

## Temple Canyon - Temple Canyon Road

**Direction to trailhead:** Starting from the intersection of US 50 (Royal Gorge Boulevard) and South 1<sup>st</sup> Street; drive south on 1<sup>st</sup> Street approximately 5 miles to Temple Canyon road. Turn onto Temple Canyon Road which changes from paved to gravel after 1.5 miles and is quite rough in some locations as it turns sharply and gradually climbs in elevation. A 4-wheel or all-wheel drive vehicle is advised. At 4.0 miles you will see a faded Temple Canyon Park sign. This is where Temple Canyon Park begins. Continue driving for another mile until you see a dirt road on your right (north). A brown sign located on the left side of the road reads, "Temple Ridge Picnicking and Camping Area". This road takes you to the Temple Canyon trail head. After ¼ mile the entrance road splits (Figure 1), with a picnic pavilion, and camping and parking areas on the right. The two roads merge as the road continues past this picnic site. Continue driving down the road until it dead ends at a dirt parking area with another covered pavilion, and camping area. The trail head is located to your left (south) on the side opposite from Temple Canyon. About 8.5 miles one way from Canon City.

**Length of hike:** 2.6 miles (round trip)

**Beginning elevation:** 6095 feet

**Change in Elevation:** 476 feet

**Difficulty:** Rated easy but trail has a steep initial slope that is slippery in some locations. You also have to cross Grape Creek which is wide and a strong current for much of the year.

**Description:** The trail descends gradually at first as it winds around the western side of the hogback mesa, then the rate of descent increases rapidly as the trail descends along a number of switch backs around the west and north side of the hogback into the valley below (Figure 1). Caution is recommended since the trail is narrow, uneven steep and slippery in places because of the loose rock fragments that litter the trail. The views are magnificent, as you round the end of the hillside and see the rugged walls of Temple Canyon (Figure 2) and Grape Creek below (Figure 3). As you hike down the trail you will pass by Rocky Mountain junipers, piñon pines, mountain mahogany bushes with their plumose flower appendages and skunk sumac, large, three-leafed non-poisonous bushes related to poison ivy.

At the bottom of the canyon the trail becomes level and parallels Grape Creek for about 0.4 miles until you reach the crossing that takes you to the other side of the creek and up the ravine to the Temple. You pass small groves of aspen and willows as you walk along the bank of Grape Creek. The creek is impassible at times because of high and fast flowing water. The trail up to the Temple is easy to see but rough with large rocks that have to be climbed around or over. On the lower section of the trail, watch out for a large patch of poison ivy growing adjacent to the trail. As you reach the upper end of the ravine the trail turns to the east entering a short side ravine that dead ends at a rock wall identified by a long, thin, green, vertical, marking. The trail to the temple continues to the left of the marking with a climb of about 10 feet. The trail then continues through a narrow canyon to the Temple, a large alcove cut into the side of the granite cliff by erosion (Figure 4). To reach the Temple you have to climb about 20 feet up a vertical rock wall.

According to the Canyon City Chamber of Commerce the Temple has had an active history. This site was fought over by the Ute and Apache Indian tribes before it was discovered by European settlers in the late 1800's. Evidence still exists of old wagon train and stage coach tracks, Indian trails, and an old railroad right of way intended to connect Canon City with the silver mines in the Wet Mountains..



Figure 1. Map of Temple Canyon Trail



Figure 2. View from Temple Canyon Trail



Figure3. View of Grape Creek from bottom of Temple Canyon



Figure 4. The Temple