Mingus Traverse 80

Section by Section Course Description

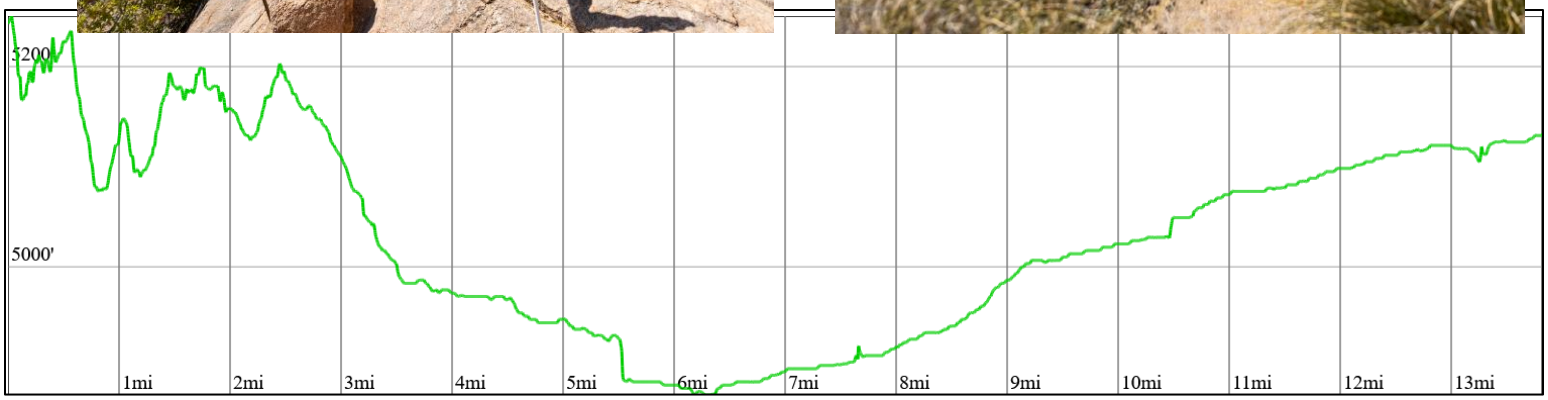
This document contains Section by Section descriptions for the Mingus Traverse 80 distance only. See the website for Section by Section descriptions for the other race distances.

Updated 10/1/26

This document will not be updated with course changes within 1 month of the event.

