

UPPER REACHES OF THE CANYON JUST NORTH OF ECHO CANYON

We had previously visited this canyon in December 2016, and before that in December 2015. On each visit, we were able to progress further up this canyon. On the first visit, we checked out the impressive narrows at the beginning of the middle part of this canyon, and on our second visit we were able to bypass a large boulder jam and see the rest of these narrows. On that second visit, we had continued up the canyon, which has numerous boulders and small dryfalls to climb. We soon decided to turn around and exit the canyon on the north side, because of the slow progress we were making up the canyon at that point. From the north side of the canyon, we spotted a formation further up-canyon that looked like it could be a natural bridge, so we planned to check it out on a future trip. Hence the goal of this trip was to determine if that formation is a natural bridge. Unfortunately, it is not; the "hole" we'd seen was where a gigantic rock had apparently been. But the upper part of this canyon is quite pretty, and the rocks lessen further up the canyon. It might be interesting to proceed further up this canyon, although one will probably soon encounter a large dryfall. Please see my report "Upper Narrows of the Canyon Just North of Echo Canyon" from December 2016 for a Google Earth map of this area.

Panorama from where we parked on the Echo Canyon Road, looking towards the Panamint Mountains (center background), and the upper Black Mountains (left). This is not where we usually park; we typically park near what appears to be an old well, but since we arrived early in the morning it was occupied by campers enjoying the very nice location to camp:



Looking towards the canyons between Echo and Hole-in-the-Wall, which include Rockfall Canyon and at least one other canyon:



On our way to the canyon mouth, we encountered an old trail with some rock markers. I am not sure how recently these might have been placed here:



Part of this old trail as it drops into the canyon wash:



Once in the canyon, we spotted from a distance a relatively large flock of birds, with yellowish-green feathering on their chests. I don't recall having seen birds like this previously, but I'm thinking they may be common in this area (?) since there were so many of them:



We also spotted a lone bighorn sheep (scout?) high up on the ridge to the north. This was more wildlife sightings than we usually see in a day, and made me wish I had a camera with a better zoom lens on this hike:



The conglomerate rock formations in this area certainly look to me like the right kind to form a slot canyon:



We continued up the main wash and took the right (southern) fork as usual. The large boulder in this picture is actually blocking the entrance to a small side drainage here:



At this point, we gained the small ridge on the left side of the canyon (between the two main forks, though we couldn't see the other fork at this point). This is the view looking into the small side drainage seen in the previous photo; the part of the canyon we were in earlier is on the other side of this drainage:



Panorama looking towards the mountains above the upper reaches of this canyon, from where we exited the canyon wash:



This is part of the ridge we walked along when we first visited this canyon, back in December 2015:



The side-drainage seen in the center of this photo (south side of the canyon) is where we had descended into this canyon in December 2015. That side-drainage had some nice narrows, and, given what we could see from here, I'm wondering if there may be some more (shallow) narrows further up that side-drainage:



This is the upper part of the side-drainage we'd been following (north side of the canyon):



Looking across the northern (left) fork of the main canyon at a small peak/bump which would be interesting to climb; it should have great views of this canyon, Funeral Slot Canyon, and the "More Slots" Canyon which is between these two canyons:



Looking down one of the small ridges between the two main forks of this canyon. The bump with the jagged rocks on top, seen to the right in this photo, is where the two main forks of this canyon join. Also notice the line of rocks on the ridge here; I'm not sure whether they were placed there long ago, or if they just naturally ended up there:



From this ridge, we were getting increasingly good views of the peaks between this canyon and Echo Canyon. I can't recall for sure, but it may be possible to access some of the ridges seen in this photo from side canyons of Echo Canyon:



Some previous hiker must have placed these rocks here, which unfortunately marred the scenery:



Looking ahead towards where we will be dropping back into the canyon:



This is a good spot to have second-breakfast before continuing on into the canyon. The views from this small ridge are very nice:



Looking across towards the Echo Canyon wash (which is not visible; it's on the other side of this ridge):



On the hills to the left (north) of the canyon, we could see some small alcoves:



Zooming in on these small rock alcoves, which would be interesting to check out further sometime:



Looking north towards the ridges which separate this canyon, "More Slots" Canyon, and Funeral Slot Canyon:



The cloudy skies were giving interesting lighting for photography. Here, we are above the upper section of narrows, looking down-canyon:



Notice the different layers of rock in this panorama of the upper section of narrows; the slot-like portion of the canyon is formed from a reddish-brown conglomerate rock, with the gray formation we're walking on at the top (I'm thinking it's a more recent alluvial deposit, but I don't know much geology):



Looking down into the upper part of this canyon from the north ridge. Unfortunately, one can't descend into the canyon right away, and instead you need to ascend then descend a small ridge before following a side-drainage down into the canyon (more photos later):



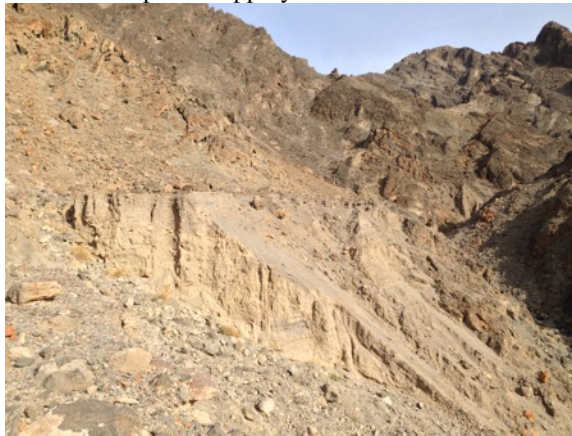
Zooming in on the formation that turned out to not be a bridge (seen in the center of this photo):



This is the entrance to the upper section of slot-like narrows:



The terrain seen to the far left in this photo is too steep and slippery to cross:



Looking across at the bighorn sheep trail we would use to exit the canyon later in the day (left of center):



Getting another view looking up this interesting canyon from here:



This is the slippery ascent which we used to cross the small ridge that prevented us from descending into the canyon. Note some routes up this ridge are much better than others, so use care when choosing a path:



Panorama looking towards the valley from the top of this small ridge. The south fork of this canyon can be seen to the far left, and the north fork is to the right:



Looking down-canyon, from the other side of this ridge, towards the entrance to the narrows:



These interesting balanced rocks (right of center in this photo) were here our first trip to this area:



This is the view looking up the boulder-choked part of the canyon:

