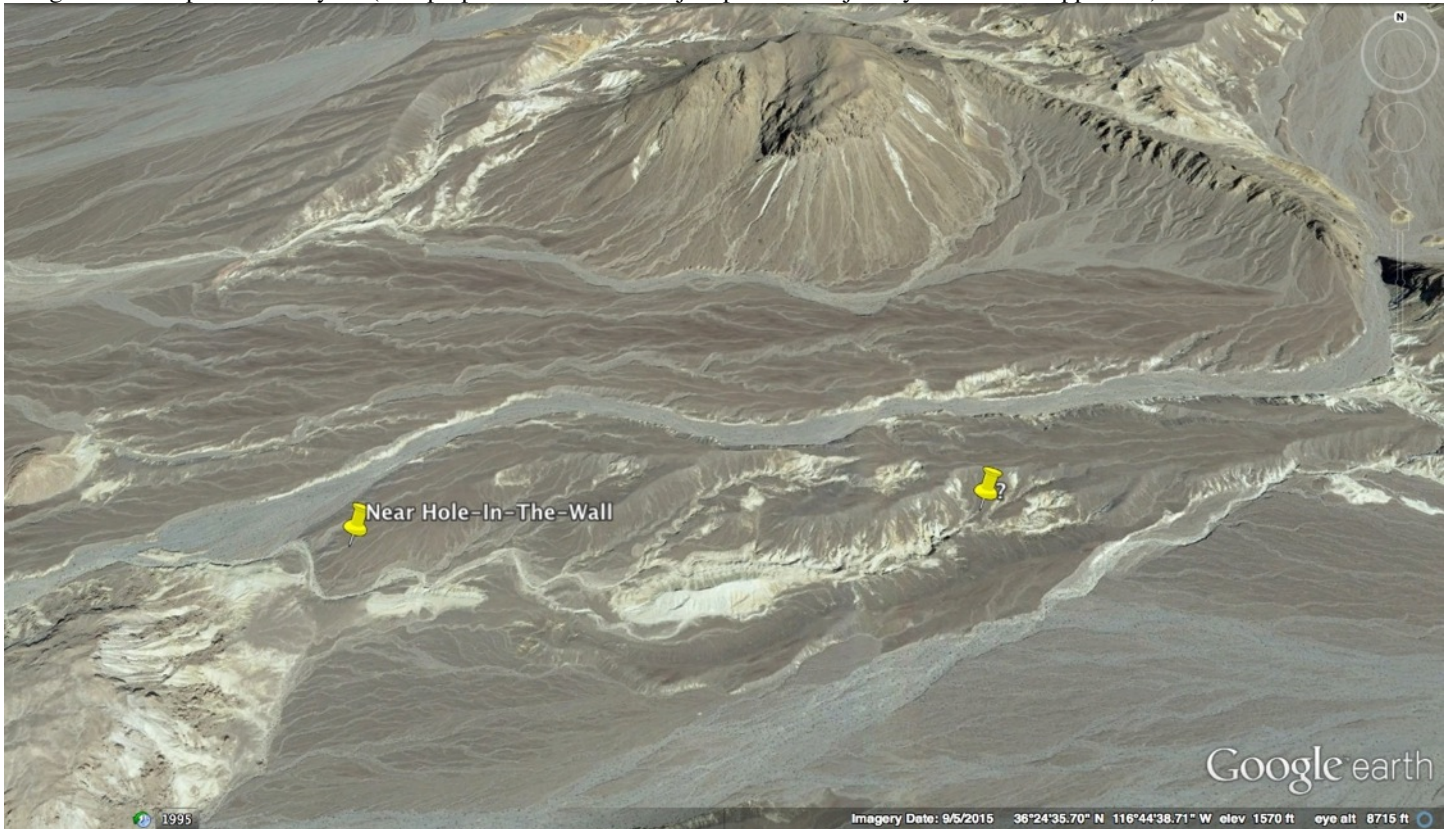


A SHORT CANYON NEAR THE HOLE-IN-THE-WALL ROAD (WINDY SHORT-DAY HIKE)

When planning hikes for a Death Valley trip, I always try to plan at least one short day hike for bad weather days. Recalling that the Hole-in-the-Wall area is often less windy than other areas on a windy day, I began to look for a short hike in that area. Many years ago, before I had a camera, we would hike the short canyon which heads off to the south just before the actual Hole-in-the-Wall. The rock formations in that area are very interesting, so I looked for a nearby canyon which might have similar rock formations, and this one did not disappoint.

I would not recommend this hike as a full-day destination; instead, I think it would be a nice excursion for families with small children on a bad weather day. This could be a family-friendly area for the reason that there are a lot of short side-canyons to explore, but caution (of course) is required because many of the rocks are sharp and the hillsides can be steep and unstable. This hike would also be a good afternoon hike for anyone returning early from a hike to, say, Slit Canyon or Undertaker Canyon.

Google Earth map of this canyon. (The pinpoint marks an area just past the major dryfall which stopped us.)



Panorama from Stovepipe Wells village looking towards clouds over the Grapevines. None of the major peaks, such as Palmer, Corkscrew, or Thimble were visible that morning. Surprisingly, however, it was not too windy at Stovepipe Wells yet, evidenced by the lack of blowing sand at the Mesquite Sand Dunes. However, strong winds were predicted for later in the day.



The wind was certainly blowing in Furnace Creek when we drove through.



Sometimes the Hole-in-the-Wall Road is very rough and difficult to find, and sometimes it is particularly easy to drive. On this trip (December 2017), the road was in good condition.



We found a good place to park a short distance before reaching the mouth of the short canyon. Here, the Hole-in-the-Wall wash splits around a mound, and currently the road goes to the left. We hiked up the right side.



The actual Hole-in-the-Wall is just barely visible between the low hills and the peaks in the background.



The wash of this small canyon started out wide open.



On the way back, wind was whipping up through here and I actually had to use a bandanna and hat to protect my eyes and face from the blowing dust and small rocks, but it also was very windy in the valley. On our hike out, however, it was perfectly calm.



Looking back at an interesting rocky bump/outcropping closer to the main road, which I'd like to climb someday.



Up ahead, we could see the canyon starting to narrow. The mud-mound hill visible to the center in this photo helped us judge where we were in the canyon.



There are numerous side canyons, mostly on the left (north) side, which looked interesting to explore, but it might also be windier as one gets higher up and closer to the ridge.



More interesting-looking side canyons.



The canyon walls were staying shallow, although the wash got narrower.



Notice the hill mentioned three photos ago is getting closer.



The walls finally started to increase in height, and the canyon became more interesting.



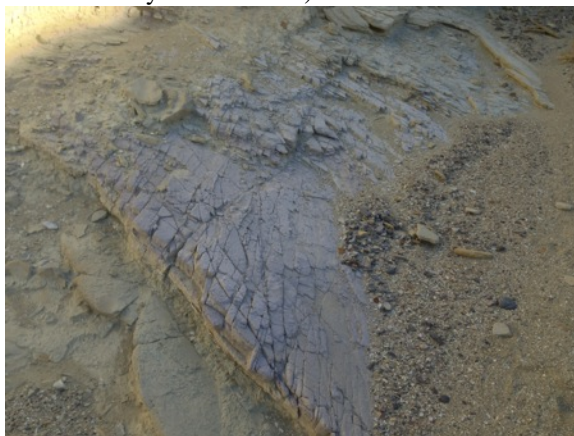
This terrain here is very similar to that in the short canyon which is closer to the actual Hole-in-the-Wall.



This short dryfall does not pose much of a challenge as it is only about 6 feet tall, although the rock is crumbly.



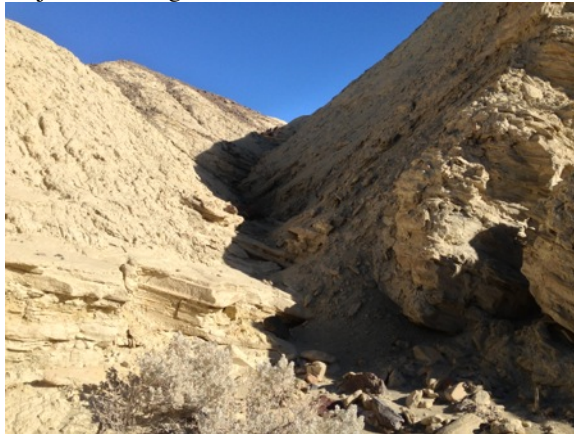
The rocks through here were surprisingly colorful in places, with blues and purples showing up in the shaded areas (on our way back, this rock was in the sun, and the colors were not nearly as noticeable).



Here is a side canyon which takes off to the right shortly before the canyon reaches the prominent hill mentioned earlier.



Around a corner, this side canyon becomes just a drainage from the hillside.



We spotted some false natural bridges in this area, where mud from the hillside has slid across a small wash.



I have never encountered a live tarantula in Death Valley, but I have seen two other that are no longer living, both just south of here (in the area near what I've referred to as "Tarantula Slot").



Continuing up the main canyon, the walls remained short.



Shortly before reaching the impasse which would force us to turn around, we spotted this side-slot taking off to the left (north).



It has a nice overhang near the entrance, and is narrow, steep, and tilted enough to make walking difficult.



Two more photos of this nice side-slot.



The main canyon's walls became taller up ahead, and we began to get concerned we would reach an impasse soon.



We also began to see more interesting side canyons, with some neat formations.



Just around the corner is the major dryfall impasse. I would think it can be bypassed farther back down canyon, but we didn't look for a workaround because we were hearing strong winds blowing across the hills above the canyon. (Also, the Google Earth maps indicate that the canyon would be ending soon anyway.)



Looking back down the canyon from here at another interesting side canyon.



Zooming in on what is either an interesting formation or a shadow far back on the hillside.



Still another interesting side canyon shortly down-canyon on the north side, which might be a possible exit to work around the major impasse.



Looking out towards the valley from near where we turned around.



Still another interesting side canyon to the north, which we saw on the way back.



There are many interesting things to see in this canyon. I hadn't spotted these short hoodoo-like formations on our way up the canyon.



This is a lone snail fossil rock we spotted in the wash. We had spotted a similar grey lone snail fossil rock near Navel Spring, so I'm wondering where these rocks may have come from.



Two photos of our progress down the canyon. It was quite windy in some places, but in other places it was relatively calm.



Looking over at the prominent peak just north of Hole-in-the-Wall which I had hiked quite a few years ago, before I had a camera.



Looking up a more major side canyon towards the Hole-in-the-Wall.



One last photo from this canyon before it became too windy to take photographs.



Here is what the Mesquite Sand Dunes looked like later that evening, because of all the wind.

