



COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST

Soldier Pass-Jordan-Brins Mesa Trails

SEDONA, ARIZONA

Hiking Time: 2 hours

M

Sedona likes to call itself “the day hike capital of the country” and your dog will not bark in disagreement.

More than 300 miles of non-motorized trails traverse the Red Rock Ranger District that surrounds the resort community.

Scores of Sedona trails will set Seaman’s tail to wagging and the *Soldier Pass-Jordan-Brins Mesa* loop is one that starts right on the north edge of town, just up the road from the dog park. Despite the proximity to civilization this canine hike will quickly immerse you in the deep green juniper forest and brilliant red and orange rock formations for which Sedona is famous.

The course pushes through the manzanita and velvet mesquite of the Red Rock Secret Mountain Wilderness before it bursts into the open. There are long, unobstructed views of noted landmarks - Coffee Pot Rock, Wilson Mountain, Steamboat Rock and others. If your journey follows a recent rain Seaman may be favored by water in the Seven Sacred Pools that have been carved out of ocher-colored sandstone.

The trail climbs some 500 feet to Brins Mesa, using a natural rock staircase in places, for more expansive vistas of Verde Valley red rock country. The mesa is covered in grasses facilitating those postcard-worthy views - the result of a devastating 2006 fire that burned away the trees from the 5,099-foot high flat-top promontory.



COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST

West Fork Trail

SEDONA, ARIZONA

Hiking Time: 3 hours

M  **\$**

They say one million people a year come to hike the trails in Sedona - and this is the most popular trail in the Coconino National Forest. No doubt Seaman will want to see what all the fuss is about.

The *West Fork Trail* begins with a stroll through an historic apple orchard dating back to the 1880s. Then the level path visits the ruins of the Mayhew Lodge whose buildings were consumed in a fire in 1980. In its heyday Hollywood stars like Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart, and Maureen O’Hara all frequented the rustic cabins here.

Shortly you reach the West Fork of the Oak Creek and canine hiking begins in earnest. Oak Creek Canyon is a serpentine passageway under white limestone and red sandstone cliffs that soar over 1,000 feet high. **Seaman will no doubt love the 13 crossings of one of the few year-round streams in the Sedona high desert.** If you arrive after snow melt paws will likely get wet as well.

The canyon is 14 miles long but most people call it quits at three miles. The mostly level dirt trail rolls easily under stands of stately Ponderosa pines, cottonwood, and, of course, oak. The turn-around point is anti-climatic but as Harry Chapin once sang, “It’s got to be the going, not the getting there that’s good.” The return trip out of Oak Creek Canyon is nearly as engaging as the way in as the stunning cliffs are encountered at entirely new angles and degrees of sunlight. Seaman may not even notice the crowds.