



The destination of this hike, pictured above, Onyx Bridge.



# Onyx Bridge

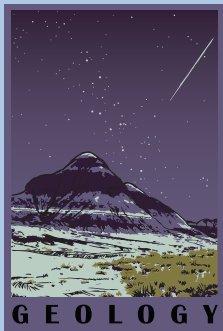
4 miles (6.4 km) round trip

Elevation Change: 300 ft (91 m)

GPS coordinates

Starting Point: N 35°5'01.3" W 109°47'20.4"

Onyx Bridge: N 35°6'31.0" W 109°47'32.1"



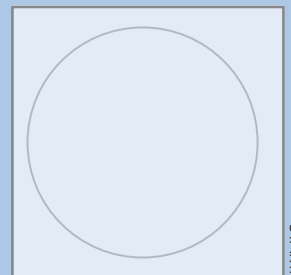
This hike takes you to a dramatic example of petrified wood eroding out of the Black Forest Bed of the Chinle Formation. The Triassic conifer tree, known as Onyx Bridge, is one of the many preserved logs in the Black Forest. These logs and the geologic layer in which they are found in are about 210 million years old.



View towards Onyx Bridge (marked by arrow) from Kachina Point.



While normally dry, washes (such as Lithodendron Wash) and canyons are subject to flash floods during the monsoon season, June through September. During this time, storms tend to move quickly across the landscape and could leave you stranded if you are not prepared. Never cross a flash flood. Immediately head to higher ground.





Onyx Bridge

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Wilderness Boundary

Lithodendron Wash

3

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1

Switchbacks, left of Inn (Starting Point)

Kachina Point

Painted Desert Inn

Main Park Road

North



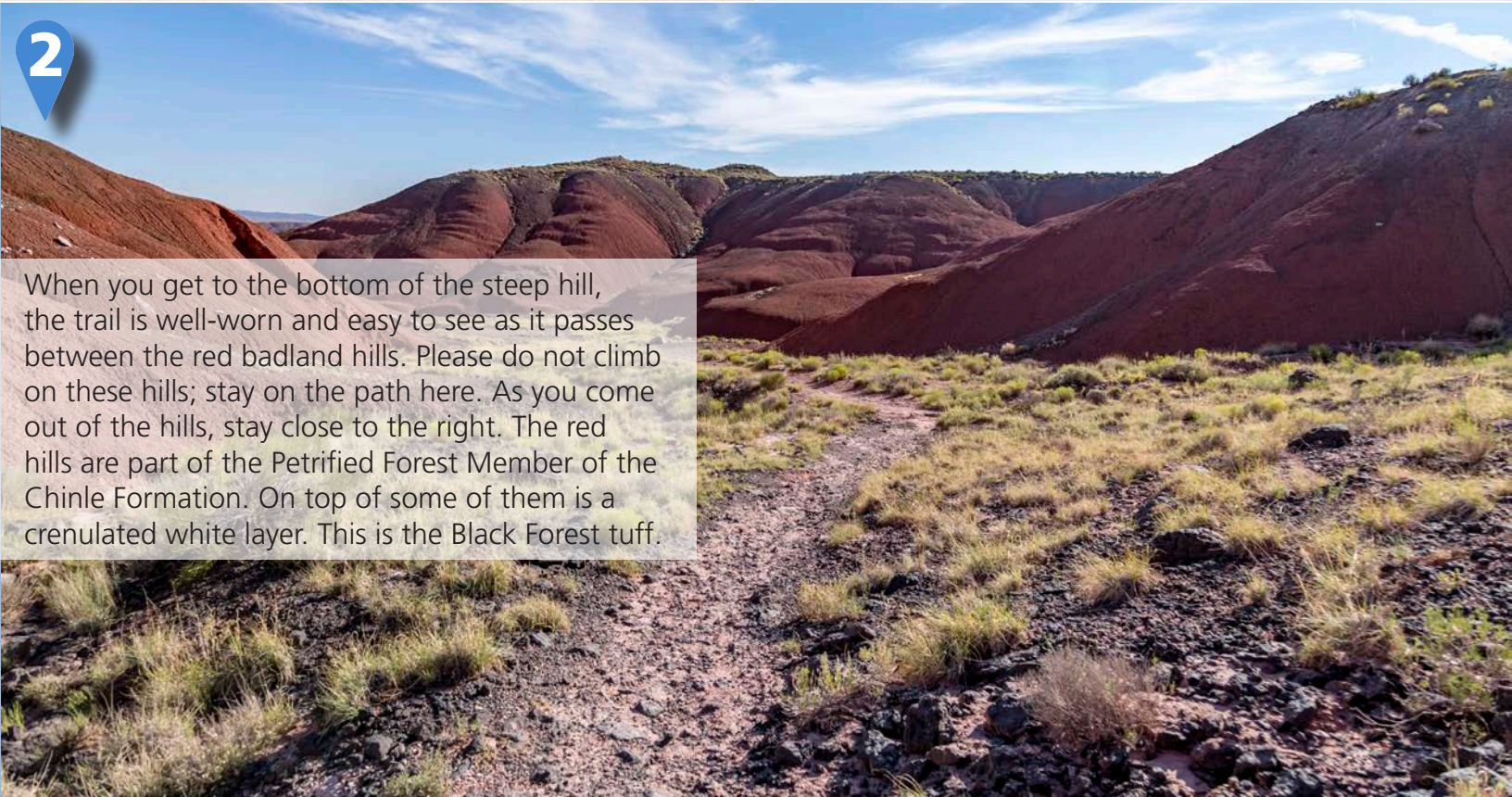
0 0.125 0.25 0.375 0.5 Miles

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Kilometers



Park at the Painted Desert Inn National Historic Landmark (2 miles from the north entrance of the park). If you know where to look, you can actually see Onyx Bridge from the overlook.

Looking at the inn from the parking lot, the trail begins with steps to the left just behind the upright display signs. Take the steps down to the switchback trail that descends 300 feet down to the valley floor. Please be careful of the loose pebbles.



When you get to the bottom of the steep hill, the trail is well-worn and easy to see as it passes between the red badland hills. Please do not climb on these hills; stay on the path here. As you come out of the hills, stay close to the right. The red hills are part of the Petrified Forest Member of the Chinle Formation. On top of some of them is a crenulated white layer. This is the Black Forest tuff.



From here the path hooks to the left, still an obvious trail, with a small dry wash (a watercourse that only holds water during rain or other precipitation). This wash goes to your left and right as you move further along the path.

Here the dry wash crosses the path. Do not follow the dry wash to the right—continue straight on the path. Look to your left and you will see the ruins of an old stone bridge from the early 20th century. It was built by Herbert Lore as part of his road system in the Painted Desert.

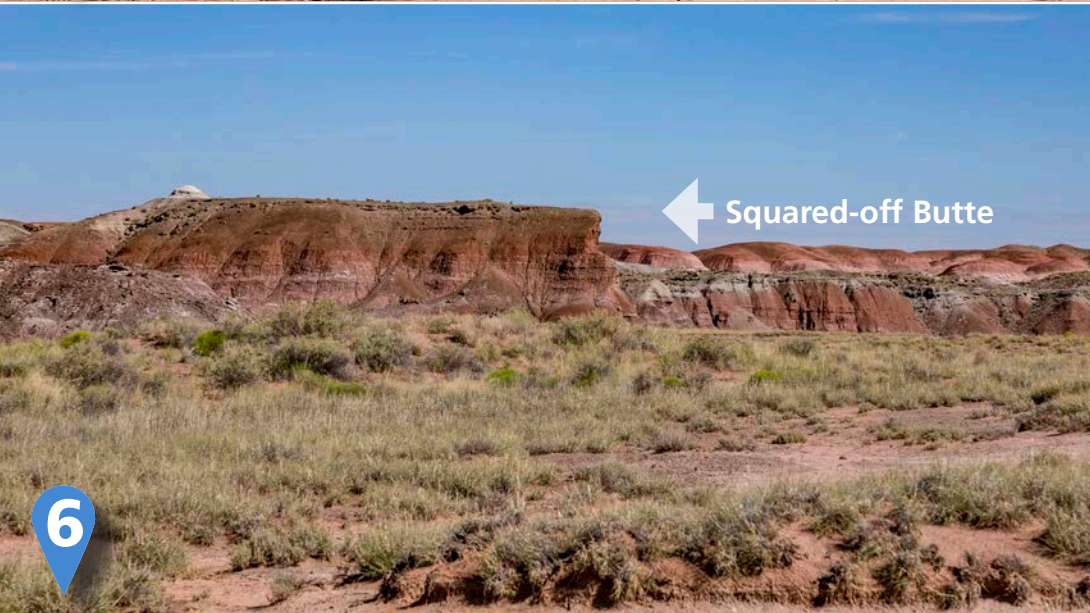


Lore's Bridge

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The path hooks slightly to the right. You will cross a small wash a couple of times as you continue straight along the path. When the path disappears, follow the wash until it opens up onto the plain.



