

## **Pistols, Plows and Petticoats Mountain Day Trip / Loop Tour**

This tour showcases the beautiful scenery south of the valley, along with wildlife sightings and historical insights into the mountains and their inhabitants.

- Refer to the Valley Loop map for the mountain tour starting point.
- Set your odometer to zero at the intersection of School Bus Road and Forest Road 285 (Water Canyon Road).
- Approximate odometer readings are in square brackets after each place name. Readings may vary.
- The route passes through the Apache National Forest and White Mountain Apache Reservation. Drive courteously and follow all signs. Forest roads are marked "FR" followed by a number.
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**The tour begins at the former Eagar Sawmill, located at the intersection of School Bus Road and Water Canyon Road (Forest Road 285) in Eagar, Arizona 85925.**

**From Phoenix**, drive northeast on AZ-87 (Beeline Highway) for approximately 90 miles to Payson, then continue east on AZ-260 for about 135 miles through Heber-Overgaard and Show Low to reach Eagar.

In Eagar, at the main stoplight (AZ-260 and N Main Street), turn south onto N Main Street (which transitions to Mountain Avenue) and proceed 1 mile.

Turn right (west) onto School Bus Road for 0.1 mile to the intersection with Water Canyon Road. The total distance is roughly 225 miles, with an estimated driving time of 4-5 hours depending on traffic and road conditions.

### **Tips:**

1. The entire route is 86.5 miles, allow several hours. The route includes dirt roads suitable for passenger cars, but watch for potholes and mud.
2. Drive slowly (20-30 MPH) and safely. Pull over to take photos or read.
3. Look for brown tour markers.
4. Bring water, snacks, or a picnic.
5. Pack a jacket and camera; mountains can be cool year-round.
6. Inform someone of your plans and expected return time.

7. Wildlife viewing is best at dawn or dusk (binoculars help).
8. Stay on established roads and keep the forest clean.
9. Park to hike, relax under pines, visit museums, or enjoy the fresh air and quiet as you explore Round Valley's heritage.

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### **#1 Eagar Sawmill**

(Immediately on your left - sign & parking on right) - Mile - 0.2

Ford log trucks and crew at Whiting Sawmill, Eagar.

Small sawmills dotted the White Mountains to meet local lumber needs. In 1941, E.T. Whiting founded Whiting Timber Company here at Eagar's south end, using free timber from the Forest Service to clear trees felled by an August 1940 tornado (6-8 million board feet) south and east of Mt. Baldy. Starting with a steam engine, it grew near the nation's largest Ponderosa Pine stand, providing lumber and jobs. Sold to Southwest Forest Industries in the early 1960s, then to Stone Container in the late 1970s, it expanded. At peak, it produced 420,000 board feet daily on two shifts, one of the Southwest's largest mills alongside McNary (35 miles west). Clearcutting was rare, tested only in small areas for Phoenix watershed runoff. Closed in 2000 due to environmental pressures and reduced timber sales, buildings and equipment were auctioned. The mill was dismantled, parts reused elsewhere. Efforts continue to restore part for small-diameter timber projects. Little remains but memories.

Google Maps:

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Eagar+Sawmill%2C+Eagar%2C+Arizona>

### **#2 Water Canyon Ranger Station / Saffell Canyon Massacre**

(Turn left on FR 74. Proceed to parking lot) Mile - 2.2

Across Water Canyon Road, under large cottonwoods by the creek, stands the old Water Canyon Ranger Station. This U.S. Forest Service "Administrative Site" focuses on agency operations, not public use. Built in 1929 to house Apache National Forest rangers overseeing timber and grazing, it reflects distinctive Forest Service architecture with simple, pleasant quarters.

Additions in the early 1930s supported expanded resource management. Still used for housing, a wood shop, and fire cache (storing equipment, clothing, food for firefighting). Administration moved to Springerville in 1950.