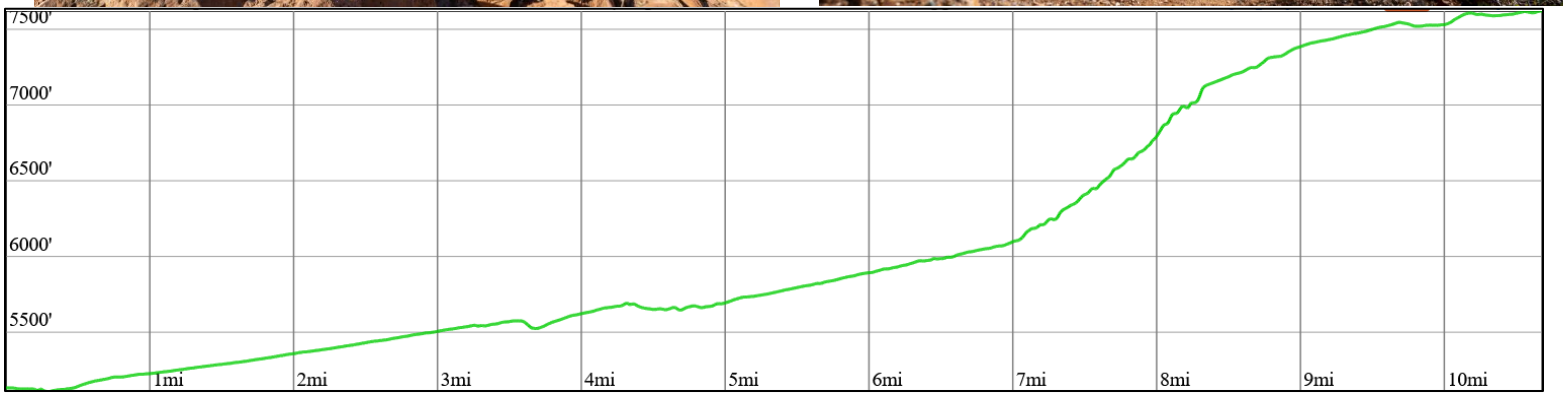
Start Watson Lake Park (0.0) to Fain Ranch Aid Station (13.8) (13.8 miles w/ +874' and -984')
Leave the start line as the sun is coming up over Watson Lake and after a few turns in the park, the course hits the Watson Lake Trail which is part granite slickrock, part boulder hopping, and part scrambling. Normally you TRY to navigate this trail by following spray painted white dots. For the race, we will mark the crap out of the area but as a general rule, keep the lake on your right and stay close-ish to the water. The Granite Dells are actually quite amazing. At mile 1 you pass beneath the damn outflow through a magical lush green area in a narrow canyon and then climb back up onto the granite rocks. Another ½ mile dumps you back onto the Peavine Trail where a left takes you on a 4-mile easy downhill grade on crushed granite. As soon as you are out of the rock formations, the view opens up to a wide grass valley and Mingus Mtn in the distance. Peavine ends to sidewalk where you will continue straight for a while, cross through an intersection, and then continue onto a dirt road. Use the A-Frame ladder (the first of a few in this stretch) to cross over a barbed wire fence and onto Fain Ranch Land. Another A-Frame ladder will take you back onto surface streets for a little over a mile and then again, over the fence to cross a large section of Fain Ranch. Cut cross-country through uneven dirt and grasses for about 1.5 miles and then another A-Frame ladder brings you to the Arizona Downs Racetrack complex, another A-Frame, back through grassland, through a pipe culvert, and into the Fain Ranch Aid Station. The Fain family has been ranching the Prescott Valley since 1870's and at one point the ranch encompassed the entire valley floor. We are lucky to be able to traverse this ranch with its high desert grasslands and large bounding herds of Pronghorn Antelope.

NOTES – The cross-country miles at the end of this section can be hard to navigate. Be ready to have your trusted phone ready with the course file. Fain Ranch Aid Station has crew access and drop bags. If you are interested in supporting the riparian areas in this section, get involved with the Prescott Creeks FOREVER PRESERVED program.



Fain Ranch Aid Station (13.8) to Mingus Mountain Camp Aid Station (24.5) (10.7 miles w/ +2,790' and -302')
This section is difficult. Leave Fain Ranch Aid Station turning a few times to get out of the Arizona Downs Racetrack complex. An A-Frame ladder helps you cross yet another barbed-wire fence before joining a very faint double-track road. Keep the highway on your left and you'll know you are headed in the correct direction. After about 3.5 miles the course veers off of the faint double-track for some rough cross-country travel. This section sucks. You were warned. Keep your phone out for navigation. Pick your way through grass, sage, catclaw, open plain, and sandy draws, and eventually you'll come to the last A-Frame ladder over a barbed wire fence and leave Fain land. Turn left on a wide well graded dirt road and then a mile later a right onto a faint double-track that will slowly turn into a very nice single-track. Stretching diagonally across Central Arizona, the Black Hills rise up to almost 8000 feet and separate the Prescott Valley from the Verde Valley. Enjoy the views of the pass ahead and watch as the vegetation quickly turns to pine, juniper, and pinon the further you get up canyon. Hit your first switchback and gear down for a worthy 2-mile climb. By mile 23 the grade has slacked off and you come to a trail intersection where you will stay left and then hit a dirt road where you will again stay left. One mile down the road you'll turn right on another dirt road and then another mile will bring you to Mingus Mountain Camp Aid Station.

