

GROTTO CANYON

Grotto Canyon is a canyon which is popular with rock climbers; we have returned to this canyon many times, each time trying to get a little further than the last time by looking for bypasses for the larger dryfalls and trying to climb the smaller dryfalls. This trip report is from the trip in which we got the furthest distance up Grotto Canyon, almost to the third side canyon. I will not be posting details to the workarounds which we did for the larger falls, because I feel that it would be dangerous for an unprepared hiker to attempt what may appear, from my photos, to be an easy bypass, but in reality is quite difficult. Additionally, as mentioned in Michel Digonnet's excellent book, *Hiking Death Valley*, please be considerate to other explorers of this canyon and leave no trace of climbing aids that hikers may use—disassemble rock piles at the base of dryfalls on your return.

The first set of dryfall impasses starts just after the road ends, and these are easily bypassed by what has become a well-worn trail. This photo shows the view looking down-canyon after bypassing these impasses:



After this first narrow section, the canyon opens up for a little ways:



Then, the canyon encounters another narrow section with one small (about 8 feet tall) climbable impasse and a larger (about 25-foot tall) impasse; both impasses can be bypassed by one trail. This photo shows the view looking down from the top of the 25-foot fall:



Past the 25-foot fall, the canyon goes through some very, very nice narrows:



A typical impasse in this canyon, which may or may not prove challenging to hikers, depending on their skill level at climbing (I found the main difficulty in climbing in Grotto Canyon to be the slickness of the rock):



Zooming in on an upper section of the canyon where it appears quite narrow:



A small fall; note the greenery that can be seen just above the fall:



Continuing up-canyon through more narrows; due to it being shady in the canyon, it was difficult to get good photos:



A slick, slide-like fall:



This 20-foot boulder jam was not climbable for us, so we had to backtrack a little ways and find a workaround:



This panorama photo gives a better feel for the height and difficulty involved in climbing this boulder jam:



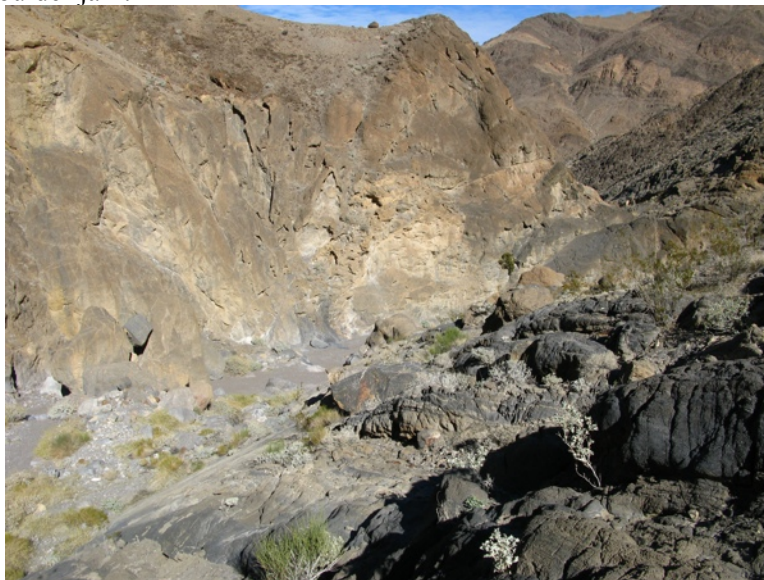
Zooming in on the narrows around the boulder jam from above:



Looking back down the canyon from the bypass:



The canyon above the boulder jam:



The second side-canyon heading off on the left:



The next two photos show tighter narrows in the canyon:



Continuing up-canyon, past more falls and through more narrows:



Then, we encounter a 18-foot fall that stops our progress; it is too tall for us to climb, and as it was getting late we decided to turn around and check out the second side canyon rather than look for a bypass route:



A photo of some narrows on our way back down towards the second side canyon:



Small impasse in this side canyon:



Continuing up-canyon:



Looking back down the side canyon, with a nice canyon wall on the left side of the photo:



Our progress is soon stopped by a large impasse in this side canyon:

