

SIDE CANYON NARROWS OF FUNERAL SLOT CANYON

On this hike, our goal was to check out some potential narrows in the second northern side canyon of Funeral Slot Canyon. We also visited a short side-slot off of the main Funeral Slot, which I had spotted on Google Earth. I have not heard of any hikers following this side-slot to the ridge, but I consider it a worthy addition to the Funeral Slot Canyon hike. However, care is required in the upper part of this side-slot, as it has numerous crumbly dryfalls. Please do not climb these dryfalls unless you are familiar with the risks involved in climbing in this kind of terrain. Clarification on my labeling of the side canyons of Funeral Slot Canyon can be found below. Also refer to the blue line on the Google Earth map for our route on this hike.

We had first visited Funeral Slot Canyon in December 2012. (For some reason, it appears I did not write a trip report on our hike to this canyon after that trip.) We returned to the area north of Funeral Slot Canyon in December 2014/January 2015 when we found Crown Bridge. We have also looked down into Funeral Slot Canyon from the ridge south of it, when hiking in the upper "More Slots" Canyon.

A note on naming the side canyons of Funeral Slot Canyon: Other hikers may have different labeling schemes for this canyon, but here's how I'm referring to the many side canyons of Funeral Slot Canyon. I'm calling the major canyon which drains from near upper Echo Canyon "Funeral Slot Canyon." The actual incredibly narrow section for which this canyon is named is in what I'll call the first (major) northern side canyon. (There is a minor northern side canyon which takes off before Funeral Slot Canyon first narrows.) This first northern side canyon forks; the northern one contains Crown Bridge, and the southern one is the one most hikers follow when visiting the main Funeral Slot. Near where Funeral Slot takes off from the main canyon, a side-slot takes off to the east. We explored this side-slot in the afternoon on this trip. Back towards the canyon mouth, Funeral Slot Canyon has two minor side canyons, one on the north (which we used in January 2015 to access the ridge north of Crown Bridge, on our second hike to that area), and one on the south. Up the main canyon past the turnoff for Funeral Slot is a narrow slot which takes off to the north. This is what I'm referring to as the second northern side canyon of Funeral Slot Canyon. This side canyon has many forks, which I'm not individually labeling.

Google Earth map of this second side canyon of the main Funeral Slot Canyon. The blue line shows the approximate (!) route we took on this hike. The orange line is from a previous hike in January 2016, where we explored the upper part of "More Slots" Canyon and also got a nice view into the upper part of Funeral Slot Canyon.



Looking across at a prominent hill near the Texas Springs Campground, from near the recommended parking area for Funeral Slot Canyon. There are many interesting things to see in this area. In January 2012, on our way back from the lower "More Slots" Canyon, we followed a horse trail near the hill seen in this photo.



We had not seen this interesting formation on our previous trips to this area. It is located on the northern wall of the wash one follows to get to Funeral Slot Canyon, and it appears to be a small drainage arch (water from the hillside flows down through the foot-and-a-half tall hole seen in the center of this photo).



The trick to finding the entrance to Funeral Slot Canyon is to have a good Google Earth map and to look for the most major wash draining from the hillsides. The alluvial fan near the canyon mouth has many large and colorful boulders, which look out of place in the brown and grey terrain. This photo is of where the first minor northern side canyon takes off from the main canyon; we had followed this canyon in January 2015, when we returned to the Crown Bridge area.



Continuing up-canyon. We had only visited this part of Funeral Slot Canyon once, in December 2012. At that time, I was not taking HDR photos, so the pictures from this hike turned out way better than those from our previous trip.



Looking back down-canyon from just past where the canyon splits around an island of sorts. The dark spot to the far left in this photo is where a steep side-drainage joins the main canyon. There is a large cave-like indent in the wall there too.



The canyon rounds a corner and immediately becomes narrow.



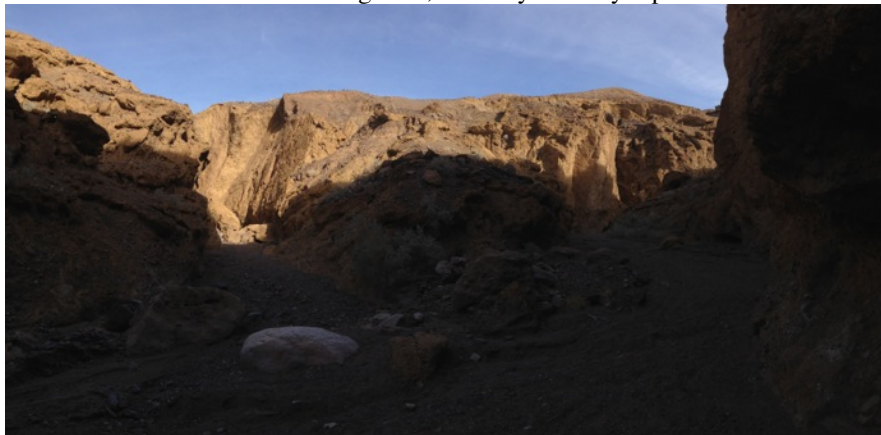
The first part of the canyon is very nice narrows. However, the best narrows are in the main Funeral Slot, which (as mentioned above) is the first northern side canyon of Funeral Slot Canyon.



