

Access to the upper Verde River

Access to the upper Verde River between Paulden and Clarkdale is challenging. Relatively easy public access points for passenger cars are at the Upper Verde River Wildlife Area, at Perkinsville Bridge, and near the Tuzigoot Bridge in Clarkdale.

Current Prescott National Forest (PNF) and Arizona Game and Fish policy prohibits vehicular access to the riparian corridor. Also, PNF policy restricts vehicles to roads signed and designated on the Motor Vehicle Use Map that is available at the District Ranger offices. You should also obtain a map of PNF; see <http://www.fs.usda.gov/prescott/> for details.

There are a dozen trailheads on the canyon rim where you can hike down to the river. To access the river using rough two-track forest roads (high-clearance vehicle required) to get to a trailhead . You will encounter gates to control cattle, but because this is public land you have legal access. Please leave the gate open if you found it open, closed if you find it closed, and close it a sign requests closure.

Please practice “Leave No Trace” rules: pack out all your trash (and pick up trash that others have left behind).

The following description of access to the upper Verde River is excerpted from the “Citizens’ Proposal for a Upper Verde Wild and Scenic River,” updated in December 2016 to reflect current conditions. Locator points are labeled on maps M3a–d. All access roads, trails, and descriptions are based on field verification.

Trail Access

Generally, trail access (Maps M3a–d) to the river is from roads ending on the canyon rim. Typically, there is a trail down the rim to the riparian zone. No trails along the riverbank survive the yearly seasonal floods that scour the banks. Hiking along the river is easy, but it requires occasional bushwhacking through the brush and frequent wading.

1. **Stillman Lake Trailhead** (Locator R30): From Sweet Valley Rd, an unmarked road crosses Arizona State Land ending at the privately owned Headwaters Ranch property. An informal trail leads down the bluff to Stillman Lake; it is commonly used to view rock art (Photo Appendix P19). This trail is not available for public access without permission from ASLD.
2. **Upper Verde River Wildlife Area** (Locator R28): informal trails extend upstream to Stillman Lake and lower Granite Creek, and downstream to the PNF boundary..
3. **FR9097U Trailhead**: Trail 9097 leads to river following an unused ranch two track.
4. **Hell Point Trailhead**: Designated trail 9012 (Locator R10) from the end of FR9711R leads down the bluff to the river.
5. **MC Canyon Trailhead** (Locator R11): Designated trail from the end of FR9010 leads to the river.
6. **Bear Siding Trailhead** (Locator R08): Informal trails to river from the public access and dispersed camping area at the end of FR492A.
7. **Perkinsville Bridge Trailhead** (Locator R14): From this un-maintained public access and dispersed camping site area, it is possible to walk upriver; no trail exists. Access downstream is blocked by private property belonging to Perkinsville Ranch.
8. **Sand Trap Tank Trailhead** (Locator R13): Designated trail 9024 leads to the river.
9. **Duff Springs Trailhead** (Locator R09): Designated trail 9016 leads down 300' and 1.5 mi to the river.
10. **Pothole Tank Trailhead** (Locator R07): Designated trail 9006 leads down 300' and 1 mile to the river.
11. **Pipeline Trailhead**: Access to the river from the end of FR638 south and FR638 north (Locator R01, R02).
12. **Sycamore Canyon Trailhead** (Locator R05): From the end of FR131, designated trail 144 leads up Sycamore Canyon into the Sycamore Wilderness area. This is an extremely popular route used by Verde Valley residents for hiking and swimming in all seasons.
13. **Sycamore Creek Confluence Trail** (Locator R16): From the end of FR131, an unnumbered, very rough, two track road leads south down to the rim above the Verde, providing hikers, campers, and

boaters with hiking access to the river corridor. AZGFD closes this trail to all access from Dec 1 to June 1 to prevent interference with bald eagle nesting.

Road Access: West of Perkinsville Bridge

Approximately 25 river miles upstream from Perkinsville Bridge (Locator R14), Arizona State Highway 89 runs north-south along the western boundary of the upper Verde River study area. Yavapai County Roads 70, 71, and 137 are graded roads suitable for 2WD passenger cars; all turn east off of Highway 89 near Chino Valley, heading generally into the Prescott National Forest, intersecting various Forest Service Routes (FR) that provide access to the study corridor.

