

Diamond Creek Takeout Information

Diamond Creek, at river mile 226, has long been the preferred take-out point for Grand Canyon raft trips. The Hualapai Tribe charges a fee for passage through their reservation, yet there are benefits to taking out at Diamond rather than continuing to South Cove. PRO supports your choice to use Diamond Creek, and wants you to be aware of the ramifications of that decision.

PEARCE FERRY IS CLOSED

Since May 2001, Pearce Ferry (river mile 279) has been closed due to extremely low water levels on Lake Mead. The next road access to the lake is South Cove. To reach South Cove you must make an additional 17 miles past Pearce Ferry with little or no current, commonly in fierce head winds, and through disorienting terrain.

HUALAPAI FEES

The Hualapai Tribe owns the Diamond Creek Road and charges a fee for each person (including drivers) and each vehicle traveling the road. The Hualapai will bill the permit-holder prior to the trip; no response is needed at that time. If PRO is doing your takeout shuttle, we will pay the fees for you. If you pay them yourself, have your receipt ready when you reach Diamond Creek.

The Hualapai ranger will take a count of the number of people and vehicles involved in your Diamond Creek takeout, including any private vehicles. Please verify that the number of people (including drivers) and vehicles is correct **before** signing the Hualapai permit. **Once signed, the billing is final** and the tribe will **not** re-negotiate. Your final billing from PRO will match the number that you signed for on the Hualapai permit, rather than any predicted numbers.

As of the 2007 season, the Hualapai land use fee is \$53.50 per vehicle and per person, which includes 7% tribal tax. For a full Grand Canyon trip of 16 people, with two vehicles (and two drivers) picking them up, 20 fees are collected for a total of \$1070. This fee is subject to change.

REACHING THE DC TAKEOUT

Most groups camp the last night at one of the numerous camps between river miles 220 and 224, and from there to the takeout is a few swift miles with several small rapids. Diamond Creek is easy to spot from the river, yet somehow people still manage to miss it. Don't be one of them! At mile 225 you will see a cable across the river, and on river right there is a gauging station. As you round a sweeping left bend below the cable you will see a large side canyon ahead on the left; just below a small riffle is the Diamond Creek access. Immediately below the rocky "ramp" is Diamond Creek rapid. Along with some sunshades (ramadas) and picnic tables there is usually a flotilla of boats and vehicles visible from the water.

Above the pebble beach where you plan to make shore, there is a wide pool with a vein of current down the center of it. Don't wait until the last minute to get your rafts out of the current. Pull over to the left side early and float slowly down the bank. The water accelerates into Diamond Creek Rapid at the takeout beach, so be prepared. Designate an agile person to leap ashore and hold each boat. One person can stand on shore, ready with a throw bag in case a raft is missing the beach.

The landing spot is narrow and heavily used. If the beach is congested with other craft, it is easier to wait in the tamarisk above the beach than it is to pull boats ashore in the fast bouldery mess downstream. When you do make shore, assuming that the road is obviously open, de-rig immediately and pile your gear in a discrete area where it does not block traffic. If there is no one else at the takeout, investigate the road condition before de-rigging (more below).

PRO schedules early morning takeouts in the summer to avoid traffic congestion, heat, and the risk of afternoon thunderstorms that can flood the road. The Tribe does not permit takeouts between 7 and 10 a.m. because they are rigging their Diamond Down trips, so the usual pickup times are either 6:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. Arizona does not use daylight saving time, so in the summer dawn is very early by the clock. Takeout day is long if you start early, and even longer if you tarry. It takes 1½ hours to row from mile 220 to Diamond Creek. Please confirm your takeout time with PRO before launching.

THE DC ROAD

The Diamond Creek road runs from Route 66 at Peach Springs, Arizona down to the Colorado River in Grand Canyon. It is a heavily used, bulldozed path through river cobbles and sand, and crosses the creek repeatedly. The last mile of the road runs in the stream-bed of Diamond Creek. The off-pavement distance is only 18 miles, and in its best condition takes an hour to negotiate.

A heavy rain in the headwaters of either Diamond Creek or Peach Springs may make the road impassable for days. The summer monsoon (typically July through September) is usually responsible for the damage, but floods can occur at any time of year. Most (98%) Diamond Creek shuttles are completed without incident; the remaining 2% are substantially impacted by adverse road conditions.

When the road is damaged, the Hualapai Tribe closes it. Once floodwaters have receded they bring in heavy equipment to repair the road. Diamond Creek floods more frequently than Peach Springs Creek. Since Diamond Creek affects only the last mile of the road, repairs can usually be made within a day. If Peach Springs Canyon floods, it may demolish the entire road and require up to four days to repair.

ASSESS THE ROAD CONDITION

If you arrive at Diamond Creek and PRO's vehicles do not arrive at our pre-determined rendezvous date and time, assess the road condition before de-rigging.

If there are other vehicles and people present, ask them about the road's condition. If the road is open, it's safe to assume we have been delayed. Please proceed with your de-rig – we'll be there as soon as humanly possible.

If Hualapai tribal members are present and telling you that the road will not be open for at least a week, do not believe them. Also, do not act on any cryptic notes that tell you to go to South Cove. Some tribe members may exaggerate the magnitude of damage to the road. Wait and gather information.

If there are no people and/or vehicles present, check the road condition yourselves – again, before de-rigging. If Diamond Creek is running red, it's your first clue that the road may be washed out.

To investigate the road's condition, hike up the creek (which is the road) until the first right-hand bend (1/4 mile). Look for any sign of vehicular traffic.

If it is clear that vehicles have reached this point recently, assume we're having problems at our end and are doing our best to reach you. You can return to the boats and proceed with your de-rig.

If the road is clearly washed out, have members of your group hike approximately one mile up the road to where Diamond Creek joins Peach Springs Canyon. Bring along pen and paper, as well as PRO's phone number, to deliver a message through any traffic you intercept. Consider this hike **extremely dangerous**. Additional floods may be on their way, regardless of how clear the sky may be. Hikers must pass through a section of a narrow, sheer-walled canyon with limited possibilities for escape from subsequent floods. Agility and climbing ability should be considered prerequisites for this hike. The hikers' mission is to determine whether Diamond Creek or Peach Springs Canyon flooded, in order to assess how long it may be before the road is repaired. Hike up the road past Diamond Creek (the first major side canyon coming in from the left when looking upstream), continue past a ramada (sun shade) on the right, moving on to where the road next crosses the stream bed – which is now in Peach Springs Canyon.

If Diamond Creek is the source of the flood your shuttle vehicles may be waiting at the ramada for the road to be cleared. In this case, hikers should discuss your options with the drivers. The drivers will most likely walk back to the river with the hikers to assess the road and recommend a plan.

If Peach Springs Canyon flooded, walk far enough past the ramada to evaluate the degree of the damage. If you see the road repair crew, send a message to PRO through them as to your location, condition, and plans. If you do not see the road crew, you may leave a written message for PRO at the ramada.

If the hikers determine which canyon flooded, but do not meet anyone, the hikers should leave a message, if appropriate, and carefully return to the boats to inform the trip leader and group.

PLANS B, C, and D...

If you are using a PRO shuttle for your Diamond Creek takeout, we ask the trip leader to give careful thought to possible outcomes and alternatives, and commit to a plan of action in case of floods or other unforeseen circumstances. Please fill out PLAN B: PRO's Diamond Creek Questionnaire, and return it to us before your launch. We further recommend that you bring this printout along for reference.

WEIGH YOUR OPTIONS and RESOURCES

- What option did you choose on the **Plan B Questionnaire**?
- Which creek flooded, and how extensive is the road damage?
- Weather – Is there a risk of additional floods?
- Travel Plans – How critical is your group's timing?
- Food and fuel – Are you good at creative cooking? Do you have supplies for three to five more days, or are you running on empty?
- Finances – Can you afford to pay for both shuttles, if you have arranged for a Diamond Creek pickup and then go to South Cove instead?
- Morale – Is your group prepared for another 10 miles of whitewater and 60 miles of flatwater rowing? Have you got any whiskey left?
- Do you have a Satellite phone?
- Do you have a GPS? Does anyone in your group know how to find South Cove, or do you have a map? (Finding the route is a challenge).

CONTACT PRO

Regardless of your course of action, we ask that you make every effort to communicate with us here at PRO. Call us on your satellite phone, or someone else's. Send out written messages with the Hualapai Road Crew, or leave them secured to the picnic tables at Diamond, or at the ramada. Let us know how you are doing, what you are doing, and what you need. Remember to include the five W's in your note: who, what, where, when, and why. We will make every effort to take care of you. A phone list is on the last page of this packet.

Most commercial trips in Grand Canyon carry satellite phones, and it is OK to wave them in. Everyone on the river has faced a similar crisis. Send someone upstream to get their attention before they're committed to Diamond Creek Rapid. Ask courteously for the use of their phone, and arrange a method for repayment, through PRO if you like. If you're low on food, let them know. Most trips have food to spare.

SATELLITE PHONE

If the road is damaged, or if you have a medical emergency during the trip, a satellite phone is worth its weight in gold. Direct communication allows us to make the best of difficult situations. If your trip has a satellite phone and you arrive at Diamond Creek to find the road clearly damaged, call PRO. If you experience heavy rains within a day or two of take-out, call us the day before reaching Diamond to discuss road conditions and options. The following numbers may help you in dealing with the unforeseen.

PHONE NUMBERS

| | |
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| Professional River Outfitters | (800) 648-3236 |
| Grand Canyon N.P.S. Emergency Dispatch | (928) 638-7911 |
| Lake Mead Emergency Dispatch | (800) 680-5851 |
| Lake Mead Ranger | (928) 564-4444 |
| Hualapai River Runners | (928) 769-2219 |
| Hualapai Diamond Creek Road Crew | (928) 769-2270 |

PRO RECOMMENDS WAITING AT DIAMOND CREEK

Regardless of which creek flooded, we suggest you wait at Diamond Creek. South Cove is a long difficult row. It usually takes no more than one day to repair the single mile of road impacted by Diamond Creek, and even if Peach Springs washes out the entire road, it may still be faster and more fun to camp and wait for the road to clear than to row until you drop. We recommend not de-rigging your boats until you can see the whites of the Hualapai Road Crew's eyes; it will still be hours before other vehicles may pass.

**Camping at Diamond Creek is undesirable if the road is open, and requires a special permit from the Hualapai Tribe. Emergency camping when the road is washed out is OK.

THE OTHER OPTION: CONTINUING TO SOUTH COVE

Heading to Lake Mead will most likely delay your return to civilization and cost more money. On the other hand, you will get 10 more miles of whitewater in another Granite Gorge and several more days of strenuous adventure. Under persistent human power, without adverse weather, it takes 4-5 days to reach South Cove. Groups who go "Diamond Down" without doing the Grand Canyon invariably take along a motor.

There is now only one tow service operating on Lake Mead. Canyon Jet Boats picks up commercial passengers almost daily during the season. You may want to flag them down or call if you have an emergency and need to get someone out in a hurry. Call Dick Mattson @ ARR (800) 477-7238 as far in advance as possible.

If you have not yet conversed directly with PRO, we hope to hear from you while you are on the lake. Below mile 240 (Separation Canyon) you'll most likely run into private powerboats, Park Service Patrol, or Canyon Jet Boats. Somewhere downstream of Pearce Ferry cell phones begin to connect. The jet boats have satellite phones on board. Don't be afraid to flag them down, and ask to make use of their phone to let us know your situation. Let them know it is a PRO trip and PRO will cover their phone costs. Anyone on the water may be able to offer some assistance or at least relay a message to PRO confirming the date and time you would like to be picked up at South Cove.

ROWING LAKE MEAD

Downstream from Diamond Creek the whitewater picks up again and there is fine scenery. Somewhere before Separation the rapids cease, and the sediment and waters of Lake Mead fill the canyon. Pearce Ferry (CLOSED) is 54 miles past Diamond Creek, and South Cove is 17 miles past Pearce Ferry.

While Lake Mead levels are low, there is slow current past Pearce Ferry. Sand bars shift in the section from Separation to Iceberg Canyon, and the current is hard to read.

Somewhere after Boundary Point (the narrow place 4 miles past Pearce) the current disperses. Around this point headwinds are notorious, and winds typically continue from here to South Cove (about 12 miles). At times even motorboats must pull to shore to wait out 50-70 mph windstorms. Your best bet for making these miles is either at night, or very early in the morning, before the solar-heated winds rise. There are beacons that indicate the way at night. A GPS is very useful in this area.

THE RAMP AT SOUTH COVE

The use of South Cove by river trips is new since Pearce Ferry closed, and the situation is sensitive. It is in the river runner's best interests to be polite.

Please de-rig on the dirt bank to the right of the dock, as viewed from the water. There is a road there where your shuttle vehicles can get close to the water, and a sign designating the raft de-rigging area. The pavement is reserved for powerboats.

On weekdays when there is little traffic, you may de-rig on the side of the ramp. Dry boats and pile gear off to the side. Do not de-rig on the dock.

PRO'S PLAN

So what will PRO do until we hear from you? We'll check your Questionnaire, and assume that you're executing the plan that you indicated. If/when we know you'll be delayed a day or more, we'll call the numbers you gave on the form, and cancel any motel reservations.

If we know the road washed out prior to your take-out date, and we know that it was Diamond Creek that flooded, we'll send out the vehicles as initially planned. The Hualapai may stop us at Peach Springs, or allow us to head down to the ramada where Diamond Creek meets the road – we won't know until we get there. If we know Peach Springs Canyon flooded, we will wait to send vehicles down until we hear from the road crew that they are close to reaching the river. Unless you've chosen the Lake option on your questionnaire or until we hear otherwise, we expect to find you at Diamond Creek. If we discover you have continued to the Lake, we will contact the Meadview Ranger and ask him to do a patrol to ascertain your location and situation.

Please keep in mind that PRO has a fixed number of vehicles and drivers at any one time. We work with rental companies and other outfitters, but these assets are often utilized to capacity during the season. We do our best to accommodate each situation, but your patience will be required. Flexibility on your part will definitely keep additional costs to a minimum. We will bring a meal for your group with us – whether pre-arranged or not – on any shuttle that will be delayed more than ½ a day.

THE COST TO YOU

Your group is financially liable for all costs incurred by getting you, your gear, and PRO's gear out of the canyon. This includes multiple shuttles that could occur when 1) You head for South Cove after we've already driven to Diamond to get you, or 2) You leave gear by the river and we have to drive back to get it later. Any additional services rendered, beyond the scope of those which were prearranged, will be billed at cost to the final statement of your account.

