

SPUR CROSS RANCH CONSERVATION AREA 1-19-22

Trail maps for various segments in the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area

<https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/Trail-Maps/Spur-Cross-Conservation-Area/>

Dragonfly Trail, Metate Trails, Spur Cross Recreation Area (Cave Creek). Rating D.

This is about a 4.8-mile lollipop loop with an elevation gain of 540 feet. The hike starts out going back up the road for a quarter mile, then turns right on a slant. At the bottom of the hill, turn right. You will cross the creek and travel through a saguaro forest with very tall saguaro cactus. The whole area along the creek is a riparian area, which contains permanent pools of water and lots of vegetation. The trail makes a loop around the Jewel of the Creek Preserve, which contains many different bird species and up to 20 different dragonfly species. We then go in the other direction on the Spur Cross Trail to the Metate Trail. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on the trail is a forest of very large saguaros. This is our turn-around point. Porta-johns are just past the parking area in the park, but there is a park fee is \$3.00 per person. The Dragonfly Trail is free, but the other trails in the park are not. Driving distance is 110 miles roundtrip. [SCG=5.5/600/2.5].

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SpurCrossRanchConservationArea/Metate-Dragonfly-Trails>

Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead -- Head north on PebbleCreek Parkway to Indian School Road, turn west (left) and take Loop 303 North following it until it ends at I-17. Go north on I-17 and take second exit onto Highway 74. Turn right on Highway 74 (Carefree Highway). Turn left (north) on Cave Creek Road (approximately 9.5 miles - watch for road after 53rd). Turn left (north) on Spur Cross Road (main road veers left after the turn). Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right. Walk down the road .1 miles and pay.

Elephant Mountain trail, Spur Cross Recreation Area (Cave Creek). Rating B This is a 10.2-mile hike with an elevation gain of 1800 feet. The hike starts out on the Spur Cross and Metate trails. To the Lime Kiln Trail, then Elephant Mountain loop to Spur Cross trail back to the parking lot. Most of the early trail is very rocky. Besides the view of Elephant Mountain, there is a rock formation that looks like a Buffalo. There are many saguaro cacti along the trail. Park fee is \$3. per person. Porta-john at the trailhead. Driving Distance is 110 miles roundtrip. [SCG=7.2/1600/4.0].

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SpurCrossRanchConservationArea/Elephant-Mountain-Trail>

Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead -- Head north on PebbleCreek Parkway to Indian School Road, turn west (left) and take Loop 303 North following it until it ends at I-17. Go north on I-17 to second exit Highway 74. Turn right on Highway 74 (Carefree Highway). Turn left (north) on Cave Creek Road (approximately 9.5 miles - watch for road after 53rd). Turn left (north) on Spur Road (main road veers left). Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right. Walk down the road .1 miles and pay.

Elephant Mountain trail, Spur Cross Recreation Area (Cave Creek). Rating C

Challenge. This is a 7-mile hike with an elevation gain of 1600 feet. The hike starts out on the Spur Cross and Tortuga Trails. Most of the early trail is very rocky. Besides the view of Elephant Mountain, there is a rock formation that looks like a Buffalo. There are many saguaro cacti along the trail. Park fee is \$3. per person. Porta-john at the trailhead. Driving Distance is 110 miles roundtrip. [SCG=7.2/1600/4.0].

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SpurCrossRanchConservationArea/Elephant-Mountain-Trail>

Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead -- Head north on PebbleCreek Parkway to Indian School Road, turn west (left) and take Loop 303 North following it until it ends at I-17. Go north on I-17 to second exit Highway 74. Turn right on Highway 74 (Carefree Highway). Turn left (north) on Cave Creek Road (approximately 9.5 miles - watch for road after 53rd). Turn left (north) on Spur Cross Road (main road veers left). Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right. Walk down the road .1 miles and pay.

Metate, Spur Cross, Dragonfly Loop Spur Cross Recreation Area (Cave Creek). Rating C. This is a 7.5-mile loop hike with an elevation gain of 1000 feet. The trail crosses Cave Creek a few times (using wooden planks or rock hopping). The Metate Trail goes through a forest of very large saguaros. The Spur Cross Trail goes for a couple of miles through typical desert terrain. The Dragonfly Trail goes through a riparian area known for its many bird species. Trail condition: overall an average hiking trail with a couple of stony creek crossings. Porta-johns are just past the parking area in the park, but there is a park fee is \$3.00 per person. The Dragonfly Trail is free, but the other trails in the park are not. Driving distance is 110 miles roundtrip. [SCG=5.5/600/2.5].

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SpurCrossRanchConservationArea/Metate-Dragonfly-Trails>
Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead -- Head north on PebbleCreek Parkway to Indian School Road, turn west (left) and take Loop 303 North following it until it ends at I-17. Go north on I-17 to second exit Highway 74. Turn right on Highway 74 (Carefree Highway). Turn left (north) on Cave Creek Road (approximately 9.5 miles - watch for road after 53rd). Turn left (north) on Spur Cross Road (main road veers left). Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right. Walk down the road .1 miles and pay.

Skull Mesa Traverse and Loop Trails: Spur Cross, #4, 247, # 248, #247, #4, (Spur Cross Recreation Area). Rating A. Distance 15.8 miles roundtrip with an elevation gain of 4092 feet. From Spur Cross Trailhead, take the Maricopa Trail ~2 miles to park boundary. Continue north on forestry road 48 for another ~2 miles. At junction with Cave Creek Park route 4 turn right then right again onto trail #247 (Cottonwood Trail). In ~2 miles at the junction with #248 (Skull Mesa Trail) turn left and climb 1 mile steeply up to the summit of Skull Mesa. Continue east on #248 ~1.5 miles over the summit of Skull Mesa and steeply down to the junction with the Quien Sabe Trail - enjoy the views of the trailless Quien Sabe Peak to the north. Continue to follow #248 south another ~1.5 miles to the junction with #247 (Cottonwood Trail). Turn right (west) and walk ~2 miles back to the Skull Mesa Trail junction. Return ~4 miles to the parking lot following the path described above. What you need to know: All trails - Long Mileage – approximately 16 miles - Stream crossings may be required along the Maricopa Trail High elevation gain - Steep uphill to the top of Skull Mesa – over 1000 feet in one mile. Remote setting – possible overgrown vegetation may make navigation difficult at times especially on east side of Skull Mesa. Good chance of seeing wildlife. Recommend bringing extra water and electrolytes on this hike. Porta-johns at the trailhead. Park fee is \$3.00 per person. Driving distance is approximately 110 miles roundtrip.

Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead -- Head north on PebbleCreek Parkway to Indian School Road, turn west (left) and take Loop 303 North following it until it ends at I-17. Go north on I-17 to second exit – Highway 74. Turn right on Highway 74 (Carefree Highway). Turn left (north) on Cave Creek Road (approximately 9.5 miles - watch for road after 53rd). Turn left (north) on Spur Cross Road (main road veers left). Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right. Walk down the road .1 miles and pay.

Spur Cross to Maricopa Trail, Spur Cross Recreation Area (Cave Creek). Rating C, B. This is a 6–10-mile hike with an elevation change of 500 feet. The hike starts out heading West on the Spur Cross Trail and travels through typical desert terrain. On the return, turn right on the Dragonfly Trail. On the Dragonfly Trail you pass through a saguaro forest with very tall saguaro cactus. You then descend into a riparian area, which contains permanent pools of water and lots of vegetation. The trail then makes a loop around the Jewel of the Creek Preserve, which contains many different bird species and up to 20 different dragonfly species. Porta-johns are at the trailhead. Park fee is \$3.00 per person. Driving distance is 110 miles roundtrip. [in February 2010, heavy rains wiped out the trail and many of the smaller cottonwood trees in the Preserve].

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SpurCrossRanchConservationArea/Spur-Cross-Loop>
<https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SpurCrossRanchConservationArea/Metate-Dragonfly-Trails>

Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead -- Head north on PebbleCreek Parkway to Indian School Road, turn west (left) and take Loop 303 North following it until it ends at I-17. Go north on I-17 to second exit – Highway 74. Turn right on Highway 74 (Carefree Highway). Turn left (north) on Cave Creek Road (approximately 9.5 miles - watch for road after 53rd). Turn left (north) on Spur Cross Road (main road veers left). Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right. Walk down the road .1 miles and pay.

Spur Cross Skull Mesa, Spur Cross Recreation Area (Cave Creek). Rating A. Trails SX, #4, #247, #248, Cottonwood, Skull Mesa. This hike is a 14-mile hike with an elevation gain of 3200 feet. From the Spur Cross Trailhead, take the Maricopa Trail about 2 miles to the park boundary. At the junction of Cave Creek Park #4, turn right, then right again onto trail #247 (Cottonwood Trail), at about 2 miles at the junction of #248 (Skull Mesa Trail) turn left and climb steeply up to the summit of Skull Mesa. Return to the parking lot along the same route. Stream crossings may be required along the Maricopa Trail, remoted setting, possible overgrown vegetation may make navigation difficult at times, good chance of seeing wildlife. Steep uphill to the Skull Mesa, over 1000' in one mile. Be aware of loose stones on the descent. Panoramic views from Skull Mesa. Bring extra water and electrolytes on this hike. Port-a-johns at the trailhead. Park fee = \$3. Driving distance about 110 miles roundtrip.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/SpurCrossRanchConservationArea/Skull-MesafromSpurCross>
Directions to Cave Creek - Spur Cross Trailhead -- Head north on PebbleCreek Parkway to Indian School Road, turn west (left) and take Loop 303 North following it until it ends at I-17. Go north on I-17 to second exit Highway 74. Turn right on Highway 74 (Carefree Highway). Turn left (north) on Cave Creek Road (approximately 9.5 miles - watch for road after 53rd). Turn left (north) on Spur Cross Road (main road veers left). Go 4.5 miles (1.5 is gravel) to the parking area on the right. Walk down the road .1 miles and pay.