

**100**

**CLASSIC  
HIKES** in TM

**ARIZONA**

**Second Edition**

**Scott S. Warren**

# Walnut Canyon



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## 24

## WALNUT CANYON

**Distance:** 4 miles round trip**Difficulty:** easy**Hiking time:** 3 hours**Elevation:** 6,950 to 6,800 feet**Management:** Coconino NF**Wilderness status:** none**Season:** April to November**USGS map:** Flagstaff East

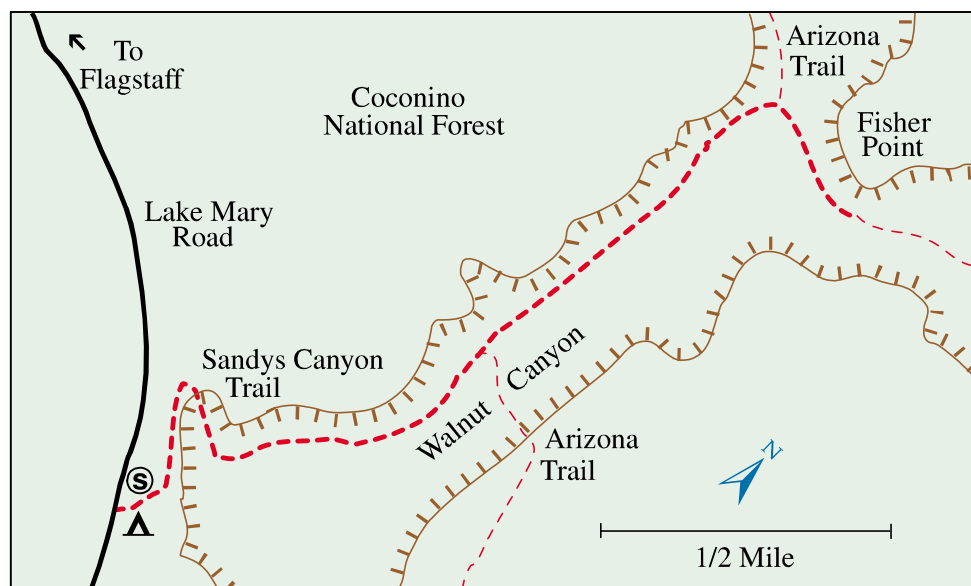
Most people know Walnut Canyon for the small national monument located just east of Flagstaff. Tucked away in this end of the canyon are several Sinagua cliff dwellings dating back 700 years. But Walnut Canyon stretches for several miles across the Coconino Plateau, and a hike into a section upstream from the monument reveals the beauty of this small but interesting canyon without the crowds.

Follow the Lake Mary Road 5.5 miles south-east from where it turns off US Highway 89. Just past the second cattle guard, turn left and drive to the far end of a small campground. This hike utilizes the 1-mile-long Sandys Canyon Trail to access the canyon bottom.

