

Looking out towards more of Canyonlands National Park, towards the 4WD road and beyond into The Grabens, just before we reach the start of the Joint Trail:



The Joint Trail goes off to the right, and there is a viewpoint a short distance to the left:



There are steps cut into the rock here to aid in climbing to the viewpoint:



Panorama of The Needles from this viewpoint; I'm guessing that this must be one of the most popular places from which to take photos of these amazing rock formations:



Another panorama of this area from near where the previous one was taken; I think this is where the viewpoint is located, as the trail didn't seem to continue beyond here. I'd guess there are some good views from the crack to the left, but we didn't take the time to see if it is possible to hike over there. There certainly is a lot of exploring one can do around here:



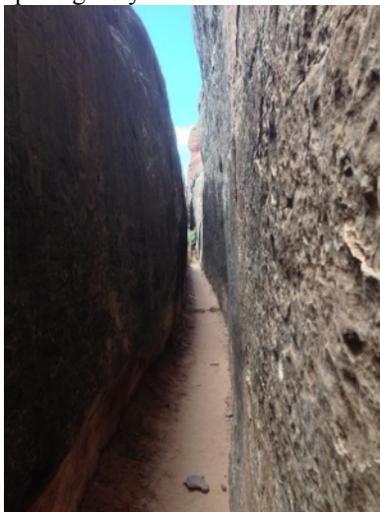
From here, we headed back to the trail intersection to check out the Joint Trail. This well-built staircase descends into the crack which forms this section of the loop trail:



The route through here started out incredible, and it only got better:



Note how sheer the walls are and how straight the passageway is:



There is a narrow crack heading off to the right shortly after entering the "slot"; it's possible to squeeze through this crack and scramble out on the other side (and, I'm assuming, to get on top of this formation):

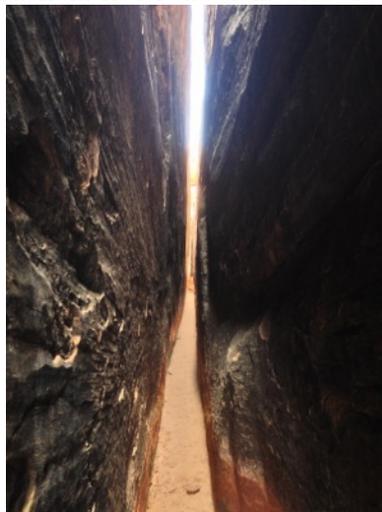




About halfway through this side-crack, it is intersected at a four-way junction, and the other two directions were too narrow for me to get through:



Looking back towards the Joint Trail in the distance from the far end of this side-crack:



Panorama of the four-way-junction (heading into the crack is straight ahead, and the two tight cracks are off to the sides):



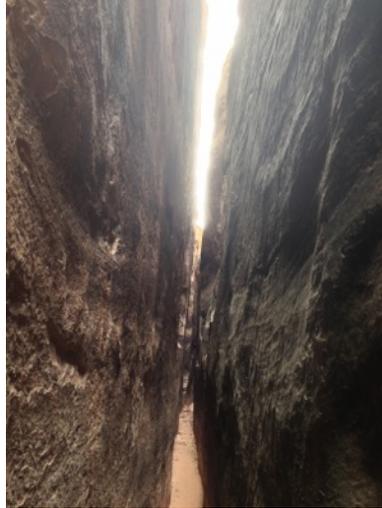
Upon returning to the main Joint Trail, we noticed that it was starting to get cloudy (compare these photos to the ones showing the sky that were taken prior to exploring the side-crack). So, we tried to increase our pace along the loop and back to the parking lot from here:



There is only one obstacle in this slot which might cause difficulty for some hikers (unless one counts the narrowness of the slot):



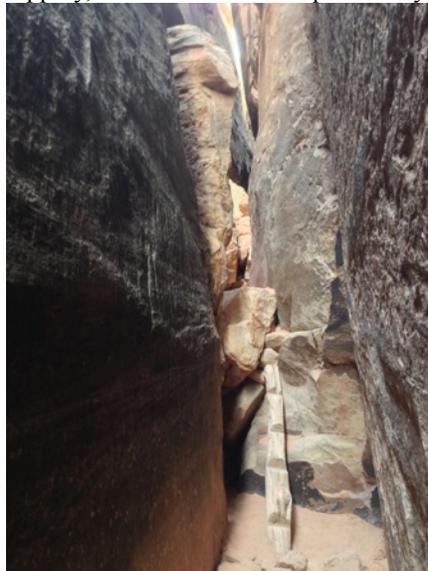
Looking down the slot from here, as the walls are getting amazingly tall; since this slot is so narrow, I wondered what it looked like on top of where we were, and if one might be tempted to simply hop over the top of this slot:



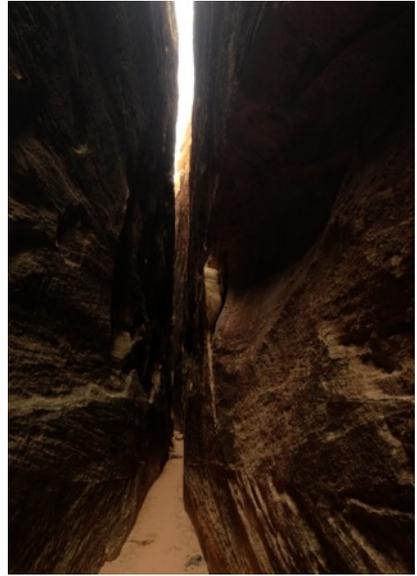
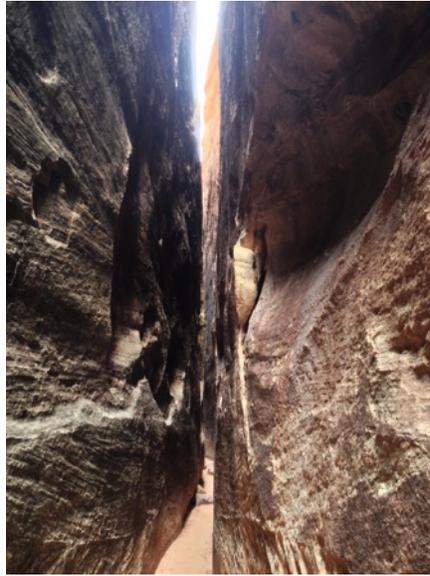
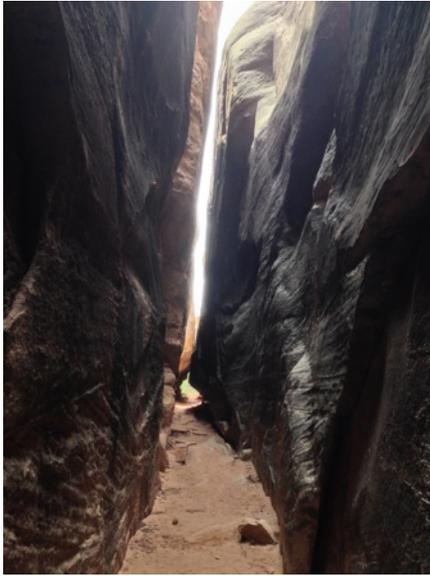
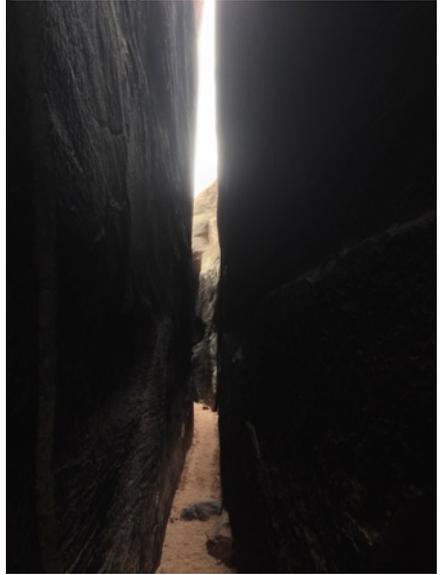
Looking back up the boulder jam, which has some rocks piled in a sort of staircase to one side to aid in climbing or descending this part of the obstacle:



The last stage of the boulder jam seemed to me that it would be the hardest for most hikers unused to this sort of trail; both the log and the nearby rock are covered in sand and hence slippery, so one must climb up carefully using both hands:



Continuing down this incredibly narrow slot; we were astounded to be able to hike through something like this:



The narrow slot finally ends in a subway-like passage:



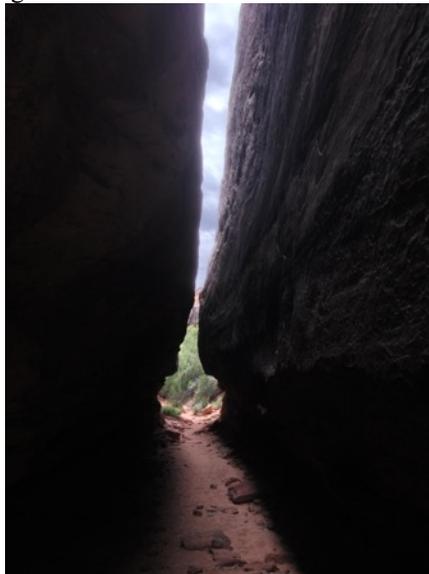
There were some side-slots which looked to lead out to other canyons and would certainly be worthy of exploration if we'd had more time and hadn't been concerned about an approaching storm:



This one looked especially narrow:



HDR photo as we hike out of this subway passage:



This is the view looking back at the lower entrance to the Joint Trail; I wouldn't have predicted it to be as spectacular as it was from looking at this view here, though it certainly does look interesting:



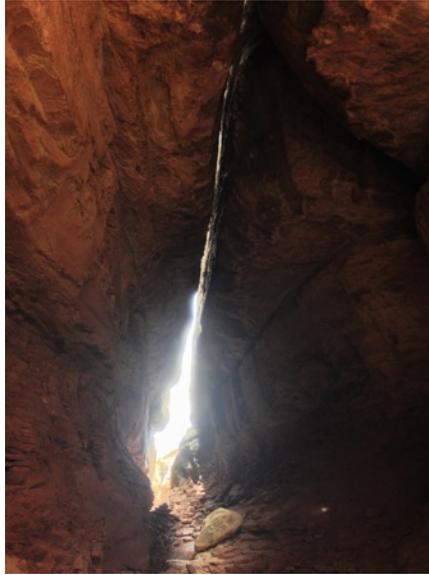
We continue to hike through a passage with subway-like walls; they just aren't as tall as the previous part of the Joint Trail:



This side-canyon had an even bigger overhang than the main canyon we were following:



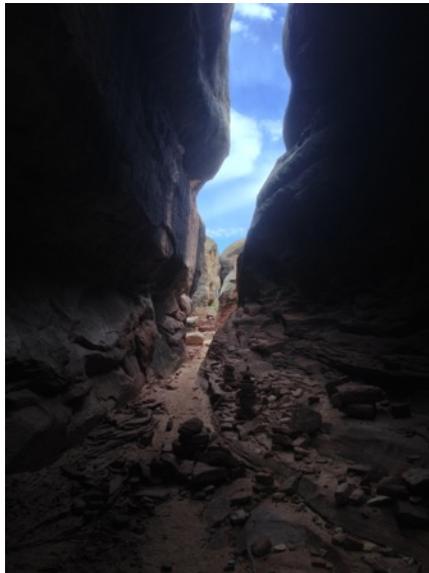
Soon, the trail turned a corner and passed through a boulder jam, and we entered yet another passage, this one also subway-like, but on a much grander scale:



It actually reminded me a lot of Tunnel Slot in the Grand Staircase, as it was so wide at the bottom yet impassably narrow at the top:



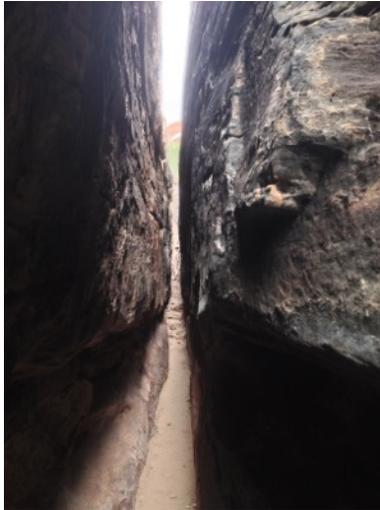
HDR looking out of the end of this formation; we were so amazed at what we were seeing here, as we hadn't expected it to be this nice:



There was one last side-slot turning off to the right, which looked to go for a distance and seemed too interesting to miss:



It did indeed go for quite a ways, about as long as the first side-slot we had checked out:



Upon returning to the main trail, we quickly encountered this long and steep staircase which we'd need to descend:



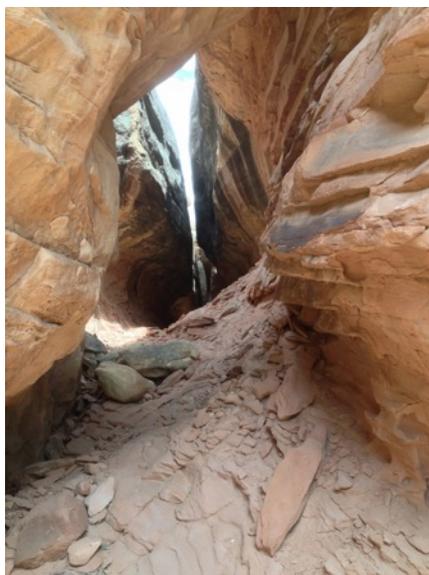
Hiking through here would be much harder without such a well-maintained trail, and if there was no trail at all the modern hiker would likely have great difficulty successfully navigating this area:



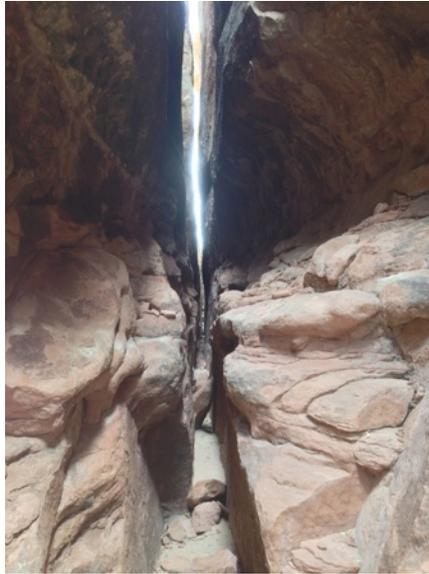
The trail had finally exited all the Joint Trail "slots" now, but we were still seeing lots of interesting "subway" formations off on the sides of the trail. Looking over to the right, we spotted this interesting area:



This area was also off the main trail, but it looked like it had been heavily visited by tourists; note that the walls are much taller through here than they are in similar formations we had seen previously. There were actually two subway-like passages here; the one to the left (leftmost photo) encountered a small boulder jam and ended there, while the one to the right (center and rightmost photos) went on for some distance:



The passage on the right quickly turned into this slot, but we had to continue on due to the increasing number of clouds in the sky (I'm not sure how far this slot goes or if it eventually becomes too narrow to continue; it might simply pop out on the other side):



Looking back out of this amazing spot towards where the main trail is; it would have been great to spend a lot more time on this trail exploring "nooks and crannies" such as this:



Continuing down the main trail; there are so many gigantic hoodoo-like rock formations through here, which looked interesting to climb around on:



Panorama of the great scenery we are still hiking through; it would be incredible to do some exploring around here, while still being careful of the cryptobiotic soils:



The trail starts to descend to the 4WD road now:



Note the amazing balanced rock seen in the distance just left of center in this photo:



Another view of this part of Canyonlands; it'd be great to spend some time (a few days) exploring along this 4WD road:



Continuing along the trail leading to the road, with more toadstool-like hoodoos (similar to the ones we'd seen near the Elephant Hill Trailhead parking area) up ahead:



Finally reaching the road here; it would be a bit shorter for hiking to the Chesler Park/Joint Trail area starting from here, but one would have to first drive in from Elephant Hill or, if possible, the road from Beef Basin (depending on the road conditions through the Pappy's Pasture/Bobby's Hole area):



This rough stretch of road is the descent into the sandy parking area for this hike; I'd think some drivers might park above this obstacle, though perhaps this may be easy for those driving over Elephant Hill:



The two-track spur road to the parking area from here is easy walking and seems like it would be easy driving (since it is hard-packed mud, no sand or rocky rough spots) as long as another vehicle going the opposite direction isn't encountered:

