

Apache Vista Trail

The trail-head for Apache Vista and the Overland Trails are located on Rt. 261 across from Hay Lake (approx. 7.2 miles from Rt. 260 on the east side). It is a reminder of the destruction wrought by the Wallow Fire in the summer of 2011. Fortunately, not all of the trail was burned and what the fire chose to leave will take your breath away.

The Apache Vista Trail starts out level, but once it connects with the Overland Trail, it descends toward Water Canyon Creek and the East Fork of the North Fork of the Black River. The Trail has not been maintained, so with the switch backs and overgrowth, it is critical to pay attention to worn areas that might resemble a trail. There are rock cairns strategically placed along the main trail, that serve as guides to the main event.

This fall, I hiked the Overland Trail and followed it down the ridge past the turn for Apache Vista. Further down that trail, there is the Mountain Point Spring, which is secured by a 4' split-rail fence. This time, however, I came to see a snow covered Escudilla Mountain and experience the "High Lonesome" that Andy Marshall writes about, so we turned and headed to the Vista. Apache Vista is incredible. You can see the entire "Round Valley" area, Escudilla Mountain and several other mountains that border Arizona and New Mexico.

I ventured out here with my son Danny Groebner and his roommate Chans Cox and once we reached the Point, we sat for a long time and just took in the view. Escudilla was covered with a light snow and the view was incredible. This is a great spot to stop and take a break. We brought some snacks and stayed for a long time, clearing our heads and breathing the fresh air. It was a perfect day for hiking. Although it was February, the temperatures were close to 60F degrees. We followed the sign that pointed toward the Point of the Mountain Scenic Overlook, but the trail is hard to navigate, so we headed in the direction of Rt. 261, through a field and eventually saw the sun glistening off the top of my car.

Once in the car, we headed to Greer, as do many winter visitors, to eat at Molly Butler's. We drove to the end of Rt. 373, first to check out the Little Colorado River and, on the way, we spotted a large herd of elk that posed for my camera. Hiking in February, for most, is a chilling experience at this elevation, but for this hike, it couldn't have been any better. The entire day was a typical White Mountain adventure.

If you hike just the Apache Vista Trail, it is 2.6 miles long and a nice short hike with spectacular views. Once you reach the look-out point, you can follow the trail back the way you came. Because of the Wallow fire, the Forest Service is playing catch-up on trail maintenance.

February 2014

To find the Apache Vista Trail from Pinetop, follow Rt. 260 past the Sunrise turn and the Greer turn until you reach Rt. 261 (to Big Lake). Turn right and follow Rt. 261 past the Point of the Mountain Scenic Overlook, until you come to the kiosk on the left for the trail. Rt. 260 is closed beyond the parking lot of this trail head during the winter because the roads are not maintained. Elevation: 9,000'