Saffell Canyon (left) is named for Sam Saffell (Valley Tour #23). In 1885, he and family trailed 2,000 cows from Texas, homesteading land with "grass higher than a cow's belly." They prospered and built the Saffell Hotel and Saloon in Springerville. Nearby, Apache's murdered and scalped the Bazaari family via Water Canyon. Town founder William W. Eagar's family, living in a dugout up-canyon, hid by the creek to escape. W.R. Milligan (Valley Tour #5) homesteaded a nearby canyon named for him.

Google Maps:

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Water+Canyon+Ranger+Station%2C+Arizona>

### #3 Little George's Lake - Mile - 7.6

George Eagar built this small reservoir in 1912, typical of many in the mountains to store stream and runoff water for valley farms and gardens. Most used earthen dams and headgates, with natural streambeds carrying water downhill to ditches for steady supply. Rebuilt at least once like many earthen dams. Droughts sometimes dried streams, springs, and reservoirs. Part of the Twenty-six Bar Ranch grazing permit.

Google Maps

(<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Little+George%27s+Lake%2C+Arizona>)

### #4 Rudd Creek - Mile - 010.1

The 1876 Weekly Miner noted six Arkansas families arriving. Next spring, Dr. William Rudd bought land on this stream, draining to Escudilla Mountain's (left) foothills. The Rudds ranched and farmed successfully, selling to Mr. McKay (later White Mountain Hereford Ranch, now Sipe Wildlife Area). The doctor traveled by horse and buckboard with medical bags and rifle. Fred and Bert Colter's (Valley Tour #7) mother was a Rudd. Right: two ancient volcanic cinder cones—Rudd Knoll (near) and Wahl Knoll (far), after Bertha Wahl's family (Valley Tour #17), who ran large sheep, cattle, horse herds.

Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Rudd+Creek%2C+Arizona>

## #5 Pat Knoll

Turn left on FR 60 - Mile - 10.3

The tall hill ahead (right) honors Pat Trainor, an hospitable, witty Irishman tried 13 times for rustling in Apache County courts—never convicted. He summered cattle here in the 1880s, hiding his rope under his shirt instead of on saddle. He helped start cattle businesses by renting cows on shares.

Google Maps <https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Pat+Knoll%2C+Arizona>

## #6 Pat Knoll Ranger Station - Mile - 11.5

Left: stone chimney of early U.S.F.S. ranger station built around 1913. Foot-thick log walls, 14x16 feet; ranger earned \$50/month. Cabin dismantled recently, reassembled at White Mountain Historical Park in Springerville (Valley Tour #3) for historic furnishing. Nearby: spring and later cow camp cabin foundation; corrals still used.

Early U.S.F.S. Ranger Station at Pat Knoll

Google Maps:

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Pat+Knoll+Ranger+Station%2C+Arizona>

## #7 Crosby Crossing - Mile - 17.9

Mollie Wiltbank Crosby (later Butler) and husband Lorenzo homesteaded on Black River's lonely banks, running a store and cattle herd. Mollie recounted the Smith Gang—"gentlemen rustlers and desperados"—visiting; she slept upstairs with children while they slept downstairs armed. After leaving, tracked by posse led by Arizona Rangers, a gun battle on Black River canyon walls killed Rangers Will Maxwell and Carlos Tafoya; now "Battleground." Lorenzo possibly killed later by a Smith member. After his death, Mollie and children moved to Greer. View Mt. Baldy at [018.6]. Turn right on FR 249 [022.3]. At Big Lake Road [023.6], visit center [024.3], then to #8.

Crosby Crossing Original Crosby ranch and store on Black River

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Crosby+Crossing%2C+Arizona>

## **#8 Big Lake and Crescent Lake** - (Park in pull-out on left at milepost 395)

Restrooms here and at lakes' camp stores. - Mile - 26.8

Horsedrawn construction at Big Lake Dam - C.C.C.

