



TOM'S UTAH CANYONEERING GUIDE

Archive

Heart of Coyote Gulch Canyoneering Route • Canyons of the Escalante

Rating:	2A 5.4R ★★☆☆
Best Season:	Spring or Fall recommended.
Time:	8 to 12 hours. Get an early start.
Access:	Route starts and ends on a spur road of the Hole in the Rock Road. A 4WD car spot would save you 3 miles of hard walking.
USGS 7.5' Map:	King Mesa and Stevens Canyon South
Permit:	Not required for day use. Free overnight permits required for overnight backpacking, available at VCs and trailheads.
Equipment:	Wading shoes. Climbing skills. Navigation skills, map and compass. 165' rope and sling may be useful for belaying the exit slab.
Drinking Water:	Available in the canyon, should be filtered.
Flash Flood Risk:	Moderate.
Difficulties:	The climb out requires solo 5.4 slab climbing above a substantial drop. A 165' rope may be useful for weaker members of the party.

Wow. There's really no other way to say it. This is the place - one of the most sacred places in Utah for me. A splendid, deep, lush canyon cut into the Navajo sandstone. A cathedral. This one has it all.

And it has "been discovered". This one-day-blitz is a way-too-quick dash through the heart of Coyote Gulch, with an exciting 5th class exit up a rib, and a bit of cross-country navigating to regain the car. The exit climb should not be



underestimated - it is truly 5th class with a lot of exposure. Having a rope for beginners is only marginally useful as there are no established anchors, though there are natural features that can be slung, if you can find them. And if it happens to be raining, you're probably out of luck until the rock dries. I cannot recommend descending this feature, and I cannot recommend ascending it with full size packs. It would also be very difficult to drag packs up with a rope. You have been warned. The exit rib is the first rib downstream (East) from Jacob Hamblin Arch.

If you are "in the area", be sure to climb either the exit rib or the rib over Jacob

Hamblin Arch and soak in the view from the top. Either rib is reasonable to descend IF you are a climber and have

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just ascended it and know the way.

Approach: From Escalante, drive down Hole-In-The-Rock Road about 36 miles and turn left on Forty Mile Ridge road. Travel 4.5 miles to the top of the hill and a water tank. Most will want to park here. The road further out gets progressively worse, and then crosses a long section of deep, soft sand. 4 WD high clearance probably required (but conditions change rapidly). Drive or walk down the road 2 miles to the end of the 4WD road.

Stroll to the Rim: follow a cairned trail across slickrock about 2 miles to a dramatic overlook of the lower Escalante River. This stroll is in the full, full sun, with no chance of shade. The trail leads to a parapet of sandstone, and to the famous "Crack-in-the-Rock" descent - a slot behind a flake that lets you descend the 50 foot cliff to the dune area below.



Descend to Coyote: Cut down the third class crack to the dune area below. If you have large packs, you will want to lower them with a 50' rope. The trail descends down, then left of a pinnacle to the creek below.

Stevens Arch Viewpoint (optional): Got Time? About where the dune trail hits the creek, on the opposite side of the creek, there is a steep trail/route up onto the side above. Find this, ascend it, then follow a trail out right (east) to the promontory below the incredible Stevens Arch. (This trail is also the high-water link between Coyote Gulch and the Escalante River).

Up Coyote Gulch: waterfalls, arches, lush springs, a natural bridge, some ruins, flowers, etc. In the next 4 miles there is an amazing variety of scenery. A lot of this travel involves walking in the stream, so be ready for lots of wading.

The Exit: the exit is in the "big wall" section of the canyon, where the sinuous stream has cut huge undercuts into

the 300' cliffs. Check out the acoustics. Your landmark here is Jacob Hamblin Arch, a huge arch in one of the ribs between loops. There is a good spring just below JH Arch. If you have the time, be sure to explore up-canyon a few more switchbacks. There is a 5.4 route up over the top of Jacob Hamblin Arch, that gives access to the Slickrock landscape on the north side of the Gulch. Your Exit back to the car is on the rib just downstream (east) of the arch, on the downstream side, behind some trees. It's pretty obvious. Work your way up the rib, finding the least difficult route. Near the top of the steep part is a tiny arch that can be slung for an anchor. May take some searching to find.

Back to the Car: now all you've got to do is get back to your car. The terrain is very complex and difficult to navigate by dead reckoning. Pull out your compass. It's 177 deg mag to the Water Tanks top of hill, and 100 deg mag to the carpark at the end of Sandtrap road.



