

Saddle

Overview

This easy-to-follow trail is an excellent choice for a hot summer day as its climb is split in two (one out and one back) and much of those climbs are in the shade of a dense forest. At the peak, it provides solid views of the Smoky Mountain and the valley below. Saddle's terminus connects to the Chocolate Gulch trail system which in turn connects with Fox Creek and other trails, so those looking for a longer hike have plenty of add-on options. It is part of a popular mountain bike trail system, so be aware of your surroundings.

The Numbers

4.3 mile out and back

725 total elevation gain

Ascent Grade: 7.1% (Moderate)

Water

There is very little water enroute. You will cross a stream at the beginning and end of the hike, but the only other source is just before the 2-mile mark, and that small stream runs dry in low-water years. The flip side is that much of the hike is in the shade, so water is less of a factor than during sunny hikes.

Drive

From downtown Ketchum, it is an easy 7.5-mile drive with only the last tenth mile on a dirt road. [Click here](#) for directions. There is parking for about 15 cars and it is rarely full.

There are bathrooms at the trailhead.



Parking and Trailhead

Season

May through October

Route

Take the left fork at the signed junction that marks the trailhead – the right fork takes you to the [Oregon Gulch trail](#). There is an easy water crossing within the first 250 feet as you make

your way through an open meadow with the forest climbing up the hill to your left. A quick turn to the left takes you into the forest where you will begin a steady but easy climb.

At the .8-mile mark, views of the Boulder Mountains peek through the trees and at 1 mile, a hillside meadow opens in front of you, providing good views of the Wood River Valley and the Smoky Mountains.



Meadow at 1 mile and views of the Smoky Mountains

There is an opportunity at about the 1.3-mile mark to better your views of the valley by shooting through two bushes to the left and accessing a user-made trail that climbs a modest grade along a knob for about 500 feet.



Entrance to user-made trail and view from the top of the knob

The main trail begins to descend and re-enters the forest at about 1.5 miles. The trail winds through the forest and just before the 2-mile mark, come to a plank bridge that crosses a small, sometimes dry creek. Shortly afterwards, you will enter an open area lined on your left by smallish aspen trees and around the 2.15-mile mark, you will come to the destination, which is Saddle's junction with the popular Chocolate Gulch trail.



Turnaround Point

For those looking to lengthen the hike, the [Chocolate Gulch/Northfork](#) trail will add just over 4 miles to make an 8.3 mile loop.