



BENSON CREEK - BRIAN HEAD



Rating: 3C

Length: 2-4 hours

Gear: Standard Technical Gear

Maps: Parowan, UT;

Rappels: 4 to 32 m (105 ft.)

Water: Small flowing stream

Flash Flood Danger: Moderate

Season: Summer, Fall

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12S 337910mE 4182134mN N37° 46' 20" W112° 50' 26"
Bridge	12S 338082mE 4182422mN N37° 46' 29" W112° 50' 19"
Right	12S 338117mE 4182446mN N37° 46' 30" W112° 50' 17"
Left	12S 338169mE 4182428mN N37° 46' 30" W112° 50' 15"
Bridge	12S 338320mE 4182324mN N37° 46' 26" W112° 50' 09"
Junction	12S 338348mE 4182203mN N37° 46' 22" W112° 50' 08"
Leave Trail	12S 338296mE 4182111mN N37° 46' 19" W112° 50' 10"
First Top	12S 338440mE 4182000mN N37° 46' 16" W112° 50' 04"
Angle Down	12S 338676mE 4181897mN N37° 46' 13" W112° 49' 54"
Rappel 1	12S 338736mE 4181967mN N37° 46' 15" W112° 49' 52"
Rappel 4	12S 338574mE 4182098mN N37° 46' 19" W112° 49' 58"

Hype

Benson Creek is a family friendly hike to a waterfall or a high adventure canyoneering outing. Ok, truth be told, it is a tame short canyoneering adventure as well a family friendly hike.

For hikers, this is a pleasant outing, complete with benches and picnic tables near the falls. Bring the family, bring a lunch, and enjoy the day. The short distance and easy trail make it suitable for most.

For canyoneers, the toughest part of the day is the approach. Expect steep loose dirt and all of the unpleasantness it can entail. Fortunately, however, the approach is relatively short and soon leads to an

excellent but short slot canyon section and four rappels. The shortness of the approach and easiness of the technical section make this suitable for most canyoneers.

Note: The creek flows fairly low most of the year. Summer and fall are the recommended seasons if taking the canyoneering route. During cooler times of the year, rain pants and a rain jacket can help keep you warm and dry. Wetsuit never needed, as the pools should only be ankle deep. If the stream is flowing more than ankle deep, as it could be in spring runoff, consider waiting until tamer conditions.

Tags: hike, canyon, family friendly, beginner, access: paved

Trailhead

The trailhead is on the road to Brian Head Ski Resort from Parowan, UT. To get there, take exit 78 from I-15 and head east into the town of Parowan. Follow Main Street from the highway about 1.2 miles to Center Street and turn left on Center Street.

After 0.3 miles, Center Street curves right and becomes Canyon Road. Follow this 5.5 miles to a large parking area on the left that is signed Parowan Canyon Wildlife Management Area. This is the trailhead, and mile post 8.6 on SR-143.

Route

From the parking lot, follow the wide and well-used trail. It goes back down the canyon for a few minutes, then crosses the stream on a footbridge. A small social path goes off on the left just after the bridge, stay right on the main trail.

A few minutes past the first bridge is a second bridge over a small side gully, then a trail junction. Again, stay left on the most used trail. A few minutes after this second junction is a third, at the edge of a sage brush clearing. This is where the hiking and canyoneering routes diverge.

Hikers (20-30 minutes total from trailhead):

Stay left. A few picnic tables and benches appear before the trail enters the stream bottom. Follow the trail a few minutes up to the 10 m (33 ft.) falls. Return the same way.

Canyoneers (1-1.5 hours total approach time):

Go right, noticing the slope to the left (north). The route climbs this slope to the top. Follow the right trail branch a couple of minutes until it appears relatively easy to go straight up the hillside. This will be in an area of less talus.

Head up the hillside. Many game and social trails appear here and generally funnel into a more used trail the higher you get. In spots, it is steep, loose dirt, but never exposed or dangerous with good route finding. Continue all the way up until the angles eases substantially.

From the lower angle crest, it is tempting to drop down too early. Avoid the temptation, and continue working north and up, then gradually west. You want to descend into Benson Creek where it is a low angle slope and relatively easy. This skirts around a smaller side canyon. If you drop down too early, you will end up in the wrong side drainage or on the steep cliff dotted slope below the first rappel. If in doubt, continue upstream.

Once in the canyon bottom, it is an easy stroll to the slot and first rappel.

Canyon (30+ minutes)

R1 32 m (105 ft.) - Off a tree on the left. A 60 m rope will not work doubled here. Make sure you have enough rope for a 32 m rappel! The rappel drops 4 m to a ledge, then continues down.

R2 13 m (43 ft.) - Right after rappel 1 is a bolted anchor on the right for a two stage 13 m (43 ft.) rappel. Stunning section.

R3 16 m (53 ft.) - The canyon is easy walking for a few minutes to where it slots up again at rappel 3. The drop is about 12 m (40 ft.), but the anchor is 4 m (14 ft.) back from the edge.

R4 13 m (43 ft.) - The final rappel is shortly down canyon from rappel 3. This is the waterfall that is reached by hikers. Rappelling off the tree on the left is highly recommended as it puts you near the flow of the waterfall. There is another anchor on the right wall that avoids the waterfall altogether but doesn't seem like much fun.

A couple of fixed pieces (piton and bolt) on the left side of the waterfall make me wonder if this is occasionally climbed.

From the bottom of the waterfall, follow the trail a few minutes down to the junction, then back to the trailhead.

