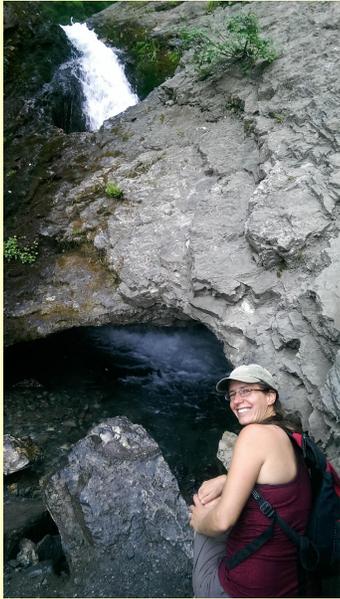




DONUT FALLS - BIG COTTONWOOD CANYON



Rating: Easy Hike

Length: 1-3 hours (1.6 miles from Forest Service Trailhead or 4 miles from BCC Road)

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 444697mE 4498482mN N40° 38' 07" W111° 39' 14"
Left	12T 444668mE 4498371mN N40° 38' 04" W111° 39' 16"
Donut Falls	12T 444644mE 4498012mN 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 Service Donut Falls Trailhead.

It is 0.8 miles down the road to the south to the Forest Service Trailhead. I don't recommend driving to the Forest Service Trailhead. It is constantly full in the summer. Walking from the BCC adds a bit of distance but makes for a more enjoyable day.

Route

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

To the Forest Service Trailhead (30-40 minutes / 1.3 miles)

Walk the main road south. It crosses the stream over a bridge. A new trail, signed Donut Falls 1.5 miles, leaves the paved road shortly after the bridge on the left. This is a more enjoyable route than staying on the road and what I recommend. Follow the winding trail as it passes the Jordan Pines Campground, then climbs a bit and soon reaches a pit toilet and the Forest Service Trailhead. Note: Alternatively, staying on the paved road reaches this point as well. It is shorter but less scenic.

To The Falls (20-30 minutes / 0.8 miles)

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.

