


# TOM'S UTAH CANYONEERING GUIDE

## Archive

### Forgotten & Lower Eagle Canyons San Rafael Swell, Central Swell

<b>Rating:</b>	3B III 5 <sup>th</sup> Class EZ 
<b>Best Season:</b>	Spring or fall. Much of Eagle Canyon is exposed to the sun and very hot in high summer.
<b>Time:</b>	8 to 10 hours.
<b>Longest Rappel:</b>	Up to 165 feet.
<b>Access:</b>	Route starts and ends at the View Area, near Exit 114.
<b>Permit:</b>	Not required.
<b>Equipment:</b>	No technical equipment required.
<b>Map:</b>	USGS 7.5' Copper Globe, Sid and Charley, The Blocks, and San Rafael Knob.
<b>Cold Protection:</b>	Expect some wading through pools.
<b>Drinking Water:</b>	Sparse, bring plenty.
<b>Flash Flood Risk:</b>	Moderate.
<b>Skills Required:</b>	A few rappels. Some swimming and wading if it has been wet. Three boulder problems in Forgotten Canyon up to 5.8 in difficulty, though not exposed.

A beautiful and dramatic canyon, with some athletic and navigational problems protecting it, **Forgotten Canyon** is a wonderful adventure with a wide variety of treats. Nice narrows, Desert Bighorn Sheep, a dramatic rappel, a few boulder problems and some gooky pools, plus a spectacular arch and interesting side canyons make this an exploration worth the rather long day it takes to do it.

This route leaves from the View Area at exit 114, drops down a gully, then rappels into Fab Canyon, a short little slot. Fab is followed to the wide open middle part of Eagle Canyon, where you can enjoy ATV tracks and gringo petroglyphs. The dryfall is passed by a dramatic rappel, then Eagle Canyon followed to its junction with Forgotten. Forgotten is then ascended through deep narrows, a few muddy pools and over a few difficult boulder problems. After viewing a spectacular arch, we climb out of Forgotten and find our way back into Eagle Canyon, and follow a jeep trail back to the highway. This is a long hike so get up early and bring plenty of water.

**Getting There:** Park at the View Area on the North Side of I-70 at exit 114. If possible, spot a car on the jeep trail - take the dirt road on the south side of exit 114 past the roadcut and down to Justensen Flats. Turn left at the signed intersection, taking a rough branch road to a sandy tunnel under I-70. Park here, or continue over a rougher road about 1/2 mile to where the road drops down a hill and gets very rough. (Park here for alternate start).

**The Approach:** Enjoy the view of Eagle Canyon from the View Area. Follow a faint trail around the rim to the right past a small gully and then down the rib on the other side. Drop down 50', then follow a game trail into the gully and down. Work your way down carefully, heading somewhat left at the bottom to the rim of the final drop into the canyon. Follow the rim left and find a reasonable place to rappel in. Fab Canyon is deeper than it looks, so make sure your ropes reach the bottom

Information courtesy [CanyoneeringUSA.com](http://CanyoneeringUSA.com) ©2011 Imlay Canyon Gear All Rights Reserved

before rappelling over the edge. The place I chose was 170' deep.

You are now in Fab Canyon, a marvelous narrow little slot. Check it out up canyon - a dryfall stops you after 1/4 mile, with an interesting plaque. If you rappelled in above the dryfall, you will be glad you brought a bolt kit.

Coil up the ropes and head down canyon. The narrow part ends far too soon. The now open canyon leads to Eagle Canyon. At the junction, turn left (90 minutes).

**Alternate Start:** Park just past the I-70 underpass, or drive about 1/2 mile farther and park before a hill. Follow a rough jeep track down and into Eagle Canyon. Turn Left. Stagger like Lawrence of Arabia across the open, sunny and sandy expanse of middle Eagle Canyon.



Forgotten Canyon

Follow Eagle down a few turns. Admire the track scars from ATVs highpointing. There is also an ancient ATV inscription on the left hand wall. The canyon tightens up and becomes rocky. A narrow slot starts in the bottom of the canyon. Traverse the right rim of the slot to the main drop off. Select a tree to rappel from, down the slab and over the edge, 30 meters. (There are several possibilities, make sure your ropes reach the bottom). (3 hrs to this point).

