

“ROCK NETTLE” UPPER CANYON AND SECOND SIDE CANYON

Our goal for this hike was to explore the upper part of Rock Nettle Canyon, which we had been unable to see on our first hike up this canyon (see my Trip Report for Rock Nettle Canyon to see photos of the lower part of both the main canyon and the second side canyon). To access the upper canyon, we ascended the ridge between the second side canyon and the third side canyon (which doesn't go very far, as can be seen in the Google Earth image) to the ridge overlooking the main canyon. From this ridge, we could see a major dryfall in the main canyon that would quickly stop progress. We also saw that the canyon had two short side canyons, one to the north and one to the south. One member of the group descended into the main canyon via the southern side canyon (and encountered a large rock nettle on the way) and discovered that the main canyon has another major dryfall before the one we could see from the ridge; this dryfall may be climbable on the left side, but, as the route out was steep, did not attempt to go any further up the canyon. From the ridge, we descended into the upper reaches of the second side canyon, which we had been unable to see on our last trip to this canyon because of the dryfall in the lower part of this second side canyon. This side canyon has some of the most incredible narrows I have seen in Death Valley! As we continued down the side canyon, we discovered that the only impasse before the narrows in this side canyon is the fall we encountered in our last trip--and it is possible to bypass it on the north side, which is what we did. We attained the same ridge we had climbed earlier from the side canyon, and followed it back to the main canyon. Alternatively, it appears to be possible to bypass this fall on the south side; this route would likely be shorter but involve a little more scrambling. Once we returned to the main canyon, we continued up the canyon to possibly attempt the “Bighorn Workaround” mentioned in my Trip Report for lower Rock Nettle Canyon; however, as we had a long day, upon seeing the workaround we decided not to attempt it. For anyone interested in seeing the incredible narrows, I think that the best route would be to hike up this second side canyon from the main wash, bypass the dryfall on the south side, and see the narrows. From there, a hiker could then ascend to the saddle between this side canyon and the main canyon (which I think would be easier than the route we took to get to that saddle) to see the upper Rock Nettle Canyon.

Annotated Google Earth view of the canyon:



View of the ridge which overlooks the main canyon; we ascended the smaller ridge in the center of the photo to attain the ridge further back:



Looking down at the upper part of the second side canyon; the narrows look very interesting from here:



This photo gives an idea of the steepness and talus of the ridge we were ascending:



View of the major dryfall in upper Rock Nettle Canyon:



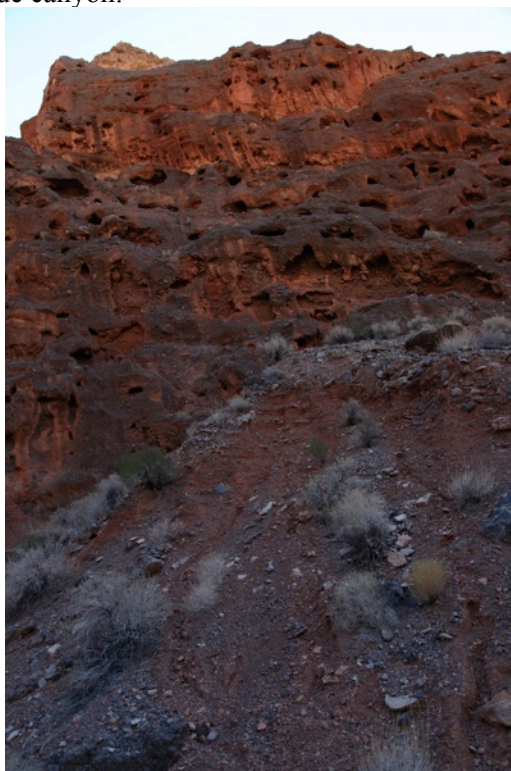
This panorama from near the saddle between the main canyon and the second side canyon shows how the upper canyon splits into three washes:



Zooming in on the northern side canyon:



Interesting caves in the southern side canyon:



Looking up the southern side canyon (what must be descended in order to access the upper canyon by this route):



The first major impasse in the upper canyon; it may be possible to climb it on the right:



The upper side of the “Bighorn Workaround” that I mentioned in my TR on lower Rock Nettle Canyon as a possibility for another workaround of the 80-foot fall:



From the ridge, we descended to the second side canyon and explored the narrows we had seen from the ridge. The next five photos show these incredible narrows:





Looking up at the sky from a “side slot”:



Looking back up the side canyon as we have just passed the only small dryfall in the narrows, which is very easy to climb:



The canyon opens up a little after exiting the tightest narrows, and it has some interesting “hoodoos” (of which part of one can be seen in the right side of this photo):



Looking down at the rest of the canyon from the top of the impasse:

