

FIRST SOUTHERN SIDE CANYON OF MOONLIGHT CANYON

We decided to check out the short narrows section of the first side canyon (not to be confused with the "first major" side canyon of Moonlight Canyon which is described in my Moonlight Bridge report) because it appeared from Google Earth to have some nice narrows before encountering a large impasse. We also checked out the convoluted area of washes just south of Moonlight Canyon.

Google Earth map of this area:



We parked along the road to Scotty's Castle at the closest access point to the Moonlight Canyon mouth; this is a very rough alluvial fan, so we typically try to minimize the distance we have to spend hiking over it. Looking up ahead at the Moonlight Canyon mouth from near the road:



Approaching the canyon mouth:



There are some very nice formations in the canyon walls through here:



We are now approaching this first side canyon:



We did not see any footprints in this side canyon, which was surprising considering how spectacular it is; perhaps this is because most hikers are trying to get to the main Moonlight Canyon narrows and don't want to take the time to check out side canyons, or perhaps because this side canyon appears that it does not go very far before reaching impasse or getting to the ridge:



A large rock slab on the side of the canyon near its beginning:



Past the first "gateway" of the side canyon, it opens up briefly before reaching another "gateway":



Up ahead, it is difficult to tell where this side canyon goes:



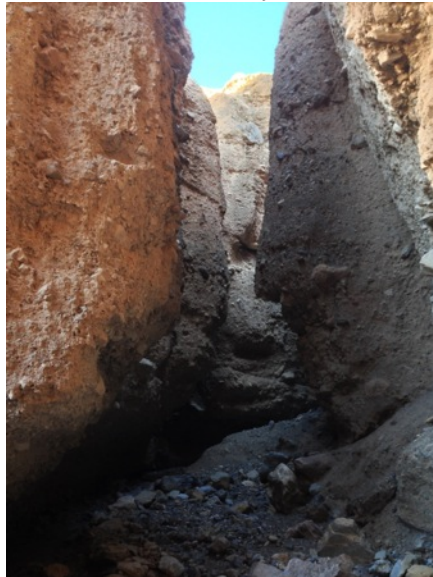
Looking back out at the main Moonlight Canyon from here:



There were many overhangs in the narrows of this side canyon which had these insect dwellings (at least, that's what they looked like to me):



This is the impressive entrance to the narrow slot in this side canyon:



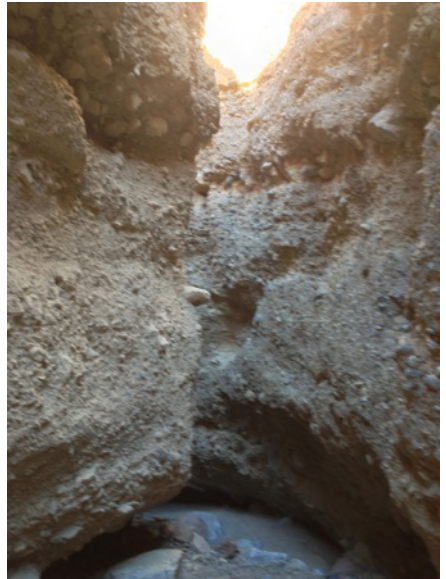
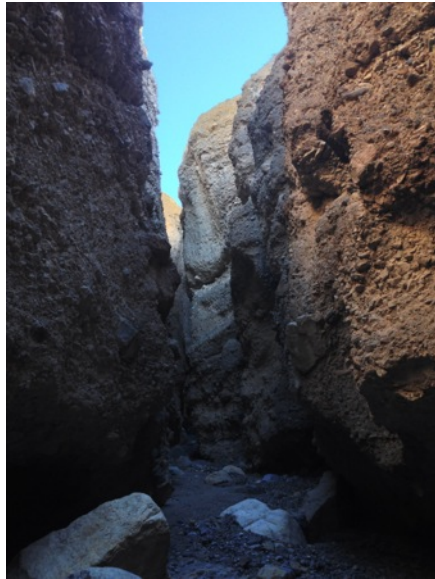
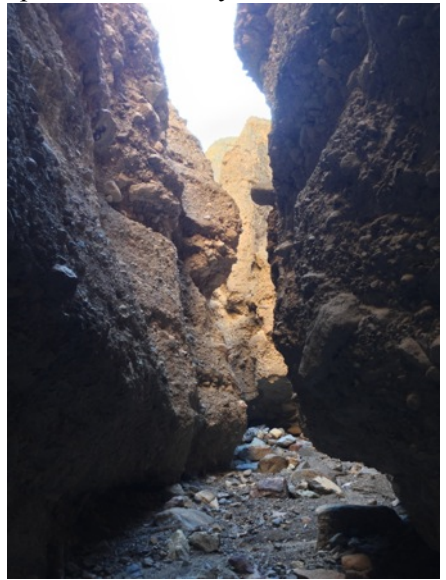
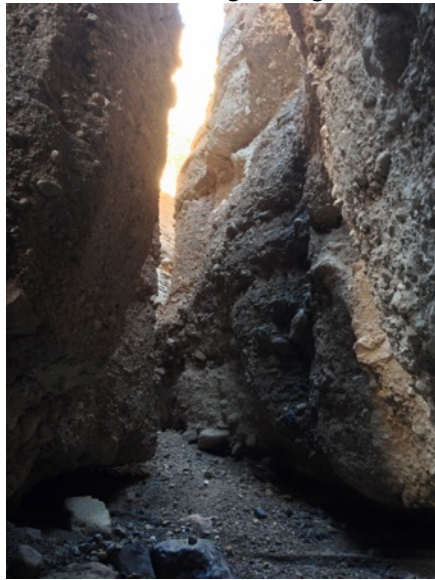
Panorama of an impressive overhang at the beginning of this slot:



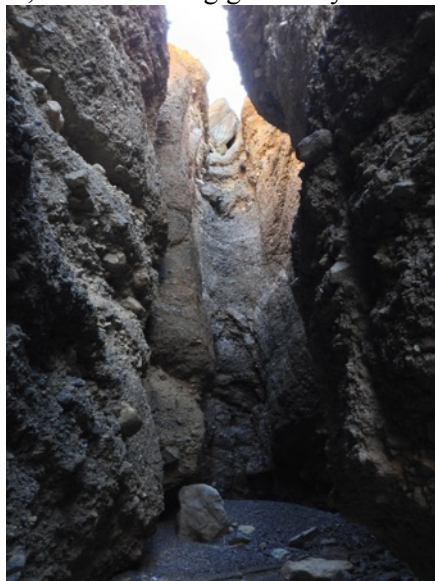
Looking back out of the slot at the beginning of this side canyon:



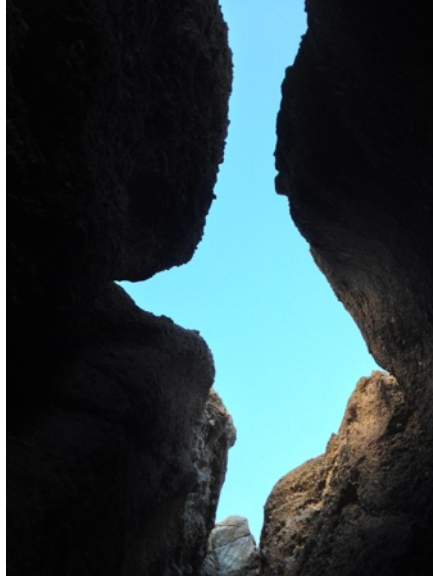
The next six photos are of this incredible side slot off of Moonlight Canyon; note that the walls of this slot are unbelievably tall, and walking through this area is like walking through a scaled-up version of many similar slots in DV:



Finally, at the very end of the narrow section, we reach this gigantic dryfall with a chockstone at the top:



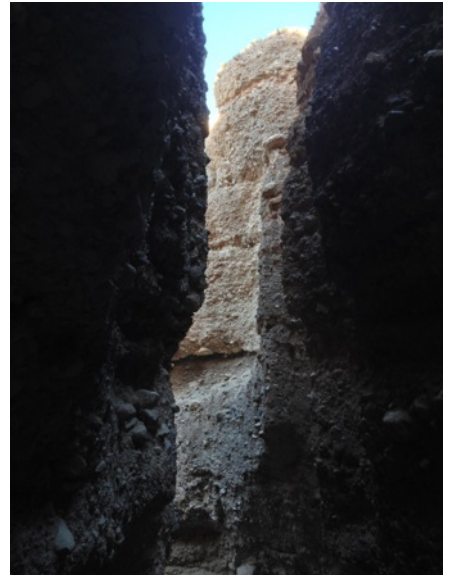
Looking up at the sky above the fall; note the chockstone is at the bottom of this picture:



Looking back down-canyon at its narrowest section, just before the dryfall:



Three more photos of this surprisingly good slot on our way back down:



Looking back up-canyon at the beginning of this slot (near the overhang), it definitely does not appear that the canyon will continue beyond this point, but it does:



Another picture looking back out towards the main Moonlight Canyon near the beginning of this side canyon:



From here, we circled over to the badlands-like area just to the south of Moonlight Canyon, and did some brief exploring around there:



Looking down one of the washes in the middle of this area:



The most impressive wash in this badlands-like area was the one just south of the entrance to Moonlight Canyon:



There was a pile of gigantic rockfall at its head:



And it had some interesting features lower down:



Looking straight down into the wash from our viewpoint:



Panorama of this wash:



Looking back towards the road from here, and the alluvial fan which we would need to cross shortly:



There were some colorful areas in these hills just over a small ridge from Moonlight Canyon:



Dropping down into the wash of this small canyon and looking up it; I think the most impressive view is looking down at the canyon from above:



This is one of the biggest barrel cacti which I have seen, if not the very biggest:

