



HAVASUPAI TRAIL

Corpus Christi Hiking Club 2013



HAVASUPAI TRAIL



Corpus Christi Hiking Club 2013

Created by Carol Carder for Corpus Christi Hiking Club - May 5, 2013

The Havasupai Trail begins at the Hualapai Hilltop (elevation 5,199 feet) west of the South Rim of the Grand Canyon on the Havasupai Reservation and about 165 miles northwest of Flagstaff. The trail descends 3,000 vertical feet to the Indian village of Supai (almost 10 miles) where hikers check in and pay the fee. Another 2-3 miles beyond, following Havasu Creek, is the campgrounds bordered by the spectacular 100-foot Havasu Falls at the entrance and the breath-taking 200-foot Mooney Falls at the end. Hikers must traverse almost two miles of steep switch backs before reaching the floor of Havasu (Cataract) Canyon where the river runs under ground most of the time before appearing above ground outside of Supai. Its waters are a clear blue-green colored by the presence of lime in the rocks.

The Havasupai tribe (people of the blue-green waters) are the traditional guardians of the Grand Canyon for over 800 years and number around 639 members. Supai is the capital and has 136 houses, a cafe, lodge, school, general store, tourist office and two churches. Two towering rock formations, called "The Watchers" overlook the village.

The hiking club began planning their first back-packing trip to Havasupai Trail about one year ago. On February 1, (the first day reservations could be made) Cheryl and Jack Pruett spent a couple hours dialing and redialing before finally getting through and obtaining our reservations for April 26-28, 2013. Now the serious planning began—what equipment was needed, what food was good for camping, who has the first aid kit, etc. Prepared and well-equipped 11 hikers were ready for the adventure—Dave Kohlman, Fran Kearney, Cheryl Pruett, Chuck Schaefer, Brian and Karen McKenna, Carol Carder, Mike Karczinski, Debra Kuehl, Liz Button and her father Paul.

After leaving the church parking lot at 8:30 a.m., the group stopped in Flagstaff for lunch and to meet up with Liz and Paul who were going to drive a motor home to the trail head. Thanks to the small kitchen in the motor home the hikers feasted on a potluck dinner of homemade pasta, salad, bread, wine and desert. They were originally going to pitch their tents in the parking lot for the night, but a lack of available space forced them to sleep in the cars and under the stars on the truck bed and ground.

At the break of dawn the group awoke, ate breakfast, put on their packs and began their descent at 6:30 a.m.



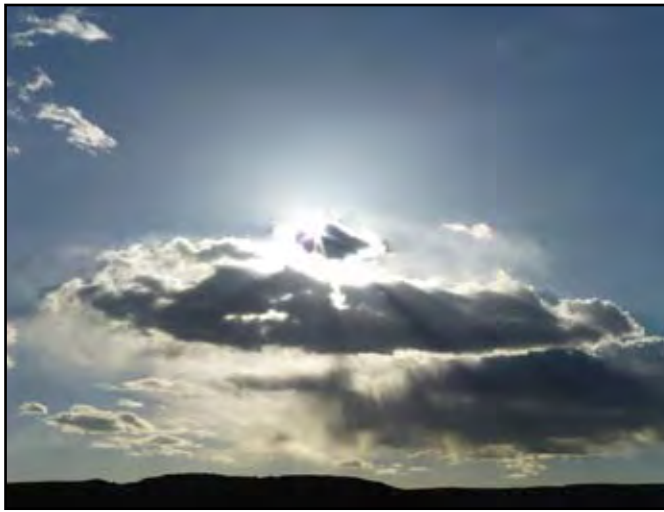
THURSDAY
APRIL 25:
CORPUS
CHRISTI
TO
HUALAPAI
HILLTOP

