

MULE CANYON TOWERS, BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT, UTAH

These towers are accessed from Hwy 95. The turnoff (to the south) is at milepost 102.2. There is a gate, which at the time of our visit was closed by a chain looped around a fence post. Be sure to close it after you drive through, or if you park just off the main road then do not block the gate. Head south along the dirt road for about a quarter mile until you reach a parking area and trailhead kiosk. As of June 2017, the road to this kiosk is passable by a high-clearance vehicle. You can drive another quarter mile beyond the kiosk to another parking area, but you will need to be skilled with 4WD roads and especially sand and slickrock steps.

According to online info regarding this area, there are seven towers above the canyon, and some ruins and petroglyph/pictograph panels in the canyon below. Unfortunately, as we were driving from Ely, NV to Blanding, UT on this day, we did not have much time to explore this area.

This is the first quarter mile of the road, which is somewhat sandy, and it would not be easy for two vehicles going in opposite directions to pass here.



Looking north towards the main part of Bears Ears National Monument from the first parking area.



This is the informative kiosk at the first parking area. Notice that the road becomes narrower and rockier beyond this point.



This sign calls these ruins the "Cave Towers." Some online resources also call them the Mule Canyon Towers. These towers are from the middle of the 13th century.



It was quite hot on the afternoon when we did this hike, so I didn't get many photos of this area. Here we have arrived at the top of Mule Canyon, which is deeper and has more sheer cliffs than I had expected.



This is the ruins of one of the towers; unfortunately, there isn't much left of this one.



To our right upon reaching the end of the main trail we spotted what is probably the best preserved of these towers.



Notice the impressive rock-stacking of this tower, and how well the stones were chosen so that they fit together.



Looking across at the other side of the canyon from here.



Notice how precisely rectangular this entrance to the tower is.



Also notice how perfectly curved the sides of the tower are. This certainly is impressive building work.



Looking down Mule Canyon from here.



Across the canyon, one can just barely see some more (small) ruins, below the canyon rim (right of center, under the overhang, in this photo). I would guess it is a granary, but I'm not sure.



Looking back at all the greenery at the head of the canyon.



Panorama of the impressive view from here of the very top of Mule Canyon. Notice how deep this canyon quickly becomes.



Looking across at the ledge just past the ruins we spotted earlier. I think there may be more ruins here, but I couldn't see them from this side of the canyon.



Looking back at the tower we had photographed earlier.



Here we are back at where the trail reaches the top of Mule Canyon. Notice one can see a second tower in the background center of this photo. Unfortunately, it was too hot and we were too short on time to look for the other four towers. I'm not sure how well-preserved the others are.



The next two photos show part of the road between the trailhead and where we parked at the first kiosk. Notice how the road crosses slickrock here. On our hike out, it was somewhat difficult to predict where the road was going.



This steep section of road just beyond the slickrock is sandier than it looks, and there are some slickrock steps where it appeared some vehicles had spun tires.



Looking north at the impressive clouds above Bears Ears National Monument. (This stretch of the road was not easy walking, as it was as sandy as a sand dune.) We saw some lightning in the distance during our walk. (That evening in Blanding, we saw a very impressive "light show" of lightning in the distance.)



This is the last slickrock step before reaching the kiosk and the first parking area.

