

Coronado National Forest

Dragoon Mountains



Butterfield Stage Coach Stop

Only ruins and a few rock walls remain of the old stage stop at the mouth of Jordan Canyon on the northwest corner of the Dragoon Mountains. The 45' by 55' structure, with a corral at one end and two 9' by 10' rooms at the other, was constructed on this spot in spite of the fact that it presented a clear danger of Indian ambush. A nearby spring that provided precious water in an arid land was considered sufficient reason to live with the danger.

The station at Dragoon Springs was used by two mail companies. The San Antonio to San Diego "Jackass Mail," which used mules to pull its coaches and pack its passengers, began service across southern Arizona in July of 1857 and discontinued it just 40 runs later. The John Butterfield Overland Mail Company, which ran between St. Louis and San Francisco, started twice weekly service in October of 1858, taking "twenty-five days or less" to make the 2,700 mile run. Over 200 way stations were utilized along the way. In March of 1861, the Butterfield Line abandoned its route across Arizona and moved operations north to Utah. Reasons given for the closure were increased hostilities with the Apaches, the onset of the Civil War, and stiff competition from the Pony Express. In 1887, even the old spring deserted the site after an earthquake disrupted its flow.

During the short history of the Butterfield Stage Station, and even after it was abandoned, it was the scene of a number of altercations. Three men were killed in a fight among construction workers here in 1857. Four Confederate soldiers died in a battle with Apaches at the stage stop in 1862, and two U.S. Army regulars were killed in a second altercation later the same year. In 1967, the graves of several of those unfortunates were vandalized.

In 1979, the ruins of the old stage stop were listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Hopefully, that will inspire those who wander this way to exercise more respect toward this window on our past.

Attractions:

Wild west history
Ruins
Good views of the northern Dragoons
Scenic drive

Facilities:

None

Location: 68 miles east of Tucson.

Access: From Tucson, drive east on I-10 for about 65 miles to Dragoon Road. Turn right on Dragoon Road and continue for 3 miles to the town of Dragoon. Turn south on Four Canyon Road (FR 687) for 4 miles, then follow the signs to Jordan Canyon.

Road Conditions: I-10 and Dragoon Road are paved. FR 687 is dirt but suitable for passenger vehicles.

Season: Year-round

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Douglas Ranger District,
3081 N. Leslie Canyon Rd., Douglas, AZ 85607, (520)364-3468

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