

Imlay Canyon from Potato Hollow • Zion National Park

Rating:	4B IV R
Best Season:	Summer or fall.
Time:	9 to 14 hours.
Longest Rappel:	130 feet (40 m)
Access:	Starts at the West Rim Trailhead by Lava Point; finishes by hiking out the Narrows to the Temple of Sinawava. Long car shuttle or shuttle service required.
Permit:	Required—Available at the Visitor Center.
Seasonality:	Summer and Fall —The preferred seasons, with nice temperatures and scenery. Winter and Spring —Ice, snow and snowmelt conditions persist through the spring—making the approach inaccessible or present dangerous conditions. Pothole levels —The real variable. High water=fast, cold and easy escapes. Low water=slow, difficult and not so cold. Snowmelt and thunderstorms fill the potholes. Knowledge of recent weather or trip reports can give you a clue, but you should ALWAYS be prepared to hook out of potholes.
Equipment:	Helmets, rappelling gear, lots of webbing and rapid links.
Cold Protection:	Thick wetsuits or drysuits required at all times of the year.
Drinking Water:	Sparse—there is some filterable water, but not recommended.
Flash Flood Risk:	High—there are long sections of narrows and a large watershed above.
Skills Required:	Efficient travel, problem solving, pothole escapes, long exposure to cold water.
Anchors:	Natural and bolted.

Imlay is one of the best canyons in Zion, if not THE best. The first descent required three days and was a feat of amazing bravery and chutzpah. With knowledge of the route, plus modern techniques and equipment, it is now a wonderful journey inside the stone, with pothole challenges that add spice.

From Potato Hollow on the West Rim, the "Full Imlay" route is a little longer than the sneak route, and can be done in two days, camping near the Crossroads where the Sneak route comes in; or in one day with an early start from the West Rim Trailhead.

While the lower narrows of Imlay are AMAZING, the upper half of the canyon is on a par with many canyons in Zion, but certainly has its charms.

The Approach: From Lava Point, hike the West Rim Trail 5.1 miles (8 km) to Potato Hollow. A side trail leads left to a small pond and a designated camping site. Follow the outlet of the pond to the head of the canyon. There is often a trickle of water in the stream. (Can also be hiked to from the Main Canyon floor but this will take 4-5 hours).

The Canyon: Traverse the left rim 1/8 mile (200m) to a small bowl with two pine trees. Downclimb through a break in the cliffband to the lowest pine.

R1: Rap 140 feet (40m) to a large pine tree.

R2: Rap 120 feet (35m) to the creek bottom.

R3: Rap 120 feet (35m) off of logs in the streambed through multiple pools past an old piton. The pools are usually waist deep.

