



OLD WOMAN WASH - EASTERN REEF



Rating: Easy/Moderate Hike

Length: 1-3 hours (2-4 miles)

Gear: Standard Hiking Gear

Maps: Old Woman Wash, UT;

Water: Little or none, bring all you need.

Flash Flood Danger: Low

Season: Spring, Fall, Winter if no snow

Waypoints:

Trailhead and Old Chimney

12S 537220mE 4281010mN
N38° 40' 37" W110° 34' 20"

First Panel

12S 535815mE 4281539mN
N38° 40' 54" W110° 35' 18"

Second Panel

12S 535291mE 4281598mN
N38° 40' 56" W110° 35' 39"

Loop Pass

12S 535071mE 4281949mN
N38° 41' 08" W110° 35' 48"

Hype

The eastern San Rafael Reef is riddled with deep canyons, tall spires, and old ruins from both of the mining era and early Native American occupants. Old Woman Wash is a great example of the beauty and diversity of the area.

The hike starts at an old chimney left from the mining days when Uranium was king and miners flocked to the San Rafael Swell to try and strike it rich. From there the route meanders into an ever-deepening canyon and to a small petroglyph/pictograph panel. Families or the less motivated can call it a day and return from here, though this first panel isn't particularly impressive.

Motivated hikers can continue on a scenic loop that gives big views of Old Woman Wash before looping back via a quite impressive pictograph panel and a few petroglyphs. This is my strongly recommended loop, and it packs a lot of good stuff in a fairly short hike.

Tags: *hike, rock art, dog friendly, family friendly, beginner, access: high clearance*

Trailhead

Note: The road to the trailhead varies quite a bit and usually doesn't require four wheel drive, but does generally require high clearance.

The trailhead is at milepost 138.9 on UT-24. This is the highway that runs between I-70 to the north, and Hanksville to the south.

From the north (I-70) it is about 21 miles south after leaving I-70. From the south, the side road to the trailhead is about 23 miles north from the intersection of UT-24 and UT-95 on the east side of Hanksville.

- Reset your odometer as you turn off of UT-24 (12S 539746mE 4280107mN / N38° 40' 07" W110° 32' 35")
- 0.45 miles - Junction, stay left. (12S 539063mE 4280452mN / N38° 40' 18" W110° 33' 03")
- 1.5 miles - Junction, go left. (12S 537429mE 4280424mN / N38° 40' 18" W110° 34' 11")
- 1.8 miles - Junction, go right. (12S 536964mE 4280571mN / N38° 40' 23" W110° 34' 30")
- 2.0 miles - Junction - stay right. (12S 537063mE 4280806mN / N38° 40' 30" W110° 34' 26")
- 2.2 miles - Side road and old chimney on the left. This is the trailhead. (12S 537220mE 4281010mN / N38° 40' 37" W110° 34' 20")

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.

To The Panel (1.0 mile / 30 minutes)

From the trailhead, walk west up Old Woman Wash. It quickly enters the Navajo Sandstone layer and begins deepening. Follow it to a very prominent side canyon that comes in on the left with a tall prow separating the main and side canyon. The first panel is on the right (north) side here on the vertical wall. It is faded, and a bit hard to see from a distance. Some old shepherd signatures are also on this all.

The Loop (1.5 miles / 1 hour)

For the loop, continue up Old Woman Wash, the main canyon. It soon reaches minor dryfalls and pools. Leave the bottom of Old Woman Wash and walk along its rim on the left (south) side, gaining elevation as you go. In 10-15 minutes past the panel, the walls open up on the south (left).

Hike south along the big wall that is to the east now, and begin descending down the wide drainage. An old mining road is visible across the canyon.

Staying close to the wall, an impressive pictograph and petroglyph panel become visible on the left (north) as the canyon starts to bend and head back to Old Woman Wash. This panel is quite a bit more interesting than the first panel!

From the panel, hike to the shallow canyon bottom and follow the canyon as it drops quickly to the junction with Old Woman Wash. There are no major obstacles in this side canyon.

Return (1 mile / 30 minutes)

Once at Old Woman Wash, follow it west back to the trailhead.

