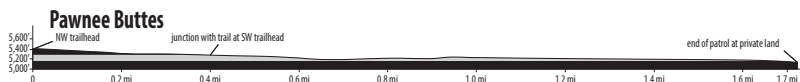


Pawnee Buttes Trail 840

PRIORITY	MEDIUM (patrol methods: day hike; ride stock)
Rating:	Hikers – Easy Stock riders: Easy
Open for Patrol:	open all year
SPOT/USFS Radio:	not required (Radio: 06 (Pawnee repeater); Priority 4, Good reception)
Wilderness:	None
One-Way Length:	1.7 miles (from NW trailhead to base of the western Pawnee Butte)
Beginning Elevation:	5,420
Peak Elevation:	5,420
Gain/Loss/Net Gain:	0 / 269 / -269
USFS Regulations:	National Forest
Trails Illustrated:	None
USGS 7-½' Quadrangles:	Pawnee Buttes (most of trail), Grover SE (trailhead area)



TRAILHEAD LOCATION

From I-25, take CO-14 east approximately 52 miles to CR-103 (about 13 miles east of Briggsdale). Drive north on CR-103 following the directional signs (and CR-98) to Keota. From there, go north on CR-105, then east on CR-104, to CR-111. Follow CR-111 north to GDR-685 and then follow GDR-685 northeast to the trailhead.

Toilets located along GDR-685, at the site of the future trailhead SE of the existing trailhead. There is no water available for people or stock. There is parking for stock trailers near the trailhead. Note that the actual trailhead is at the southern end of the parking area, about 60-70 ft due south of the large, paired Pawnee National Grassland and Pawnee Buttes Trail signs.

Hawks, eagles, and falcons nest in the rocky cliffs of the Buttes and bluffs. They should not be disturbed.

There is a seasonal closure from March 1 through June 30 to protect nesting hawks, eagles, and falcons. Public access to the Overlook and surrounding bluffs is prohibit-

ed. Visitors may not approach within 200 yards from the top and 400 yards from the bottom of the Buttes. Remind visitors to remain on the Pawnee Buttes Trail during this closure period to minimize disturbance to the nesting birds. Also, remind riders that only processed feeds or certified weed-free hay can be brought onto the Pawnee National Grassland, and that horses (and other stock) should be fed only these products for 48-72 hours before being brought onto the Grassland.

GPS Coordinates:

trailhead: N40°48.807' W104°0.039'

maze gate & swinging gate at barbed-wire fence: N40°48.845' W103°59.676'

end of patrol (at private property): N40°49.319' W103°58.499'

PATROL DESCRIPTION

This trail is open year around and provides an opportunity to view the Buttes up close. The Buttes stand approximately 250 feet above the surrounding prairie and were formed as the surrounding sediments were removed by erosion. The upper surfaces of the Buttes, which are composed of relatively hard sandstone and conglomerate, protected the underlying, softer, clay-rich sedimentary rock from erosion. Due to their unstable nature, climbing on the Buttes is not recommended.

Caution: Rattlesnakes are abundant in the National Grassland and are commonly encountered along this trail.

From the trailhead, the trail meanders between the Overlook area (to the north and west) and Lipps Bluff (to the east and south), descending gently around gullies until reaching a low point where it crosses a large arroyo. There are soapweed yucca plants more or less all along the trail and numerous Rocky Mountain juniper trees near the arroyo and on the northern face of Lipps Bluff. The trail then proceeds northeast to the base of the western Pawnee Butte before passing by the southern face of the Butte and continuing in the direction of the eastern Pawnee Butte.

However, the trail ends shortly after passing around the southern side of the western Pawnee Butte, just beyond a large wooden sign stating "End of Trail" "Private Land Beyond this Point". Although the eastern Pawnee Butte is nearby and this butte lies partially on USFS land and partially on private land, there is no public access to it because it is surrounded by private land. For this reason you should discourage visitors from going beyond the end of the trail toward the eastern Pawnee Butte.

Take a hat, sunscreen, and water. Temperatures topping 100°F can be encountered in July and August, so it is best to hike or ride this trail in fall, winter, or spring. Camping is allowed on public land within the Grassland, but camping is prohibited within 200 ft of the Pawnee Buttes trailheads.

The Pawnee National Grassland is a native shortgrass steppe (i.e., shortgrass prairie) dominated by buffalo grass and blue gramma. It typically receives only 12-15 inches of rainfall annually. The Grassland supports a surprising

diversity of plants and wildflowers (over 500 plant species have been documented in the area), many of which bloom in early spring. In addition to an abundance of native plant species (that include at least four species of native thistles and several species of native spurges), numerous plants were planted by homesteaders and early farmers and many of these still persist. Furthermore, a number of introduced noxious weeds occur on the grassland, including Dalmatian toadflax, Canada thistle, Musk thistle, Scotch thistle, Diffuse knapweed, Russian knapweed, Houndstongue, Saltcedar, and Kochia.

Approximately 300 bird species (including the Colorado state bird, the Lark Bunting) occur on the Grassland and many of them nest either on or near the Pawnee Buttes. Almost 50 species of mammals (including pronghorn), and numerous species of reptiles, (including the western rattlesnake) have been documented on the Grassland.

Collecting artifacts, arrowheads, vertebrate fossils, or barn wood is prohibited. Remind people of the LNT principle - Leave What You Find.