

Natural Bathtub

Perhaps this "natural bathtub" - the deep bowl-like depression in the bedrock of the stream was actually used for bathing at one time. Various old artifacts indicate this break in the woodland was once a homestead. Early settlers of these parts learned to live with nature and took advantage of its every offering.

Rock Quarry

Those long, tube-like holes on the face of the bluff are modern. Rock for park buildings and walls was quarried here by men of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s, and the long drill marks are where dynamite charges



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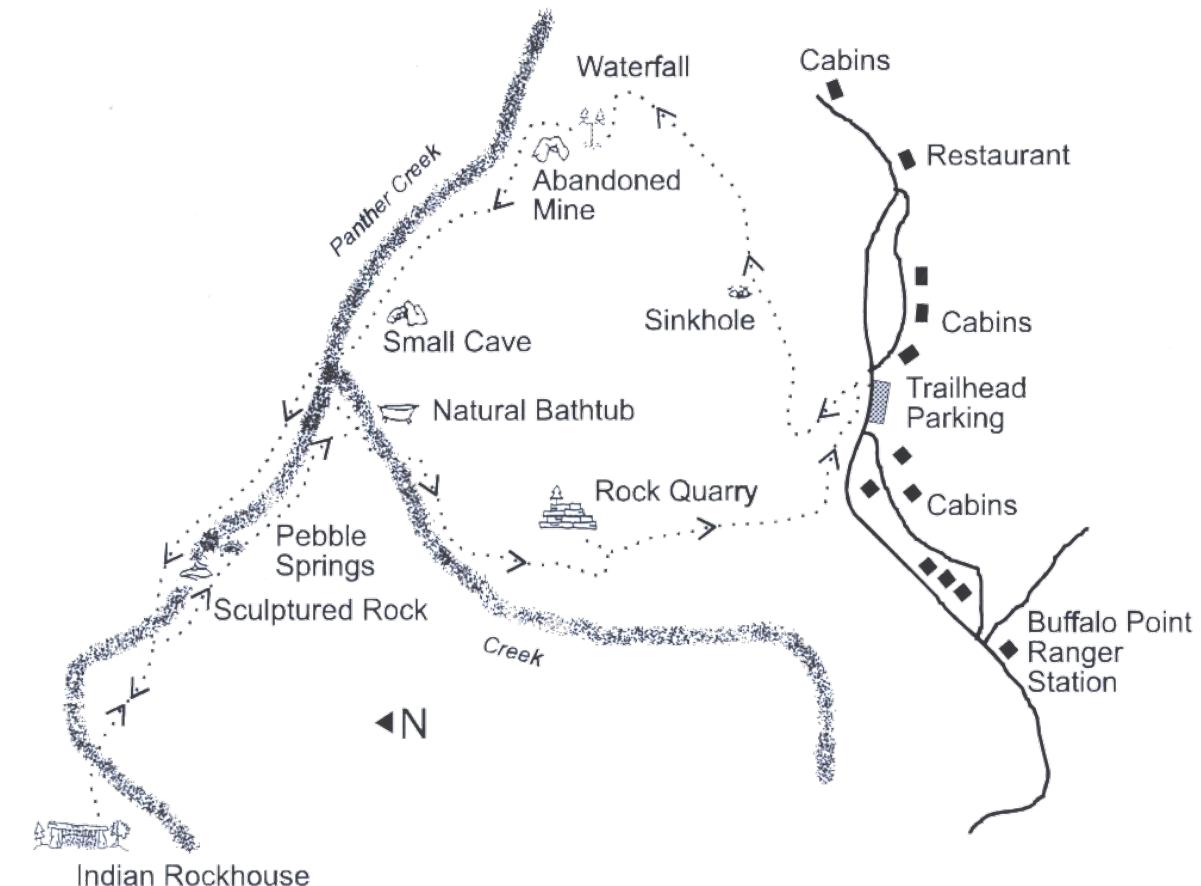


Indian Rockhouse Trail

The Indian Rockhouse trail winds on hill-sides and along a streambed to Indian Rockhouse Cave, once a shelter for Native Americans. Considered moderately strenuous, the trail is 3.5 miles (round-trip) and the return is mainly uphill. Allow three to four hours for the hike. For your safety, wear comfortable shoes with non-slip soles, stay on the trail, and watch for loose gravel. Carry plenty of drinking water, since none is available along the trail.