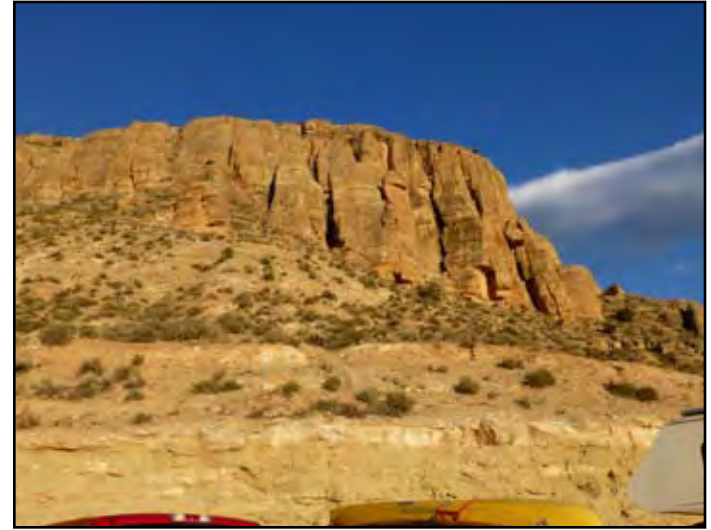
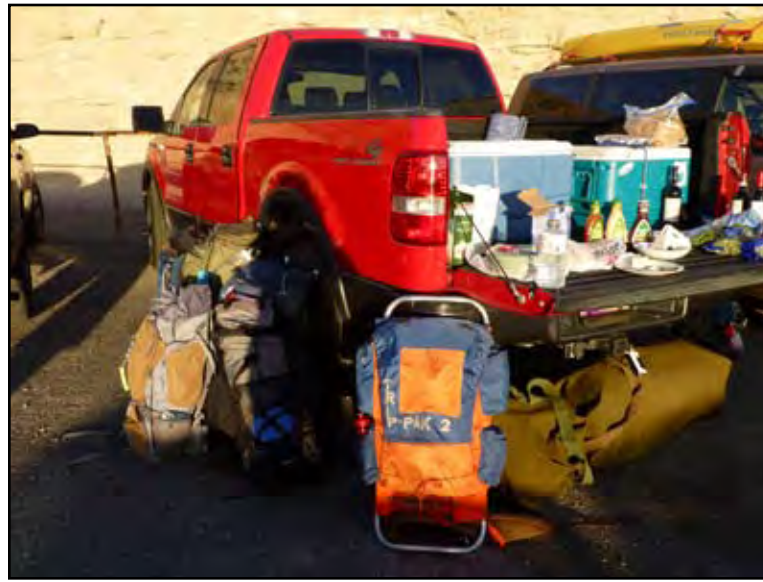




There is no way to drive to Supai and Havasu Falls. The only way down is by foot, mule pack, or horseback. There is a helicopter service, though, for those who cannot hike.

Our first look at the trails from the hilltop. The switchbacks looked treacherous and steep. Even some of the mules were resisting and had to be coaxed to continue.





The sunset gave a lovely warm glow to the cliffs and saturated the sky with hues of orange, yellow and violet. Everyone is filled with the anticipation of the adventure ahead.





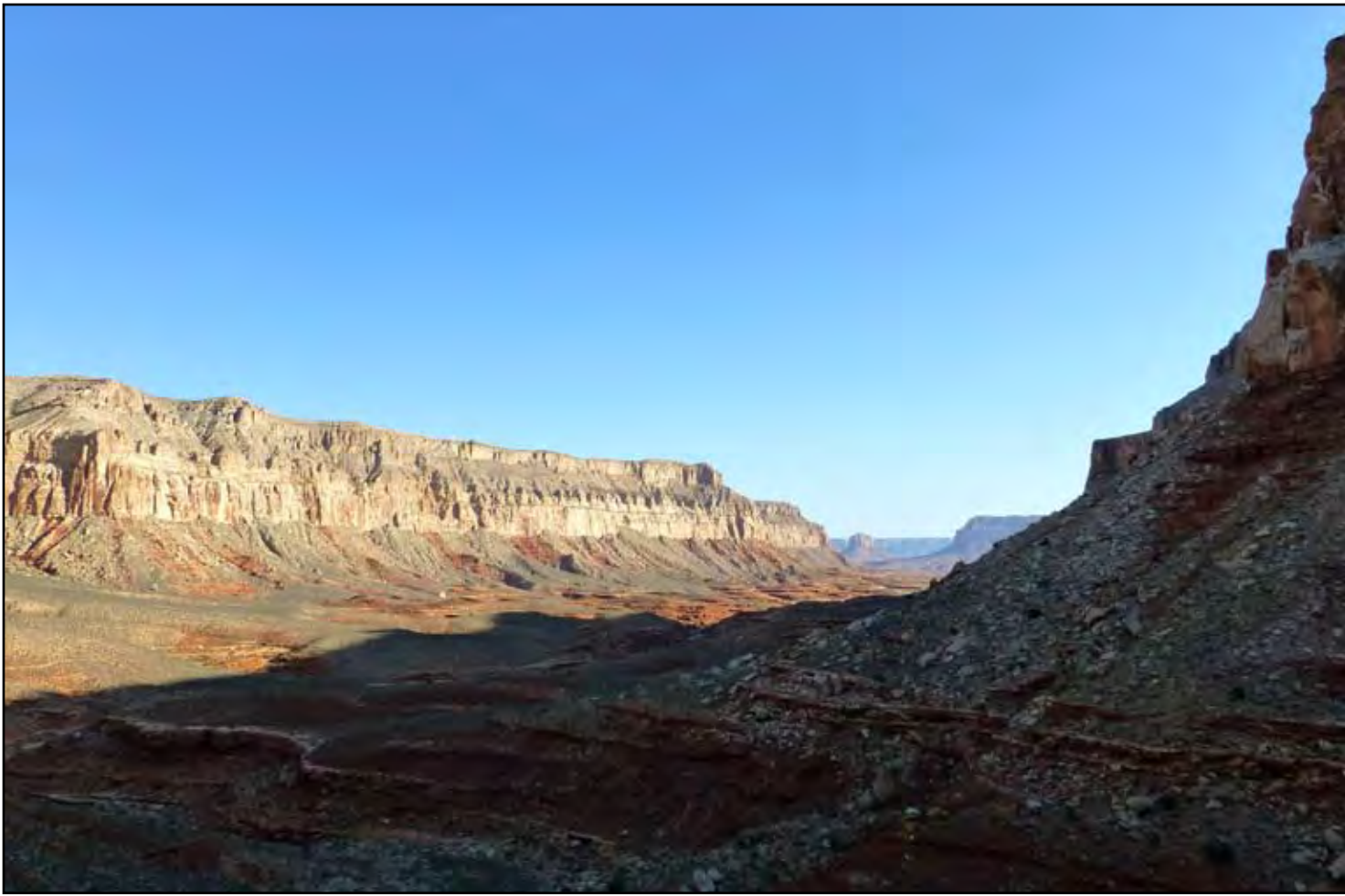
Dawn arrives with the moon descending languidly over the cliffs on the other side of the canyon.

FRIDAY
APRIL 26:
HUALAPAI
HILLTOP
TO
HAVASUPAI
CAMP



Ready! (left-right): Carol Carder, Cheryl Pruett, Mike Karczinski, Chuck Schaefer, Paul Button, Liz Button, Brian and Karen McKenna, Dave Kohlman, Fran Kearney and Debra Kuehl.







Finally at the bottom of Havasu Trail. Whew, the sun is heating up the rocks and it is time to take off jackets, zip off the bottom of our long pants and take a long drink of water. How many more miles???



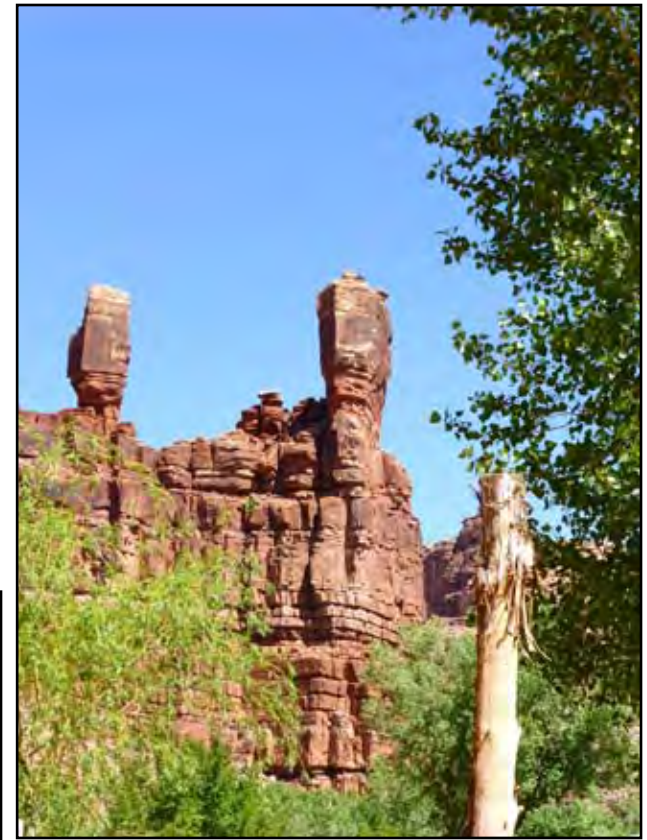
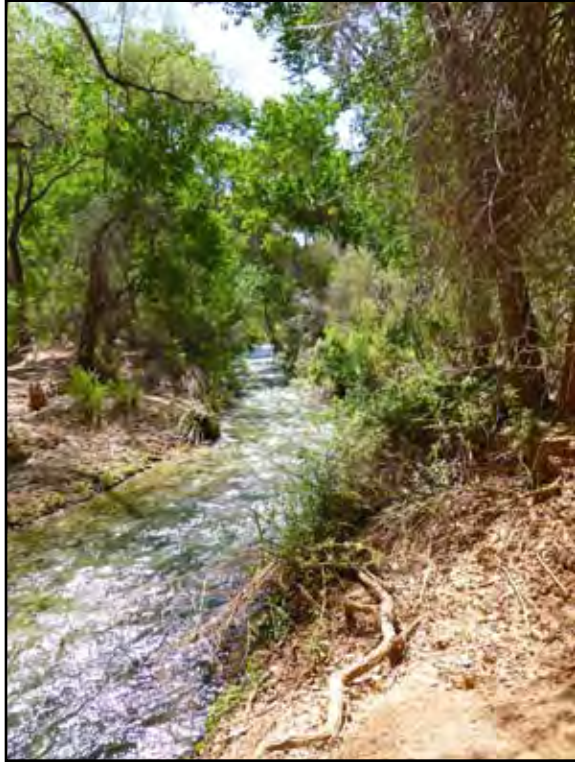






Almost to the village of Supai. The cool blue-green waters of the Havasu Creek are running above ground, and the trees and vegetation are more lush. The air feels fresh and the pace quickens.





Just outside the village small farms are watched over by two towering pinnacles and plenty of grazing horses and mules.



At last...in the village. As of the 2010 census, Supai had a population of 208. It's the capital of the Havasupai Indian Reservation, and is currently one of only two places in the United States where mail is still carried out by mules, the other being Phantom Ranch in the Grand Canyon.



We checked in and began our final trek to the campgrounds, walking past the cafe, school and several small houses with gardens strewn with children's toys and play equipment. Just outside the village we came upon Havasu Creek, on our left, marveled at the turquoise waters and the spunky Little Navajo Falls..



After descending a couple of steep hills we heard the roar of the water spilling over rocks. A few feet later we glimpsed our first look at the magnificent Havasu Falls. Filled with wonder and excitement, we forgot how tired we were and pressed on, anxious now to see the campgrounds.







While waiting for the mules to get in with our tents, we refilled our water bottles at the only potable source in the camp, an underground spring called Fern Creek. The water is pumped to the surface and it flows out two spigots. It tasted delicious. Then we hung out at the bottom of the falls until the 3 p.m. arrival of the mule train. The rocks outside of the falls have been shaped into strange “melted” formations by the years of running water.



The falls run inside as well as outside the mountain.





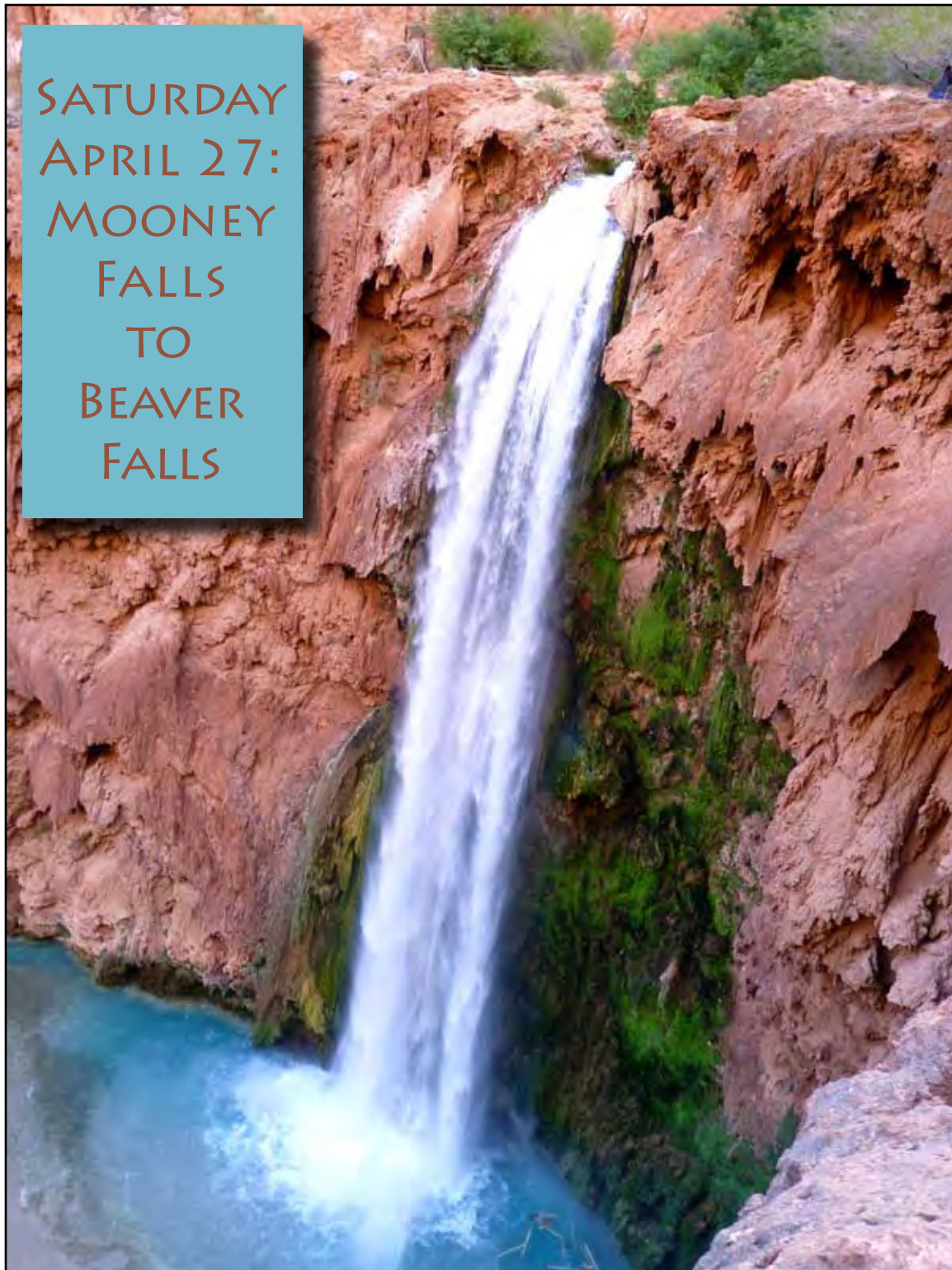
Six tents soon went up on a cozy piece of land surrounded by trees away from the path to the latrine and water spigots. The spot had two large picnic tables for us to sit around. It was perfect! We hung our boots and packs in the tree. Dinner was individual dehydrated meals “cooked” with the water we boiled on four little camp stoves.

