

Pontatoc Ridge - HikeLemmon.com
2014/10/29, 1:24000, WGS 84



Pima Canyon Trail

Finger Rock Trail

Pontatoc Canyon Trail

0.7 miles, 3250': Cross Pontatoc Canyon [PT01] and begin climbing towards the ridge.

0.8 miles, 3450': Signed junction - sharp right for Pontatoc Ridge, left for Pontatoc Canyon Trail [pr-pc]

2.4, 5045': Enjoy the views from the top of the cliffs! [prnd]

Signed junction [pc-fr] - right for the Pontatoc trails, left for Finger Rock.

CAUTION! The trail to the top of the cliffs is steep, loose and un-official.

0.0 miles, 3040': Richard McKee Finger Rock Trailhead. [thfr]

2.0 miles, 4200': Un-signed junction - the un-official trail to the right can take you to the top of the cliffs (left to continue to the end of the Pontatoc Ridge Trail). [pr-pd]

1.4 miles, 3550': Trail goes up a short section of rocky slab. [PR03]

Nice viewpoint/break spot on rocky ledges. [PR02]

1.9 miles, 4100': Saddle. [PR04]

Pontatoc Ridge

Overview

The [Pontatoc Ridge Trail](#) is amazing, but going to the official end of the trail is likely to leave you wondering about the top of the cliffs towering above you... While it is unofficial, steep and not maintained there is a route to the top – if you are comfortable with the (essentially) off-trail hiking this trail requires it will take you up to a spectacular location! Note that the unofficial trail to the top of the Ridge is closed from January 1 to April 30 due to the restriction on travel more than 400' off of designated Forest Service Trails in the [Bighorn Sheep](#).

- Location: North side of Tucson, [Pusch Ridge Wilderness](#), Santa Catalina Mountains.
- Start: [Richard McKee Finger Rock Trailhead \(City's Edge Hikes\)](#) (Vehicle Access: Paved Roads/Passenger Car)
- End: [Richard McKee Finger Rock Trailhead \(City's Edge Hikes\)](#)
- Fee: No
- Driving Distance from Speedway Campbell: 8.4 miles
- Driving Time from Speedway Campbell: 20 Minutes
- Hike Type: Out and Back
- Hiking Distance: 4.75 miles
- Elevation Gain: 2,350'
- Elevation Loss: 2,350'
- Highest Elevation: 5,000'
- Lowest Elevation: 3,050'
- Dogs: No ([Bighorn Sheep Restrictions](#))
- Bikes: No ([Pusch Ridge Wilderness](#))

Additional Notes:

- Off-trail hiking in the Santa Catalina Mountains can be hazardous and challenging - make sure you understand the skills you need to stay safe, be cautious and know your limits!
- [Bighorn Sheep Restrictions](#): January 1 to April 30: Travel more than 400' off of designated Forest Service Trails is prohibited. All year: Dogs are prohibited (except for seeing-eye dogs and handi-dogs), the maximum day use group size is 15 and the maximum overnight group size is 6.
- [Pusch Ridge Wilderness](#): Motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment, including mountain bikes, are not permitted in Wilderness.
- The trailhead is officially open from dawn to dusk. A permit is required for overnight parking ([Pima County Trailheads Permit Request](#)).

Driving Directions

[Google Maps Directions](#) from the Speedway and Campbell intersection in Tucson to [Richard McKee Finger Rock Trailhead](#).

Quick version:

- North on Campbell (6.4 miles)
- Right onto Skyline (0.4 miles)
- Left to continue on Skyline (0.7 miles)
- Left on North Alvernon Way (0.9 miles)
- The trailhead is on the left/west side of the road.

Trail Notes

The mileages and elevations below are approximate (don't expect the values below to match your GPS exactly).

- 0.0 miles, 3040': start at the [Richard McKee Finger Rock Trailhead](#) (parking for the Pontatoc Ridge Trail, [Pontatoc Canyon Trail](#) and Finger Rock Trail) [Waypoint thfr].
- Cross the road and walk north, several signs mark the beginning of the trail just after the entrance to a gated community.
- The trail climbs a short hill to a signed junction [Waypoint pc-fr] – take a right (left for the Finger Rock Trail) – the trail wanders thru the desert towards Pontatoc Ridge crossing several washes.
- 0.7 miles, 3250': Cross Pontatoc Canyon [Waypoint PT01] (there are a number of wash crossing before crossing Pontatoc Canyon) – the trail begins to climb steeply.
- 0.8 miles, 3450': Signed junction [Waypoint pr-pc] – take a right (left for the [Pontatoc Canyon Trail](#)) – in a few more minutes there is a nice rocky area just off the trail is a good spot for a break with nice views over Tucson [Waypoint PR02].
- The trail continues to climb – at 1.4 miles, 3550' [Waypoint PR03] walk up a section of rocky slab – there are often several cairns to help you find the trail.
- 1.9 miles, 4100': Saddle – great views! [Waypoint PR04]
- 2.0 miles, 4200': A few minutes after the saddle look for a well worn trail the splits off to the right – the route to the right is the unofficial route up to the top of the cliffs (left continues to the end of the [Pontatoc Ridge Trail](#). [Waypoint pr-pd]
- The trail continues climbing steeply up the hill side – the trail is indistinct in places – and eventually follows the ridge on the west side (near the cliffs) to the top – the best part of the trail! Don't be fooled by the false summit as you come up the hill... The top will be at about 2.4 miles, 5045'. [Waypoint prdend]

Although the cliffs were mined they are not the site of the 'Pontatoc Mine' that was worked in the early 20th century, the location of Pontatoc Mine is apparently somewhere inside the housing developments south of the ridge. The ridge/cliff area was prospected during and shortly after the Pontatoc Mine was producing, but what was found "apparently didn't amount to much" – see [The Pontatoc mine in a north Tucson neighborhood](#) and [Mineral investigation of the Pusch Ridge Wilderness, Pima County, Arizona](#) for more information. The older name for this trail is the 'Old Spanish Mine Trail'.