← Squared-off Butte

Look straight to the horizon in front of you and find the squared off butte pictured here. Keep this land formation in view and head towards it, crossing Lithodendron Wash. Be very careful of any water in the wash, particularly during the monsoon season.

6



← Squared-off Butte  
Wash to Onyx Bridge  
↓


Once you pass the squared off butte, there are a number of small canyons to your left.

7


You want the third canyon pictured here that has a narrow, but fairly deep wash, cutting into it. It is right where the Lithodendron Wash cuts sharply to the right and at the end of the "island" in the middle of the wash.

8

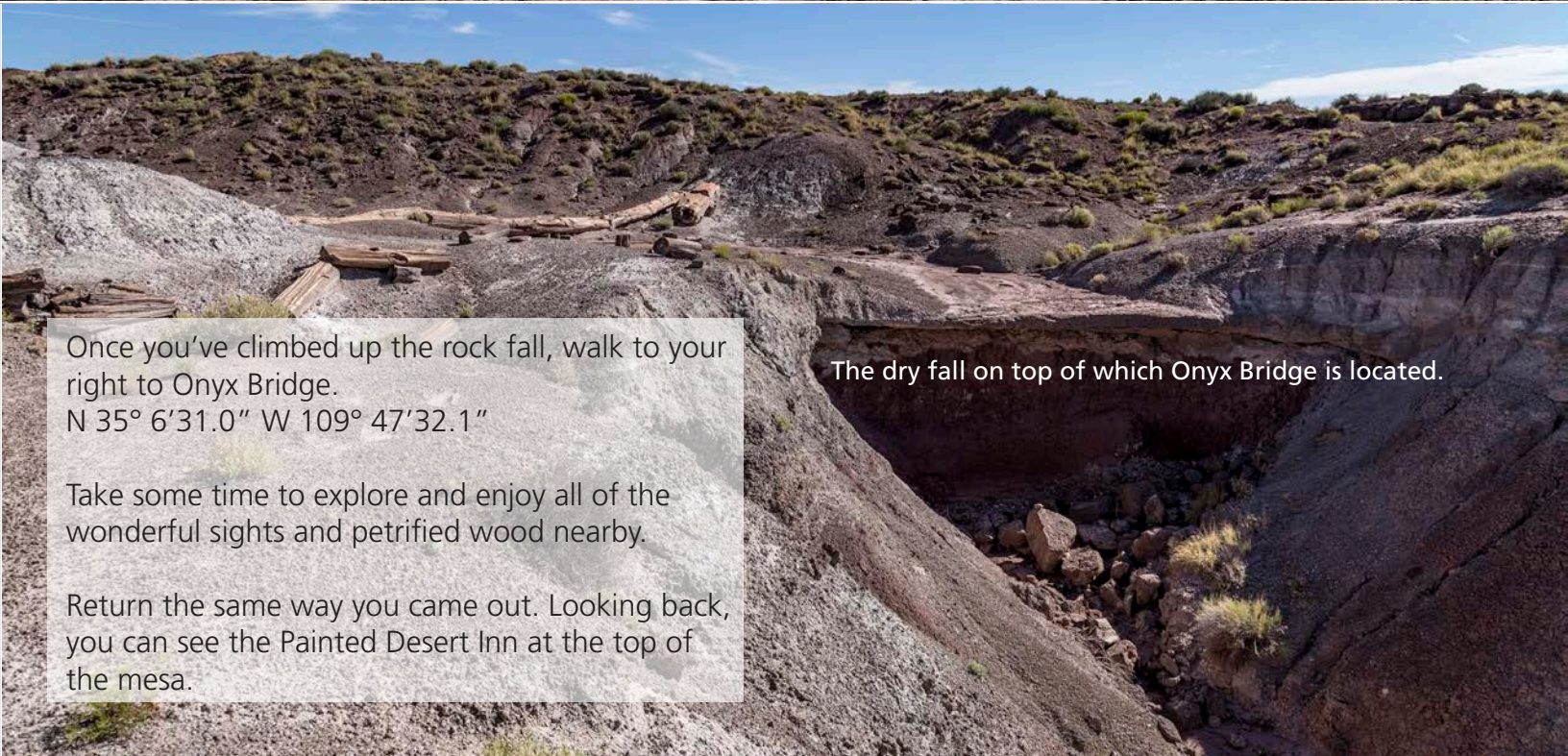




As you follow the wash into the red hills here you will come to a split. Go to the right.



At the next split, go to the left. The Onyx Bridge is actually to the right but it is safer to climb up to the left at a rock fall. Carefully climb the rock fall.



Once you've climbed up the rock fall, walk to your right to Onyx Bridge.  
N 35° 6'31.0" W 109° 47'32.1"

Take some time to explore and enjoy all of the wonderful sights and petrified wood nearby.

Return the same way you came out. Looking back, you can see the Painted Desert Inn at the top of the mesa.

The dry fall on top of which Onyx Bridge is located.

# Things to Know About Off the Beaten Path Hikes

Hiking off-trail offers the opportunity to enjoy this landscape beyond the experience of the average visitor. These “Off the Beaten Path” hikes are suggested routes; not paved or maintained trails—although you may notice social paths or old road beds. All of the hikes require route-finding skills. Bring a compass and/or GPS tracking device.

Please consider the following and plan accordingly:

You are responsible for your own safety.

Some areas have little to no cell phone coverage.

Understand that you are heading into a wild natural region.

Know your personal limits, and of those in your party.

Wear appropriate shoes and sun protection. Bring food and *plenty of water* (1 gal./person/day).

Follow all park rules and regulations.

Do not create rock cairns or trail markers.

The backcountry of Petrified Forest National Park offers:

- A semi-arid landscape with elevations over 5,500 ft (1,700 m) with no water or shade.
- No marked trails—route-finding skills are necessary.
- Uneven surfaces that may become impassable when wet.
- Steep hills, narrow canyons, and crumbly surfaces.
- Temperatures that fluctuate widely (>100°F/38°C in summer and <32°F/0°C in winter).
- Solitude and beauty.

*Unless you have an overnight Wilderness Area Permit, you are required to be out of the park by closing hours. Backcountry camping must be one mile away from any established trail or road. Camping in vehicles in parking areas is not permitted. Ask park staff for more details on backcountry camping.*

## Using This Guide

This book is a collaboration of staff and volunteers who have wandered these areas to find important landmarks and beautiful vistas. The maps provide the route to destinations. The photos are references to help you find your way. Remember to keep an eye on the weather, find a landmark near where you parked to stay orientated, and be sure to drink plenty of water!

## Onyx Bridge

4 miles (6.4 km) round trip

Elevation Change: 300 ft (91 m)

GPS coordinates

Trailhead:

Onyx Bridge: 35°6'31.0"N 109°47'32.1"W

GPS coordinates are set in:  
Degrees° Minutes' Seconds"

Be sure to set your GPS in the appropriate format to prevent confusion. There may be a margin of error up to 30 meters for the listed coordinates.



Use the cancellation stamps found at the Painted Desert Visitor Center, or Rainbow Forest Museum to date your adventures!

# The Leave No Trace Principles

The Leave No Trace Principles are the bedrock of the Leave No Trace program. They provide guidance to enjoy our natural world in a sustainable way that avoids human-created impacts. These principles have been adapted to they can be applied in your backyard or your backcountry.



The following are a selection from the Leave No Trace Seven Principles. © 1999 by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org).

## Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

## Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

In popular areas:

- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas:
- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

## Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.

## Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

## Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

## Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

## Look what I found!

One of the marvelous things about exploring the Wilderness Areas is finding all the unique artifacts.



We cannot stress enough how important it is to leave any fossils, archeology artifacts (i.e. pottery sherds and arrowheads), rocks, plants, or animals exactly where you found them. Much like a forensic scientist at a crime scene, when artifacts are removed or displaced, a wealth of information is lost about that item. Please join the millions

of hikers before you and do not pick up anything you find out on these hikes. Take a picture of the artifact, and one of the surrounding area, and show these to a ranger so we can send a scientist to recover it. Be careful not to post where you found these items online, because those locations may encourage looters.

Petroglyphs are easily damaged by even the softest touch. The oil on your hands will deteriorate the rock art. These ancient symbols cannot be recovered once lost.

Help us protect these awesome resources for future explorers such as yourself!

Petrified Forest National Park  
1 Park Rd, Box 2217  
Petrified Forest, AZ 86028  
www.nps.gov/pefo

These **free** apps will assist you while you venture through Petrified Forest National Park.

## Chimani

Chimani provides apps for specific National Parks, including Petrified Forest! Features include:

- *GPS-enabled maps*
- *Expert-written details on more than 120 points of interest*
- *Collect points and earn badges for visiting parks and other points of interest*
- *And much, much more!*

\*Be sure to download the features inside the app before heading in the park.



iNaturalist offers a chance to become a citizen scientist! Take photos of flora and fauna with your device and upload. Find out what that critter or flower is with in-depth descriptions. Most importantly, these records give biologists a way to track and monitor life in these ecosystems with your help. Join the iNaturalist community today!

*Both apps available on:*



Sometimes going off the beaten path  
makes all the difference

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