Area). Rating C-B.

This is a 7-9.6 mile hike with an elevation change of 1000-1500 ft. The 7-mile hike (1000 ft) goes to a bridge over a slot canyon. An optional side hike is to drop down into the slot and go along it for a short distance. The 9.6 mile hike (1500 ft) goes up to a high point overlooking the entire area. There is no park fee despite approach signs along the road stating fees are required – this fee is for other forms of recreation, not hiking. There is a restroom at the trailhead. Driving distance is 130 miles RT (the last 3 miles are on an unpaved dirt road).

<https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/CaveCreekRegionalPark/Maricopa-Trail-Carefree>

Directions to Cave Creek - Bronco Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn North (left) on I-17.

Turn right (east) on Carefree Hwy (Hwy 74) and drive to the end.

Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road (just in front of the Boulders Resort)

Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road past the turnoff to Bartlett Reservoir.

Drive about 8 miles to the Bronco Trailhead on the left.

The last several miles is a dirt road.
Restrooms are at the trailhead. No park fee.

Skull Mesa, Spur Cross Rec Area (Cave Creek). Rating B. 12.4 miles roundtrip with an elevation gain of 3180 ft. Skull Mesa Trail # 248 features panoramic views of the desert foothills. This is a good place to see deer, javelina, and snakes. This is not recommended for novice equestrians or inexperienced stock. Due to the tall grasses in the area you'll find the rock cairns a useful guide to finding the path. From the west junction with Cottonwood Trail at an elevation of 3260 feet the trail climbs many switchbacks, gaining over 1000 feet in a mile. For next mile, traverse Skull Mesa reaching elevation 4560 feet, then drops to the junction with QuienSabe Trail. The trail climbs and descends for 1.5 miles to its east junction with Cottonwood trail. Directions from Cave Creek: Travel north on Cave Creek road and turn left on Spur Cross Road. The trailhead is about 1.5 miles after the road turns to gravel. Porta-johns at the trailhead. Park fee is \$3.00 per person. Driving distance is approx 110 miles
RT<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SevenSpringsRecreationArea/Skull-Mesa>

Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead

Take Loop 303 to I-17.
Go North on I-17.
Turn right on Hwy 74 (Carefree Highway).
Turn left (North) on Cave Creek Road.
Turn left (North) on Spur Cross Road.
Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right.
Walk down the road .1 miles and pay \$3.00 per person (free with MC pass).
Porta-johns are at the trailhead another .1 miles down the road.

Skunk Tank Trail (Seven Springs Rec Area). Rating C+. This is a 6 mile in and out hike with an elevation change of about 800 feet. This hike passes through a wooded area before rising up into more typical desert terrain. There are interesting views of the seven springs valley area from the top of the ridge. Restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 140 miles RT (the last 10 of which are unpaved).

Directions to Cave Creek - Seven Springs/Skunk Tank Trailhead

Take Loop 303 to I-17.
Go North on I-17.
Turn right on Hwy 74 (Carefree Highway).
Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.
Turn right on Cave Creek Road.
Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.
At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.
Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.
Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.

Directions to Cave Creek - Skunk Tank Trailhead - Alternate

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.
Turn left (North) on I-17.
Turn right (east) on AZ 74 (Carefree Highway).
Turn left on Tom Darlington/Scottsdale Road.
Turn right on Bloody Basin Road.
Turn right on Cave Creek Road.

Continue on Cave Creek Road as it changes to Forest Road 24 as you enter the Tonto National Forest.

At the 4.5 mile point (on FS 24) the pavement ends in a well graded dirt road.

Continue winding along the road, at the 12 mile point you'll hit a short stretch of pavement as you enter the Seven Springs Recreation area and Cave Creek Campground. A creek crosses the road twice (cement road at this point), but it is shallow.

Drive past the camp sites & look for a green 'Trail' sign which points to a parking area (with bathroom) on the left side of the road.