This prominent formation jutting out from the southern side of the canyon looks to me like a bird's beak.



Panorama of the major fork in Funeral Slot Canyon. The main canyon goes to the right, while the first northern side canyon, which contains Funeral Slot, goes off to the left. Note the white rock seen in the lower left of the photo. In photos of this canyon from about 5 years ago, this rock was buried under almost a foot more gravel, and only the very top was visible then.



Continuing up the main canyon, the walls aren't as tall and the canyon isn't as narrow as it was just before, but the scenery is starting to get more colorful.



I had forgotten how scenic this part of the canyon is.



Nice side canyon which immediately ends at a tall dryfall.



Rounding another corner, the rock formations in this area continue to provide interesting scenery.



This interesting rock we spotted in the wash appears to have a smaller rock embedded in it.



Notice the colorful reddish hillsides up ahead, which are similar to the hills in the upper part of "More Slots" Canyon, just south of here.



Looking back down-canyon at the entrance to the narrow section.



Up ahead on the left side is the very narrow entrance to the side canyon we would be exploring.



This is what the canyon looks like just beyond the side canyon entrance. We had explored further up-canyon on our first trip here, and we would be coming down this part of the canyon later in the day.



This is the impressive entrance to the second northern side canyon of Funeral Slot Canyon. Note that this is a vertical panorama image, and therefore it is somewhat distorted; the canyon walls are actually taller here than they appear.



The next five photos show our progress up this incredibly narrow entrance to the side canyon. The rock here seems to be more solid and not as crumbly as the rock which forms the main Funeral Slot.



At the end of the narrow section, hikers must crawl through this hole under a large boulder to continue.



Looking back down the slot from the boulder.



Past the boulder, the canyon widens remarkably. This is where we had turned around on our first trip, thinking (incorrectly) that this is the end of the side canyon.



Just ahead and around a few turns, the side canyon splits into two forks.



We followed the left fork first. Here, it enters a shallow set of narrows.



These narrows are nice, but certainly not as spectacular as other narrows in the area.



What is interesting is that these narrows are of the same more solid rock that we had encountered at the beginning of this side canyon.



There are a few particularly narrow sections in this side canyon of the side canyon, but the walls never really got tall.



Here we are approaching another narrow section of the side canyon.



A small side-canyon took off to the left (we were able to see up it from the ridge later on).



Notice how the walls are so close here that they almost touch.



There are some interesting holes in the canyon walls here.



This narrow section of canyon certainly is interesting, but the walls never became particularly tall.



This impasse stopped our progress. It is about 9 feet tall, and the rock is just crumbly enough that I didn't want to climb it.



Looking at the part of this side canyon above the impasse. Notice how the walls are still quite short.



From here, we went back down-canyon to the beginning of the narrows (see the Google Earth route map at the beginning of this report) and then ascended the ridge to the southeast. Here is the view looking back down the side canyon and down the main Funeral Slot Canyon in the background.



Looking across at the short side canyon we hadn't explored.



Panorama from a view point looking down into this side-canyon-of-the-side-canyon. Notice the colorful hills to the left.



Another view down into the narrows.



We were able to drop into the canyon again from the ridge. This is the view heading down-canyon.



The canyon isn't as narrow above the impasse, and the canyon floor is steeper.



This is the top of the dropoff which had stopped us from below.



Heading up-canyon from where we had descended from the ridge, the canyon became steeper.



After climbing the boulder jam seen in the previous picture and rounding a corner, we encountered this very narrow passage, with a tall dryfall topped by a chockstone just beyond.



From here we regained the ridge. This is the view looking down-canyon from the ridge.



There certainly are many colorful areas to see in this part of Funeral Slot Canyon.



Looking down from the ridge at where we had been stopped in the canyon.



Looking up-canyon at where it ends below some reddish colored hills.



This appears to be the deepest part of the canyon. Unfortunately, we were not able to descend into this part of the canyon (notice how steep and slippery the talus/scree is here).



Looking back down this interesting canyon again.



This might be a possible route into the canyon, but I'm not sure. Since this was our first day of hiking for the trip, we didn't choose to try to descend here.



It really isn't possible to see much into this canyon from the ridge, unfortunately.



Continuing to proceed up the ridge, we were able to get increasingly good views of the red hills above the canyon. Also notice the small "tributary" of the side canyon which enters from the north (see left side of this photo).

