




TOM'S UTAH CANYONEERING GUIDE

Archive

Eardley Canyon Technical Hike San Rafael Swell, Central Swell

Rating:	III Class 5 PDH Wet 
Best Season:	Spring or fall.
Time:	About 8 hours.
Access:	Route starts and ends at the mouth of Straight Wash.
Permit:	Not required.
Equipment:	Bolt Kit, 1 50m rope, long slings. A GPS is useful.
Map:	USGS 7.5' Arsons Garden, Greasewood Draw.
Cold Protection:	Swimming and wading. Summer wetsuit or wetsuit shorts and drytop; drybags for your gear.
Drinking Water:	Bring plenty. Water could be pumped from potholes.
Flash Flood Risk:	High—the Canyon has a very large collection area near I-70.
Skills Required:	Getting an early start; the long, steep hike up the reef is in full sun. 4 th class descent, and technical potholes that may require drilling anchors.

A great technical section of potholes, guarded by a strenuous approach. I was hoping for an easier way to the fun part, but it is not to be. The approach is strenuous and treacherous, and this is a poor choice for beginners.

Getting There: 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

A more thorough description of the first part is available under Lower Straight Wash.

The Goods: drop into the wash and follow it through the reef. Behind the reef it opens up, then penetrates straight ahead into the Coconino sandstone. This loop can be avoided by following any of several small trails to the left, over a pass and back into the wash. Or walk the loop and enjoy the dramatic geology lesson as the wash swoops left and back into the main wash.

Head south up straight wash. After about 1/2 mile, Eardley Canyon comes in on the right. It is surprisingly small. Take 15 minutes to jog up to the pool. This is where we will come out. It takes about an hour to get to this point.

Out at the face of the reef, head south past the mouth of Eardley. Go at least 20 feet, then head up the face of the reef. Climb steeply up the face, choosing the easiest path, but staying within a few hundred feet of the edge. Dramatic views into the canyon are available. The face starts out fairly easy though steep, but after 30 minutes becomes much rougher, as many gulleys must be crossed. Annoying, but not difficult.

Finding the correct drop in point is essential. After about 2 hours of hiking vigorously up the reef, make your way over to the edge. The correct route is a prominent white ramp that can be seen to make it from the top all the way to the bottom. Two white ramps just down canyon from it end in cliffs near the bottom. The correct ramp is the only one that can be seen to make it all the way to the canyon floor. UTM: 12S 0540890E 4293979N

