

Sedona & Village of Oak Creek inclement weather riding

As cyclists come from all over the world to ride in Sedona, there are often differing perspectives on when trails should be ridden after a major weather event.

We hope to provide you with some guidance on what trails to avoid and what routes to consider riding after major, inclement weather events.

Best routes 1 - 2 dry days after a major weather event:

- Carrol Canyon: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/482590/>
- Dry Creek/Western Gateway: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/482988>
- Thunder Mountain: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/483083>
- Rabbit Ears: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/view/48077782/>

When is it too soon to hit the trails?

- You're leaving a visible tire track of an inch+
- You're carrying mud on your tires and can no longer see your tire knobs
- You're kicking up significant amounts of mud onto your bike frame

If you are experiencing one of these conditions on a trail, turn around and pick another route to ride.

What if there are puddles on the trails, but I'm not picking up mud?

This is generally fine riding conditions. Just don't go around the puddles, which often widens the trail. Go through the puddles to keep the single track, single.

When should I be concerned about going out after a weather event?

The worst time of year is the Winter. If there is a substantial snowfall, and the temperatures are below freezing at night and above freezing during the day, the trails go through a freeze/thaw cycle. This freeze/thaw cycle turns many of the trails into a muddy, saturated mess. The cycle continues until the temperatures rise high enough to dry out the trails during the day and/or they do not freeze overnight.

If you get out very early in the morning during the freeze/thaw cycle, most of the trails will still be frozen and are OK to ride until the ground heats up, typically finishing your ride prior to 11am is safe.

As far as the remainder of the year, the trails typically absorb even heavy downpours fairly quickly. However, many of the creek crossings can become difficult to navigate with significant rain or snow events. If the trails do not get a day or two to dry out and another rain or snow event occurs, they can become saturated, and it can take 2-5+ days for the trails to be suitable to ride again.

These are common opinions, and these opinions are correct.

- ***Mother Nature causes more damage to the trails.***
- ***The soil in Sedona fixes itself, so it's fine to ride whenever, regardless of the trail conditions.***

However, consider these factors:

- Red Rock Trail Crew and many volunteers work all winter/spring to create drainages to get water off the trails, so they dry out more quickly. Drainages also assist in keeping the soils on the trail, thus minimizing potential ruts and erosion. When you ride during muddy conditions, these drainages are compromised thus resulting in longer periods with mud, ruts, and a loss of soil.
- Many of us love Sedona due to the beautiful trail systems. Be part of keeping our trails looking great every day.

Which trail do you want to ride a week from now?

Muddy Mess.....

Lovely hero dirt!!!



How various areas hold up during weather events & what trails to avoid and routes to ride:

GREEN – Trail system/Trail typically rideable after 1-2 days of warm, sunny weather

YELLOW - Trail system/Trail typically rideable after 2-4 days of warm, sunny weather

RED - Trail system/Trail typically rideable after 4–7 days of warm, sunny weather

Carroll Canyon

Carroll Canyon is the go-to recommended trail system when weather events hit Sedona. The area is rocky and predominantly south facing, so it tends to dry out faster than most other areas in Sedona.

It's best to start your ride from the Sedona High School/Red Rock Loop THs. The areas close to Shelby Rd/Old Post TH parking lot can get muddy. It's best to stay off the sections of Old Post & Ridge that are closer to Shelby Road, as the sections of Ridge near Shelby have wash crossings that can be difficult to cross.

- **GREAT: Skywalker, Herkenham, Sketch, Pyramid, Brewer and Over Easy**
- **MIXED: Ridge, Old Post, Carroll Canyon, Secret Slick Rock**
 - If you stick to the Skywalker side of these trails and avoid the side closer to Shelby, you'll be less likely to hit mud and water in the wash crossings. Secret Slick Rock can be muddy near the parking lot down to Ridge.
- **DEPENDS: Scorpion, Bandit**
 - These trails have a bit different soil composition, and they do have some clay areas.
- **BAD: Rams Head**
 - Take Chavez Road to connect to Old Post, Ridge, Secret Slick Rock.

Suggested Carroll Canyon, avoid the mud routes:

- Shorter: 8 miles, 1000 ft climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/482590/>
- Longer: 12 miles, 1400 ft climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/482592/>

Western Gateway

Western Gateway is one of the better areas to ride after weather events. However, Dry Creek crossings are required on many of the trails, so you will need to plan wisely to avoid getting wet or stuck. Start from the Dry Creek Aerie TH. Some of the north facing trails are tree covered, thus taking longer to dry out. Little is rideable for a few days from Girdner TH.

- **GREAT: Roundabout**
- **MAINLY GREAT: Outer Limits, Last Frontier, Ground Control, Bolo**
 - You will want to start your rides from the Dry Creek/Aerie TH to hit Outer Limits and avoid the section after Last Frontier, as it takes you to a Dry Creek crossing.
- **MIXED: Axis, Girder**
 - These trails both require crossing Dry Creek to ride their full lengths. Girdner is best out of the Girdner TH, but it drops you to the Dry Creek crossing and the Girdner sections after the crossing towards Saddle Up are in the shade and the section from Rupp to Snake follows a drainage and both are typically muddy. Axis tends to stay muddy from Lasso down to the Dry Creek crossing, so it's best ridden from Bolo back to the Aerie TH.
- **DEPENDS: Stirrup, Saddle Up, Lasso, Rover**
 - Stirrup tends to get muddy from Lasso to Saddle Up, so it should be avoided for a few days. Saddle Up and Lasso both tend to dry out quickly. If Stirrup looks good, Lasso and Saddle Up make a decent small loop. Rover connects you to Rupp from Axis, but Rupp can be muddy for a few days.

BAD: Bottom Out, Ledge-n-Airy

Suggested Western Gateway, avoid the mud & Dry Creek crossing routes:

- Aerie TH - longer: 9 mi, 800 ft climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/482988>
- Aerie TH - shorter: 6 mi, 400 ft climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/482989>
- Girdner TH - Shorter: 6 mi, 400 ft climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/482810>

Adobe Jack / Teacup

Adobe Jack/Teacup has some decent options to ride after a few days.

- **GREAT: Thunder Mountain, Chimney Rock, Andante**
- **MIXED: Jordan, Crusty, Javelina, Grand Central, Manzanita, Coyote, Plunge**
 - Parts of Grand Central from Ant Hill down to Adobe Jack can be muddy for longer. And Manzanita to Adobe Jack from Grand Central should be avoided for a while, as Adobe Jack is typically muddy for several days. Coyote connects to Adobe Jack, as well, so it's not a great option other than as an out and back. This area has lots of deep tracks as riders/hikers are going off trail and going around puddles.
- **BAD: Teacup, Sugar Loaf, Adobe Jack**

Suggested Adobe Jack / Teacup, avoid the mud route:

- Thunder Mt: 4mi, 410 climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/483083>
- Soldiers Wash: 8 mi, 900 climbing <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/planner/view/483250>

Village of Oak Creek (VOC)

VOC is a mixed bag. Rabbit Ears provides the best, quickest dry option for a loop. Slim Shady and Llama can be a good loop after a few days. However, Hiline is typically muddy and dangerous for several days.

- **GREAT: Rabbit Ears, Little Rock, Big Park Loop, Bell Rock Pathway**
- **MIXED: Slim Shady, Llama, Templeton, Easy Breezy, Hermit, Coconino, HT, Bail**
- **BAD: Hiline, Baldwin, Made In the Shade, Transept, Phone, Bell Rock ST Bypass**

Suggested VOC, avoid the mud routes:

- Rabbit Ears loop: 9mi & 1100 ft climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/ridelog/view/48077782/>
- Slim-Llama: 10mi & 900 ft climbing: <https://www.trailforks.com/route/llama-slim-shady-easy-breezy>

Dry Creek

Dry Creek is a challenging area to ride during inclement weather events, other than the routes outlined above that go out to Western Gateway. There are individual trails that dry out quickly, but it is challenging to string together a solid loop and avoid muddy, wet conditions for several days.

- **GREAT: Mescal, Long Canyon, Anaconda, Oak, Yucca**
 - These trails are rocky or sandy and tend to dry out quickly; however, there is no good way to string them together with other trails to do a loop without encountering muddy conditions. If you really want to ride them, do them as out and backs to avoid getting on the surrounding muddy trails.
- **BAD: Deadmans Pass, Aerie, Cockscomb, Canyon of Fools, Rupp, Dawa, Snake, OK, AZ Cypress, Two Fence, Lizard Head, Chuckwagon**
 - Most of these trails will have large sections of deep tire tracks for several weeks and sometimes months, as they are unfortunately ridden too soon!

Suggested Dry Creek, avoid the mud routes:

See Western Gateways routes or do the out and backs on Mescal, Long Canyon & Yucca and Anaconda.

Broken Arrow

Most of these trails get muddy and/or are dangerous to ride during freeze/thaw cycles.

- **MIXED: Broken Arrow, Little Horse, Mystic**
 - These trails provide access to the VOC trail system. These are fairly rocky and/or sandy and tend to dry out after a few days.
- **BAD: High On The Hog, Hog Heaven, Pig Tail, Peccary, Hog Wash**

Suggested Broken Arrow, avoid the mud routes:

Mystic, Broken Arrow and Little Horse can be ridden as out and backs or access into the VOC; however, there are not great routes available in these areas for several days.

Schnebly Hill

These trails are dangerous to ride during freeze/thaw cycles.

- **BAD: Hangover, Munds Wagon**

Suggested Schnebly Hill, avoid the mud routes:

none