CCC built these dams mid-1930s at urging of Gustav Becker's sons (Valley Tour #27), Julius and Ed. Used federal waterfowl habitat funds for snowmelt from 2,000+ acres drainage. Big Lake: mountains' largest at ~ 450 acres. Ed named Crescent for its shape. Stocked with trout for tourism; nutrient-rich water yields fast growth, many state records. Aging caused winter kill from oxygen depletion; 1953 fixes raised Big Lake dam/spillway 10 feet, added 1,200-ft dike at Crescent. Weeds persist. Still top fishing/camping spots. Most regional lakes man-made; only one natural.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Big+Lake+and+Crescent+Lake%2C+Arizona>

## **#9 Sheep Dipping Vat Spring** - (Turn left on FR8070F) - Mile - 28.4

Top of small hill, 200 feet right off rough dirt road (easy walk): ruins of sheep dipping vat and pens (look for rock pile). Stone-lined vat filled with water and insecticide to treat infestations for better thriving in high grasslands. Thousands of sheep summered here, herded by Mexican/Basque shepherds or settlers' children. West across meadow: spring box for stockmen.

Dipping sheep at one of several similar area vats.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Sheep+Dipping+Vat+Spring%2C+Arizona>

## **#10 Mount Baldy Wilderness Area**

(Drive or walk 0.3 miles into Gabaldon Horse Camp (signed). May be muddy/potholed. Primitive toilet.) - Mile - 33.9

At 11,409 feet, Baldy is Arizona's second-highest peak and White Mountains' highest. Sacred to Apaches; summit access restricted. Fit hikers/horseback riders: 7-mile trail from here to near alpine top. Nearby: Phelps homestead cabin ruins along East Fork Little Colorado (burned for safety). 1873 Captain Wheeler survey noted summit's "magnificent" view, a "virgin solitude



undefiled by man." Named "Thomas Peak" for General Lorenzo Thomas (Mexican War). Corrals for camping/riding. Another peak view ahead left (no pull-out). Baldy: 8-million-year-old extinct volcano, erupting 10x Mt. St. Helens' volume.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Mount+Baldy+Wilderness+Area%2C+Arizona>

**#11 Lee Valley Reservoir** (Turn left on FR 113 into parking lot).

Accessible restrooms. - Mile - 35.9

Scenic 45-acre lake at 9,400 ft holds golden Apache Trout (native only to White Mountains). Southernmost U.S. spot for Arctic Grayling (high dorsal fin, hard to hatchery-raise; reproduces naturally here).

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Lee+Valley+Reservoir%2C+Arizona>

**#12 Sheep Crossing** - (Sharp curve, narrow bridge. Park far side.) - Mile - 38.5

This historic spot lies near the headwaters of the Little Colorado River, where its West Fork—sometimes a gentle trickle, sometimes a raging torrent—provided the only reliable crossing for large sheep flocks migrating between low-elevation winter pastures and high summer mountain meadows.

As flocks arrived at bedding grounds each evening, the faint tinkling of bells could be heard. The air carried the savory aroma of simmering lamb stew and fresh-baked sourdough from Basque shepherds' camps. Burros were packed daily or every few days, and the cook moved camp to new spots with fresh water and grass. Just ahead on the left is the West Fork trailhead, which also leads about 7 miles up toward Mt. Baldy.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Sheep+Crossing%2C+Arizona>

**#13 Slade Cabin / Twenty-four Ranch** - Mile - 41.6

Two 80-acre homesteads established ~1885 for sheep. Original Peterson log cabin ruins east side road (behind you); later bought by John Butler. West: Slade Ranch. Two sheep dipping vat remnants: one here, one nearby draw. Hall Creek drainage: "Twenty-four Draw," summer HQ

for Twenty-four Ranch owned by Englishmen Smith, Carson, Scotsman Tee. Bought 1,800 cattle/brand from John Wahl; grazed all area. 1889-1904 drought; 1893 winter die-off left 2,000 of 10,000 cattle. Bone collectors shipped trainloads of skeletons. 1928: Vince Butler/Milo Wiltbank built east-side corral for cattle/fishing/hunting camp. 1937: small sawmill cut lumber for still-used cabin here.

Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Slade+Cabin+Twenty-four+Ranch%2C+Arizona>

#### **#14 White Mountain Apache Reservation Line - Mile - 42.2**

Alchesay as a young man.

Established by executive order in 1871 by Ulysses S. Grant. White Mountain Apache leaders sought peace, relying on farming/foraging unlike southern Apaches. As explained in "The Reconquest of Ft. Apache" (CRM, National Park Service, Vol. 23 #9, 2000): They responded to invaders with caution, perceiving their power and aiming to retain land. Met Major John Green's expedition peacefully despite cornfield burning. Green's post (Camp Apache, later Fort Apache) shifted from control to protection from settlers. Fort spurred regional settlement via supply demands. From 1871, many enlisted as Army scouts, subduing renegades like Geronimo. Chief Alchesay earned Congressional Medal of Honor; Diablo, Pedro got Peace Medals. Soldiers/settlers sometimes attacked peaceful bands mistakenly. Settlers feared encounters (Geronimo/Victorio visited). Chiefs maintained uneasy peace. Becker from Springerville defused a tense trial by handing accused to Alchesay for justice. 1875 relocation plan to San Carlos sparked Cibecue shooting; scouts mutinied, attacked fort (only time). Three executed for mutiny. Peace prevailed; Apaches stayed, retaining ~1.7 million acres of beautiful land. Mount Baldy (11,409 ft) is reservation's highest, sacred point.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=White+Mountain+Apache+Reservation+Line%2C+Arizona>

#### **#15 Apache Railroad / Apache Spring Shipping Corrals (on right) - Mile - 48.9**

Log landing on the Apache Railway, 1922.

Old cindered railroad bed traces parallel highway in spots. Built 1917 to haul logs/supplies for Apache Lumber Company mill at McNary. Corydon Cooley drove last spike 1919 after tough construction. Miles of spurs through forest; delivered lumber 75 miles to Holbrook 3x/week, plus daily log runs. Fall: up to 40 cars/day of cattle/sheep to Santa Fe Railroad. Springerville

cattlemen shipped from Big Lake. Four steam engines (later diesels) hauled from reservation/forest, plowing winter snow. 1940s: rebuilt/extended to Maverick, Southwest Lumber's last camp south of Reservation Lake. 1970s: Tribe reasserted logging control; by 1976, Southwest closed McNary mill/rail. Focused on Eagar; log trucks took over. Tracks salvaged; gravel beds remain—some Rails to Trails, forest roads, or reverting to nature. Portion ran as White Mountain Scenic Railroad (steam passenger) from McNary to Big Cienega; didn't profit, engine sold before trend. Apaches humor: "Indians" but skilled cowboys!

### Old #36 of the White Mountain Scenic Railroad

Government preferred feeding Apaches for friendship over fighting; Fort Apache issued live beef. Family heads got band tags for rations. Some saved females, branded with tags, built herds. Early permits to non-Indians; by 1930s drought, Apaches reserved lands for own industry. With 1934 Taylor Grazing Act, impacted non-reservation ranchers; cattle numbers dropped. Tribe gained good cattle reputation; auctions here draw multi-state buyers. Loaded via shipping pens; old yards had carload scales. Replaced decade+ ago with new set passed earlier. Apache cowboys work cows, rodeo after.

### Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Apache+Railroad+Apache+Spring+Shipping+Corrals%2C+Arizona>

### #16 Dobson Sheep Camp (Park in pull-out on left) - Mile - 50.2

Hundreds of thousands of sheep grazed lush White Mountain meadows early on. Winters killed stock, so trailed to lower country, returning spring when aspens greened. Aspen bark carvings: names, dates, art by shepherds. John Dobson from Canada 1928; no road across mountains. John Butler wagoned him to view area. Bought at \$12/sheep unit despite skepticism. Today, Dobson holds last sheep allotment on Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest: 6,000 flock winters near Phoenix, trails historic Heber-Reno driveway to summer pastures. 49 days: starts Blue Point Bridge on Salt River, via Sunflower, Young, Heber, Snowflake, Vernon. Past: staggered bands to avoid mixing; 3 miles/day, herders risked firing/shooting for pace errors. Trail 0.5-mile wide, signed; bridges over canyons. 1920s: Vince Butler counted 60,000 sheep over Little Colorado bridge upstream South Fork near Lang Creek (abutments remain). Modern world threatens access. For now, pastoral scene when herders near highway. Base camp: old buildings north of road. Next: Greer turnoff downhill.