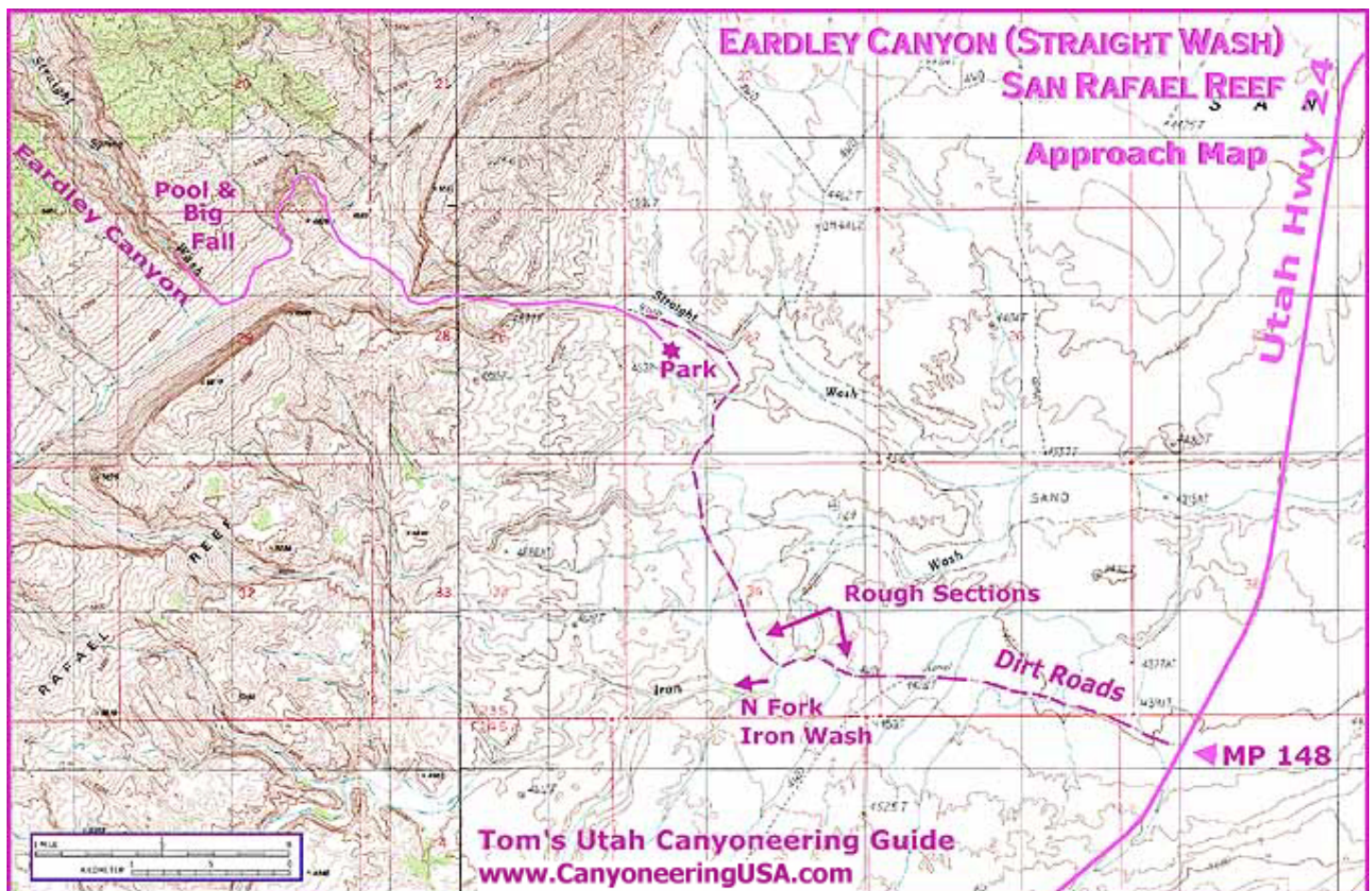
Work your way to the top of the ramp and start down. You are quickly cliffed out. Move left to the edge of the ramp and work your way carefully down the arete. Turn the corner and traverse straight left across steep dirt and loose blocks to the actual top of the white ramp. This route is no harder than 4th class, and may require a little exploring to find.

Continue steeply down the white ramp, heading out to the edge to avoid difficulties. While no section is particularly difficult, the continuous nature of the 4th class downclimbing is tiring. About an hour is required to reach the canyon floor.

Finally, in the canyon and ready for the fun stuff. Head down canyon past a section of giant boulders. The first few pools can be waded across, and then we come to the first rappel. Boulder up and left to an anchor, then rap to the edge of a pool. From here, there are at least 4 or 5 rappels into pools, swim across and climb out the other side. If the pools are low, climbing out the other side could be difficult, and drilling and hooking might be required. The anchors in this canyon are often pounded by flash floods and might need to be replaced. At least two of the anchors are off of boulders, and could be easily removed by a flash flood, or might need to be backed up with more long slings. The pools are cold. And Fun!!!

OK, enough fun. We pop out at the lowest pool and crawl into the sun to warm up. Turn the pack over to drain the water out. Strip off the harness and dry top. The pool section takes about 3 hours to negotiate, more with larger groups.

The Exit: Back out into Straight Wash, hightail it to the car, and any iced beverages you have in stock.



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www.CanyoneeringUSA.com