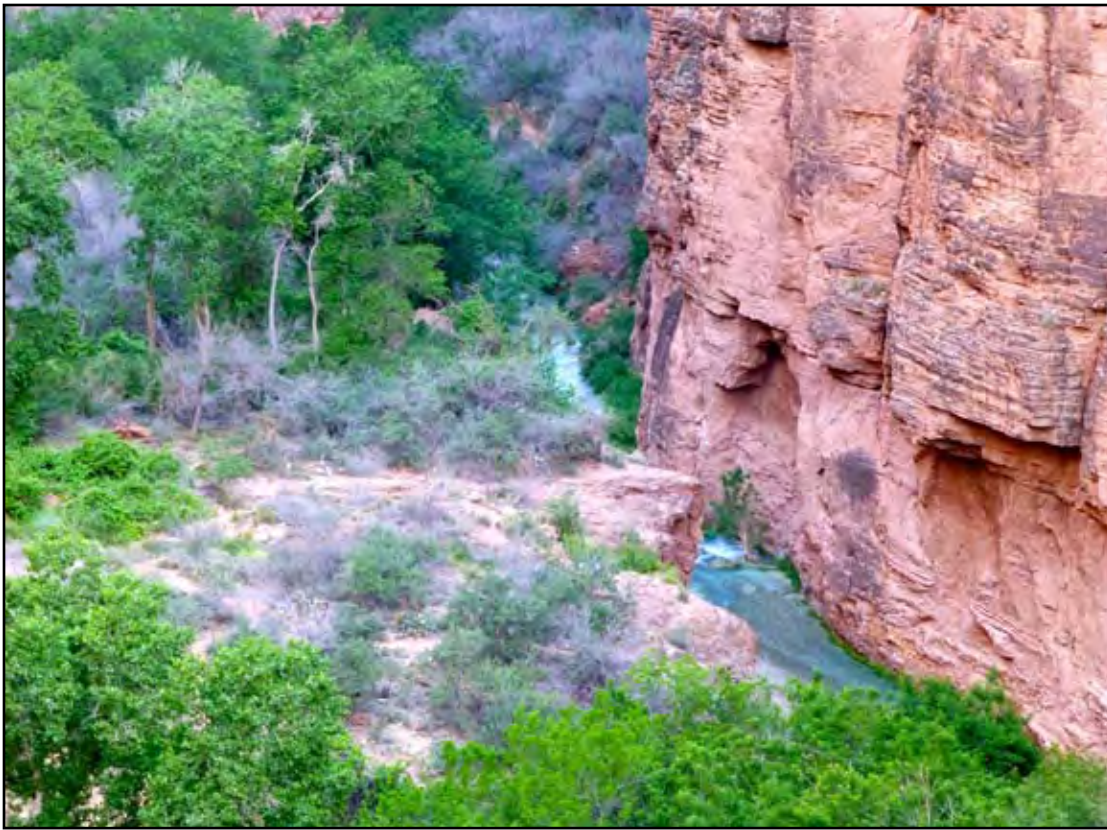


As soon as it was dark we crawled into our tents for the night. We awoke at dawn, boiled water for coffee and hot cereal, then began our hike to Mooney Falls and Beaver Falls.

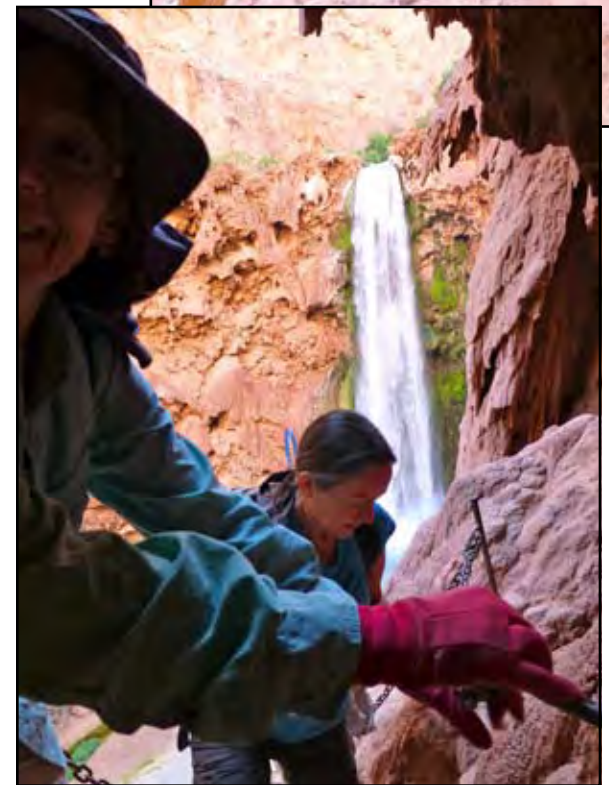
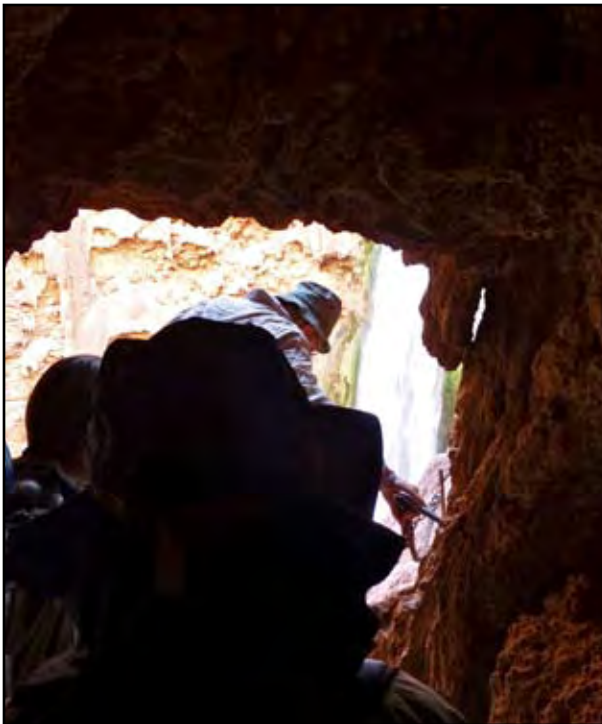
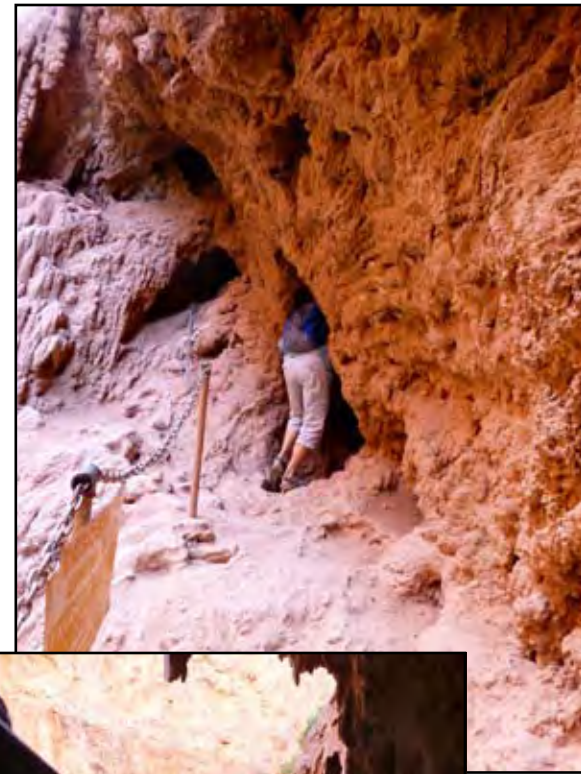