Access roads from County Road 70 (Perkinsville Road, Locator RPV, map M3a):

1. FR638 ("Pipeline Road," south section, 4WD low-range high clearance vehicle required) leads to a vehicle barrier $\frac{1}{4}$ mi from the river (Locator R01).
2. Bull Basin Rd (Locator R01a, extremely rough 4WD) is an unused ranch road that appears on some topographic maps. It provides no legal public vehicular access to the river. PNF has scheduled it to be obliterated, so it is not shown on the access map.
3. FR9211J via FR164 (high clearance vehicle required) leads to the Pothole Tank trailhead (Locator R07) on the rim 300' above the river. PNF trail 9006, restricted to hikers and equestrians, leads to the river; motorized access is prohibited.
4. FR9110R via FR164 (high clearance vehicle required) leads to the Sand Trap Tank trailhead (Locator R13) on the rim approximately 150' above the river. PNF trail 9024, restricted to hikers and equestrians, leads to the river; motorized access is prohibited.
5. FR9112J via FR164 (high clearance vehicle required) leads to the Duff Springs trailhead (Locator R09) approximately 300' above the river. A trail restricted to hikers and equestrians leads to the river; motorized access is prohibited.
6. County Road 70 turns north and crosses the river at Perkinsville Bridge (Locator R14), 22 road miles from Hwy 89. Prescott National Forest allows dispersed car camping here, but no toilets, trashcans, monitoring, or maintenance are provided.
7. From Perkinsville Bridge, County Road 72 runs south to Jerome, providing access from the Verde Valley.

Access roads from County Road 71 (Drake Road, Locator DRA, map M3b):

1. FR9010 via FR9711k and FR182 (high clearance 2WD vehicle required) runs seven miles to a trailhead (Locator R11) on MC Canyon Point separating MC Canyon and Hell Canyon, approximately 200'

above and 1.5 miles from the river. Trail 9013, restricted to hikers and equestrians, leads to the river; motorized access is prohibited.

2. FR492A (“Bear Siding Rd,” suitable for 2WD standard clearance passenger cars) leads 6.5 miles to an undeveloped camping area known as Bear Siding (Locator R08). Motor vehicle access to the river is barred. Bear Siding has been a popular swimming and party spot for decades, and the area is highly impacted by campers. Prescott National Forest provides no facilities, monitoring, or maintenance services. Topographic maps indicate another access road to Locator R12, but this road was abandoned and obliterated many years ago.

3. County Road 71 continues, turning south to Perkinsville Bridge.

Access roads from County Road 137 (Verde Ranch Road, Locator RVVR, map M3b):

1. An unnamed road (SUV friendly) turns south just after Verde Ranch Road crosses the railroad tracks (Locator R28A) and leads to the Upper Verde River Wildlife Area (Locator R28), operated by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. On the canyon rim, about a mile from the Verde, a welded pipe gate and fence prevents vehicles from descending the rim and accessing the river. Hikers and equestrian entry is allowed; picnic tables, toilets, and an educational display are located on a terrace a few hundred yards above the river.

2. FR638 (“Pipeline Rd,” north section, 4WD low-range, high clearance vehicle required for this very rough road) leads to a trailhead (Locator R02) on the canyon rim 1/4 mile and 200’ above the river. A trail restricted to hikers and equestrians leads to the river; motorized access is prohibited.

3. FR9097U (high clearance 4WD vehicle required) leads to the Prospect Point trailhead (Locator R03) approximately one mile and 200’ above the river. Trail 9097, restricted to hikers and equestrians, leads to the river; motorized access is prohibited.

4. FR9711R, via FR681 and FR9087K (high clearance vehicle required), leads to a trailhead (Locator R10) at Hell Point on the canyon rim one mile from and 300’ above the river. Dispersed campsites exist here. Trail 9012, restricted to hikers and equestrians, leads to the river; motorized access is prohibited.

5. From the FR9097U junction, Verde Ranch Road continues to Verde Ranch. A sturdy locked gate bars public access (Locator R27) to private property.

Road Access into Study Area: East of Perkinsville Bridge (map M3d)

Tuzigoot Bridge: There is no public road access to the river downstream of Perkinsville Bridge for the next 25 river miles until the Tuzigoot Bridge, near Tuzigoot National Monument in Clarkdale. At the bridge, a public access point permits boaters to take out.

Forest Road 131: FR131 runs northerly through the Coconino National Forest, generally paralleling the Verde, ending at the border of the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness near the confluence of Sycamore Creek. A few miles down FR131 from the Tuzigoot Bridge, the Tapco public access area permits boaters to launch and float to the Tuzigoot takeout. At the end of FR131, a private road with a locked gate provides controlled access to the Packard Ranch and two small private parcels on the Verde above the Sycamore Creek confluence. From FR131 in the Coconino National Forest, several short roads lead toward the river, including private roads plus FR9951, FR9952, FR9505, FR9506, and FR9507 (Locators R16–23). These roads terminate within the study corridor on top of sheer basaltic cliffs that line the canyon; you can hike down to the river but no vehicle access is possible.

In addition to road access, there is a railway used by the Verde Canyon Railroad for popular tourist rides six days a week (one train every afternoon), running from Clarkdale to Perkinsville and back through the spectacular canyon (<http://www.verdecanyonrr.com/index.html>). The tracks follow the narrow river canyon on a bench above the river or above the basalt canyon rim. The train moves slowly for sightseeing, only stopping briefly at Perkinsville and never releasing passengers. Additionally, the tracks are used nightly to haul coal and other materials to the Clarkdale Cement plant operated by Salt River Materials Project. Train traffic is audible daily for a few minutes. The tracks are not visible from the river.

Road Access: Lower Granite Creek

There is no public access by road to lower Granite Creek.