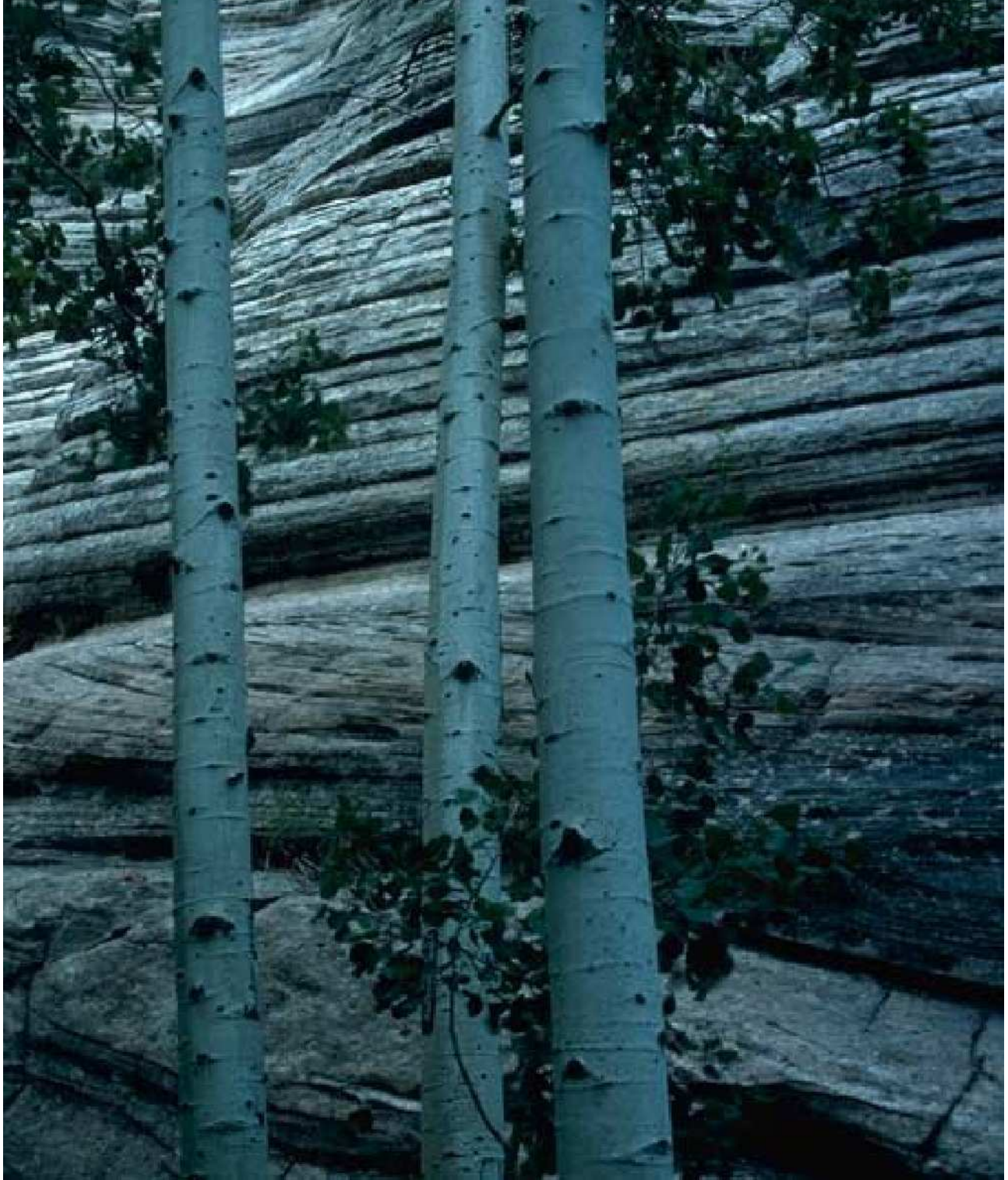
From the trailhead the Sandys Canyon Trail traverses north across flat terrain to the canyon's

edge, 0.25 mile away. The rim offers a fine view into shallow but well-defined Walnut Canyon. Capped by the dark lava bed that covers the entire Coconino Plateau is a layer of Coconino Sandstone, the same rock found in the upper walls of the Grand Canyon. At about 0.5 mile, the trail reaches a short side canyon (Sandys Canyon) through which it gains access to the main canyon's bottom. Within the protected environment of Sandys Canyon grow several yellow-bark ponderosa as well as a few aspens and lesser shrubs.

From the mouth of Sandys Canyon, the trail continues north along the level bottom of Walnut Canyon to where it soon reaches the Arizona Trail. The hike then takes up this new trans-state route for another mile, to where the



Quick and easy, this hike in Walnut Canyon is ideal for hikers short on time.



