

Soldier Trail

Overview

From the lowest official trailhead on the mountain the first short section of the Soldier Trail #53 climbs steeply up a rocky trail as it parallels Soldier Canyon. Eventually the trail offers dramatic views of Soldier Canyon, a pleasant section in the Canyon and great views from grassy hillsides!

- Location: This hike is located in the [Pusch Ridge Wilderness](#) in the Santa Catalina Mountains north of Tucson, Arizona.
- Start: [Soldier Trail Trailhead \(Lower Highway Hikes\)](#) (Vehicle Access: Paved Roads/Passenger Car (Mountain Road - be careful of weather conditions!))
- End: [Soldier Trail Trailhead \(Lower Highway Hikes\)](#)
- Fee: No
- Driving Distance from Speedway Campbell: 15.2 miles
- Driving Time from Speedway Campbell: 30 Minutes
- Hike Type: Out and Back
- Hiking Distance: 5 miles
- Elevation Gain: 2,000'
- Elevation Loss: 2,000'
- Highest Elevation: 4,850'
- Lowest Elevation: 3,250'
- Downloadable PDF Map: [Soldier Trail Map and Description](#)
- Dogs: Yes
- Bikes: No ([Pusch Ridge Wilderness](#))

Driving Directions

[Google Maps Directions](#) from the Speedway and Campbell intersection in Tucson to [Soldier Trail Trailhead](#).

Quick version:

- Drive East on Speedway (5.0 miles)
- Left on Wilmot and continue on Tanque Verde (4.3 miles)
- Left on Catalina Highway (5.9 miles)
- The parking for this trailhead is a pullout on the down-mountain side of the highway - there are signs that will help you find the pullout.

Trail Notes

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

- 0.0 miles, 3250': A sign marks the start of the trail at the [Soldier Trail Trailhead](#). [Waypoint thso]
- 0.6 miles, 3890': Cross a wash on a rocky slab. [Waypoint SO01]
- 1.5 miles, 4360': Enter Soldier Canyon – as the trail crosses and follows the canyon you may have to look carefully to find it. [Waypoint SO02]
- 1.6 miles, 4390': Leave Soldier Canyon – head east onto the grassy hillsides. [Waypoint SO03]
- 2.3 miles, 4870': A well-worn side trail splits off to the left to a great highpoint/vista. [Waypoint SO04]
- 2.4 miles, 4810': Continue to the right at a sign for the Soldier Trail – the trail to the left is an unofficial trail into the bottom of Soldier Canyon frequently used by [climbers](#). [Waypoint SO05]
- 2.5 miles, 4810': The Soldier Trail ends at a junction with the [Molino Basin Trail](#) at a sign under a large tree – right on the [Molino Basin Trail](#) takes you towards the [Gordon Hirabayashi Recreation Site](#), Shreve Saddle and the [Sycamore Reservoir Trail](#) are to the left. [Waypoint so-mb]
- To return to the [Soldier Trail Trailhead](#) hike back down Soldier Trail – longer hikes are possible by using the [Molino Basin Trail](#).

and maintenance of a powerline to the Federal Prison Camp near Milepost 8 ... The camp was abandoned ... The line and conductors were removed and the power poles were cut off above ground level and left where they lay."

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This trail has a long history. In Look to the Mountains Suzanne Hensel identifies the 'Old Soldier Trail' as a route believed to have been created by soldiers from Fort Lowell. In the early 1900s this trail became one of several paths that were used to travel from Tucson to areas high on the mountain. In The Santa Catalina Mountains, A Guide to the Trails and Routes the authors give a few more historic details:

"The lower portion was made into a dozer road by Trico Electric Cooperative ... for the construction

