

SCRUGE CANYON AND TURRET BRIDGE

Scruge Canyon is the first canyon south of Red Wall Canyon, which ends just below Scruge Benchmark. Our plan for the day had been to follow Scruge Canyon to its head, then ascend Scruge Benchmark and, if possible, drop into Red Wall Canyon (otherwise return down Scruge Canyon). Scruge Canyon has been reported to be passable to hikers, and this may or may not be the case (I can't say for sure as I didn't hike very far in it). It begins with a large boulder pile which can essentially be walked up (no-hands-needed climbing) if a path through the boulders is chosen carefully. Shortly after, two boulder jams are encountered, the first of which can be bypassed easily on the right side and the second of which cannot be bypassed (the cliffs are too sheer past the impasse). Both of these boulder jams could potentially be climbed by hikers, but I determined the rock to be too slippery for me to safely climb them. Thus we ascended the ridge to the south of the canyon, then followed the wash on the other side down a short distance. From there, we regained the ridge between this wash and the Scruge Canyon wash. Once having followed this ridge a little ways, I was looking into the wash we had just left and spotted what appeared to be a bridge crossing a side wash draining into this more major wash. We hiked down to it, and sure enough it was a bridge! The formations surrounding this bridge remind me of a castle, thus I chose to call it Turret Bridge. It is the 15th natural bridge to be found in Death Valley National Park, and it is the first to have been discovered in the year 2014. After photographing this bridge, we explored the nearby washes before heading back towards the road.

Looking ahead, towards Scruge Benchmark with Scruge Canyon just behind it:



As we get closer, Scruge Benchmark becomes a more prominent peak; note that the Scruge Canyon wash is to the left of this point jutting out into the wash:



Panorama at the entrance to the wash of Scruge Canyon, with Scruge Benchmark very visible in the center of the photo:



The wash was quite open for a while, and it was wide enough that it was clear this is a fairly major canyon:



The walls start to narrow down:



This was an interesting formation we spotted above us on the canyon wall:



Continuing up the canyon wash as the walls begin to get even taller:



The wash goes around a tight bend:



Then it curves away from the entrance to the cliffs:



The canyon makes a large bend:



Then it begins to bend back towards Scruge Benchmark:



Up ahead, we see that the canyon begins to get steep:



Luckily, it only has this short dryfall through some nice rock, which can be easily climbed:



Around the corner is the major boulder pile:



A route through these boulders needs to be picked with care so that one does not need to do any climbing:



Interesting reddish colors in the rock walls through here:



The main part of the boulder pile is just up ahead:



This is the last section of the boulder pile:



Looking back down the boulder pile at the interesting rock formations and colorful walls below us:



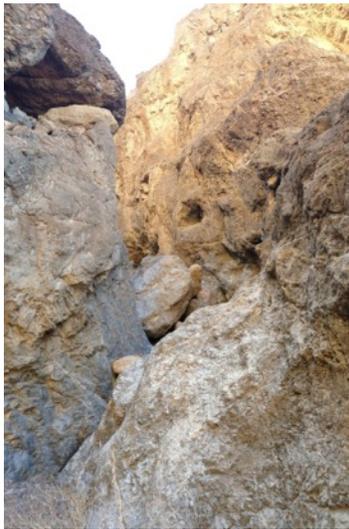
Up ahead, the canyon rounds a bend and we wonder if it will level out or if we will encounter more boulders:



Luckily the canyon goes to the right of these big rocks rather than over them:



The canyon passes through a narrow-ish section:



Here it actually goes under the big boulder in the center of the photo on the right side:



We were surprised to see the canyon go through here:



Just beyond the canyon goes through some vivid red rock:



Looking back toward the big boulders and out at the valley:



This part of the canyon certainly is very colorful; note the hoodoo just right of center in the photo:



This boulder jam should be climbable by hikers, but as we were tired from the previous days of hard hiking and the rock is slipperier than it appears, we opted to bypass it on the right side:



Looking back down at the canyon wash from the bypass; I'm a little higher than I needed to be here, so this workaround is actually easier than it looks:



Looking down into the canyon, we see that it passes through another narrow section just ahead:



Looking down at the canyon floor:



Once back in the main canyon, we took a brief look back towards the top of the first boulder jam, through the interesting reddish rocks which were present in this area:



Up ahead, this narrow passage was very intriguing:



Unfortunately, it is blocked by a boulder jam, this one bigger than the last:



Again, this should be climbable by hikers, but it was too slippery for us tired hikers:



There were a few small bones in this area:



We decided to look at a potential workaround:



The talus is much slipperier than it looks here, and when getting to the saddle between the two rock outcroppings seen in this picture, I slipped many times:



Looking back down into the canyon; the cliffs are much too sheer here to descend, so the only way to continue would be over the boulder jam; Scruge Benchmark can be seen in the upper right of the photo. Someday we will return to this canyon when we are less tired and hopefully complete it:



Looking back down at the main valley from this (failed) workaround:



We decided to head over to the ridge between Scruge Canyon and the nearby wash, as we had already gained some elevation:



Looking down into this wash:



We headed down the wash, which was much steeper than the Scruge Canyon but thankfully did not have any major impasses:



Looking out towards the road from further down the wash:



There was this interesting rock circle we spotted on the ridge; I have no idea of its origins, if it was made in recent or in ancient times:



Panorama of the surrounding area from here, with Little Arches Canyon and Palmer Canyon to the left:



We decided to head back up to the ridge rather than follow the wash down as it began to get rocky:



Looking back up the wash:



When taking these photographs, I happened to notice what appeared to be a natural bridge below us:



As can be seen from this photo, the bridge crosses a side wash which drains into the more major wash which we had been in earlier:



We headed down this side wash to check out this interesting formation:



At this point, we can see that this is indeed a bridge, and it is tall enough to walk through easily:



Looking down at the bridge from the top of a dryfall just above it:



We climbed down the fall, and this is the view of the bridge from the back side:



Looking at the bridge from the front; we were amazed that we had found another natural bridge:



This bridge appears to be around 10 to 12 feet tall at its highest point:



Looking through the bridge at the mud that has eroded off the cliffs behind the bridge:



Looking down at the bridge from the other side of the main wash; the sun angle was not ideal for taking photos of the bridge at this time:



Panorama showing the turret-like formations around the bridge:



From here, we decided to head up-canyon to check out the rest of the narrow area we were in; however, just around the corner the wash returned to how it had been when we exited it previously:



Looking back down the wash; Turret Bridge is just around the corner:



One final view of Turret Bridge and the formations around it on our way back down the wash:



We walked down this rocky wash through an interesting narrow-ish section:



The wash we were in joined with another wash at this junction; we came from the one on the left, and we decided to briefly check out the one on the right:



The walls of this wash were taller than the one where Turret Bridge is located:



This wash also had some narrower sections which were similar to the Turret Bridge wash:



There were some interesting features in this wash, too, like this false bridge:



Here we are heading into a narrow section with some strange formations just ahead:



The wash got steeper and we had to navigate around this boulder pile:



Ahead are some of the formations which we had spotted from further down-canyon:



The wash passed through this tighter section:



Then, the walls began to get less tall and the wash became steeper, so we headed back down-canyon to see the rest of the wash below the fork:



The canyon continues its narrow character through here:



We passed through this collection of interesting formations; be very careful if visiting this area not to accidentally step on one of these formations, as they appear to be extremely delicate:



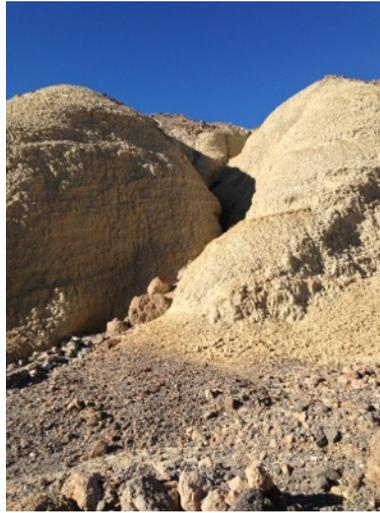
This was another interesting formation on the canyon wall; it appears to be another false bridge, where the wall has slumped down onto the other side but water has eroded underneath it:



Looking back up-canyon at the narrow section we just walked through:



This is another interesting area in the canyon:



We checked out this small wash, and found this interesting natural feature, which is about 3 feet tall and can just barely be crawled through:



Further up the wash is this other interesting natural feature; it also is about 3 feet tall, but it is probably around 8 feet long and therefore would be difficult to crawl into:



Some nice hoodoo-like formations we saw on our way out of this wash:



Looking down-canyon from near here, as the canyon is just starting to end:



Looking back at the entrance to this very interesting area:

