

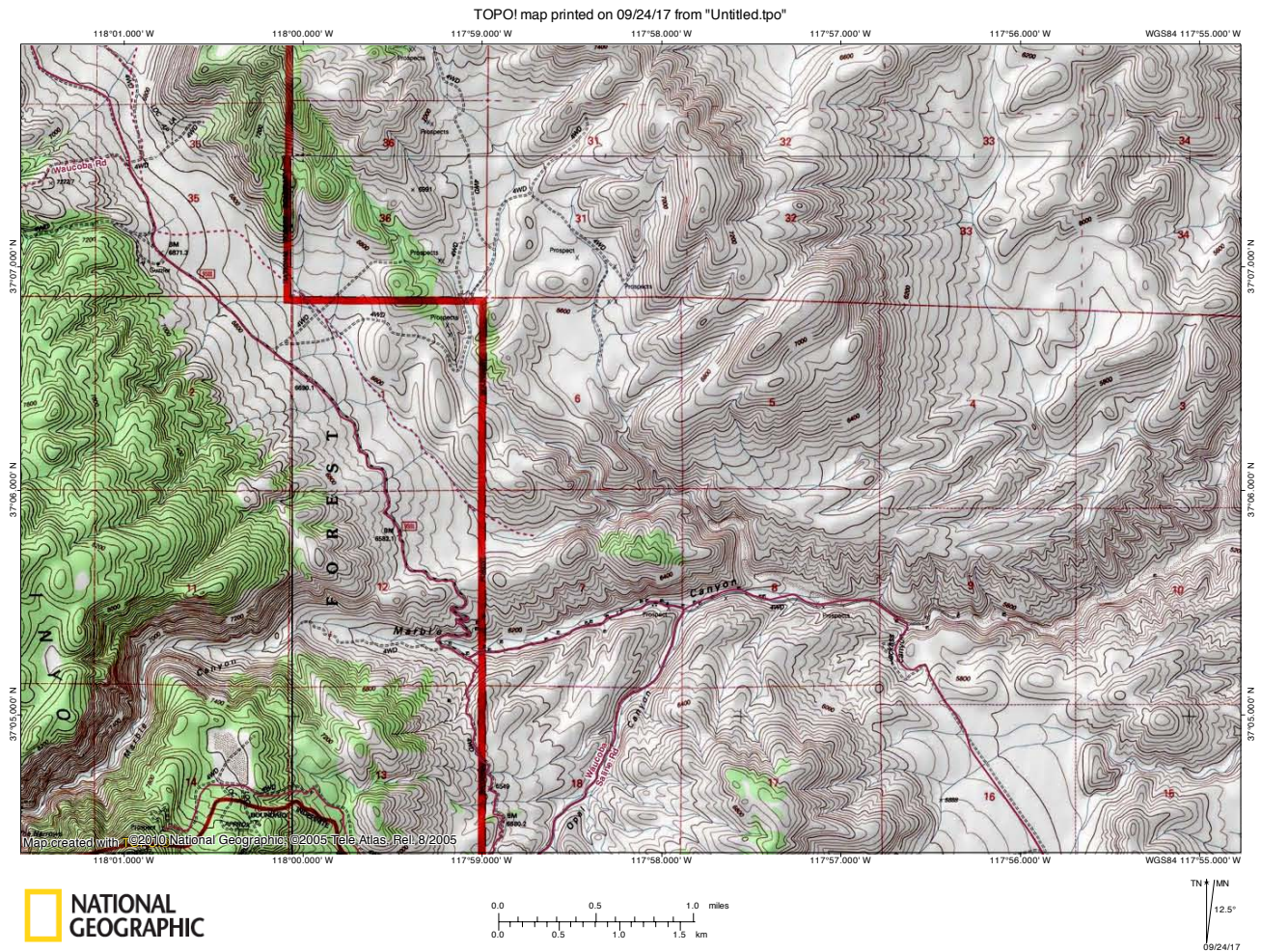
NORTH PASS INTO SALINE VALLEY, MARBLE CANYON (SALINE RANGE) MINING RUINS, AND JOSHUA FLATS,
DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

The original plan for this day of the trip was to drive into the Saline Valley and do a hike there. Unfortunately, however, when we arrived in Bishop (June 2017), the weather was predicted to be unseasonably hot. Therefore, we decided to instead take a "reconnaissance" drive on the Waucoba-Saline Road ("North Pass Road"), to see the scenery and get an idea of how long it would take us to get to the Saline Valley. We ended up turning around in Whippoorwill Canyon, shortly before it reaches the valley, because the temperature was starting to get too warm for our liking.

On our drive back to the main Death Valley-Big Pine Road, we stopped where the Waucoba-Saline Road goes through Marble Canyon (Saline Range; not to be confused with the perhaps better-known Marble Canyon in the Cottonwood Mountains) and hiked down it a short distance, to where the major side canyon takes off to the north. There are numerous interesting mining relics in this canyon. From here, we drove back to the Death Valley-Big Pine Road, and continued along it towards the Eureka Valley. We stopped shortly beyond Lime Hill, where we could get a view into the Eureka Valley, as it was again becoming too hot for us to want to continue further.

From there, we headed back to Joshua Flats, which, in my opinion, is one of the more incredible locations in Death Valley National Park, because of the density of medium-sized Joshua Trees and the interesting scenery. (It is similar to, but better than, the Joshua Tree forest one encounters when driving to the Racetrack Valley.)

TOPO map of the Marble Canyon area. Note that it is very useful to have a good map of this area when driving the Waucoba-Saline ("North Pass") Road.



There are some interestingly contorted rock formations in a narrower section of canyon along the Big Pine-Death Valley Road, before reaching the turnoff for the Waucoba-Saline Road.



Looking down towards Cowhorn Valley from near the beginning of the Waucoba-Saline Road.



The road drops into the valley seen to the left of center in this photo, and follows it towards Marble Canyon (Saline Range).



Here the road is approaching where it will drop into Marble Canyon (Saline Range).



The road switchbacks impressively down into the canyon.



Looking up-canyon from where the road drops into the wash.



Looking down-canyon from where the road starts to follow the canyon.



There were many tall yellow plants alongside the road and in the canyon which were in bloom at this time of year (see the right side of the road).



Taking a closer look at some of these blooming plants which were so prevalent during our trip to this area. I'm not sure what they are called.



Here we are approaching some of the old buildings in one of the mining areas of Marble Canyon.



This structure is remarkably well preserved.



We would explore Marble Canyon further on our way back. Upon driving up and out the other side of the wash, this is the view looking towards Waucoba Mountain.



Looking northwest, towards Squaw Peak. Notice the patch of white-ish rocks on the left (south) side of this mountain, between it and Waucoba Mountain (which is just south of Squaw Peak).



The road was in good condition here, and the scenery is different than I had expected.



Here we have dropped over the other side of North Pass and are descending the road in Whippoorwill Canyon.



The road is narrower and slightly rockier here. I would be very concerned about flat tires if taking a vehicle here that didn't have at least good light-truck tires.



As soon as we could get a view into the Saline Valley, we stopped. It was quite hot outside, and we still wanted to check out the Joshua Flats, so we decided to turn around here. (When planning this trip, we were going to do a hike in the Saline Valley, but when we arrived in Bishop the weather was predicted to be unseasonably hot for June, so we decided it would certainly be too hot for us to hike in the Saline Valley.)



This is the view looking back up the road from where we stopped.



We decided to briefly hike up to the ridge to the southwest to get a view.



We encountered some small patches of wildflowers on our walk up to the ridge.



More flowering plants appeared as we gained elevation.



Looking west, towards what could be Mt. Inyo (based on looking at TOPO maps), but I'm not sure.



Looking down the main road and out towards the Saline Valley. Ubehebe Peak is visible from here, but it was too hazy to get a good zoomed-in photo of it.



Looking towards some rocks further up the ridge.



Looking west across these hills again.



Panorama from this ridge, looking towards the Saline Valley.



These small white flowers were quite common here. I'm not sure what they are called.



Another panorama from a different location on the ridge, showing more of the scenery to the southwest.



Panorama looking up the ridge (left) and towards the east (right).



This interesting pink-colored plant is one I think I've seen before but I don't know its name.



From here, we headed back up Whippoorwill Canyon and back across North Pass. Here we are crossing Whippoorwill Flat. Notice all the green plants on the sides of the road.



We stopped at what appears to be a camping turnout in a patch of trees, where it was cooler and there was a nice breeze, for lunch. This is typical scenery for this part of the Saline-Waucoba Road.



This tree caught my attention, as one of its branches has wrapped itself tightly around the trunk for more than half of the circumference of the trunk.



Back on the main road, we are starting to descend towards Marble Canyon again.



We parked at a turnout where the road leaves Marble Canyon on the down-canyon side. View looking up-canyon towards some old mining buildings from here.



Looking across at an old truck which is on its roof (and seems to be collecting bumper stickers), and at other mining relics near it.



Looking down-canyon from the turn where the main road leaves the canyon. There is a dropoff on the other side of the turn, so one would not want to accidentally continue straight. Notice the old VW bug in this photo; I wonder why it is there, as it doesn't look like a standard mining area vehicle.



Looking back at the main road where it leaves Marble Canyon on its way to North Pass.



This is where the road to Jackass flats turns off. This road is not in as good of condition as I'd expected, and not knowing what potential turnaround sites there were we decided to walk it for a short distance rather than attempt to drive it.



Looking across at an old chimney (right), with a narrower section of Marble Canyon visible to the left.



This interesting plant had some cotton-like blooms growing on it. We saw many plants in this area which I don't know the names of and I don't recall seeing frequently in the main Death Valley area, probably because we are at a different elevation and in different terrain.



Taking a closer look at these tall blooming yellow plants which were everywhere through here.



This mining area has been fenced off, so I'm assuming it must contain a mine shaft.



The road crosses the main part of the Marble Canyon drainage. Up ahead is an old mining tower of sorts which we had spotted from the main road, where the canyon rounds a bend.



Taking a closer look at this old tower.



From here, we could see further down the canyon. Here it opens up slightly, then narrows again.



This mine shaft is located just below the mining tower, and is not fenced off.



We continued a short distance down-canyon to this pyramid-shaped mining relic.



There is another mine shaft next to this pyramid-shaped tower.



Looking down-canyon, where the road is heading, from here. (Eventually the road will ascend the hillside to the left (south)).

