

KEANE WONDER BRIDGE, CYTY'S MILL, AND AN UNNAMED CANYON JUST NORTH OF THE KEANE WONDER MINE AREA

The goal for this hike was to visit Keane Wonder Bridge, which is located in the area southwest of the trail which goes from Keane Wonder Mill to Cyty's Mill. This area between the alluvial fan and the old mining trail is formed from ancient travertine terraces. From there, we hiked up towards Cyty's Mill, then followed a different route back down to the alluvial fan. Then, we hiked up a short canyon/drainage just north of the travertine terraces, which eventually leads into the hillsides between Big Bell Extension Mine and Cyty's Mill.

I am not including the exact location of Keane Wonder Bridge in this report, due to the sensitive nature of this bridge. However, using Google Earth and the photographic clues in this report, it shouldn't be difficult to find, with some effort.

The travertine terraces area is surprisingly colorful, and I would certainly consider it to be worth exploring even if one does not see Keane Wonder Bridge. Dignonnet's excellent Hiking Death Valley book compares this area to Yellowstone's Mammoth Hot Springs, and "at some point in time, perhaps as recently as the Pleistocene, this spring was considerably larger." This area extends for almost 1.5 miles towards the alluvial fan. Cyty's Mill, and Cyty's cabin, are nicely preserved remnants of this area's mining history. And, the canyon just north of the travertine area is also a very scenic canyon to walk through, and we were fortunate enough to see (and be watched by) a lone bighorn sheep high up on the hillside while we walked through part of this canyon.

The more major drainage north of this canyon, which cuts through the reddish plateau seen in many of the photos in this report, is a canyon I hope to visit at some point in the future. It eventually leads to Big Bell Extension mine, and it is reported to have some nice narrows.

Looking down the main part of the valley, towards Furnace Creek, on our way to the Keane Wonder Mine Road. This day was mostly overcast:



Looking towards the mountains above Keane Wonder Mine, some of which are relatively easily accessible if hiking from the Chloride Cliffs Road:



We parked where the Keane Wonder Mine Road crosses the major wash which drains from the travertine terraces. There are many old metal drums in the washes around here, left over from the mining operations. I'm not sure what this one was used for, but it reads "RHEEM 18 55 46 ICC-17E STC":



Panorama with the road we descended to the wash on the left, and the wash we are heading up on the right:



Looking back towards Tucki Mountain while hiking up this wash:



These interesting reddish cliffs to the northwest would be visible for most of the hike:



Here we are looking towards the travertine terraces below the trail from Keane Wonder Mill to Cyty's Mill. To the far left is the start of the short canyon we would visit later in the day:



Here we are approaching the base of this travertine area; notice how the wash draining from the canyon we'll visit later in the day (left) joins with the wash draining from the canyon near Keane Wonder Mine (right) and has eroded the base of the travertine terraces into a point (left of center in this photo):



Looking towards the small canyon we'll visit later in the day. Notice how it cuts between the reddish cliffs to the left and the lighter colored travertine area to the right:



The Keane Wonder Mine Road is up on the small plateau seen just above center in the photo. It would be a shorter walk to park there, but that is highly not recommended, since there is barely room for two vehicles going in opposite directions to pass in that section of road, and it would be destructive to climb the roadside berm and park there:



We soon pass a small hillside near the base of the travertine terraces. Notice the three distinct layers of rock (brown, pink, and orange) visible on this hillside:



Zooming in on Cyty's Mill, which is visible in the center of this photo. It's about a mile away from where we are standing:



Panorama near the base of travertine terraces:



To the left is the small canyon we visit in the afternoon:



In the center is a small wash which leads into the terraces and in the direction of Cyty's Mill:



To the right is a slightly larger wash, also leading up into the terraces, in the direction of Keane Wonder Springs:



Notice the hoodoo-like formation on the side of the wash here:



At this point, we began to explore the nearby area, and eventually visited Keane Wonder Bridge. So, I will not give a precise route description, but a dedicated hiker should be able to determine where these photos were taken. Up ahead, we are starting to see very colorful rock formations, which are somewhat reminiscent of colors in the Mammoth Hot Springs area in Yellowstone:



Then, in a side drainage, we spotted these tall tower-like formations on the hillsides:



Notice the water coming out of the side-drainage here:



Getting a closer look at these tower-like formations:



Interesting narrow section of canyon in this area:



Up ahead and to the left in this picture, one can see what looks like a bridge:



Notice all the salt crystals on the canyon floor here. We had to be very careful to step from rock to rock to avoid damaging these:



Notice the unique "canyon span" of this bridge. It's sometimes difficult to determine what qualifies as a major or minor natural bridge. Personally, the small canyon/drainage makes me think this should be a minor bridge, but it's relatively large so perhaps that's what makes it a major bridge:



I climbed out of the small canyon/drainage on the right side to get this photo of the bridge:



There is a small dryfall in the drainage, just past this bridge:



Looking down at Keane Wonder Bridge from the top of this dryfall:



The water appears to be seeping out of the ground at this point, just above the dryfall:



From here, we explored the area between Keane Wonder Bridge and Cyty's Mill. Here we are looking up towards the trail which runs between Keane Wonder Mill and Cyty's Mill:



Some distance away, we spotted this rock pile, which is probably an old mining claim marker. There are good views from this location, and it's a good lunch spot:



Panorama of a nice view from near this claim marker. Note that this photo was taken near the edge of a cliff, and when I stepped closer I noticed many large, deep cracks in the ground. So, I would not recommend getting close to the edge of these cliffs:



Looking north, towards the drainage which runs between the travertine terraces and the reddish cliffs:



Looking northeast, towards the area surrounding Cyty's Mill:



Panorama of this part of the travertine terraces, and the mountains behind them:



Looking southeast towards the Keane Wonder Mine parking area from here:



From here, we began hiking up towards Cyty's Mill. It's difficult to walk directly to the mill, and instead one must work around cliff-outs such as the one shown in this picture:



We began to get increasingly good views looking down the valley towards Furnace Creek:



Here is another rock pile/claim marker (lower part of the picture):



Looking southeast, towards where the main trail cuts across the top of the travertine terraces:



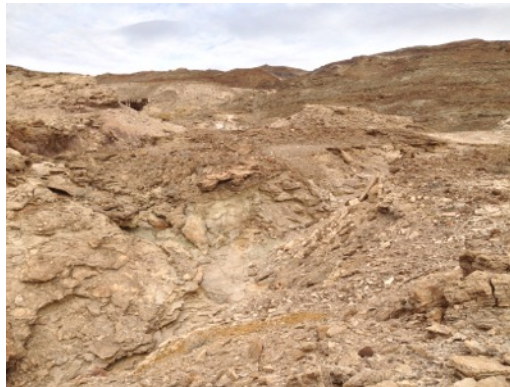
Looking north, towards more interesting formations between where we are hiking and the small canyon we'll visit later in the day:



Looking down one of many drainages we pass on our way to the old mining trail:



Although it's less than a mile to Cyty's Mill from where we stopped for lunch, it takes longer than expected because of all the small drainages which must be worked around:



This is one of the small water-filled holes along the old mining trail, between Keane Wonder Springs and Cyty's Mill. It's been fenced off, but it looks quite deep:



Up ahead along the trail we can see Cyty's Mill:



Here is another fenced-off water-filled hole, which also appears to be very deep. Notice the black and reddish colors along the edges:



Looking down the terraces and towards where we parked; notice how, in general, the day has stayed rather overcast, which is nice since bright sunlight could have been bad for the eyes when walking across some of the lighter patches of travertine:



Panorama from the old mining trail, looking down the main part of the valley (center), with the southern Funeral Mountains to the left and Tucki Mountain to the right:



Here is an old bed frame and something I can't identify, near the trail:



Up ahead, we can see water draining from yet another spring near Cyty's Mill:



I'm guessing this is a wildlife camera, or something similar such as a people-counter, since I've seen something similar labeled as a wildlife camera in Point Reyes National Seashore:



This looks like the foundation for another building:



There is a substantial amount of broken wood below the mill-site:



Cyty's house is just below the mill:



This ingenious design collects the water runoff from the metal roof in a gutter which drains into the bucket seen next to the building:



The stamp mill is an impressively large construction; also notice the large water tank to the left of it:



Looking out at the valley from just behind Cyty's house. This is a very nice view to be able to wake up to each morning:



Looking across more mining equipment, over towards the northern end of the travertine terraces:



This is another view across Cyty's house, this time looking towards Furnace Creek:

