

~ Upper Falls Driving & Hiking Instructions ~

There are two ways to access Upper Falls Wilderness Camp: The first is a 2½ hour hike that originates at the Ranch, <http://www.darwinranch.com/images/UpperFallsDriving2.pdf>. The directions that follow are a scenic alternative from the Jackson Hole area, which involves a 1½ hour drive (from Jackson) followed by a 4 hour hike.

MAPS

The DRIVING PORTION of this trip is on the Jackson Ranger District in the northern half of Bridger-Teton National Forest. The Forest Service tourist offices in the Greater Yellowstone Visitor's Center at the north end of town can provide you with a road map of the Gros Ventre River valley.

The HIKING PORTION of the trip starts at the Cow Creek trailhead. The first hour is depicted on the USGS Ouzel Falls Quadrangle.map. The remainder is on the USGS Darwin Peak Quadrangle map. These maps are also available at the Visitor's Center or can be bought at any of the outdoor recreation stores in Jackson.

DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS

The total DRIVING time to the trailhead from the Jackson Town Square is about 1 ½ hours.

Drive 6.8 miles north of the Town Square to the Gros Ventre Junction. Turn right and drive 7 miles to Kelly, then continuing another mile to the Gros Ventre Road on the right.

Cumulative mileages from the beginning of the Gros Ventre Road past Kelly are as follows:

Miles	Directions
0.0 miles	Gros Ventre Road leaves the highway 1 mile north of Kelly.
6.0 miles	The pavement ends. Atherton Creek campground is on the right. Continue straight ahead.
10.8 miles	Bridge over the Gros Ventre River.
12.5 miles	Crystal Creek Bridge.
13.0 miles	A road goes left to Slate Creek. Stay right (straight ahead).
18.8 miles	An information display on Trumpeter Swans is on the left.
19.5 miles	A fork. Do not take the left branch, which crosses the River and goes to the Goosewing Ranch. Stay right (straight ahead).
23.6 miles	A sign on the right says "Soda Lake". Stay left (straight ahead).
28.3 miles	The Cow Creek trailhead. There are corrals and barns on the left, an outhouse on the right. Park your car here. (If you are using a Ranch walkie-talkie you can notify us that you are at the end of the road.)

HIKING INSTRUCTIONS

The trail takes off about 200 feet up the road from the corrals. A sign says "Cow Creek Trail". (The mileage on the sign says 9 miles to the Gros Ventre River. Actual mileage is probably closer to 8.)

Estimated times are from one reference point to the next and are figured for a moderate pace. Total hiking time at this moderate pace should be around four hours (not including stops, or the optional and difficult side trip to Bear Cabin Creek Falls). Some hikers may take longer.

From time to time over the first hour of this trail you will come to unmarked forks that simply come back together a little further on. It

doesn't matter which fork you take until you get to the pass at the head of Cow Creek.

Hours : Minutes (from Trailhead)	Trail Description
0:00	Departure from Trailhead.
1:10	The valley opens up and you can see the Red Cliffs of Sportsman's Ridge on the left at the head of the Creek. (If you are using a Ranch walkie-talkie it will not work much beyond this point, until you reach the pass.)
1:15	The trail crosses Cow Creek in an open meadow. (Looking back down the Creek you can see the skyline of the cliffs above the Togwotee Pass highway.) Almost immediately on the left are a series of Beaver Ponds.
1:45	Cross through an old buck & rail fence in the trees. Leave the gate open or closed, whichever way you find it.
2:45	The top of the pass at the head of Cow Creek. (If you are using a Ranch walkie-talkie it should start working again at this point.) The big, broad-topped mountain that dominates the view to the south is Darwin Peak. The correct trail goes to the right of two small, swampy lakes. In late season these may be almost dry.
2:50	The "Cowboy Camp" (or "Cowboy Cabin" - actually there are two, plus some corrals). The trail you want to take is clearly visible climbing up the opposite bank of Bear Cabin Creek, 50 feet to the south. Do not (at this point) follow the Creek up or down.
3:00	The trail, which has been heading more or less toward Darwin Peak, forks just before crossing Bear Cabin Creek a second time. Take either fork - they rejoin just before the Creek. Immediately after this 2nd crossing of Bear Cabin Creek take the left fork of the trail, which follows alongside the Creek. From here on the correct trail stays just south of Bear Cabin Creek (though not always within sight of it) all the way down to our camp on the Gros Ventre River.
3:10	Stay LEFT, on the better used trail. (There is a 2.5' high, knobby limestone boulder by the right fork). A few feet further there is another fork. Stay LEFT again. Just a little further is a third fork. Go RIGHT and continue downhill. (The left fork goes to an old salt lick area for cows, next to some trees).
3:20	Cross a shallow gully (usually dry) coming in from the right. Once out of the gully the trail continues parallel to the main branch of Bear Cabin Creek, which is still on the left in the trees about 100 yards away.
3:30	OPTIONAL AND DANGEROUS SIDE TRIP. Just before the trail starts its serious descent via switchbacks into the Gros Ventre valley you can, if CAREFUL, scramble down over some very steep, loose rock into the Bear Cabin Creek canyon. The Creek enters this major chasm in a truly magical waterfall that plunges freefall over a high lip to the rocks below. DANGER! Do not try to go down near the falls but choose instead a point several hundred feet downstream where there are enough trees to stop you if you start to slide out of control.
3:50	Once you are back on the main trail continue descending toward the Gros Ventre. As you emerge from the switchbacks and the rocky outcroppings you should see the remains of an old log cabin with no roof - the "Bear Cabin" for which the Creek is named - about 200 feet down the creek, on the right. An old horse trail, also to the right and about 100 feet before the Cabin, takes you straight to our camp.

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