

TRAMWAY CANYON (LOWER PART)

As can be seen from the TOPO map below, Tramway Canyon is the first major canyon south of Ashford Canyon. It was named for the impressive mining tramway which can be seen in the canyon. The tramway cable still runs from the upper tramway station to the lower tramway station, which is located near the canyon mouth. I am not sure if the mine in this canyon has a name.

There are some dryfalls in this canyon which will likely be challenging for the average hiker. There are also some old tramway cables which are partially buried in the canyon wash, so hikers must be careful not to trip on these.

I understand from other hikers' reports that there are more dryfalls beyond the one which stopped us, perhaps before one reaches the access to the upper tramway station, so on a future trip I am considering looking for a bypass on the south side of the canyon, or following the ridge up on the south side, or trying to get to the tramway station from the north side of the canyon and then back down into the canyon. Unfortunately, ridges in the Black Mountains are generally not friendly to hikers, so, even though the south ridge looks more promising, it may not be easy to hike.

Interestingly, a lot of the mining relics, including the upper tramway area which we didn't get to, are visible if you look at this area on Google Earth.

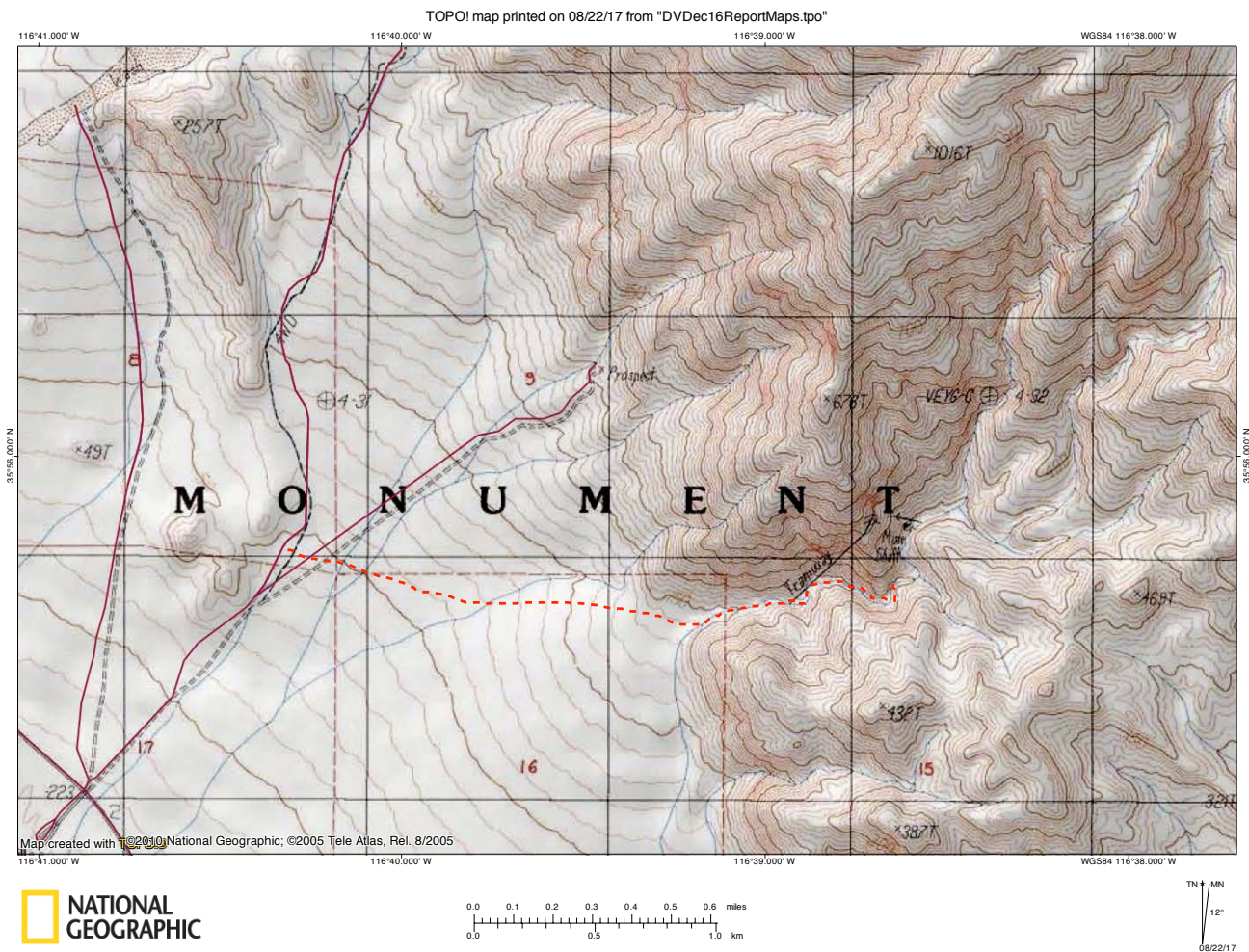
I first heard about Tramway Canyon from Steve Hall; for more information on this canyon, see his report at:

www.panamintcity.com/black/tramwaycanyon.html

As Steve notes in his trip report, there appears to be much more to see in this canyon. Unfortunately, however, we were not able to get any further in this canyon than he did.

Note that we approached this canyon from the Ashford Canyon Road; it can also be accessed from the main Badwater Road, as seen in Steve's report.

TOPO map of Tramway Canyon.



