

Doug Fir Trail

Download Hikers' Haven Driving Directions at www.PryorMountains.org

8/8/12

After a little over a mile in open grassland this trail enters a Douglas Fir forest as it climbs up the SW slope of Red Pryor Mountain. This forest ecosystem provides a different experience from the nearby Big Sky and Rocky Juniper hikes. The trail begins from Horse Haven Rd, 2.8 miles from Helt Rd. This is 1.0 mile past the start of the Big Sky Trail. As with the other trails in the Hikers' Haven area there are no trail signs.

Left: Start of the Doug Fir Trail.

Right: Horse Haven Rd.

0.0 miles, Start of trail:

The trail begins at a "Y" on Horse Haven Rd. at 5,770 ft. elevation. (See photo to right.) The right fork is Horse Haven Rd. The left fork, with a post and rocks in the middle, is the Doug Fir Trail. This two track is not open to motorized use.



BLM / USFS boundary fence



0.4 miles, fence and gate:

North of this fence is Custer National Forest; south is BLM land. Please report if this gate is not locked to prevent motorized use.

0.7 Miles, junction: Take the left fork. (The right fork follows a different drainage into the Douglas Fir forest.)

1.0 Miles, junction: A track goes back and right (southeast) to join the right fork from the previous junction. Continue north on the left track.

1.2 Miles, Trail enters Douglas Fir Forest. From this point on the trail climbs more steeply up the bottom of the forested drainage. Look for well used squirrel trails between the tree trunks.

2.5 miles, track fades away at about 7,600 ft elevation.

For energetic and experienced hikers only:

It is possible to continue from this point to the top of Red Pryor Mountain. It is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile and nearly another 1,000 ft elevation to the top. There is no trail. The first quarter mile is rough bushwhacking through thick timber and rocky cliffs. The rest of the way to the top is open grassland. You can't get lost going up because uphill is always the way to the top. The return trip is a different matter. Without careful and competent use of the topo map and/or GPS (preferably both) it would be easy to miss the trail. Without that trail the hike down could be very challenging. The total round trip to the top of Red Pryor and back is about 7 miles with 2,700 ft elevation gain. (Note: There is a 4WD route to the top of Red Pryor Mountain.)

An interesting alternative is to go up the Doug Fir Trail and bushwack to the top of Red Pryor Mtn, then take the Big Sky trail back down to Horse Haven Rd. To do this you must be able to find the unmarked top end of the Big Sky Trail. There are no signs. Again without the trail the decent would be long and hard. This loop hike is almost ten miles round trip (including one mile hiking Horse Haven Rd between the two trail heads) with 3,000 ft elevation gain.

