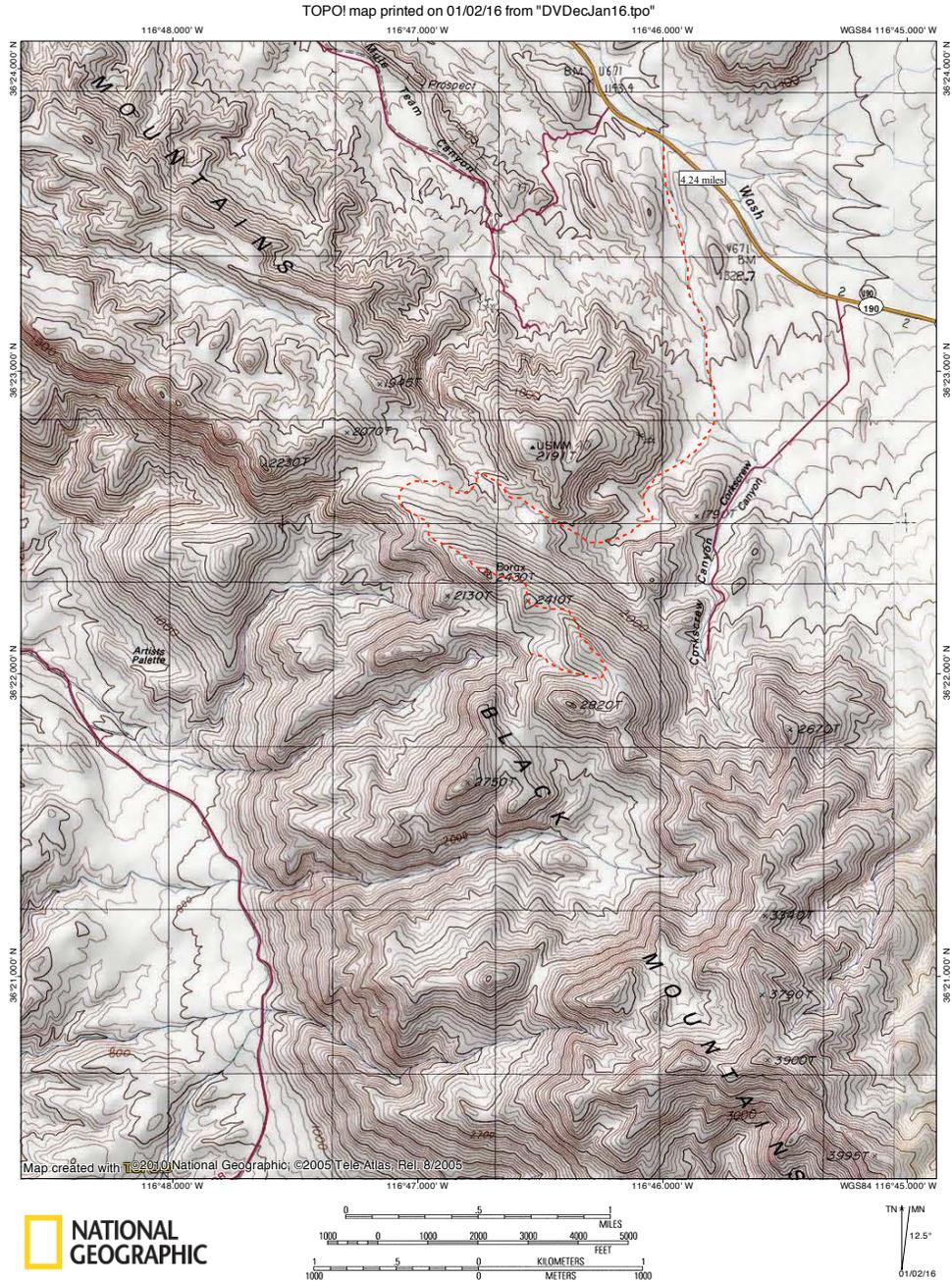


BEYOND BORAX BENCHMARK

TOPO map for this hike:



Looking towards Borax Benchmark from the wash we follow on the way up; we had wanted to continue past Borax on our previous hikes to the area, but unfortunately it had always either been too hot or too windy then:



The canyon we follow is just left of center in this photo:



There were a lot of plants sprouting up here, so there will probably be many wildflowers in this location in the spring:



Continuing up-canyon, we soon see where our route goes; we head up just right of center, following the right fork of this wash (the left fork also works, but it winds around a bit more and takes longer):



The route has become more entrenched (in my report on Borax Benchmark from January 2012, the photos show that there is no "mini-slot" here, and instead the route up is a flat, but steep, wash):



Looking back down what we'd just hiked up:



Looking down into where we would have come up had we followed the left fork:



From here, we drop down into the left (main) fork, and follow it up to the ridge. Despite the recent rainstorms, we saw many footprints and lots of evidence of hikers:



Looking towards Borax from the saddle at the top of the left fork:



The mud-mound-y formations through here seemed more steep and pointed than I remembered:



We followed the main wash down until we reached the narrowest side-canyon heading up towards the flat area below Borax. This is the crumbly dryfall which must be climbed near the beginning of this side-canyon:



Looking out at the neat formations which can be seen from here:



There is another minor impasse which must be climbed (easiest on the right side), shortly past the first dryfall:



Just beyond, one can ascend the mud-mound-y ridge to access the flat area below Borax Benchmark:



Panorama looking back towards where we hiked up, and out to the Funeral Mountains, from here:



We next began to hike towards the top of Borax, enjoying the nice views towards the Echo Canyon area:



From the ridge, we got a glimpse down into the upper reaches of the 2nd Artist's Palette canyon:



Looking up towards the top of Borax Benchmark, on the left:



Panorama from the top of Borax, looking into the upper Artist's Palette Canyon 2 (right) and over towards the upper Artist's Palette Canyon 1 (just left of center):



Looking back down towards where we had just been hiking:



From here, the plan was to continue down along the ridge:



Looking back towards Furnace Creek and the main part of Death Valley:



There were some interesting rocks scattered around at the top of Borax Benchmark:



Heading down the ridge, we started to get some great views into the upper Artist's Palette Canyon 1:



Looking back down at the canyon wash we had originally come up:



We could also see that it would be difficult to access the blue mountain seen in the center of this photo. From here, we dropped into the uppermost reaches of Artist's Palette Canyon 2:



The upper canyon has a few interesting colorful sections:



And it also has some mud-mound-y features:



The wash we were hiking in soon dropped into a more major wash; luckily we were able to easily downclimb the dryfall where the two forks joined:



Looking down-canyon and out of this narrow section:



This is the small dryfall that we'd just climbed down (it's about 12 feet tall):



Continuing down-canyon, we knew that we'd soon get stopped by a big impasse:



And, just ahead, there it is. This is the view looking over this big dryfall:



From here, we turned around and headed back up-canyon, as the terrain seemed to be way too steep to look for a bypass:



This impasse is just around the corner from where we dropped into the main wash, and was too tall (about 18 feet) and crumbly for us to climb:



So, we climbed back out of this main canyon, then attained the ridge nearby:



This is actually the upper part of the main canyon that we'd just been in, and if we'd had more daylight we would have explored it. I would guess that the only potential way to hike to the top of the blue mountain seen in the center of the photo just above would be to follow this wash and somehow try to circle around behind the bump that is just to the right of this wash (however, I very likely could be incorrect about this as I haven't yet verified it):



Looking back over at Borax Benchmark from here:



We then crossed the main wash and attained the next ridge. There was a big dropoff on the other side of this next ridge, and we were able to look down on some interesting green hoodoo formations nearby:



Looking down at the middle part of the Artist's Palette Canyon 1, which we hadn't been able to access because of the big dryfall:



Looking across the upper Artist's Palette Canyon 2 at Borax Benchmark (far left peak in the background ridge):



Panorama looking down into the middle of Artist's Palette Canyon 1, with the green hoodoos to the left, the blue mountain to the left of center, the main canyon to the right of center, and Borax Benchmark to the far right:



Looking over at the seemingly inaccessible blue mountain:



From here, as it was starting to get late on this January day, we headed back to the ridge along which we would retrace our steps to the top of Borax Benchmark:



Panorama looking towards the Funeral Mountains and the Hole-in-the-Wall area from this ridge:



On the hike back, we had an incredible sun angle for taking photographs looking into the upper Artist's Palette area. Borax Benchmark can be seen to the right in this photo (surprisingly far away now):



Looking north up the valley, and over towards our route back up to Borax Benchmark:



Looking down on the canyon we hiked up:



Panorama of the area below Borax Benchmark (compare to the panoramas taken when we were hiking below this point and looking up at Borax Benchmark, seen earlier in this report):



Looking over at the blue mountain again:



The photos taken from this ridge were incredible at this time of day, with this lighting:



This is my favorite panorama photo taken on this hike:



Looking back at the area in the upper Artist's Palette Canyon 1 that we'd just been hiking in; the terrain isn't really as flat as it may appear here. Notice that the green hoodoos can just barely be seen in the center of this photo:



Another view looking down the Borax Benchmark ridge:



From here, we followed the route that we'd taken on the way up. This photo is looking out at the formations behind the 20 Mule Team area:



Somewhere in the area just past where one descends from the last ridge is this interesting formation. It's actually less than a foot tall, and could very easily be crushed by a careless hiker:



Panorama taken after we exited the wash, looking towards the Funeral Mountains (left) and the Borax Benchmark ridge we'd been hiking on earlier (far right):

