



Trail 28--Mill D to Reynolds Peak down Butler Fork

Duration: 4 hours

Distance: 6.55 mile loop

Difficulty: Moderate

Trailhead: Mill D North Fork

Elevation: Mill D trailhead 7268'; Summit 9422'; Butler Fork trailhead 7223'

Avalanche: Crosses known avalanche path: Butler Fork can be an avalanche trap. Avalanches have run down Reynolds Peak

Map: Mount Aire 7.5' quadrangle

GPS Coordinates: Reynold's Peak--12 T 0445482/4501240

Dogs: Not allowed in Big Cottonwood Canyon

Introduction: On a sunny powder day this trail is unbeatable--A great workout to the peak, views from the top of the world, a 2200' downhill float in Utah's light powder, and views of mountains, mountains, and more mountains from the summit. From the top of Reynolds Peak you get an awesome mountaineering perspective, and to the west you can see the Oquirrh mountain range across the Salt Lake Valley. Reynolds Peak attracts backcountry skiers as well as snowshoers, so the path to the top may not be terribly lonely if the day is right. This trail passes Dog Lake (see the chapter on Dog Lake) and covers some of the same trail, but starts and ends at different trailheads.

How to Get There: A shuttle car is needed for this route. Leave your shuttle car at Butler Fork trailhead found 8.5 miles up Big Cottonwood Canyon on the left side of the road. Continue up the road .7 mile to the most obvious trailhead in Big Cottonwood-- Mill D North Fork trailhead. The trail begins here.

Trail Description: Mill D North Fork trailhead is well marked. One of the most-used trailheads in Big Cottonwood Canyon, it's easy to find. Start past the trailhead sign. The trail forks a few hundred feet up the trail. Head right which leads you east across the front of the mountain face. It crosses some questionable avalanche terrain, so make sure the snow is safe. As you travel this section, the view opens out across the road and gives a great perspective to the mountains on the south side of the road. The trail unfolds beneath evergreens, not too densely wooded, but feeling like a pleasant forest jaunt.

Because this area accesses great backcountry terrain and has such obvious trailheads, you will find many side trails and intersections. Always follow the main trail. You will see intersecting trails from skiers and other users, but stay on the main trail as you round the east side of the mountain.

As mentioned earlier, the trail to Dog Lake intersects with this trail. At 1.5 miles you hit the fork for Desolation Lake and Dog Lake as mentioned in the Dog Lake chapter. Head left at this sign. The trail proceeds primarily west as it climbs up to Dog Lake.

The last .5 miles to Dog Lake gets steep. Once you get to the lake the trail winds around the south side of the lake. When you break from the small patch of trees, Reynolds Peak becomes visible standing directly to the southwest. Your destination is the top of Reynolds Peak. Continue west around the south side of the lake and into the trees that spatter the ridge. Start your climb up this north ridge to the top of Reynolds Peak. From here it is steeper, but not as long as it appears. Most often a trail will be visible from other users. As you climb the ridge the view becomes spectacular.

From the summit you will head off the peak a different direction. Start west across the ridge for a hundred yards or so and then head down the north side of the mountain in a westerly direction. By following this general direction you will dump into Butler Fork and will usually find a trail down the drainage to follow. If no trail exists just follow the wash out to your shuttle car. This descent down Butler Fork is an avalanche terrain trap, so again, don't enter on a day with sketchy avalanche conditions. You can't get lost coming down because the backside of the mountain as it dumps directly into Butler Fork. Following Butler Fork south dumps you right at Butler Fork trailhead.