**Hard-Core Alternative:** A more direct variation can be made, by rappelling 30' directly into the small slot at its head. Climb and work your way down with some difficulty to a final rappel into a deep pool under the dryfall. Anchors might be available off of wedged trees, but good natural anchor skills might be required. Don't get your ropes stuck. You are now in a deep wide slot, Lower Eagle Canyon. This area is frequented by Desert Bighorn Sheep. Head down canyon. An interesting narrows section is found after 10 minutes. This can be avoided on the right if wet. About 20 minutes further down canyon, Forgotten Canyon comes in on the right. It is big and obvious. Tramp up canyon.

**Forgotten Canyon:** A deep slash cut through a 600 foot sandstone buttress, with mostly easy walking. Ten minutes up Forgotten Canyon, the difficulties begin. Three fifth class boulder problems are made more difficult by each being preceded by a nasty mud pool. Some wading up to waist deep may be required. Bringing a clean pair of shoes to climb these bits is a good idea. The first problem is the hardest, but can be aided by tossing a sling around the top of the boulder.

After the difficulties, the narrows continue for a half hour, then the canyon opens up and enters a sandy area. 5 minutes later, a large canyon comes in on the left matched with one on the right.

**Side Trip:** The canyon to the left snakes in about 1/2 mile, and makes a great side trip.



Five minutes past the twin canyons, the next canyon comes in on the left. Above the head of this canyon is a dramatic arch that can be seen only from a short stretch of the main canyon floor. This is an important landmark - find it. (90 minutes from Eagle/Forgotten junction).

**Side Trips:** The canyon below the arch cuts deep and narrow into the rock - a great 15 minute side trip. For a better view of the arch, slab climb up the buttress on the right side of the canyon.



Arch high above Forgotten Canyon

We could follow Forgotten Canyon to its head. But let's not. From the Arch Viewpoint in the canyon, move up canyon 50 feet, then easily climb the right side of the canyon to a saddle between a small knoll and the end of Secret Mesa. Ascend steeply but easily up the ridge of the buttress to Secret Mesa. This is a large flat Pinon/Juniper covered platform, cut by the top of Forgotten Canyon to our left, and bounded by rounded yellow domes on our right. Follow the edge of the rounded domes first Southeast, then around the corner and Southwest.

**Alternative Route:** From Arch Viewpoint, if you desire shade, follow Forgotten Canyon as it winds its way up to Secret Mesa. A 40' dryfall is passed by backing up about three hundred feet and traversing perilously (5.4) above the canyon rim on the left (left looking up canyon). (It actually looks easier on the right).

Continue up canyon. Avoid the major canyon on the left, after using it to pass a dryfall. Then avoid the small canyons on the right, until the canyon starts to flatten out onto Secret Mesa. Follow washes somewhat right toward the rounded domes of the escarpment. (The canyon variation is about 20 minutes longer than the ridge route).

Continue to follow the edge of the escarpment, staying close to the rock. Resist the temptation to follow washes left, and stay against the escarpment all the way back to Eagle Canyon.

The last 50' drop into Eagle is a little tricky. First check out the really cool slit cutting into the rock on the right. Then follow the rim away from the escarpment about 100' to a faint trail that cuts down through the rim rock and finds its way to the bottom of Eagle.

**Alternative Route:** a shorter but trickier return to Eagle Canyon is possible. Rather than following the escarpment, continue Southeast at the corner where the main route heads Southwest. Cut around the top of a deep, rough canyon, then follow the rim on the far side toward Eagle Canyon. Work your way down the rim and down a level, then use a 3rd class gully and faint trail to drop into the canyon near its mouth. Walk out to Eagle Canyon just down from the Jeep Trail. (This

Information courtesy [CanyoneeringUSA.com](http://CanyoneeringUSA.com) ©2011 Imlay Canyon Gear All Rights Reserved

route saves about 30 minutes, but misses the really cool slot.)

Tromp up the wide and flat Eagle Canyon. Catch the prominent Jeep trail up and right back toward I-70. Be happy you spotted a car, or walk the shoulder of the interstate to get back to the View Area.