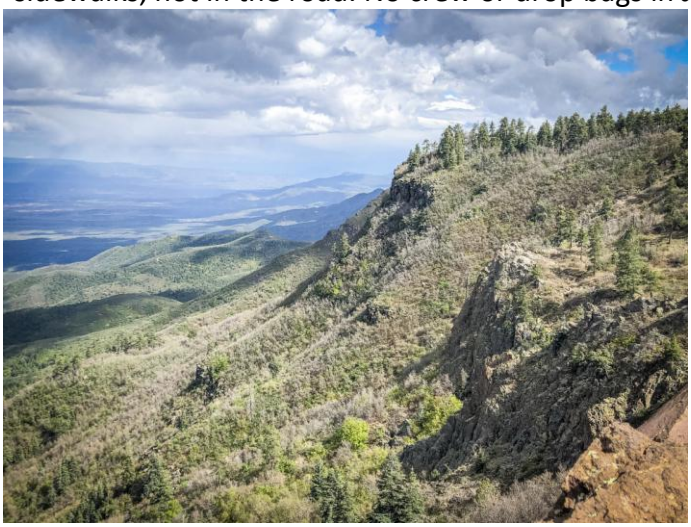
NOTES – **GEAR CHECK mandatory for all runners leaving Fain Ranch AFTER 11AM**. If you do not have the Required Gear + Cold Weather Gear, you will not be able to leave Fain Ranch after 11AM. The swing in temperature from daytime in the Prescott Valley to nighttime on top of Mingus can vary by 40°F. You'll encounter a couple of gates through this section. Please help us maintain our permits for future years by closing each gate behind you. Mingus Mountain Camp Aid Station has crew access, drop bags, hot showers, and sleeping bunk rooms (heated indoor space).

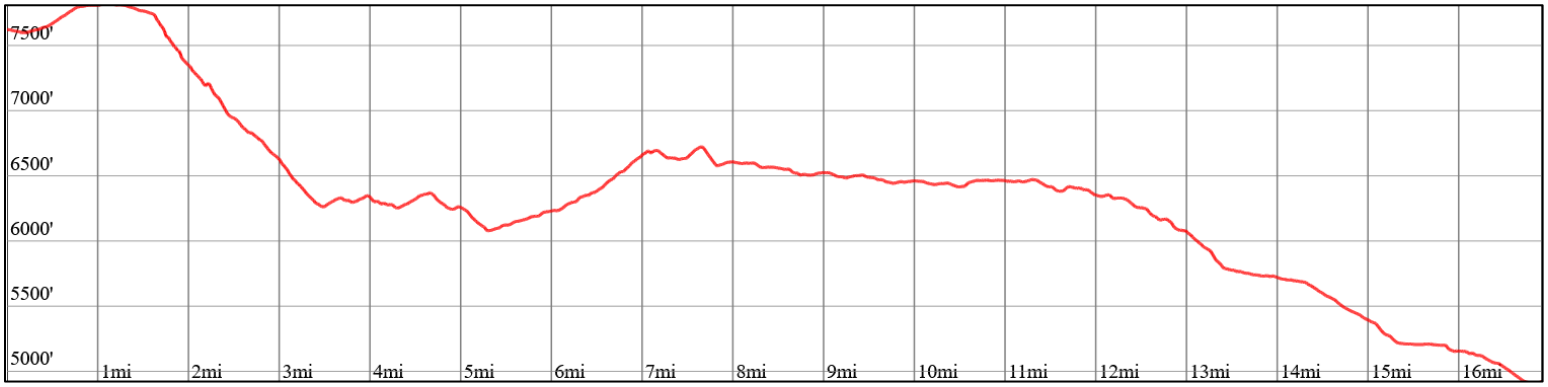


Mingus Mtn Camp Aid Station (24.5) to Jerome Aid Station (41.5) (17.0 miles w/ +1,750’ & -4,428’)
Turn left out of the camp, left again 1/3 of a mile down the road, and then hit a campground. Continue straight out at the end of the road and behold the rest of your adventure, laid out before you. The views from atop Mingus, across the Verde Valley to the red rock walls of Sedona and the peaks of Flagstaff beyond are some of the most spectacular of the course. Fill your lungs with the view and continue a half mile further along the cliff edge before the North Mingus Trail hangs a left for a technical descent. Hang on for a mile to a left turn and then another half mile to another left, as the grade slacks to an old roadbed now eroded to single-track. Cross Hwy89A cautiously and then the pines give way to scrub oak and sage. This is where you tip from the first half of the course to the second half. Psychologically it is a big step. The view opens up as you traverse above the HUGE Verde mine, looking across the Verde Valley and down into the mine. Your feet will hate some of the roads on this section. Rocks rocks rocks. The dirt roads eventually wrap around and you run past the mine, such a cool feature, and into Jerome. As you drop into Jerome, you’ll pass the start line for the Sedona Canyons 125 distance which starts Wednesday morning and runs alongside you through your finish.

