



CRACK CANYON - SAN RAFAEL SWELL



Rating: Hiking (Class 4)

Length: 4-6 hours

Maps: Goblin Valley, UT; Temple Mountain, UT

Season: Any, no snow. Can be hot in the summer.

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12S 522178mE 4277216mN N38° 38' 36" W110° 44' 43"
Downclimb	12S 522782mE 4275273mN N38° 37' 32" W110° 44' 18"
By Pass Top	12S 523007mE 4275103mN N38° 37' 27" W110° 44' 09"
By Pass End	12S 523008mE 4274946mN N38° 37' 22" W110° 44' 08"
Slot End	12S 523312mE 4274483mN N38° 37' 07" W110° 43' 56"
To Chute	12S 523915mE 4273237mN N38° 36' 26" W110° 43' 31"

Hype

Crack Canyon, as it cuts a deep path through the reef, is a great adventure and not to be missed if you are in the Southern Swell area. It's easy access, striking scenery, and ease make it a great choice for a family hike. The hike is best in the Fall, Winter, or Spring, and can be blistering hot in the summer. It is a dog-friendly hike if you use the bypasses for the most difficult sections.

Tags: *hike, family friendly*

Trailhead

Reach the trailhead by going west from Green River Utah on I-70 to the junction with highway 24 that goes to Hanksville. Go toward Hanksville for about 25 miles to Mile Post 135.

- A signed road goes off to the west signed Goblin Valley. (12S 537737mE 4275878mN / N38° 37' 50" W110° 33' 59")
- Follow this paved road 5.1 miles to a junction. Go straight. (12S 530077mE 4278354mN / N38° 39' 12" W110° 39' 16")
- At 7.2 miles from the highway, a good road goes off on the left. This is the Behind the Reef road. (12S 527155mE 4279922mN / N38° 40' 03" W110° 41' 16")
- Reset your odometer, and follow the Behind the Reef road 4.1 miles to a signed trailhead for Crack Canyon. An old road goes off on the left here, but it is heavily washed out. Parking at the trailhead is advised. (12S 522177mE 4277215mN / N38° 38' 36" W110° 44' 43")

Route

From the signed trailhead, follow an old road as it heads down the wash. It gets progressively worse as you follow it toward Crack Canyon. As you near the reef, where the canyon deepens, the road ceases to exist, and a wooden fence marks the end of motor vehicle travel. Follow the canyon as it cuts deeply into the reef. This first section of the canyon is impressively deep with fascinating solution pocket marred walls. 10-15 minutes past the fence a short narrows section is encountered. It has a couple of easy downclimbs, or can be bypassed on the right (looking down canyon).

Five minutes past this first small narrows is an impressively undercut section that is very photogenic in the right light. The canyon opens briefly before another short narrow section is encountered. This section has a couple of minor downclimbs, but nothing difficult.

The pattern repeats itself, as the canyon opens and then begins to narrow again. This narrow section, however, begins with a 2 m (7 ft.) downclimb that can be a little tricky for some. If this seems too difficult, go back up canyon about 3-5 minutes, watching on your right (looking up canyon) for a boulder filled crack. You can ascend this crack a level, and then follow a cairned trail down canyon bypassing the difficulties. The bypass is a good route to take if you have dogs with you.

Continue down canyon through more open and narrow sections. Near the end, a very deep narrow section is encountered and marks the spot where the canyon begins getting shallow as it exits the reef. 20 minutes or so after the deepest section, you exit the slickrock walled canyon and enter the dirt and rock lined wash on the other side of the reef. For most, this is a good turn around spot. Return the way you came.