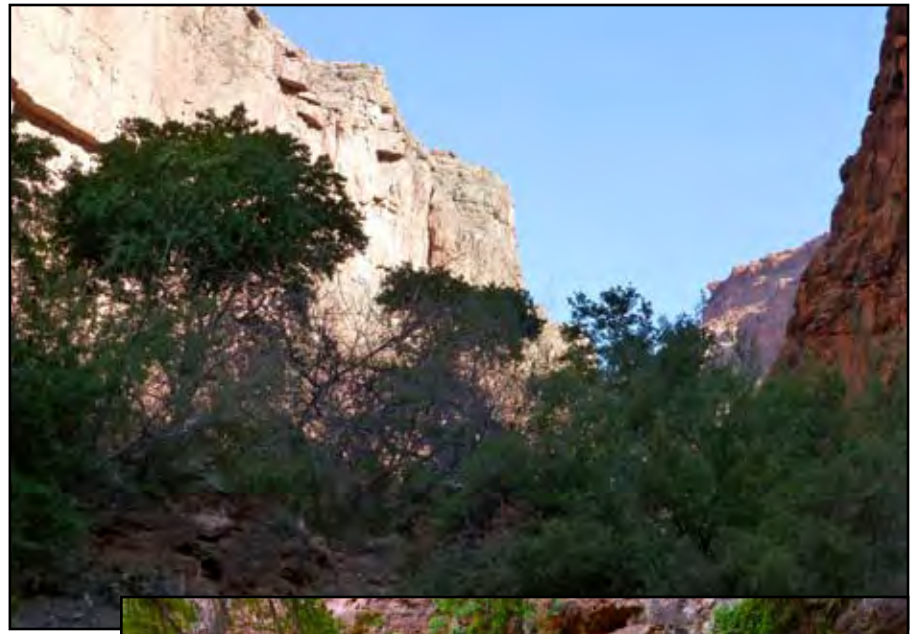
SATURDAY APRIL 27: MOONEY FALLS TO BEAVER FALLS





From the top of the trail Mooney Falls is impressive and dazzling, but the adventure really begins when we hike down “at our own risk” to the bottom of the falls. This entailed walking along the side of the cliff and then entering a cave/tunnel in the mountain, traversing through this cave and coming out a little way down, only to enter another cave/tunnel. Coming out of that cave requires a terrifyingly steep descent down the outside of the cliff with two chains to hang onto while trying to find a decent foothold. This takes you to the first of two “ladders” before finally reaching the bottom.





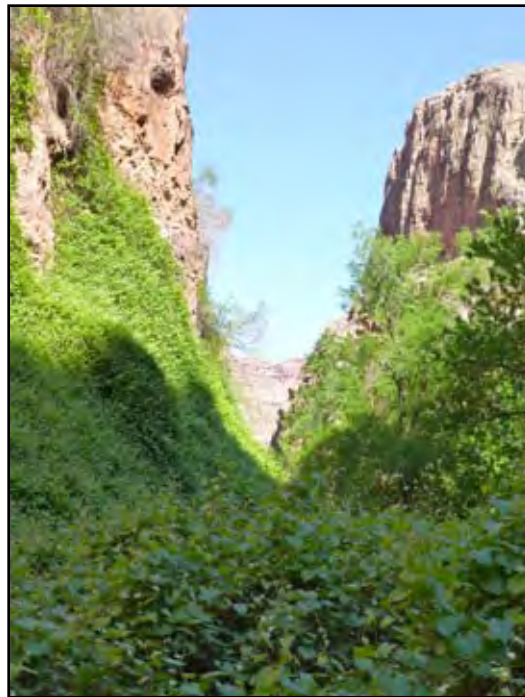
Chuck takes a break while waiting for the rest of us to catch up. The next part of the hike is serene and beautiful, following the creek and trekking through tall vegetation of wild grape vines.