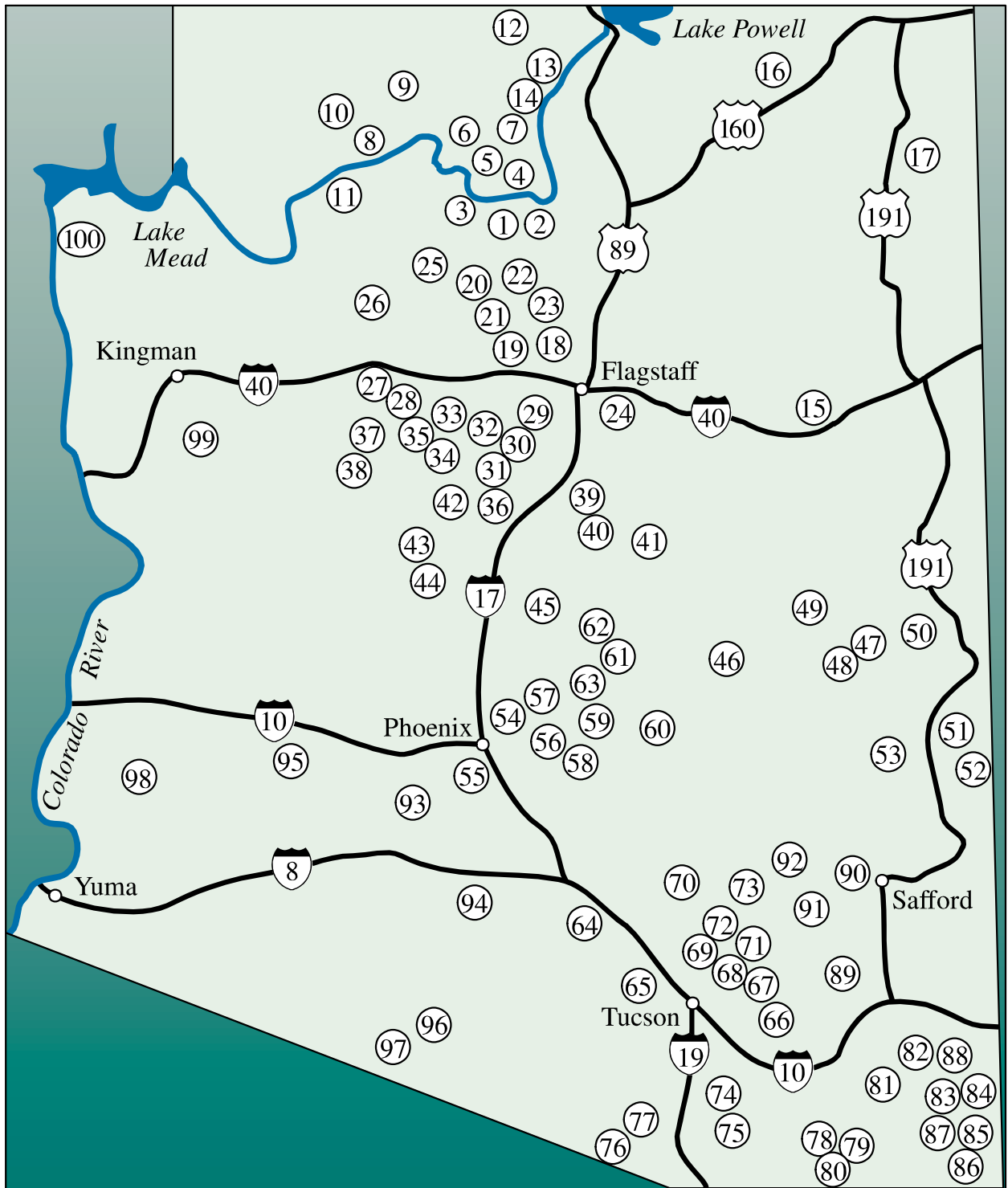
### *Aspen in Walnut Canyon*

canyon bends to the east. The Arizona Trail climbs up a side canyon at this point and heads toward Flagstaff. To the right soars Fisher Point, an impressive rise of Coconino Sandstone. Note the crossbedding in this former desert sand dune.























The end of the established trail and the turnaround for this hike is Fisher Point. To avoid dis-

turbing the riparian plants beyond (box elder, oak, walnut, ash, and poison ivy, among other species), the Forest Service discourages continuing beyond this point.

Water is not available along the route, so pack a quart or two. Be prepared to encounter mountain bicyclists, especially along the Arizona Trail segment.



# MAP LEGEND

	Main trail		Spring
	Secondary trail		Rapids or falls
	Paved road		Saddle or pass
	2WD gravel road		Building
	4WD road		Cave
	Canyon rim		Point of interest
	Intermediate stream		Summit
	Perennial stream		Campground (CG)
	River		Picnic site
	Boundary		Tank, pond, or lake
	Start of hike		Bridge



## USING THIS BOOK

All of these hikes follow either designated trails or, at the very least, established routes of travel such as canyon bottoms. Cross-country excursions are avoided so as to lessen impact on the environment. Most of these hikes either access a particular point of interest or follow a loop route. Attention has also been paid to representing the variety of terrains and ecosystems found in Arizona and to providing as wide a geographical representation as possible. Some of the hikes presented here are quite popular and should be avoided on weekends and holidays, but there are a great many other excursions that are not as heavily visited.

### Information Blocks

Each hike begins with an information block designed to provide pertinent facts and figures at a glance. By scanning these headings, you should know right away what to expect during each hike.

