Horseback Riding

The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) has become a favorite spot to enjoy riding horses and mules for day trips, with opportunities for longer trips to remote back country areas between trailheads. The multi-use San Pedro Trail is open to riding with access from exiting trailheads.

The San Pedro Trail is primarily on historic roads and abandoned railroad grades along the San Pedro River developed during Arizona territorial times and provides access to a variety of natural and historic points of interest in the NCA from the Land Corral area south to the International Border. Access the San Pedro Trail from trailheads along State Highways 82, 90 and 92, Charleston Road and other Cochise County roads. The trails open for horseback riding are primitive administrative roads (closed to most motorized traffic) and single-track, multi-use trails. Popular trail segments are maintained annually, and other segments are maintained every three to five years. The trail from Willow Gulch north of Fairbank to the Land Corral Trailhead has not been improved or maintained. The trails are mostly on rolling terrain along the river, with some steep grades in the Charleston Hills area.

Plan your trip: Become familiar with the area, rules of conduct and regulations, the trailheads and trail conditions, and emergency services. Plan on being self-sufficient. The area is remote, with minimal facilities, and poor cell phone coverage. Bring water for you and your animal. Let someone know where you are going and what to do if you do not return on time.

Respect Other Visitors: Birders, walkers, hikers, bicyclists, dog walkers, backpackers, other horseback riders, and others may be encountered at trailheads and on the San Pedro Trail. Avoid blocking parking areas or trail access at trailheads with your trailers. Be aware of the presence of others to avoid incidents.

Pets must be leashed in all developed facilities and in other posted areas. All dogs must be kept under direct control at all times. Clean up after your dog and pack out the waste.

Trailheads and Parking: Trailhead access roads are gravel surfaced, infrequently maintained, and may become rough. Horse trailer parking is available at Palominas, Hereford, San Pedro House, Murray Springs, Escapule, Millville, Little Boquillas Ranch, Fairbank, and Terrenate (In-Balance Road) trailheads only. The access road to the Land Corral is presently in eroded condition and not recommended for trailers. The road into Murray Springs is very narrow.

Please stay on the trail as much as possible. Do not create new trails. Be sensitive to seasonal conditions - horses ridden in muddy areas may damage trails.

Educational/Interpretive site trails are for walking only: Birding and educational trails around the San Pedro House, Hereford, Waters Road, Murray Springs, Terrenate, Millville, and Fairbank Cemetery, are for hiking only. Don’t ride through these areas - tether your horse outside and walk.

Riding through the Recreation Management Zones at the San Pedro House and Fairbank is permitted for trail access only. Do not stop or tether your horses in these areas.

Dispose of Waste Properly: Pack out all your trash. Dispose of human waste in toilets provided or with proper backcountry methods. Avoid leaving waste from your animals in developed areas.

Sanitation: Do not clean out your trailer in the parking lots! Clean up after your animal in areas of high public use (Fairbank Townsite, San Pedro House area).

Leave What You Find: Vegetation, archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites and artifacts are protected by federal law. It is illegal to damage, destroy or remove any artifacts or structures in the SPRNCA. Metal detecting is not permitted.

Water: Water is available from hose bibs at the San Pedro House and Fairbank Historic Townsite trailheads. Rest horses first so they don’t relieve themselves in the water.

Watch Out for Wildlife: The area is natural habitat for avian, mammal, reptile, and aquatic wildlife species; avoid disturbing animals.

Watch out for hazards including thorny vegetation, low-hanging branches, falling trees and branches, hidden sink holes, quicksand, steep drop-offs, unstable ground, collapsing riverbanks, rattlesnakes, large predators, extreme temperatures, and flash floods.
Additional information and detailed San Pedro Trail Maps are available online:

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area | Bureau of Land Management (blm.gov)

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