



ARCH (JOHNSON) CANYON - SNOW CANYON



Rating: 3B

Length: 3-5 hours

Gear: Standard Technical Gear

Maps: Santa Clara, UT; Washington, UT;

Rappels: 6 to 60 m (197 ft.)

Water: Can be several pools. Wetsuit in cool/cold conditions.

Flash Flood Danger: Moderate

Season: September 14th to March 15th

Notes: This canyon requires a shuttle, and is closed from March 15th through September 14th.

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12S 267079mE 4118199mN N37° 10' 52" W113° 37' 26"
Rappel 1	12S 266494mE 4118385mN N37° 10' 58" W113° 37' 50"
Rappel Final	12S 266137mE 4118295mN N37° 10' 55" W113° 38' 04"
Exit Trailhead	12S 265194mE 4117904mN N37° 10' 41" W113° 38' 42"

Hype

Arch Canyon has to be one of the best beginner friendly canyoneering adventures in the Saint George area. Good anchors, relatively short, with some impressive rappels and nice (though short) narrow sections, this is a good one I highly recommend. The rappels start small and get bigger, culminating in a 60 m (197 ft.) rappel near Johnson Arch. Expect to have an audience for the final rappel on any busy weekend!

The canyon is in the Snow Canyon State Park, and requires a permit. To protect nesting birds, it is closed from March 15th to September 14th (late spring through fall). Since it is ONLY open in the fall, winter, and early spring, and it CAN hold several deep pools, a wetsuit is required except during very warm days. The canyon alternates between sunny open sections and short shady sections, so sun is generally available only a few minutes after each pool if you need to warm up.

Note: This canyon requires a permit. Permits are available online at <https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/snow-canyon/permits/> (<https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/snow-canyon/permits/>)

Tags: canyon, beginner, access: paved

Trailhead

Exit Trailhead

Take Exit 6 from I-15 toward Bluff Street (this is route 18)

3.2 miles, go left onto Snow Canyon Parkway

Follow this road, staying straight at the first round-about until the second round-about at 3.9 miles. Go right here, onto Snow Canyon Drive and follow it 0.8 miles to a trailhead (parking area on the left). This is shortly BEFORE the pay booth to go into Snow Canyon State Park.

Starting Trailhead

Go back to Route 18. (back 0.8 miles, then left at the round-about for about 4 miles)

Go north on Route 18 about 3.7 miles to 4200 North. This is the first side road after a long stretch without any side roads. Go left and follow 4200 North a couple of blocks to its end in a cul-de-sac. This is the trailhead.

Route

Approach (30-40 minutes)

From the trailhead, follow the trail a minute to its junction with a dirt road. Go left (south) on the dirt road until reaching the Gila Trail. Go right and follow the Gila Trail north to where it descends into Arch Canyon. There are many foot prints and side trails crisscrossing the area, though it is relatively easy to find the canyon.

Note: Reaching the canyon by going north on the dirt road about 5 minutes, then dropping down to the west into the head of the canyon is a great option, but crosses private land. In 2015, this was not fenced or signed and clearly heavily used. If going that route, a few down climbs and a bit of route finding are needed to reach the normal entrance at the Gila Trail.

Canyon

Head down canyon, quickly coming to the first rappel with a bolted anchor on the left. This is an intermediate downclimb, but beginners may want a rope. (7 m (23 ft.))

Rappel 2 is a two stage drop of about 15 m (50 ft.). There may be a pool here.

Continuing down canyon, stay left as the canyon slots and drops to an anchor and rappel 3, 15 m (50 ft.).

Immediately down from rappel 3 is rappel 4 off a boulder and 7 m (23 ft.) into a pool. Walking on the right edge of the pool kept it less than knee deep on our trip, a particularly warm and dry time.

The canyon opens briefly before dropping 31 m (102 ft.) at rappel 5. Be mindful of your pull. This rappel can have a large pool at the bottom. (Deep wade or swimmer by the look of the waterline on the wall.)

A sunny section leads to the final 60 m (197 ft.) rappel. Be VERY mindful of how you rig your ropes. The rope grooves are bad here, and the angle of the rappel causes people rappelling to tend to want to swing and slide the rope across the grooves. From the bottom, pull the rope from far back to minimize the grooves and maximize the chance of the rope pulling cleanly.

Exit (20 minutes)

Follow the trail down canyon a couple of minutes to [Johnson Arch](#) on the left, then on another 15-20 minutes to the trailhead.

