DONUT FALLS - BIG COTTONWOOD CANYON

Rating: Easy Hike
Length: 1-2 hours (1.4 or 3.5 miles)
Gear: Standard Hiking Gear
Maps: Mount Aire, UT;
Water: Flowing stream alongside the trail most of the way.
Season: Any

Waypoints:
- Trailhead - Big Cottonwood: 12T 445113mE 4500071mN, N40° 38’ 59” W111° 38’ 57”
- Trailhead - Official: 12T 444931mE 4498939mN, N40° 38’ 22” W111° 39’ 05”
- Return Junction Option: 12T 444698mE 4498482mN, N40° 38’ 07” W111° 39’ 14”
- Left: 12T 444668mE 4498371mN, N40° 38’ 04” W111° 39’ 16”
- Donut Falls: 12T 444644mE 4498013mN, N40° 37’ 52” W111° 39’ 16”

Hype

Donut Falls is an excellent and popular hike in Big Cottonwood Canyon. This is a good one regardless of the season. In the winter, it makes a great snowshoe and, in the summer, a hike. On any given summer day, I would wager this makes the list of top 10 busiest hikes in the Wasatch.

In the winter, the hike is 3.5 miles from the locked gate on the highway. In the summer, this hike can be as short as 1.4 miles round trip IF you can get a parking spot at the trailhead. Unless you are very early, I would generally recommend walking from the highway even in the summer to minimize traffic and parking frustrations along the road. The extra distance is easy walking and makes for an enjoyable addition.

Warning: Donut Falls has been the scene of several fatalities from falls. Be very careful around the falls, and don't climb up to them or up the steep rock slopes nearby. The rock is exceptionally slippery.

Also, note, the steep canyon walls at the falls have produced avalanches in the winter at times. Be cautious in the area in the winter if avalanche danger is high.

Tags: hike, wildflowers, fall colors, family friendly, beginner, access: paved, access: 2wd

Trailhead
Big Cottonwood Canyon is on the east side of the Salt Lake City Valley. Get there by taking I-215 to the east, taking exit 6 off the interstate and heading east.

Follow 6200 South which becomes Wasatch Blvd for 1.8 miles to the stop light and signs for Big Cottonwood Canyon.

Turn left at the light and reset your odometer.

Drive up Big Cottonwood Canyon. The trailhead is at 8.9 miles, where there is a large parking area on each side of the road. Park on the right side of the road. There is a toilet here and gated road (open in the summer) that heads south to the Jordan Pines Campground and Forest Donut Falls Trailhead.

**Route**

The description starts at the parking area along the Big Cottonwood road.

**To The Forest Trailhead**
Walk the main road south. It crosses the stream over a bridge, meanders through some private property, then turns to dirt. It is a mile from the main road to the official trailhead and takes 20-30 minutes.

**To The Falls**
From the official trailhead, follow the wide and well-travelled trail. It climbs a little, then meanders around and down to cross the stream on a large bridge. Just past the stream is a junction, go left.

Follow the wide trail. At a somewhat major junction, keep left on the main trail. As the trail nears the falls, it narrows and descends to the stream bed. If flows are low and your rock hopping skills are good, you can keep your feet dry. The falls are visible within a minute of reaching the stream bottom.

**Note:** For most, admiring and photographing the falls from below will be satisfaction enough for the day. If attempting the scramble up to the Donut Hole, be VERY CAREFUL. The rock is loose and slippery.

Return the same way.

**Optional Return**
On the return, when reaching the main bridge over the river, you can go left, following a dirt road that goes down the canyon and reaches the trailhead. This is a nice semi-loop return and recommended.