Sheep in mountain corrals, Apache National Forest

### Google Maps:

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Dobson+Sheep+Camp%2C+Arizona>



**#17 Benny and Rosey Creeks** (Turn right onto FR87D, go 0.1 mile. Park at 2nd bridge.) - Mile - 58.1

Rosey and Benny Creeks, side by side north of Greer, spark speculation. They symbolize unfulfilled romance: Benny Howell (one creek) left for marriage license; Rosey Hoffman (other creek) eloped with another.

Google Maps:

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Benny+and+Rosey+Creeks%2C+Arizona>

**#18 Greer Lakes** (Turn left into lakes area on Forest Rd 87B. Park first right area.) - Mile - 59.5

1880s Mormon pioneers planned this lake trio using Little Colorado snowmelt. Teams, wagons, fresnos, hand labor-built dams—vital for Round Valley irrigation. Tenacious: heated/broke rocks with fire/cold water. Without surveys, Sam Hale/brother dug 10-month tunnel through rock ledge (east side first lake) with pick, shovel, lantern, dynamite (area's first). Met nearly perfectly; drains Tunnel Lake to Little Colorado, then Round Valley. Restrooms/boat dock next turn. 3/4-mile loop to River Reservoir. Bunch Lake named for teacher Con Bunch who helped build. Trophy Brown/Rainbow trout; popular recreation. Drive sides/loops to match odometer. Return highway - Mile - 62.1.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Greer+Lakes%2C+Greer%2C+Arizona>

**#19 Lone Wolf's Cabin or Butterfly Lodge** - (Watch for big log entry on County Rd. 1126 left of highway.) - Mile - 63.1

Lone Wolf in full regalia.

"Butterfly Lodge": mountain residence/hunting lodge for James Willard Schultz and son Lone Wolf (by Blackfoot wife). Schultz's Indian lore writing and West fascination led him as first non-resident/tourist to build log cabin in 1913 near Greer. Carpenter John Butler (with Cleve Wiltbank) built it in pines for nature immersion. Name from meadow butterflies. 1924: gifted to son, first Native American painter/sculptor of West. Now National Register; Greer's first museum.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Lone+Wolf%27s+Cabin+or+Butterfly+Lodge%2C+Greer%2C+Arizona>

**#20 Lee Valley, Molly Butler Lodge and Amberon Point - (Parking by Molly Butler Lodge) - Mile - 63.9**

Explore this quaint village main street: cabins/lodges in pines, ends turnaround [065.0] at east Baldy trail sign; walk to Government Springs on old hatchery trail upstream. Originally Lee Valley for Willard Lee family (1879). First viewed from Mt. Baldy by Captain Wheeler (1873), Mormon explorers (1874). Post office favored short names; renamed for A.V. Greer, Amity founder (Valley Tour #9) who moved here. Amberon Ingelvelson: first recorded settler 1879; raised grain (scythes/sickles) in rich soil at Amberon/Amberian Point (valley south end). Mollie Crosby Butler (Tour #7): courageous, self-reliant; expert four-horse driver, delivered homemade cheese/butter across mountains to Fort Apache. Widowed, married John Butler; shared mountain love, hosted Zane Grey, Gov. Hunt, thousands at "Molly Butler Lodge, Arizona's Oldest Guest Lodge" (opened 1910). Started free, then charged; always generous. Recross bridge: right, White Mountain Lodge—built 1892 as pioneer residence (8x12 milled timbers, wooden pegs), opened as lodge 1940.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Lee+Valley%2C+Molly+Butler+Lodge+and+Amberon+Point%2C+Greer%2C+Arizona>

**# #21 Lang Creek - Mile - 70.8**

Before Highway 260, road crosses Lang Creek. "Old Man Tommy Lang" settled here 1879. 1889: died from Joseph Youngblood gunshot in dispute over overnight stay at Lang's cabin (Youngblood: Twenty-four Outfit cowboy). May 16, 1896: last U.S. Regular Army-Apache engagement "near Lang's Ranch."

Right, returning to Round Valley on 260: Little Colorado's steep canyon walls from Greer. Northeastern Arizona's lifeline: headwaters on Mt. Baldy as East/West Forks; meet in Greer Valley, flow to Round Valley.

Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Lang+Creek%2C+Arizona>

**#22 South Fork, Monty Butler Cabin, and Greer Mail Trail** (Turn right at "South Fork" and "Museum" signs - Mile - 76.0; stop pullout top hill.) - Mile - 76.9

Below: secluded South Fork canyon, named for tributary to river. Old mail trail to Greer passed here; mailman horseback weekly, \$200/year. Canyon floor: abandoned Monty Butler cabin/barn. Wanted "Dead or Alive, \$5000" for Colorado teamsters trouble; worked John Hall ranch nearby. Mother Ella Butler in Butch Cassidy Gang; Monty kept fresh horses for them. Cassidy visited as Jim Lowe. Upstream: James Hale settled with nine boys; built log home, planted oats/apples. Killed 1886 amid White Mountains gunfire (Valley Tour #19). Homestead now The Little House Museum—worth drive; territorial history. Watch road rocks for Indian petroglyphs descending to river. Across bridge short way: ~1885 hand-hewn log cabin by Mr. Phobe (little known). Various pioneers lived here. Eastern philosopher Mr. Marmaduke visited, stayed; grave nearby. Proceed downhill, explore South Fork.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=South+Fork%2C+Monty+Butler+Cabin%2C+and+Greer+Mail+Trail%2C+Arizona>

**#23 Apache Scout Grave** - Mile - 78.6

At Guest Ranch entrance, turn left 0.5 mile. USFS South Fork Campground by brook, under pines. Near entrance, left hill: forgotten Apache scout grave. Vandalized headstone read "Apache Scout, Ivan Thomas, 1879." White Mountain Apaches scouted for Fort Apache cavalry, aiding renegade capture, ending Indian wars. Little known of Ivan's death/burial here. Beautiful hiking trail starts west side campground along stream.

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Apache+Scout+Grave%2C+South+Fork%2C+Arizona>

**#24 The Milligan Ditch / Irrigation** (Just past golf course entrance) - Mile - 86.5

W.R. Milligan's (Valley Tour #5) unlined dirt ditch for farm/grist mill crosses under highway here, toward mill site. Joseph Udall widened to 8 feet with larger equipment. Annual cleaning started irrigation season. Building/maintaining ditches/reservoirs took effort but ensured water in semi-arid land. Ditches circled valley, even to north mesa. "Mormons make water run uphill" rang true. Mormon bishopric led irrigation, paying \$1.25/day (church got shares for members). Round Valley Water Users Association: local stockholders (often 1-2 shares for gardens). Built



goWhiteMountains.com

12-mile main canal: upper "Big Ditch," rest "Amity Ditch." Smaller ditches distributed. Used Greer Lakes/White Mountain Reservoir water. Laid without surveys; Bishop George Crosby engineered with 2x6/2x4 (16 ft), hand level, one leg 1/2 inch shorter for 1/2-inch fall per rod when level. Little Colorado sustains locals. Many dirt ditches still used; piping project for safety/conservation.

**We hope you enjoyed touring the beautiful "Sierra Blancas," Arizona's White Mountains.**

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=The+Milligan+Ditch+Irrigation%2C+Arizona>

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