


TOM'S UTAH CANYONEERING GUIDE

Archive

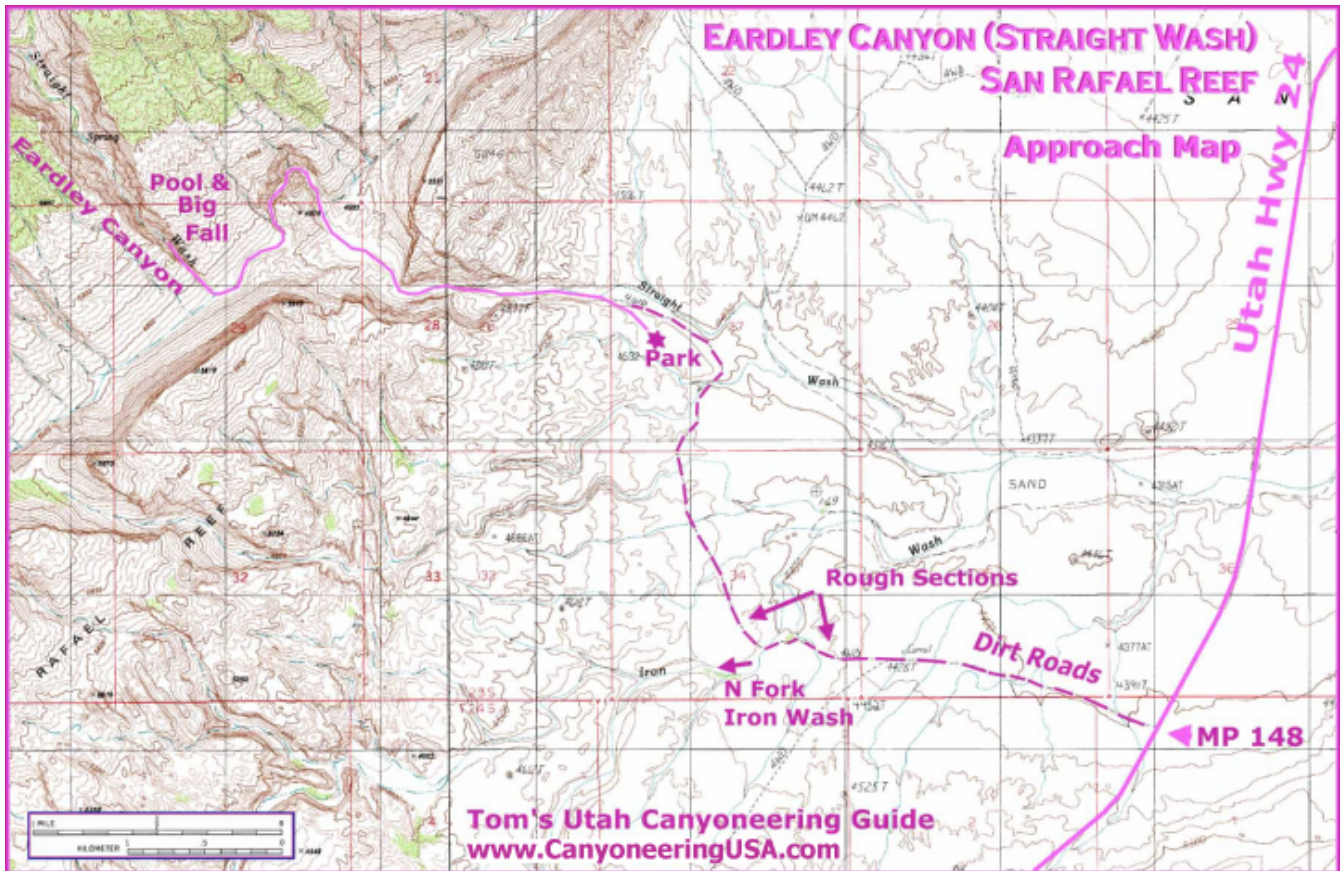
Eardley Canyon, Straight Wash San Rafael Swell, Central Swell

Rating:	3B V 
Best Season:	Fall and spring.
Time:	2 days at a casual pace.
Access:	Carspot required.
Permit:	Not required.
Equipment:	1 50m rope, extra slings, full dry bags, summer wetsuits.
Map:	USGS 7.5' Arsons Garden, Greasewood Draw.
Cold Protection:	Summer wetsuits and drybags for your gear.
Drinking Water:	Sparse; bring plenty for the first day. Pumpable potholes and puddles may be found in the area of the Rincon, but the only definite water is at the very bottom, in the technical pools.
Flash Flood Risk:	High—few exits exist in the lower canyon. This hike requires 2 days of absolute non-thunderstorm conditions.
Skills Required:	Technical pothole sections in the bottom of the canyon involve rappelling and swimming, and difficult pothole exits.
Technical Note:	As of 5/07/2000, the anchors have been fixed up. HOWEVER - this is an example of a canyon some good natural anchor building might be required. At least two rap anchors are wedged boulders, which could easily be swept away in the next flash flood. The bolt anchors in this canyon show a lot of damage from flash floods, and could be destroyed at any time. Know how to build safe rap-anchor cairns before entering this canyon. This is a great canyon, but would be a lot less fun if you had to spend a night or two there, waiting for the Emery County Sheriff's Office to come save your butt.
Anchors:	There are plenty of bolts in this canyon - please do NOT place more.

This is one of the primo adventures in the Swell. It descends from the height of the Swell, through a tremendous variety of narrows to a technical pothole section. After a few raps and some cold swims, you pop out at the bottom and cut through the reef to the San Rafael Desert.

This canyon is seldom descended, and ANY party that heads in should know how to build natural anchors. As of 5/7/2000, the previously smashed anchors have been fixed up, but most likely the next flash flood will mash at least some of them again. The swims are very cold and even in stinking hot weather, summer wet suits should be worn to prevent hypothermia. In non-stinking-hot weather, more protection will be needed.

Spot a Car at the Bottom: Turn off Highway 24 at milepost 148, go toward the reef: 1.1 miles Corral on Right, road heavily washboarded; 1.3 miles Very Rough Spot; 1.6 cross wash; 1.7 split - turn right for easier road; 1.9 rejoin main track; 2.5 small track on L; 2.6 cross wash (rough); 3.0 cross wash (very rough); 3.3 track on R to cottonwoods & camping; 3.6 track on R to wash; 3.7 end of road, park. This road is suitable for aggressive high clearance 2WD vehicles when dry. Camping is poor at the bottom. UTM: 0544410E 4293146N



Getting to the Start: Take Exit 129 off of I-70. Follow the access road on the NORTH side of the highway 3.1 miles to a dirt road on the right. There is a sign here for "Red Draw". Follow this .2 miles then turn right and cross under I-70. On the south side of I-70, turn left. 1.5 miles further take the right fork. Cross a larger flat field and follow a straight section that marks the former airstrip. Where the road meets the trees, follow the main track around to the left, then out a progressively rougher road. When you can see the edge of the escarpment, find a place to park. The road soon ends in a dramatic overlook. There is good camping in the area.

Take a good look at the view. Note how Straight Wash cuts into the rise of the Swell. Also note two canyons below and to the right that provide easy access to Straight Wash. These 4th class entrances are covered under Upper Straight Wash, and are recommended. The harder 5th class approach listed here is for the more hearty, but really is not very good so is not worth the effort.

The Canyon: Take another look at the view. Note how Straight Wash cuts into the rise of the Swell. Two canyons below and right that provide easy access to Straight Wash. Note the canyon further left showing a little steep wall. This is the 'Drama Queen' entrance requiring some rappelling, sketchy anchors and dicey scrambling.

The Drama Queen Start: drop off the escarpment to the Pinon-Juniper forest on the platform below. Trend left and toward the previously noted canyon, dropping in at any convenient point. The canyon is, at first, fairly easy but soon comes to a 30' dryfall. Choose a suitable tree and rap in. A short section of drops follows, requiring more mediocre tree anchors. The canyon is narrow and potholed and can present problems - avoid the potholes with creative scrambling, and be sure to avoid that last keeper hole by finding a rap anchor above it, that allows you to rap past it. (You have been warned!) Once in the canyon, turn left and head downstream. The canyon starts dry and rocky, but soon narrows and becomes more

interesting. Upper Straight Wash offers an outstanding variety of narrows - some thin, some wide, some deep, some shallow. Traipse downcanyon and enjoy the scenery. There are good boulder problems for the flatland-challenged.

About 2 hours downcanyon is when the first water appears, starting as quicksand and a tiny trickle. Tremendous cottonwoods appear. The water soon dries up. If planning on camping, pump as soon as suitable water is found. Past the cottonwoods, the canyon becomes rougher and travel slower.

The canyon continues. And continues. In fact, it continues dramatically for quite some time, penetrating through the



Coconino sandstone layer and reaching the limestone and shale beneath. The variety of narrows is astounding. Once through the Coconino, the canyon opens out and becomes big and grand. After around 6 hours of hiking, we come to the Rincon, an important landmark. A small limestone dryfall is passed easily on the left. The Rincon can be recognized as a distinct abandoned meander on the right. The canyon turns left, with dramatic slopes and a view downcanyon of the formerly flat Coconino starting its plunge toward the ground. Good camping can be found in the area. At times, water may be available at the dryfall.

A steep slope ahead and right offers the only 'easy' exit from the canyon.

After a refreshing night's slumber, continue downcanyon. We soon arrive at a section of interesting limestone narrows. Some creative downclimbing or a short rap off a tree may be required to pass any of a couple of short falls. Enjoy these unique narrows.

Well, well, well. After working your way downcanyon for a few hours, the lovely Coconino dips down back to our level and the canyon tightens up. This is the business. (For the faint of heart, escape is available up a prominent blocky white buttress on the right, a couple hundred yards short of re-entering the red stuff, and just before a section of large boulders. Work your way up the white ramp, staying right toward the crest of the buttress. At the very top where the white ramp ends in a cliff, traverse left to find a moderate exit. This route is long and difficult, 4th class).

The Fun Stuff: Wonder why you carried those wet suit parts through 90 degree heat? You'll soon appreciate your wisdom. The canyon narrows and presents its first real difficulties. After a little scrambling, rap into a pool, swim across, exit the other end. There are 4 or 5 large pools to rap and swim. Some may be difficult to get out of. The water is certainly very cold, even in the heat of the summer. The anchors may be very bad, as they are fully exposed to the effects of flash floods. Expect to spend three hours working through this section.

The Exit: And there you are, at the bottom. After warming up in the sun, a quick stroll takes you downcanyon to Lower Straight Wash. Turn left and follow the wash about an hour to where you (hopefully) spotted your car.