Sometimes the little side trails led to an enchanting oasis along the creek.



The final trek to Beaver Falls took us up the side of another cliff, via rickety ladders and steep trails. At the top we met ranger Clifton who told us how to get down to the bottom of the falls. We were now at the end of the reservation. The south rim of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River lay just beyond.

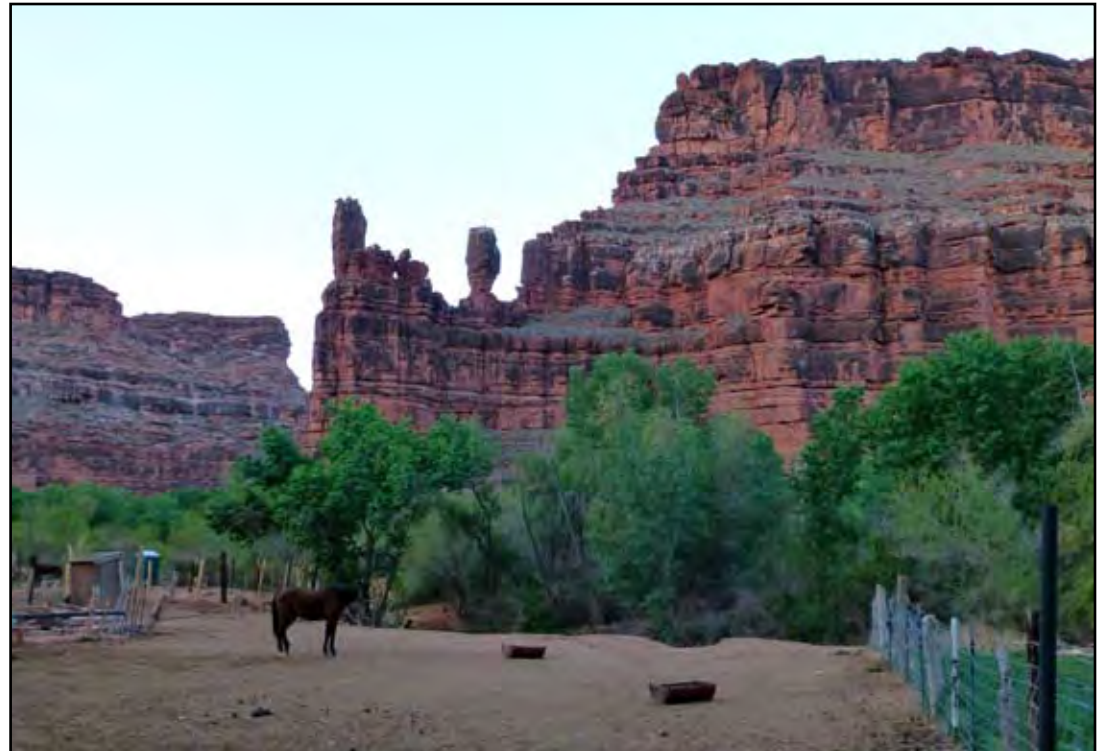




Beaver Falls is smaller than Mooney and Havasu, but just as stunning. We crossed the pool at the bottom of the falls and scaled the far wall with the aid of another “ladder” and a rope. We happily hiked back to the campground, carefully traversing back up the side of the cliff in front of Mooney Falls. The rest of the afternoon was spent relaxing at the camp and in the pulsing waters under Havasu Falls. At dinner we decided to wake up the next morning at 4 a.m., boil just enough water for coffee and tea, then pack up and begin the long hike out.



SUNDAY
APRIL 28:
HAVASUPAI
CAMP TO
HUALAPAI
HILLTOP
& HOME



The moon was still shining when we began our hike out of the camp and to the village. Dawn broke over Supai as we approached. After a short break to catch our breath, we continued on through the canyon. We rested about halfway through and had a snack.



Almost to the top—the switchbacks are steep and challenging in the heat of the late desert morning.



One last view before reaching Hualapai Hilltop. We did it! Our reward is an icy cold drink from the cooler in Dave's truck. We change out of our damp, sweaty clothes before settling in for the drive back to Tucson. The first backpacking trip for Corpus Christi Hiking Club was an awesome experience for everyone. Now where should we hike next?

