

Taylor Canyon Loop

Overview

A very popular hike among locals, Taylor Canyon Loop has a lot to offer. For those seeking beauty, it is certainly on tap as the hike begins in a small, attractive canyon before rising to vista points of Bald Mountain, the Boulder and Smoky Mountain ranges and, towards the end, grand views towards the Pioneer Mountains and the Wood River Valley. Those looking for a cardio challenge will not be disappointed, as the middle section of the hike features lung-busting climbs through the woods. Wildlife is often in abundance on the hike and it is common to sight deer and elk as well as dusky sage grouse and other birds along the route.

We suggest doing the loop counterclockwise, as the climb in this direction is under the shade of a pine forest. For anyone with less than sure footing, hiking poles are recommended for either route.

The Numbers

4-mile loop

1235 total elevation gain

Ascent Grade: 10.9% (Moderate/Difficult)

Water

There is very little water on the route – just a stream that parallels the first mile of the hike. During dry periods this stream becomes a mud hole. Given the intense climb and because much of the descent is in the sun, it is recommended to bring plenty of water.

Drive

From downtown Ketchum, it is an easy 5.4-mile drive with all but 1.2 miles being on paved roads. The dirt roads are fairly well maintained, so most cars will have no issues getting to the trailhead. [Click here](#) for directions. There is parking for only about 12 cars and by mid-morning and on weekends, spaces are at a premium.

There are no bathrooms at the trailhead.



Parking lot and Trailhead

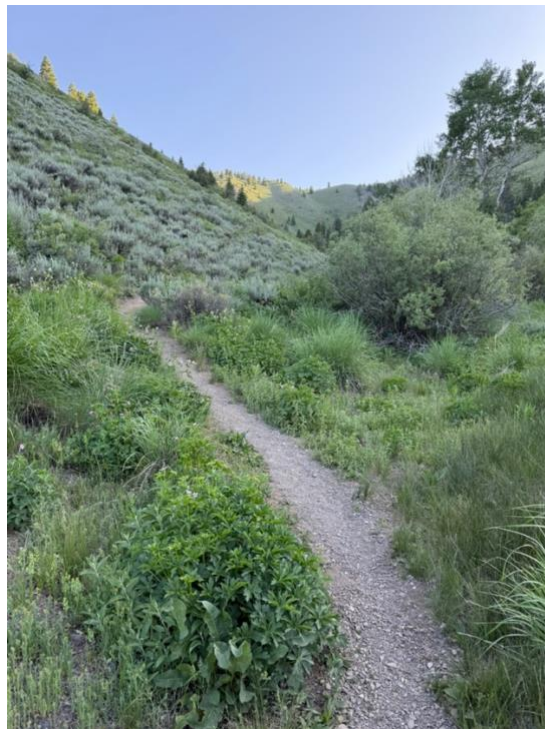
Season

May through mid-October

Route

The first .8 miles of the hike is a pleasant, easy climb through a small canyon. During much of the day, the hills on either side block out the worst of the sun. There is a stream that runs along the right side of the path. However, during dry periods, this stream turns to a mud hole, so while it offers some relief to thirsty dogs, they will come out of it with dark, mud-caked legs. During wet seasons, you can draw water from it, with the best spot to do so being at about .75 miles.

At .8 miles, the trail veers left and immediately begins to rise a bit more. It is a small taste of what is to come.



Veer left at .8 miles – The climb steepens

At 1.15 miles, the trail turns left and steepens dramatically as it passes through a small gully. Over the next .4 miles, you will climb about 400 feet, mostly in the shade of the woods.



Main Climb

At 1.55 miles, come to a junction with a trail shooting off in front of you. Ignore that and take a right U-turn to continue up the hill. Shortly after the turn you will come to an opening on your left that provides a great view towards the ski slopes on Bald Mountain.



Junction (U-turn right) and views of Bald Mountain

With your back to Bald Mountain, return to the trail and take a left turn to re-start the hike. It will take you to a short descent, but at 1.6 miles you will enter an open hillside and begin to climb again. Much of the next 2 miles are in direct sun. At 1.85 miles, a trail will shoot off behind you to the right, but continue straight. Within a few steps the trail finally flattens and starts to roll along a ridge. As you continue along the ridge, views to the Boulder Mountains will start to open to your right. Even better views will come shortly.



Boulder Mountains

At 2.15 miles, the view opens even wider. This is a great spot to grab a panoramic photo of the Smoky Mountains on the left with the Boulder Mountains rising to the right.



Smoky and Boulder Mountains

The trail continues to roll along, slowly descending along an open hilltop heading southeast. At 2.4 miles the descent intensifies. As you make your way down the hillside, you will get great views of the Wood River Valley. Continuing, you will see your last climb cut into the hillside straight ahead of you. At 2.75 miles you hit that climb, a 60-foot rise over .15 miles. At the top, the trail rolls pleasantly, but at 3.1 miles, a steep descent begins again, this time over rocky ground. Hiking poles will come in handy for anyone with balky knees or unsure footing.

Below and ahead, you will see the trail rise once again up and over a hilltop. However, you will be turning left immediately before that ascent. Hit that junction at about the 3.6-mile mark and turn left.



Junction at about 3.6 miles (Turn Left)

This begins another steep descent that continues until the end of the hike. Thankfully, you will finally hit a tree line and find some shade at 3.7 miles. The trail ends back at the parking lot at the 4-mile mark.