The lighting across the salt flats near Badwater was incredible on our drive to Tramway Canyon.



The Ashford Canyon Road starts out as a fairly even two-track. Up to the bend where we parked, the road appears (as of December 2016) to be passable by a high-clearance crossover or larger vehicle, but I would not recommend it for a smaller car.



Looking over at Tramway Canyon from here. Note how straight the road is up to the first bend.



We parked where the road starts to bend towards the left. Maps indicate there once was a fork in the road which lead towards the base of the mountain straight ahead in this photo. I'm guessing that road is now closed, as I didn't see any trace of it when looking towards the mountain seen in this photo.



Panorama looking out towards the Owlsheads from where we parked.



Looking over towards where Ashford Canyon and Scotty's Canyon are located, from our hike towards Tramway Canyon.



We could see lots of remnants from the major wildflower bloom in Spring 2016 while hiking across to the canyon.



Looking over at the peak between Ashford Canyon and Tramway Canyon. According to the TOPO maps, there are some mining claims up by the short canyons which drain from this peak.



Looking across at Tramway Canyon from here. Luckily the hike across the alluvial fan, rather than up it, wasn't too rough.



Here is the entrance to Tramway Canyon.



This colorful purple hill to the north of the canyon caught our attention. The Black Mountains actually seem to be one of the more colorful areas of the park.



As we hiked up Tramway Canyon, we began to see remnants of the mining operations which once occurred in this canyon.



Here is a very large piece of metal which is partially buried in the canyon floor. It looked very sharp, so we were careful not to get too close to this or any other similar mining relics.



Just up-canyon and to the north is a concrete platform.



Here is a metal brace of some sort.



Notice how dented this object is, which looks like some sort of mine or tramway cart. It helps show how ferociously the water must come down this canyon in a flash flood.



This tire is in surprisingly good shape for the amount of time it has probably spent out in the desert. The sidewalls were sufficiently worn, however, that I couldn't read a manufacturer or date on the tire.



Here is a wooden wheel of sorts.



Looking across at the concrete slab on the north side of the canyon.



Here is a collection of some small gears and other mining relics which appear to have collected on the side of the canyon. I'm thinking some mining enthusiast may have put them there so they didn't wash out into the valley. Perhaps many mining history enthusiasts have also explored this canyon.



Another interesting mining relic.



Continuing up-canyon, we could see that we would soon be approaching some interesting narrows.



On the south side of the canyon is the bottom of the tramway station. The ladder is definitely not safe to climb.



Notice the tramway cable crossing the sky to the left in the photo (the distortion is due to the iPhone panorama). It's amazing that this tramway cable has stayed in place for so long.



Looking back out at the valley from here.



I would think that the upper part of the tramway station must be easier to access from up-canyon, as these cliffs look particularly nasty. Unfortunately, we were not able to get to the upper tramway station due to a large dryfall (photos later in this report).



Looking back down-canyon at the tramway station.



In many places there were wires crossing the ground, which I would guess are related to the tramway operation (perhaps old wires which have fallen?). However, due to movement of gravel and rocks down-canyon, these wires are partially buried. Hence they pose a tripping hazard to those hikers who are looking up at the nice scenery and are not paying sufficient attention to the ground.



Looking back out at the valley again; observe the tramway cable crossing the blue sky just right of center.



Up ahead, the canyon walls begin to get taller. We could still see the tramway cable up above (although it is hard to see in this photo).



This looked like a possible exit route to the south to get up onto the ridge. I hope to return someday and ascend the south ridge of this canyon to hopefully see into more of the canyon and more of the mining operation located up-canyon. Note that the high point seen in this photo could be a false summit.



This short tunnel is located at a bend in the canyon.



The canyon rounds another bend and more large boulders appear in the wash.



The tramway station appears to be above this canyon wall; this did not look possible to ascend.



Up ahead, we see that the canyon enters a narrow area.



The walls began to get more colorful; here the walls are a greenish-blue, and we see that up ahead they will be a reddish-pink.



This black material seemed more rubbery than typical stabilization fabric for building; it must have washed down-canyon from the upper tramway area, but I'm not sure what it might have been used for.



The morning lighting on the canyon walls made this a very colorful area.



This was a pipe of sorts which had gotten wedged between rocks in the canyon floor; it was not metal and actually had the flexibility of a swimming pool "noodle" toy, which was surprising.



This object appeared to have been placed here in the narrows between two rocks, as it is very level. I wonder what it was used for, as it seemed some distance from the other mining equipment.



Here we are entering a tighter section of canyon.



Note how the water pouroff from this dryfall has dug deep into the gravel, causing this to be a taller impasse than it could have been. Also notice the mixed gold and blue colors on the rocks to the right in this photo.



Another short dryfall which can be easily climbed on the left side and does not present much of an obstacle.



Looking back out of this narrow section of canyon.



Up ahead the canyon transitions from the blue-green rock to the pinkish-orange rock. This transition reminded me of similar distinct rock transitions in Little Wild Horse Canyon in the San Rafael Swell, Utah.



Around a sharp corner and to the right in this photo is the first dryfall. The obvious potential workaround seen in the center of this photo cliffs out.



This is the impasse, which may pose a challenge to some hikers. (The piece of wood is for a height reference; I would estimate the impasse at about 10 feet tall, perhaps a little more.) It isn't as steep as it looks at the top, but there are less good foot-holds near the bottom than I would have liked.

