

## TOWNE'S PASS AREA CANYONS AND SALT CREEK

For the last day of our Christmas break 2014-15 Death Valley trip, we returned to the Towne's Pass road to check out more of the short canyons in this area. Thanks again to Gowergulch42 for checking out and reporting on this area. We also went to the Salt Creek area later in the afternoon to get some photos.

Google Earth map of this area:



We parked at the middle of the three parking locations listed on the map above, and headed first towards the canyon marked "Townes Pass Canyons":



We soon encountered this wash coming down from the canyon marked "Slot?" on the Google Earth map:



Looking down towards the valley from here:



Looking up towards the canyon:



Finally, we enter the main canyon here:



To the left is the main canyon and the interesting rock formations, and to the right is a side wash which appears to head into some colorful hills:



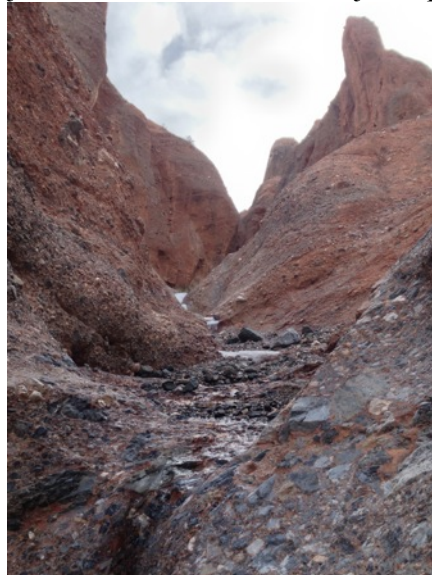
Approaching these rock formations:



There was ice in this canyon, which was unexpected:



Looking up-canyon at these ice waterfalls; just around the corner is a major impasse which requires finding a workaround:





Another photo of the ice; we have encountered much snow in DV on our December/January trips, but I can't recall ever encountering ice in a canyon:



Looking back down-canyon from here:



We decided not to bypass the impasse due to the ice in the canyon and the fact that there was a substantial group of clouds gathering in the sky, so we gained the ridge to attempt to cross into the canyon just to the southwest:



Panorama showing the rock formations in the main canyon and the colorful hills in the side canyon; we next attained the saddle to the far right in the photo:



Looking down at the valley from here:



Another photo looking into the side canyon:



Panorama towards the valley and this first canyon we checked out:



Looking towards the next canyon which we were heading to:



Looking back at the surprisingly colorful hills in this area:



This is the route we took down into the next canyon:



Part of the colorful nature of this area was likely caused by the assortment of colorful rocks we encountered on this hillside:



Looking down-canyon once reaching the wash:



Looking up-canyon:





View back towards the ridge we had just come from; note that the hillsides in this area are deceptively steep:



There were some big bushes in the canyon:



Gold-colored rock on the canyon walls through here:



Continuing up-canyon, we could see that more colorful hillsides were ahead of us:



The canyon forks here, with this fork being the main canyon:



This fork is the first side canyon, which takes off to the right (and is the one we took as it appeared to have a slot further up-canyon):



Looking back down-canyon at the increasing number of clouds heading towards us:



The side canyon wash continued to be relatively open for a while:





Then, it started to narrow down:



We didn't encounter any real "narrows" on this hike, but there were lots of narrower sections of the canyon where the colorful walls made for interesting photography:



This was a surprisingly shaped rock which has the appearance of a dinosaur egg:



There were some nice arches in the rock on a nearby hillside; this photo shows a zoomed-in view of some of the arches which we could see from this angle:



Continuing up-canyon and observing more strangely shaped rock formations in the slanted rock (like the "sinking ship" to the left in this photo):



The canyon continues to be relatively narrow through here:



More weird rock formations on the hillsides:



As we went further up-canyon, the reddish color of the rock deepened and made for some surprisingly good HDR photos with the clouds in the background:



Up ahead is a short dryfall and a boulder impasse just beyond:



Another look at the boulder impasse, which is not difficult to climb as the conglomerate rock is more solid than it appears:



Looking back down from the top of the boulder; the canyon wash climbs more substantially than it may appear when hiking up it:



The wash widens briefly just past the boulder:





Up ahead is where I had marked the potential slot on my GE map:



The hillsides around the canyon begin to get more interesting through here:



Short side canyon taking off on the right side:



More interesting rock formations:



Here the canyon goes through a bend in which there are reddish and black (mineral?) stripes on the walls:



This is the spot which I had marked on my Google Earth map as having either a nice short slot or a big impasse:



It turned out to be a very short section of narrows, then hit an impasse at the end:



Remains of a large bush which either fell down from above or washed down in a major storm:



We gained the ridge to the northeast with the idea of dropping into the canyon just over the ridge (which is either the main canyon we were in previously or another side canyon, it's not clear from the map which is more major). Looking back into the side canyon we were in previously:



View down towards the mouth of the canyon:



Looking up the ridge towards the colorful hills ever present in this area:



Looking down the ridge, it can be seen that the canyon to the right forks multiple times:



Panorama from here showing that the (side?) canyon to the right does not seem to be quite as narrow as the one we were just in:





Looking up towards the colorful hills; I think there must be some distortion in the steepness of this area as seen in this photo:



Looking towards the rock with the arches on the ridge:



There was lots of colorful moss on the rocks on this ridge:



The ridge narrowed down to a point here, which was slippery on both sides, so we dropped into the canyon to the right here:



Looking down, we could see that there was a lot of greenery in this canyon:



Looking up-canyon, it appeared that progress would be more difficult than in the canyon we were just in due to the amount of growth in the canyon wash:



We dropped into this canyon and began to follow it down:



It passed through a short narrower section:



Then we joined up with another fork:



Just below this fork, we encountered an unexpectedly large obstacle which we could not down-climb:



Thus we gained the ridge to the northeast and dropped into yet another (side) canyon:



This side canyon had even more greenery in it which made walking difficult:





Eventually it opened up and became a nice wash to walk through:



Here the colors of the rock and the nearby bushes, and the fact that the clouds had finally cleared, made this section of the canyon spectacular for HDR photography:



This bush growing out of the side of the rock seemed to be framed perfectly with the canyon walls and the clear sky above and made for a nice photo:



We exited the canyon and began heading back towards the road; this is the view into the valley as the sky is beginning to clear here:



Looking towards Pothole Canyon, where we had been the previous day, from the road:



We then decided to head over to the trail at Salt Creek which takes off from the boardwalk, for some photos of this area:



The salt covering the plants near this trail made for some interesting "salt spires":



Continuing along this trail, as the sun is beginning to set:



Nice reflections in the salt pools:



This is a very well-worn trail through here:



More salt covering the plants on the edge of the pools:



We decided to turn around here as we still had to pack for heading home the next day; we had continued along this trail to the base of the point seen in the distance in the center of this photo a number of years ago, before I had a camera:





We spotted these two birds, one black and one white, in the water. Unfortunately, this photo is marred by the footprints of tourists who did not stay on the trail:



Heading back towards the Salt Creek boardwalk; when we returned to the parking area, we observed an interesting human phenomenon. When we had arrived, all of the vehicles (of which there was quite a substantial number!) were parked on the north side of the lot; however, when we left, a new set of vehicles was in the lot and they all were parked on the other side (except for us):



An interesting salt-covered-plant arch we spotted:

