



LOWER MUDDY CREEK - HIDDEN SPLENDOR



Rating: Easy Hiking

CFS Range: 0 - 250

Length: 4-6 hours (8-ish miles)

Gear: Standard Hiking Gear, wading shoes

Maps: Hunt Draw, UT

Water: Flowing in Muddy Creek, but filtering/drinking not recommended due to high mineral content

Flash Flood Danger: Low

Season: Fall, Winter, Early Spring

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12S 503540mE 4268685mN N38° 33' 60" W110° 57' 34"
Old Bunkhouse	12S 504311mE 4267772mN N38° 33' 30" W110° 57' 02"
Panel Side Trail	12S 504268mE 4266504mN N38° 32' 49" W110° 57' 04"
Squeeze Canyon	12S 505476mE 4265572mN N38° 32' 19" W110° 56' 14"
End of Gorge	12S 505908mE 4265259mN N38° 32' 09" W110° 55' 56"

Hype

For ease of access and absolute beauty, it is tough to beat the Lower Muddy Creek hike, where the creek cuts through the eastern San Rafael Reef. The hike is one I've done probably a dozen or more times, and still enjoy. I am convinced I see something new on every trip. The route starts at Hidden Splendor uranium mining area, an old mining area first mined in 1952, and long since abandoned. From the mining area, the route meanders down the deep Wingate-walled Muddy Creek Gorge, cutting through Kayenta and finally Navajo layers before emerging from the Reef. En route the views are stunning, there are many old mining ruins to see, an arch, and even a pictograph panel to round out the day.

A couple of notes: This hike can be impossible in late spring when the Muddy Creek is at flood stage or after very heavy rains. Fall and early spring are the best times to visit. Summers bring hot temperatures and an oppressive amount of mosquitos and deer flies. Winter makes a nice time to visit as well, but wading the creek countless times along the way can deter all but he hardcore.

Tags: hike, rock art, dog friendly, family friendly, access: 2wd

Trailhead

From I-70

- Take exit 131 from I-70 (about 30 miles west of Green River). Go south off the freeway, the road parallels the freeway for 1.8 miles before turning south. (12S 529696mE 4303524mN / N38° 52' 48" W110° 39' 27")
- 3.8 - Junction stay left (12S 525566mE 4299454mN / N38° 50' 37" W110° 42' 19")
- 4.9 - Junction, stay left again. (12S 525377mE 4297642mN / N38° 49' 38" W110° 42' 28")
- 10.1 - Signed Junction (Reds Canyon / Tan Seep). Go right. (12S 522027mE 4292084mN / N38° 46' 38" W110° 44' 47")
- 13.9 - Signed junction go right again. (12S 517124mE 4290141mN / N38° 45' 35" W110° 48' 10")
- 14.8 - This is the Red Canyon / McKay Flat junction. (12S 515903mE 4289563mN / N38° 45' 17" W110° 49' 01")

Go left and reset your odometer

- 4.0 miles - Fence and Cattleguard (12S 512118mE 4285358mN / N38° 43' 00" W110° 51' 38")
- 4.1 miles - Road on the left, signed Trail 860. This is the side road to Baptist Draw. (12S 511984mE 4285101mN / N38° 42' 52" W110° 51' 44")
- 8.4 miles - Signed Hidden Splendor Junction, go left, to Hidden Splendor. (right goes to Tomsich Butte) (12S 508052mE 4279362mN / N38° 39' 46" W110° 54' 27")

Go left and reset your odometer

- 4.0 miles - Music Canyon Trailhead is on the right. (12S 507653mE 4275023mN / N38° 37' 25" W110° 54' 43")
- 7.8 miles - Quandary/Ramp/Knotted Rope Side Road on the left, stay on main road. (12S 506490mE 4270734mN / N38° 35' 06" W110° 55' 32")
- 10.4 miles - After crossing the airstrip, follow the road to a parking area before the road descends to Muddy Creek. (12S 503539mE 4268694mN / N38° 34' 00" W110° 57' 34")

Route

Rock Art and Historic Site Etiquette

Rock art and historic sites are fragile, non-renewable cultural resources that, once damaged, can never be replaced. To ensure they are protected, please:

- Avoid Touching the Petroglyphs: Look and observe, BUT DO NOT TOUCH!
- Stay on the Trails: Stay on the most used trails when visiting sites, and don't create new trails or trample vegetation.
- Photography and Sketching is Allowed: Do not introduce any foreign substance to enhance the carved and pecked images for photographic or drawing purposes. Altering, defacing, or damaging the petroglyphs is against the law -- even if the damage is unintentional.
- Pets: Keep pets on a leash and clean up after them.
- Artifacts: If you happen to come across sherds (broken pottery) or lithics (flakes of stone tools), leave them where you see them. Once they are moved or removed, a piece of the past is forever lost.

Warning: Be sure not to park or camp on the airstrip. It is still active and used by backcountry pilots.

From the trailhead, follow the road down to the Muddy Creek, and begin heading downstream. It is easiest to follow the old mining road or one of the many social trails. The route will cross the Muddy Creek numerous times, so you might as well get your feet wet from the get-go.

20 minutes or so from the trailhead, the old mining road passed a very run-down bunkhouse built during the mining boom in the 1950's. The road parallels the river, then crosses and passes through a fence. The red towering walls in this section are Wingate. Below the fence a few minutes, the canyon begins cutting into the ledge-forming Kayenta layer on a bend, before the walls before towering white Navajo sandstone. At this

bend, on the right (looking downstream) is a use trail climbing the canyon wall. Follow it 3 minutes to an excellent pictograph under an overhang. The panel is visible from the river, but a bit hard to spot.

The river is now cutting through the Navajo layer, and the walls high above dotted with the tell-tale black streaks of seeps and springs. It is 30 or so minutes to where the river escapes its sandstone confines and emerges onto the flat open desert. Just before this point a canyon comes in on the right with an impressive arch at its confluence. This canyon is [The Squeeze](#) . Once in the flat open desert, the best scenery is behind. Return the same way.

