

## Shinumo Amphitheater

There are a number of ways to get down into this area. The old North Bass or Shinumo Trail is the best known. The route down from Swamp Point to the saddle and on to the top of Powell Plateau must have been rebuilt during the thirties. A frame building just west of the saddle must have served as a dormitory during this construction work. It takes only ten minutes to reach a good spring at the bottom of the Coconino east of the saddle. The trail beyond the spring, as shown on the map, is badly overgrown with brush and it is now easier to scramble down a rockslide or bare ravine below the spring. Below this steep talus one stays in the dry creek bed to the Redwall. There is water, however, in a tributary from the east and also in the main bed near the top of the Redwall.

The dim trail, perhaps now marked by plastic ribbons, veers out of the bed and goes through the junipers west of the bed. Close to the start of the Redwall gorge, on the east wall, one can see a natural bridge where a cave has collapsed. To be sure of locating the route down the Redwall one should have the map. One needs to go down the last of several parallel ravines to a ledge running south beneath a bare wall. It seems like an improbable route but more switchbacks take you to the bed below the Redwall. A little farther there is more water flowing along the bare shale. The map shows the trail going down through the Tapeats in a wide swing to the southwest. This stretch is hardly recognizable at present and it is both more direct and easier to follow a burro trail down just east of the benchmark with the elevation 3150.

A distinctly different alternative is to stay on the east side of White Creek almost to its junction with Redwall Canyon. Go down to the bed below the Tapeats through a ravine. To the north there is the deepest and narrowest fissure in the Tapeats in the entire park. A huge boulder is lodged between the walls 80 feet up just as it was when the Kolbs photographed it sixty or more years ago. One can walk down White Creek to Shinumo Creek and see signs of trail construction proving that Bass brought his tourists here.

The main trail crosses Shinumo Creek to reach the site of the old Bass Camp. The terrace across on the right bank is surprisingly broad and free of rocks. With irrigation it served both prehistoric Indians and W.W. Bass as a fine garden, much more suitable for this purpose than the tract used by Louis Boucher. Instead of continuing along the creek for the last mile to the river the trail goes up to the south over a ridge. The open terrace below was where R.B. Stanton planned to build a switchyard for the railroad that was never built. Bass had two ways to cross the Colorado, a boat above the rapid and a tram for use during floods.

The new map omits some trails that were shown on the old West Half Map. A trail built by Bass west into Burro Canyon is still recognizable and so is his trail rising along the south wall of Shinumo Creek east of its junction with White Creek. The latter doesn't go far enough to do much good and the hiker still needs to make his way along the creek bed.

Back where the main trail encounters the Tapeats in White Canyon, there is still another choice. Stay above the Tapeats past the mouth of Redwall Canyon and follow a good burro trail along the east rim of White Canyon. This continues as a fast and clear trail around to Merlin and Modred Abysses. One can move fast and also get fine views of the entire area. Just north of the junction of Merlin and Modred one can cross to the other side. The burro trail continues for a short distance north along the east side of Merlin but then progress becomes difficult through the dense vegetation along the stream. The dry bed above the main spring is easy again and the bed remains clear even when the small How from South Big Spring appears on the surface. A team of expert climbers got up through the Redwall in

Merlin Abyss, but the ordinary backpacker would turn east into Shinumo Creek, really the main canyon. Just before this becomes impossible, there is a transverse fault cutting a route through the Redwall both to the south and north. Merrel Club found the route down here from the Elaine Saddle. It is sporty and a solo hiker would need to pull up his pack with a rope at one place. Near the top of the Supai the route turns away from the ravine to the east.

Above the Supai there is another choice. Fight through the brush to the bed below South Big Spring, go through a break in the Coconino north of the bed, and on to the road. Or go south at the top of the Supai and get to the forest on Lancelot Point near the end of the point or farther east along the south side.

Elaine Castle can be climbed from the south side. Beneath the Toroweap caprock are a number of rooms built by the aborigines. The break through the Toroweap is on the north side. One can also go down southeast from Elaine Saddle directly into Modred Abyss. There are Indian ruins in Modred and caves that attract spelunkers. An expert climber can get out of Modred to the east and southeast, but the brush is bad above the Redwall. Modred has a fine stream coming out of Abyss Cave and here one gets the feeling of perfect wilderness. Through the whole Shinumo basin the creeks have cut deep without removing the great mass of rock, quite a contrast to the open valleys of Nankoweap and Unkar.

Along the Tonto on the left side below the junction of Merlin and Modred, wild burros have established another fine trail. This is the easy way from Modred to Flint. On the south side of Flint, opposite the mouth of Gawain Abyss, there is a very adventurous route up the Redwall. I flew over it more than once, but I had to try it before I felt sure it would go. A good climber would do it handily but when I tackled it alone, it almost stopped me. By this time I had accepted the challenge of completing a route below the north rim from one corner of the park to the other. To fill in one of the gaps, I walked over to the top of this Redwall climb from the Flint-Tuna Pass. I found an old cairn pointing away from the pass toward my Redwall descent.

No discussion of the Shinumo area should omit the Powell Plateau. It forms the western skyline for the viewpoints along the south rim scenic drive. The trail from Swamp Point continues through the fine ponderosa forest. Magnificent views of the river and the canyon are obtained from any point on the rim. This sky island slopes gently down to the south and is divided about equally between ponderosa pines, junipers, and sage. There is a rumor that mule deer bucks on Powell Plateau grow extra large racks. Between Powell's two river trips, he was guided to what must have been Swamp Point and he left claiming that he had seen the finest panorama from Wyoming to Mexico.