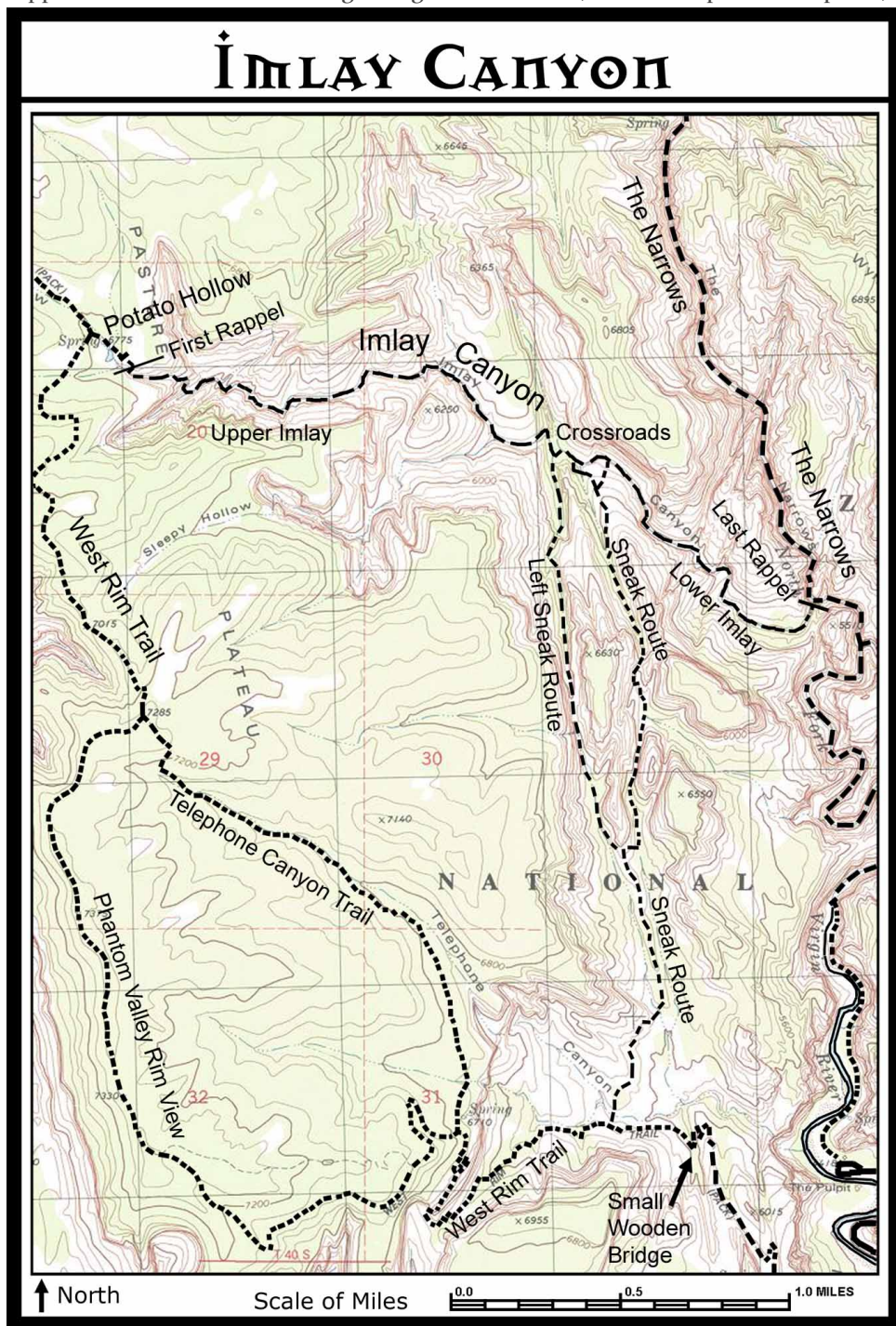
Climb down the canyon. One section may be easier to rappel. At a steep pouroff, climb left up dirt and brush, then down to a small tree.

R4: Rap 120 feet (35m) past a large tree to a ledge with bolts at the rollover.

R5: Rap 175 feet (54m) down a steep wall to a big ledge atop a ridge.

Downclimb to the end of the ridge, then off the right side down steep dirt into the wash. Several hours of interesting canyon with numerous short rappels lead to The Crossroads. The pools get deeper as the canyon progresses – suit up after encountering the first waist-deep pool.

The Crossroads: The Crossroads is a complex area where numerous canyons come in from both sides. The Sneak Routes comes in on the right, in several places. After The Crossroads, the canyon provides about an hour of moderate canyon with rappels and swims. Near the beginning of this section, after a couple of nice pools, is a large overhang sheltering a sandy beach with easy access to higher ground - a good place to bivvy.



A half hour later, the first section of extreme narrows begins. Work your way through this section, enjoying the beauty of these deep, dark and heavily sculpted narrows. Strenuous climbing, pack tosses, ingenuity and, as a last resort, drilling and hooking may be required to pass the numerous obstacles. After an hour or two or three, the canyon relents and opens up briefly. A safe bivvy can be found by climbing slabs out of the canyon to the left.

Note: it is possible to exit the canyon right at the start of the first section of extreme narrows, and proceed overland to bypass them – but it is reported to be ugly.

The second extreme narrows (the Terminal Narrows) is somewhat shorter, but still takes an hour or two to traverse. It culminates in a long rappel (60 feet, 20m) to a long pool. At the end of the pool, the canyon jogs left to a large ledge overlooking the North Fork Narrows. Rappel 130 feet (40m) to the river. Hike The Narrows to the Temple of Sinawava (about 2 hours).

The Exit: Hike The Narrows to the Temple of Sinawava (about 2 hours).