In all but a few cases the *Distance* figure refers to the hike's round-trip distance. If a particular trail is 3.2 miles long, the distance figure will indicate "6.4 miles round trip" to let you know the total number of miles to be hiked. In a few cases where it is impracticable to retrace the entire route, the distance figure will read "one way." For these hikes a shuttle is required.

The *Difficulty* of each hike is calculated mostly by the trail's elevation gain and overall grade, and rated as easy, moderate, or strenuous. One short, extremely steep pitch may not necessarily bump a hike into the "strenuous" category, but continuous steep grades would. Hiking conditions such as the presence of deadfall, loose rock, and so on were also considered. Some routes that are not too steep may still be rated strenuous because of obstacles along the way. For the most part the hiking terrain involves established trails, although some short stretches may require scrambling skills.

The *Hiking times* presented are for persons of moderate hiking ability and strength who enjoy stopping occasionally to rest and take in the scenery. They take into account such factors as

distance, elevations, grade changes, and trail conditions. These times will not fit every hiker's purposes, and are provided simply as a guide.

The *Elevation* entry shows the range in elevation that the hike covers. The first figure indicates the trailhead elevation, while the second is that of either the high or low point of the hike. In most cases this is also the destination of the hike. If this second entry is lower than the first, the hike descends in elevation (typical of most canyon hikes). If the second figure is greater, the hike climbs in elevation. In some instances, additional climbing may be required in the course of the hike. This added elevation gain is included in the hike descriptions.

The *Management* entry indicates which government agency or private group holds title to portions or all of the route. Entries include: the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), national forest (NF), national park (NP), national monument (NM), national historic site (NHS), national recreation area (NRA), national wildlife refuge (NWR), state park (SP), county park, or a city park; or owned by an organization such as The Nature Conservancy. These entities may offer additional information about a particular hike, including maps.

The *Wilderness status* entry indicates whether or not the hike enters an established wilderness area (WA) or primitive area (PA). Such information is helpful in determining what rules and regulations apply.

The *Season* entry points out the best times of the year to attempt the hike. Where high mountain hikes are concerned, that means the months when the trail is free of snow. In the lower-elevation deserts, the optimal months for hiking are when the danger of heat exposure is not too great.

Many of the hikes in this book are possible year-round. Before setting out, however, you should check with the managing agency about the road conditions leading to the trailhead and the trail conditions beyond. During certain times of the year rainy conditions may, in fact, preclude access.

The *USGS maps* entry indicates which 7.5-minute topographic map or maps cover the

hike. Keep in mind that these are often outdated in terms of trails. Some routes may not have been in existence when the maps were drafted, while other trails have since been rerouted. Nevertheless, topo maps come in handy, especially in combination with updated management-agency maps.

### **Maps**

Each hike in this book is illustrated by a map. While every effort has been made to include all pertinent information, each of these simplified maps is meant to serve as an introduction to a particular hike. It is advisable to bring along more detailed maps showing contour lines, elevations, secondary access roads and trails, and other features.

The simple style of these map sketches does not allow them to show the many twists and turns and elevation losses and gains in the route. Therefore the length of the hike shown on the map (as calculated by multiplying the length of the route shown by the indicated scale of the map) may not appear to match the distances given in the text. The distances provided in the text and information blocks can be trusted to be accurate.

### **Hike Descriptions**

Each description begins with an introductory paragraph, followed by specific directions on how to reach the trailhead. This is followed by a running narrative of the route itself, which includes a description of grades, cardinal directions, possible hazards, and general trail conditions. Most major trail junctions are mentioned, as well as vegetation found along the way. Possible wildlife sightings are sometimes discussed, as is the geology of an area. A historical perspective may also warrant mention on occasion. These discussions of the natural and human history of each hike are extremely brief, and additional research will only enhance your hiking experience. Each description ends with a summation of such technicalities as water availability, specific hazards, and regulations.

## **A NOTE ABOUT SAFETY**

Safety is an important concern in all outdoor activities. No guidebook can alert you to every hazard or anticipate the limitations of every reader. Therefore, the descriptions of roads, trails, routes, and natural features in this book are not representations that a particular place or excursion will be safe for your party. When you follow any of the routes described in this book, you assume responsibility for your own safety. Under normal conditions, such excursions require the usual attention to traffic, road and trail conditions, weather, terrain, the capabilities of your party, and other factors. Keeping informed on current conditions and exercising common sense are the keys to a safe, enjoyable outing.

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