



THE GOLDEN CATHEDRAL - ESCALANTE



Rating: Moderate hike

Length: 4-7 hours (8 miles)

Gear: Standard Hiking Gear

Maps: EGYPT, UT;

Water: Filterable at the river.

Flash Flood Danger: Low

Season: Any, although summers can be hot.

Waypoints:

Trailhead

12S 480717mE 4160722mN
N37° 35' 36" W111° 13' 06"

Neon Bottom

12S 485183mE 4162201mN
N37° 36' 24" W111° 10' 04"

Fence Bottom

12S 484155mE 4162839mN
N37° 36' 45" W111° 10' 46"

Hype

The Golden Cathedral is THE iconic photo of the Grand Staircase-Escalante area. This is the place you've seen in books, calendars, and posters. It is a stunning natural bridge in lower Neon Canyon that will take your breath away!

For canyoneers, see the [Neon Canyon](#) for doing the canyon as a technical canyoneering adventure. Hikers will find this a lovely amble from Egypt Bench, down to the Escalante River, and then a short hike up Neon Canyon to the Golden Cathedral proper. The hike CAN be done as a day hike but makes for an even more pleasant backpack. Camping along the river is sublime, and wandering up or down the river and visiting side canyons makes for a delightful wander.

Warning: Bugs can be EPIC along the river in late spring through early fall. I would recommend visiting in late fall or early spring. Winter, when there is no snow on the ground, is also a great time if you're willing to brave the cold river crossings.

Tags: *hike, dog friendly, access: high clearance*

Trailhead

Head east out of the town of Escalante about 5 miles on highway 12 until the well signed Hole in the Rock road.

- From the mileage sign on the Hole in the Rock road (0.3 miles from the highway), travel down the Hole in the Rock road for 16 miles to the signed Egypt road on the north (left) side of the road. (12S 468045mE 4154979mN / N37° 32' 28" W111° 21' 42")
- 2.8 miles, junction. Stay straight on the main road (12S 472045mE 4156826mN / N37° 33' 29" W111° 18' 59")
- 3.4 miles, cross Twenty Five Mile Wash. This can be smooth or a bit washed out and rough. All vehicles can make it to here, but high clearance is recommend from the wash crossing on. (12S 472893mE 4157177mN / N37° 33' 40" W111° 18' 25")
- 6.6 miles, the road goes near the head of Egypt 1, and a slick rock area at the head of the canyon. (12S 477235mE 4158430mN / N37° 34' 21" W111° 15' 28")
- 7.9 miles, the road enters a wash and slickrock area, with the dramatic head of Egypt 2 on the right. (12S 478562mE 4159424mN / N37° 34' 54" W111° 14' 34")
- 9.0 miles, just after crossing a metal culvert that goes under the road, park in either the wash on the left, or parking area on the right. This is the Egypt 3 trailhead. (12S 479616mE 4160787mN / N37° 35' 38" W111° 13' 51")
- At 9.4 miles, go right. (12S 479999mE 4161000mN / N37° 35' 45" W111° 13' 36")
- 9.9 miles, end of the road / Fence Canyon Trailhead (12S 480715mE 4160696mN / N37° 35' 35" W111° 13' 06")

Route

There are two approaches to the Golden Cathedral, both start at Egypt Bench. The first approach, down Fence Canyon, is the most common and on a well-cairned trail. Camping near the river at Fence Canyon is excellent and recommended. The second approach is cross country directly to the river near Neon. This is less scenic and requires a bit more route finding, but is shorter. If doing this as a day hike, cross country is probably the ticket.

Fence Canyon

Find the well traveled and cairned trail heading down the slickrock to Fence Canyon. The trail is generally well cairned and easy to follow. Follow it about 1.5 hours down to the river. There are excellent campsites near the river.

From Fence Canyon, go right downstream. Neon Canyon is the first side canyon coming in on the left in about 0.8 miles. (20-30 minutes)

Cross Country

From the trailhead, locate the dome just to the right of Neon Canyon off in the distance (consult map/pictures below). Aim for the dome during the approach.

Find the well traveled and cairned trail heading down the slickrock to Fence Canyon. Follow this down off the initial steep slickrock, and then head cross country aiming for the dome. You will lose sight of the dome a time or two as the country dips down, but keep heading in that direction. Social trails you can follow appear off and on. As you near the river, a well-defined social trail drops steeply down a sand hill and deposits you just upstream from Neon Canyon. At a moderate pace, it should take 1-1.5 hours to reach the river from the car.

Up Neon

Hike up Neon Canyon. From its mouth, it is about 0.75 miles to the Golden Cathedral.

Note: The Golden Cathedral is a special place, please don't camp in Neon Canyon, but at the river or in Fence Canyon instead.