Buffalo National River provides protection for all the plants and animals. Leave them as you find them so that others may also enjoy them. Please pack out anything you take in.

The trail begins across the road from the trailhead parking lot. Two trails lead off at a slight angle - take the right, or lower trail. This brochure highlights several points of interest along the trail.



Sinkhole Icebox

Use caution here! To the left of the trail, a large sinkhole opens to a very narrow passage descending into the rock layers below. Fog sometimes rises from the hole when cool cavern air (56-57°F) meets warmer outside air.

During heavy rain, great amounts of water flow down the ravine and pour into the sinkhole, disappearing into the crevice below. Over thousands of years, the water carved the limestone into speleothems.



Waterfall

Small waterfalls are common in the Buffalo River Valley. In many cases, as with this particular waterfall, water flows from the ground at a spring, travels a few hundred feet and spills over a bluff. Many times the water flows back into the ground just below the fall, only to reappear as a spring somewhere else.

Notice the mud in the pool below the fall. A well-traveled road once passed between the spring and the fall, creating erosion during hard rains and making the fall area muddy. The road has been closed and nature is slowly beginning to repair the fall's beauty.

Abandoned Mine

Around 1880 zinc was found and mining towns began springing up throughout the area. The largest mines were located just eight miles down river at Rush.

During World War I the value of zinc skyrocketed. Many local people, dreaming of getting rich quick, began prospecting their own lands.

Unfortunately most mines, like this small opening, proved to be void of any minable zinc and were soon abandoned. Today, animals such as deer mice, woodrats, and cave salamanders find shelter in someone's abandoned dream.



Small Cave

Feel the coolness of the cave air. Small caves like this one are home to many kinds of wildlife including rodents, toads, and tree frogs. The cool, dark crevices and moss-covered ceilings make an ideal home to many.

The phoebe is a common bird of caves and can often be heard calling its name, "phoebe, phoebe." They build their well-camouflaged nests of mud and mosses on the walls and ceiling. Nest should not be disturbed; they may contain eggs or young.

When the trail reaches the old roadbed, turn right and follow the road to the Indian Rockhouse. If you don't want to go all the way to the Rockhouse, take the return trail to the left just after you cross the creek bed. It will take you back up the hill to the trailhead.

Sculptured Bedrock

Here one of nature's forces, water, has labored for thousands of years, slowly modeling this bedrock into a variety of curves and drops. Each pebble and stone within the stream is a tool – rolling and turning, chipping and scraping. However, the real beauty of nature's sculpture is that it is never complete – constantly being altered into a new and more fascinating one.

Pebble Springs

This small, gravelly area bellows water during certain times of the winter and early spring. The water flows out of the crevice at the base of the bluff. The flow varies with the different levels of the underground river below. When the spring flows, it is usually about six to twelve feet deep at the mouth. Many years of rolling and bouncing in the underground river has given some of the stones a glassy finish, which led to the spring's name.



Indian Rockhouse

stream during most of the year, cool springs in the rear part of the cave, and a fairly constant year-round temperature - it would have made an ideal home. As early as ten thousand years ago, Native Americans lived in open camps and bluff-shelter caves in the Buffalo River Valley. They lived in small family groups, hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plant foods. Finds of a few bones, spear points, stone tools and other artifacts supply us with what little information we know about these primitive people. Their exact identity is yet to be determined by archeologists.

Camping is not permitted. Digging for artifacts is prohibited as it destroys the scientific value of the site. Please help keep the cave in its natural state for others to enjoy.

NOTE: The return begins here. Follow the old roadbed back over the small hill to the point where the return trail turns off to the right.