

## Ouray Perimeter Trail

A favorite Ouray experience, this six-mile trail explores the city's cliffs and mountains. *(Boots or sturdy shoes and trekking poles are highly recommended.)*

A clockwise hike of the trail begins across the highway from the Visitor's Center at a large boulder next to a mounted map. Ascend the staircase to the east and hike south on the cliff path .7 miles to Cascade Falls.

In this stretch you'll cross scree slopes, pass the historic Two Kids Mine and traverse a cliff band with impressive views of Ouray below and mountains to the south. *(From left to right, they are pyramidal Mt. Abram, 12,801'; broad-shouldered Hayden Mountain, 11,475'; and U.S. Mountain, 13,036', with a prominent snowfield.)*

Descend to Cascade Falls, a playground for youngsters of all ages. *(If you wish to return to town, descend 8th Avenue from here.)* Otherwise, cross the bridge below the falls and continue uphill .2 miles on Lower Cascade Trail. The trail levels off on a bench where Perimeter Trail turns right while Lower Cascade continues uphill to the east.

From here, Perimeter Trail descends slightly and emerges from forest to a drier hillside. The 5th Avenue Trail junction is .2 miles. *(This trail is another way back to town.)* It's another .2 miles through more forest to the paved Amphitheater Campground Road.

Turn right and walk downhill 500 feet to where the trail resumes on

the left just before the bridge. *(The view below the bridge is worth checking out!)*

The route turns southeast on the Baby Bathtubs Trail *(.3 miles long)* and gently ascends to a shallow, often dry, crossing of Little Portland Creek featuring small quartz bathtubs. *(These are great for kids to play in!)* Walk left uphill from the crossing to a bridge which serves the Portland Trail. The larger Portland Creek and a more spectacular bathtub area will be on your right.

Cross the bridge and head west a few hundred feet to where Perimeter Trail turns left uphill. The next .3 mile takes you across the parklike Three Pines Day Use Area and south through forest to Portland Road.

Follow the road uphill a few hundred feet and turn right into the parklike Potato Patch. *(The early miners grew potatoes here.)* Cross the Patch and climb to the high point of the trail at 8,500 feet.

This spartan, rocky upland has great views of the Uncompahgre Gorge below and mountains to the west. *(Whitehouse Mountain, 13,492' and Twin Peaks, 10,800'.)*

Descend the rocky hillside westward .4 miles and cross Hwy 550. From here to CR 361 on Perimeter Trail, it's 1.4 miles. *(If you wish to return to town or to shorten the trip, turn right on Ice Park Trail and walk .5 miles to CR361.)* Otherwise, turn left and go south on an old dam service road.

In 2,000 feet, the trail leaves the road and descends to a bridge over the Uncompahgre River. Cross and hike up to another service road, climbing a stile over the three-foot penstock pipe which carries

water to the Ouray Hydro-Electric Plant.

Walk north 3,000 feet on the service road. The Uncompahgre Gorge is now on your right. *(In the winter, these precipitous canyon walls are draped in curtains of ice revered by ice climbers.)*

Shortly after passing a small reservoir, the trail leaves the road to the right, and continues to CR361. Cross here and walk .4 miles to Box Cañon Falls and Park. *(A side trail leads down to the Visitor's Center where for a small fee you can tour the canyon. It's definitely worth seeing!)*

In the next .2 mile, Perimeter Trail crosses a suspended steel bridge and enters Ouray's old water tunnel. On the other side, it descends a steep stone staircase and crosses a dry hillside to South Pinecrest Road. *(Going downhill here is also a shorter trip to town.)* Meanwhile, the trail follows the road uphill .2 miles and around one switchback to the Oak Creek and Perimeter trail signs.

The next .1 mile climbs uphill to a trail fork. From here, descend into Oak Creek Canyon and cross the bridge, watching carefully for the mountain troll which lurks underneath.

Ascend the metal stairs to a right turn. Perimeter Trail now continues another .6 miles. In a few hundred feet, Henn's Overlook offers panoramic views of Ouray and its eastern mountain wall. *(Views include Gold Hill and the Blowout, 10,587'; Cascade Mountain, 11,543'; the Amphitheater and Cow Mountain, 13,111'.)*

The trail descends to Queen and Oak Streets. Turn left and follow Oak Street a mile north to Ouray Visitor's Center.

