

At this point, we headed straight ahead and up the ridge:



Panorama looking out at the valley and towards Tucki Mountain:



The location of the upper narrows of Pothole Canyon is just barely visible to the far right in this photo:



There seemed to be numerous small arches through here, but it was too hot on this part of the ridge to check any of them out:



Finally reaching the flatter area near the top of the benchmark; the actual benchmark is hidden behind the peak to the far left in this photo:



Looking back towards the second narrows of Cottonwood Canyon:



For me, the best views of the entire hike were looking down into the upper part of Canyon 3; someday I hope to be able to see more of the Ten Canyons region:



Looking along the tops of Canyons 3, 4, 5, and 6, with the top of Pothole Canyon (Canyon 7) the last one visible, to the far right:





Looking across the tops of Canyons 1, 2, and 3, and towards the Niter beds (top left in this photo):



Panorama of the incredible view from here (which seems to be better than the view from the top of the actual benchmark, in my opinion). Unfortunately, we did not have time to check out the view from the high point seen to the far left in this photo (the view from there into the upper reaches of Canyons 1 and 2, and towards the Cottonwood Canyon mouth, would probably be spectacular):



The high point seen just left of center in this photo is the top of the actual Cottonwood Benchmark. We had hiked up the wash seen to the far left in this photo:



From here, we headed over towards the actual benchmark. On the way, we passed by the spot where I had heard that climbers will ascend the benchmark; it looked like a possible but not particularly safe or enjoyable route to me. Notice that the Cottonwood Canyon Road can be seen in the upper left of this photo (the route we took really is the long way around!). This is the view looking down from here (the top of the route is to the right in this photo):





Panorama of the incredible view of the Cottonwood Canyon Mouth and Cottonwood Canyon First Narrows:



One more photo of this amazing view:



In previous years we had seen more Globemallow flowers, but we hardly saw any this year. I'm not sure if we weren't hiking in locations where they were prevalent, or if this wasn't a good year for them:



From the top of the benchmark, we had a great view looking towards Marble Canyon (barely visible in the center of the photo) and Cottonwood (to the far left) Canyon, with the Grapevine Mountains and the Niter beds to the far right. Unfortunately, it seems that the curvature of the western side of the benchmark is such that we can't look down on the Cottonwood Canyon Road far below:



Survey marker which seems to be pointing to the actual benchmark:



This is the actual benchmark:



Panorama towards the viewpoints we had been at earlier:



We didn't have time to hike over to the other high point in this area, seen to the left in this panorama. In this photo, the side canyon which we'd hiked up earlier in the day can be seen in the center, and the main Cottonwood Canyon is off to the left, with Marble Canyon barely visible to the far right:



Where we'd parked on the Cottonwood Canyon Road is just barely not visible from here:





At this point, we decided to see if we could shortcut our route back, because it was getting quite hot:



This panorama was taken from the saddle between the actual benchmark (not visible) and the second highest point (to the left in this photo). We headed down the ridge to the prominent flat area seen just right of center in this photo:



Panorama from this flat area:



This barrel cactus seems to have experienced some severe erosion. I wonder how long it has been here for so much of the surrounding dirt to have washed away:



This first part of the route back was much easier than the route we'd taken up:



Here we are just above the route back which was noted previously in the report. We hiked/climbed down to the side canyon seen far below from here. I would not recommend this part of the route to anyone who is not very skilled in descending such terrain in Death Valley:



Looking down the drainage that we descended; it's actually steeper than it looks, and I didn't get many photos because I was hesitant to take a camera out while down-climbing this:



There were some nice flowers that we encountered once the terrain became a little more level. This is another flower which I hadn't ever seen prior to this trip; it's called Death Valley Monkeyflower, and appears to be a rare Death Valley endemic (according to the DVNP webpage):





Blooming Death Valley Sage (unfortunately, the blooms are small, so they are difficult to see in this photo):



Looking back up at the worst stretch of the descent from about half-way down:



Finally we reached the base of the talus slope; I would not recommend going up or down this route. The best way back would probably be to have rejoined the route we'd taken on the way up instead of descending the talus slope (although this would be a lot longer, were it not so hot it probably would have been much more enjoyable, and it certainly would have been easier):





Panorama with our route back to Cottonwood Canyon on the left, the side canyon continuing to the right, and the route we'd just taken down visible in the center of the photo. I think the high point to the left of center in this photo is a false summit, because we couldn't see this part of the side canyon from the top of the benchmark:



Three photos of some of the little flowers which we were seeing lots of on our walk back:



There were little flowers everywhere on the hillsides through here, making it difficult to walk without stepping on any of them:



Notice how part of this boulder broke off and exposed the non-desert-varnished rock; it's surprising how thick the desert varnish can be sometimes:



Barrel Cacti are surprisingly pretty when they are blooming:



There were many more Desert Five-Spot flowers than I'd seen in previous years; generally we would only see them in the Furnace Creek area:



More of the common Desert-Star:





Two final photos from our drive back through the Cottonwood Canyon First Narrows:

