



TOM'S UTAH CANYONEERING GUIDE

Archive

Penitentiary Canyon San Rafael Swell, Central Reef

Rating:	1A II ★
Best Season:	Fall, winter or spring.
Time:	5 to 7 hours.
Access:	Spot a car at the end, at Muddy Creek. Hitchhiking is not recommended.
Permit:	Not required.
Equipment:	No technical equipment required.
Map:	USGS 7.5' Tomsich Butte.
Cold Protection:	None required.
Drinking Water:	None, bring plenty.
Flash Flood Risk:	Moderate
Skills Required:	Getting into the canyon requires hiking down a steep, rocky hillside.

Not Too Bad is about the best I can say for this little canyon of modest delights. Perhaps I include it to demonstrate that I am not enthusiastic about "Everything". Penitentiary offers a pleasant hike through a scruffy and unspectacular canyon. An arch near the end is it's main redeeming value.

Getting There: From Temple Junction, drive through the Reef on the Temple Mountain Road 14.75 miles to the Reds Canyon Road. Turn Left(S) toward McKay Flat and Tomsich butte. Drive 8.5 miles to the Tomsich Butte Road. Turn Right (W) and drive 5.0 miles to the Tomsich Butte area. Turn left and drive between the two Buttes, and down to the flat near Muddy Creek. Drive about 1/2 mile on the main road until past a smaller butte, then turn left on smaller roads and follow them south to their end, where the road "crosses" Muddy Creek. Spot a car here. (UTM 12S 500235 mE 4281118 mN)

Drive back up the road you came, hitting the trip odometer at the triangle intersection in front of Tomsich Butte. Drive back 2.8 miles and park. You should be beside an interesting rocky, very steep canyon on the right (S). (UTM 12S 504769 mE 4280528 mN)

Dropping In: Obviously, descending directly into this craggy abyss is not in the picture. Note across the canyon and a couple hundred yards downcanyon that a steep dirt/talus slope allows easy, non-technical access to the bottom of the canyon. Circle the head of the canyon and traverse to the steep slope. Descend to the bottom of the canyon.

The Fun Part: Head down the canyon. The canyon is rocky and wide, with a few interesting small narrows section. The rock is broken up and craggy, making for a rock climber's nightmare. Half an hour from the river, an arch is visible looking back upcanyon.

Get Back: Arriving at Muddy Creek, turn right and follow the big canyon north, crossing the sandy inside of turns at will. Get back to the car.

This hike is mostly in the full sun, so plan accordingly.

