



BIRCH HOLLOW - ZION EAST SIDE



Rating: 3A

Length: 3-5 hours

Gear: Standard Technical Gear

Maps: Clear Creek Mountain, UT

Rappels: 8+ to 32 m (105 ft.)

Water: Generally none. A shallow wade or two after recent rain.

Flash Flood Danger: Moderate

Season: Spring, Summer, Fall

Notes: No permit is needed for Birch. Car shuttle recommended, but not required. A mountain bike would work well for the shuttle.

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12S 335484mE 4130834mN N37° 18' 35" W112° 51' 23"
Bypass	12S 334253mE 4131451mN N37° 18' 54" W112° 52' 14"
Rappel	12S 333900mE 4131851mN N37° 19' 07" W112° 52' 28"
Wild Wind	12S 334269mE 4132486mN N37° 19' 27" W112° 52' 14"
Exit Trailhead	12S 337582mE 4133646mN N37° 20' 07" W112° 50' 00"

Hype

Birch Hollow, being just outside of the Zion National Park boundary, has become one of the most popular canyons in the area. The fact that it doesn't require a permit has made it a favorite destination of recreation canyoneers as well as local guides. During my last trip through we saw 3 different groups, all from local guide companies. Don't expect solitude or a wilderness experience here. Play nice and allow faster groups to pass. The BLM has a large info sign at the trailhead giving good guidelines for insuring the canyon doesn't become a permit required canyon due to over traffic.

Traffic notwithstanding, Birch is a charming canyon with 2 amazing rappels in a stunning slot section. The last two rappels are often photographed, and you see them in magazines and other advertisements frequently. The downside is the goods only last a few minutes and are over all too soon before the exit.

Note: You can exit Birch a variety of ways. Some may wish to go down Orderville and out to the Temple of Sinawava. This DOES require a permit and frankly I don't recommend it. You end up

carrying a lot of extra technical gear a long way... If you have a car shuttle, exiting UP Orderville is recommended and is by far the best way to do Birch. If you don't have another car, a mountain bike would work great. On busy summer weekends, you are also likely to be able to hitch a ride.

Finally, with one car you can exit up Wild Wind Hollow, making a circle trip. I DON'T recommend this exit. As of 2013, it is a bit hard to find the trail in spots and interspersed with lots of game trails. One wrong turn here, and you will be in for a bush whacking thrash. (As my partner and I were.)

Tags: canyon, beginner, access: 2wd

Trailhead

The trailhead is off the North Fork road, which starts 2.2 miles east of the east entrance of Zion National Park on highway 9. It is signed.

- Turn onto the North Fork Road. (12S 337340mE 4122961mN / N37° 14' 20" W112° 50' 02")
- Follow it about 5.4 miles to the Zion Ponderosa. Stay right on the main road. The road turns to dirt here, but is passable by all when dry. Reset your odometer at the dirt road. (12S 333951mE 4127075mN / N37° 16' 32" W112° 52' 22")
- At 2.8 miles, a side road goes off on the left. This is the Englstead Canyon trailhead. (12S 335082mE 4130499mN / N37° 18' 23" W112° 51' 39")
- 3.0 miles past Zion Ponderosa is the signed Birch Hollow trailhead on the left. (12S 335484mE 4130834mN / N37° 18' 35" W112° 51' 23")

Exit Trailhead - Orderville

- Continue past the Birch trailhead an additional 3.1 miles. (6 miles from the Ponderosa) to a good side road on the left signed Orderville ORV Area. Follow the Orderville ORV Area side road 0.2 miles to a parking area and gate. Those with 4x4 can continue down the road an additional 2 miles, or it is easily walked. (12S 337849mE 4133846mN / N37° 20' 14" W112° 49' 50")

Route

From the trailhead, follow the obvious and well traveled trail to the bottom of Birch and head down canyon.

In 30 minutes or so, a dryfall is reached. This falls is particularly loose, and easily bypassed via a trail just to the left. Some rappel, but the bypass is recommended. The canyon begins to deepen and narrow.

Rappel 1 is about 18 m and is overhanging.

Rappel 2 and 3 are about 8 m. A downclimb before rappel 2 may be rappelled by beginners, but is fairly straight forward.

Rappel 4 is about 32 m is the biggest in the canyon and marks the start of the best section. Be sure your rope reaches. An easy trick is to bring a 60 m rope and 10 m of webbing. Rappel single strand and use the webbing to extend the pull side as needed.

The final rappels come in quick succession. **Rappel 5 and 6 are both about 9 m, and rappels 7 and 8 are both about 18 m.** The bottom of rappel 8 is the confluence of Orderville and Birch.

Orderville Exit (Recommended)

Head up Orderville, following the use trail. It turns into an old road that is followed back to the North Fork Road and exit trailhead. Expect about an hour or a little more from Birch to the exit trailhead.

Wild Wind Hollow Exit (Not Recommended)

Head up Orderville about 10 minutes until a wide canyon comes in on the right. This is Wild Wind Hollow. Follow a cow trail up it on the right side above the canyon floor. It works up and within 10 minute climbs steeply out of the Hollow. This is where it gets tricky. There are a myriad of trails. Follow the most used one you can find south/slightly southwest to a ridgeline, then work up the ridgeline and south east to the road. On our attempt, we did well for about the first half, then lost the primary trail and ended up on a mix of game trails. Expect an hour for this exit, a bit less with good route finding.

