



Trail 13--Mueller Park to Elephant Rock

Duration: 3 hours

Distance: 2.85 one-way

Difficulty: Moderate

Trailhead: Mueller Park

Elevation: Mueller Park 5230'; Elephant Rock 6255'

Avalanche: Low

Map: Fort Douglas 7.5' quadrangle

GPS Coordinates: Elephant Rock--12 T 0431213/4522706

Dogs: Allowed

Introduction: The Mueller Park trail is the quintessential easy-access trail. From neighborhood to trailhead in 500 feet, you can hit this trail before work, after work, or on a lunch break. Your reward comes in the form of a riparian area, tranquil backcountry, a birds-eye view of Bountiful below, and a mix of hardwoods and conifers.

Mueller Park trail is extremely popular in the summer. Because it is less popular during the winter one can, at times, find the peace of a winter wonderland amidst the falling snow and naked scrub oak. This trail winds across and up the mountain keeping the elevation gain manageable. The thick scrub oak provides anchors for the snowpack so avalanche danger ranks low. But perhaps the biggest plus of this trail is how quickly you exit the city and the resulting views.

How to get there: From I-15 take the 5th South Bountiful exit. Head east to Orchard Drive and turn right. At 1800 South turn east and follow the road to its conclusion—Mueller Park. The trail begins before the fee booth. Cross the foot bridge to the south.

Trail description: The trailhead is well marked and easy to find. Start by crossing the bridge. The trail passes next to Mill creek for the first few hundred feet where it then begins to wind up the hill. Even in new, untracked snow, the route is decipherable because of its high summer use and the resulting cleared trees and brush that mark the path. The trail makes wide sweeping .5 mile switchbacks as it climbs this north face of the mountain. After climbing the first .5 mile you'll be rewarded with views to the west of Bountiful and the Great Salt Lake; and again at .70 mile.

At .75 mile the trail leaves the switchbacks and rounds the corner of the mountain heading south and east as it hugs the curves of the mountain. As it makes this turn you can look east and see the large grey blob of rock you're headed for: Elephant Rock.

The trail continues to the east maintaining elevation between 5500' and 6000', winding in and out along the silhouette of the mountain as it leads toward Elephant Rock. The trail crosses a couple springs and bridges along the way.

At 2.85 miles the trail forks. By going straight and toward the front of the mountain you will hit Elephant Rock, by heading up the mountain to the right/south you will head toward Rudy's Flat and North Canyon. To return, follow your same path back.

Options: Mueller Park Picnic Area, just east of the Mueller Park trailhead, closes during winter months. The area thus becomes, when snow levels are at lower elevations, a beautiful, easily accessed snowshoe jaunt for children. Mill Creek runs through the picnic area with bridges to cross, picnic tables to jump off, and small hills to climb. My five-year-old loves it. There is plenty of terrain to wear little ones out. No entry fee is charged during the winter.