Jerome is a historic mining town, now an artist’s enclave and tourist stop. Runners will tour directly through the old town perched on the north side of the Black Hills at an elevation of 5,000’ with sweeping views of the northern parts of the course. After passing through one of the most unique towns in the West, you’ll arrive at the aid station, overlooking the Verde Valley, Sedona, and the peaks above Flagstaff.

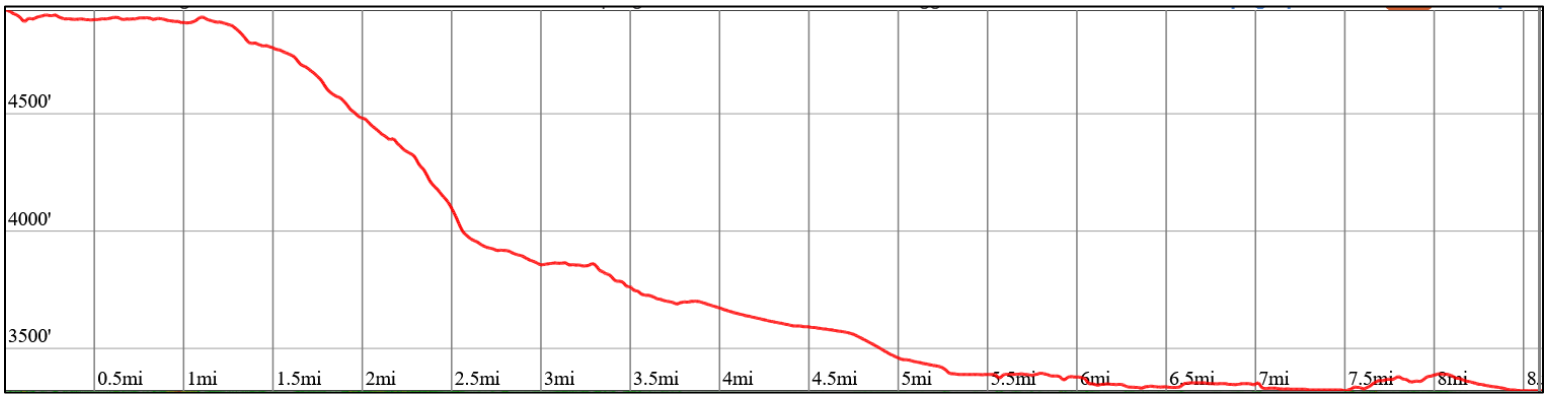
NOTES – Jerome is a sensitive permit for us. Please be courteous of vehicles and pedestrians. Run on sidewalks, not in the road. No crew or drop bags in Jerome.





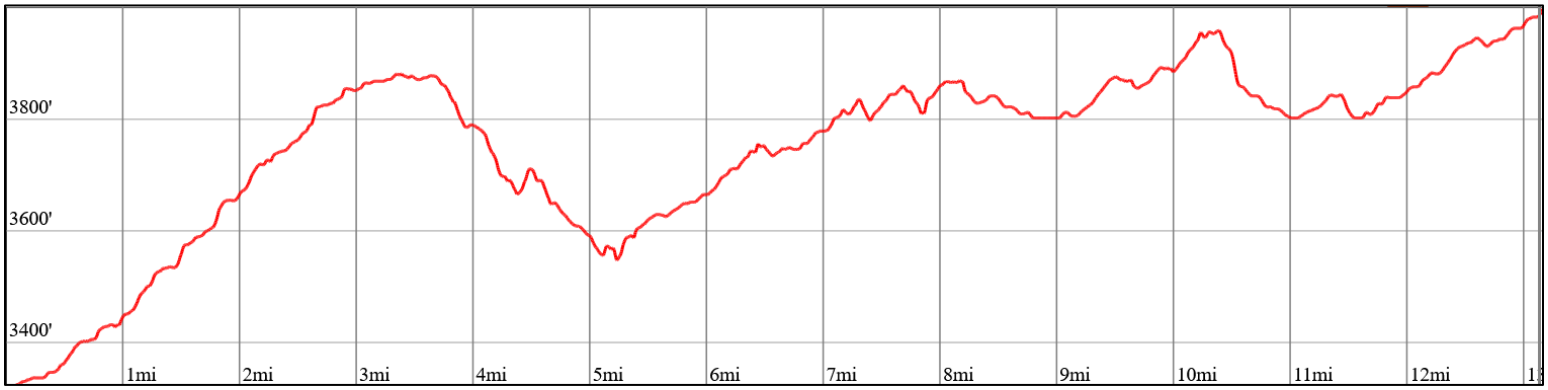
Jerome Aid Station (41.5) to Dead Horse Aid Station (50.2) (8.7 miles w/ +356’ & -1,976’)
Leave the aid station on surface streets for 1.5 miles and then pass through a gate (**BE SURE TO CLOSE IT BEHIND YOU)** to access a steep loose rough beat-up dirt road that’ll drop you down 1,000’ in the next mile. Go through two more gates (you know the drill) and hang a right on a dirt road for a gentle downhill grade for ¾ of a mile. At this point continue straight down a dirt driveway, DO NOT take the switchback to continue up the dirt road. We pass through some private property to access the Bitter Creek Wash. Use a faint trail on the right to climb out of the wash, cross the street, and turn left on Main Street which will take you straight past Clarkdale’s main square. At mile 46 take the left road fork to stay on Main Street and then turn right on an old railroad grade turned cinder path. This path will turn to single-track and then drop you down alongside the Verde River. A strange right turn under the Tuzigoot bridge crawls you up under the underpass. Come out on the other side of the bridge, scramble up the embankment and then you’ll pass through a gate (yes…close it), follow the single-track, and another gate (yep…you know what to do) and then for a special treat, wade across the Verde River. Enjoy the cool knee-deep water. There’s no keeping your feet dry here (Merino Wool socks are highly recommended). Something magical about a clear river oasis in the desert. Clear the river and turn right through a corridor of Cottonwoods and lush green grasses. Look up to see the ancient Tuzigoot pueblo perched on the cliffs above and follow the twists and turns of the single-track and double-track maze into Dead Horse State Park and the welcoming arms of our aid station volunteers.

NOTE – Crossing the Verde Valley in the daytime can be a hot affair, expect temps in the mid 80°Fs. Good thing you can lie down in the Verde River to cool off. Dead Horse Ranch State Park Aid Station has crew access and drop bags. Grab some sleep on a cot in a sleeper tent. BYO sleeping bag.



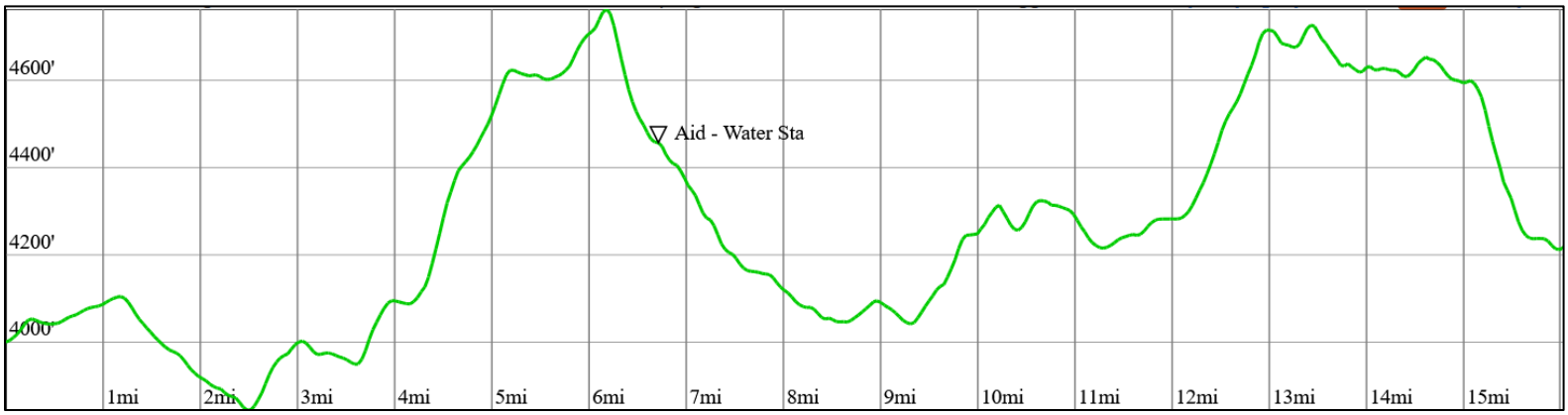
Dead Horse Ranch Aid Station (50.2) to Deer Pass Aid Station (64.2) (14.0 miles w/ +1,651’ & -971’)
Leave the Dead Horse Aid Station through a few trail and road intersections before jumping onto the Lower Raptor trail. The next 4 miles goes through Arizona Primrose habitat, an endangered species of plant. The land managers have requested this to be a NO PASSING ZONE in order to keep our traffic to the center of the trail. This trail is chunky, good single-track but lots of baby head sized rocks that are probably going to be driving you crazy. Hang a right on Thumper and enjoy a fun flowy descent to the Lime Kiln trail. Turn left on to the Limn Kiln Trail (end of the no passing zone). Lime Kiln will take you all the way to the Deer Pass Aid Station and it is your start of a 28 mile stretch of near continuous high quality single-track. Views go from great to amazing to bonkers as each crest feeds you more of the red rock vistas to come, once in Sedona. Pay attention near mile 63 as you pop onto a dirt road and make a couple of quick turns before crossing through a pipe culvert under Hwy89A and continue on to Deer Pass Aid Station.

NOTE – You might want to give some time for your feet to dry out at Dead Horse Aid Station after crossing the Verde. The trail surface from Dead Horse to Sedona can be super fine dust, so pay attention to footcare. You will have access to drop bags at Deer Pass Aid Station but no crew.



Deer Pass Aid Station (64.2) to Finish at Sedona Ranger Station (80.3) (16.1 miles w/ +2,641’ & -2,423’)
Time for some magic. This section is our staff pick for favorite of the entire course. The single-track is world class and the views are mind boggling. Continue on Lime Kiln Trail. The trail quickly crosses Deer Pass Road and then crosses through a gate. Pay close attention for the next 4 miles as the trail turns a few times and jumps on and off dirt roads. Around mile 68 you will cross a paved road (Red Rock Loop Rd) and then make a left onto Schuerman Mountain Trail. Near mile 70, be prepared to work your way right (east) around Red Rock High School, hit the much needed water station, cross another paved road (Red Rock Loop Rd again), and then back onto single-track. Get prepared for lots of turns at single-track junctions and have your phone out for navigation. But don’t forget to look up every once in a while as the views, especially of Cathedral Rock from the Ridge Trail…holy cow! At mile 75 keep your eyes peeled for a junction where you go right onto the Airport Loop trail. This trail is aptly named because it does a loop around the airport. You’ll work you way around the airport south and then east for some of the most incredible views you will see in any running race. The trail here is very chunky through, so don’t look too long. Drop down off of Airport Mesa via the Brewer Trail which spits you out onto Brewer Road where you’ll turn left and then right into your finish line at Sedona Ranger Station.

NOTES – This section is amazingly beautiful. It can also be brutally hot in the heat of the day. The Sedona Ranger Station is not only your finish line, it is also an aid station for the 125 Milers. THE 250 MILERS ALSO HAVE AN AID STATION IN SEDONA AT A DIFFERENT LOCATION, THEIR AID STATION IS AT POSSE GROUNDS PARK.



Happy running!