



MULE CANYON TOWERS - CEDAR MESA



Rating: Roadside Attraction and a short hike

Length: 1-2 hours (less than a mile)

Gear: Standard Hiking Gear

Maps: Hotel Rock, UT

Water: None.

Season: Any

Notes: Reaching the trailhead requires either a high clearance vehicle, or walking 0.5 miles each way from the highway.

Waypoints:

Ruins	12S 612417mE 4153784mN N37° 31' 27" W109° 43' 40"
Ruins	12S 612272mE 4153965mN N37° 31' 33" W109° 43' 46"
Towers	12S 612078mE 4154019mN N37° 31' 35" W109° 43' 54"
Towers	12S 612024mE 4154014mN N37° 31' 35" W109° 43' 56"
Trailhead	12S 611956mE 4154156mN N37° 31' 39" W109° 43' 59"

Hype

Mule Canyon Towers Ruin is one of only a few ruins on Cedar Mesa (outside of Hovenweep National Monument) where tower ruins are found. Along the rim of Mule are 5 to 7 towers (depending on what exactly you count as a tower), while just below the rim are several ruins and panels to visit as well. There is debate on what the towers were actually used for, with some believing they were for defense, and some believing they were used for religious ceremonies. With easy access, unique ruins, and plenty to see, this is a side trip not to miss while passing through.

Visiting the towers is easy and suitable for most, with less than a five minute stroll from the 4x4 trailhead to the ruin. The ruins below the rim require a bit of scrambling to visit. Generally only 4th class if you choose the easiest path.

Tags: *roadside, hike, rock art, indian ruins, family friendly, access: 2wd*

Trailhead

Take highway 95 to milepost 102.2, which is 102.2 miles south east from Hanksville, or about 23 miles west of Blanding. To reach the trailhead from Blanding, go south out of town a couple of miles and turn west onto highway 95. Follow highway 95 for about 20 miles.

A gate and side road on the south side of the road lead to the ruins. From the highway to the ruins is about 0.5 miles, but very rough, with several slickrock steps that will likely stop low clearance vehicles. Parking at the gate and walking the road is a good option for those with low clearance vehicles.

Note: About a mile west at mile post 101.3 there is a paved parking area and pit toilet on the north side of the road that visits the Mule Canyon Ruins. These are suitable for all, and don't require any hiking to visit. Worth the visit, though the towers are in my opinion much more interesting.

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.

Visiting the Tower (5 minutes)

From the trailhead, follow the old road/trail a few minutes to the rim of Mule. The towers are visible both to the left and right, with the most well preserved towers being the closest. An old unmarked grave and spring are also visible right at the head of the canyon.

Visiting the Ruins Below the Rim

Before visiting the ruins below the rim, walk the right (south) rim a few minutes to get a good view of where the ruins are on the north side of the canyon.

Getting down the first level is the hardest. On the north side of the canyon, near the closest tower to the head of the canyon, is a scramble down spot with a pile of rocks at the bottom. This is class 4, and easy with a spot, but make sure you are comfortable coming back up the same way.

Once down the first level, there are ruins immediately at the bottom of the down climb. To visit the other ruins, work down the loose social trail one level and follow it down canyon to many other good ruins and panels.

Return the same way, or there is an elegant route out by going up a level from the biggest ruin and traversing up canyon and out a weakness on a corner. (a few cairns, easy to find from below)

