

ZION NATIONAL PARK

KOLOB CREEK AND BOUNDARY CANYON

Kolob Creek

Rating:	4B IV or V
Time Required:	8 to 12 hours
Preferred Season:	Summer or fall.
Cold Water Protection:	Full Wetsuits or Drysuits
Longest Rappel:	165 feet (50 m)
Special Difficulties:	Long exposure to cold water.

Logistics: Kolob is commonly done in two ways. For a day trip out the MIA Trail, park at the West Rim Trailhead near Lava Point. The MIA Trail returns to this point. For a two-day trip enjoying the full glory of Kolob Canyon, start from the West Rim Trailhead and exit at the Temple of Sinawava.

Preparation: Call the Washington County Water District at 435-673-3617 to determine the release schedule. They are only open Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm. Obtain a permit at the Backcountry Desk. Confirm the waterflow in Kolob by looking where Kolob Creek crosses under the Kolob Terrace road.

Approach: The approach to Kolob can be done entirely on old logging roads. Park at the West Rim Trailhead. Walk back along the road a few minutes to the big turn. Continue straight north across the meadow to a gap in the trees, a post and the start of a road. Follow the road down a few feet, then follow it left and traverse steeply downhill 15 minutes to the bottom of a hill. Continue straight ahead and pick up a smaller road climbing the opposite side to a pass.

Descend the road on the other side of the pass, switchbacking down the drainage. Where the road forks, stay in the drainage. About 15 minutes below the pass, after crossing a small, rocky drainage, follow an obscured switchback to the right into a small drainage with bluffs on each side. Follow this road all the way to Kolob Creek. Follow a path on the right side downstream for a ways, then cross to the left side when forced. Follow a pretty good trail on the left side to the start of the drops. Allow 45 minutes for the approach.

Canyon: Check the flow in the stream. The dam release schedule might have changed. Consider carefully the amount of flow you see - if it is more than 5 cfs you are out of luck - go find something else to do. The stream flow should be gentle and shallow - you will be rappelling, swimming and downclimbing in this flow - make sure it is low.

The first rappel in the canyon is 25 meters (80 feet) into a pocket garden. Put your drysuit on before this rappel. Choose a tree near the head to rappel from, and rap in. Head downcanyon and you immediately encounter your first swim. Yee haw!

Proceed downcanyon. Rappels 2 and 3 are off log jams down short drops. Rappel 4 is a chained rappel through two or three pools. Most teams will do 10 to 12 rappels. Two long rappels of about 45 meters (150 feet) are near the end of the technical section. Otherwise rappels are no longer than 30 meters (100 feet).

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The final long rappel into a big pool is fabulous. This marks the end of the main technical section, though not the end of the fun. Many parties remove their drysuits here. However, there are a couple short rappels and swims a half-hour to an hour downcanyon.

To the MIA Trail:

About thirty minutes downcanyon, a 400-foot waterfall comes in over the left canyon wall. The spring at its base is a good place to collect water. About one hour past the waterfall, and soon after two short rap-n-swims, Kolob joins the larger canyon of Oak Creek, and your direction changes from generally east to generally south. There is often a small flow in Oak Creek, and shortly downcanyon is a short drop into a pool. Rapping from bolts on the right might allow you to avoid another swim.

Finding the MIA Trail

(Note: directions will be stated either as CANYON left or right (meaning when facing down-canyon) or as (blank) left or right, as seen by the ascender).

While the MIA Trail is not hard to find, many a canyoneer has walked past it due to inattention. Noting the intersection of Boundary Canyon is the key to finding the MIA Trail. The MIA Trail should not be attempted in the dark. The first time, most parties will require at least 2 hours for the MIA Trail, plus another hour to hike back to the trailhead.

The Boundary Intersection is marked by Boundary Canyon coming into Kolob Canyon on canyon right as a 50' wide, vegetated and not-steep canyon, and a steep, small, vegetated slot coming in across the way. There is a large flat rock right at the intersection that makes a great place to remove wetsuits and harnesses, and prepare for the ordeal ahead.

From Boundary, Kolob canyon is rocky and wide for about 20 minutes, then enters a short (5 minute), tall, narrows section. Next, the canyon opens out again and proceeds as a rocky streambed for perhaps 20 minutes, then again enters a tall narrows section, which is considerably longer (15 minutes).

Approximately 10 minutes after the second narrows section, MIA canyon comes in on canyon right, as a large, obvious, lushly vegetated and steep (but climbable) sandy slope. There are two big ol' logs in the streambed and often cairns marking the intersection. This is the only possible-looking exit since Boundary, due to tall, unbroken canyon walls.

The MIA Trail

Climb the steep slope above Kolob Creek, starting in a shallow gully, then working left at the toe of a rock buttress. Traverse left, then down to the top of a short pourover. You are now in the main MIA canyon watercourse. Scramble upcanyon. A short wall is surmounted either directly, or by climbing a ramp on the right and stepping back left. At the next obstacle, climb a steep slope on the left to gain an exposed traverse ledge. The main canyon ends at a 40 foot (12 m) dryfall with a wider-than-fists crack in the back. Stop 30 feet (10 m) from the dryfall and ascend the obvious small drainage on the right.

Follow the drainage upward, to the base of a wall. Climb left along the base of the wall, then up again. Traverse left through brush to a wide pass that overlooks the upper basin of MIA Canyon (30 minutes to this point).

From this viewpoint, carefully examine the complex terrain ahead. The upper basin is bounded on the left by cliffs and then a slinky little slot canyon (MIA Slot) dropping steeply into the basin (this is just above the "4WD" annotation on the map). To the right of this, is a complex, steep and tree-covered face that

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slides over into a deep slot canyon on the right. Take careful note of three snags (dead trees) at the canyon rim above the middle-left of the complex face – the three snags are where you are trying go.

Descend to the bottom of the upper basin, and head for the bottom of the MIA slot on the left. The slot is well worth a few minutes of exploration. Follow the main watercourse past automotive debris washed down from above. Follow this canyon five minutes along the basin floor, until it turns right and heads for the right-hand wall and slot. At this point, climb steep dirt directly up the fall line, following a shallow watercourse on a fairly good social trail.

To this point, the dreaded MIA Trail is not so bad. It gets worse.

Follow the trail steeply upward. It is important to "Follow The Trail". In the brush, the trail is easy to find, but there are several sections where the trail crosses open ground and several options all look pretty much the same. At one point, stay right and scramble steeply up rocks. At other points, walking a few feet to check out the options will reveal the correct trail.

In general, when hunting for the trail, follow the watercourse. Explore, figure out which is the correct path, and follow it. Even the best trail is steep and difficult - persevere. Keep the three snags in sight.

Near the top, the trail is less well-defined and climbs a few sections of steep, loose rock. Be careful of partner-generated rockfall. Ascend to the road.

Back to the West Rim Trailhead

From the top of the MIA Trail, turn left (south) and hike about 1000 feet (300 m) to a picnic area with water coming from a pipe. Hike the road heading uphill behind the spring, then north up a roadcut, then follow the roads (generally north and west, but always up) to the West Rim Trailhead. Allow at least an hour for the MIA Trail, and at least an hour for the roadwalk back to the Trailhead.

Down Kolob Canyon to the Narrows

Kolob Canyon can be followed to the Narrows and out to the Temple of Sinawava. This makes a fine two-day trip, and includes the best part of the Narrows. Kolob Canyon itself offers a wonderful variety of narrows.

From the MIA Trail, hike downcanyon four miles to the intersection with the North Fork. There are two short rappels with swims in icy pools within the first two miles. Plan on 3 hours.

From the end of the technical narrows, there are numerous small places to bivy in the canyon. Please use zero-impact camping techniques. Kolob has a few pools, but tends to be mostly dry. Be prepared to pump drinking water from skuzzy pools, or pump early when the water is good. If you camp after the intersection with the North Fork, you will need a Narrows camping permit. Most parties camp between the MIA trail and the North Fork.

From the intersection with the North Fork, stroll 8 miles downcanyon to the Temple of Sinawava (approx 6 hours).

Boundary Canyon

A sweet canyon tucked in between "The Big Ones" up on Kolob Terrace, Boundary makes a nice day canyon exiting out the MIA, or a great way to access Kolob Creek for a high-class, technical backpack trip. The technical part of the canyon starts right AT the Park Boundary, thus the name.

In the spring the canyon runs with water, so most parties will want wetsuits. In wet years, it is known to run all year round. Be sure to check the release level of the Kolob Dam by calling the Washington County Water Conservancy District (435-673-3617). AND to check the flow where the Kolob Terrace Road crosses Kolob Creek, 1.2 miles north of the Lava Point Road. Hiking in Kolob Canyon with more than 10 cfs, even just to the MIA exit, can be quite challenging.

Rating:	3A III
Time Required:	6 to 8 hours
Preferred Season:	Spring, summer or fall.
Cold Water Protection:	Wetsuits required in the spring.
Longest Rappel:	200 feet (60 m)
Special Difficulties:	Dam Release flows.

Approach: From the West Rim trailhead, follow the MIA road east and northeast for 10 minutes or approximately 1 kilometer to a slight knoll at a right-hand turn. This is seen on the map as where the grid line hits the MIA road. Enjoy the view north down a moderate slope into the Boundary Canyon drainage. Follow a logging road down the ridge, then a
Note: the MIA road is not always locked, but could be locked at any time. DO NOT drive the MIA road without permission.

Canyon: Find a small but stout pine about 70 feet from the head of the drop on the left (north) side of the canyon.

R1: 165 feet (50 m) down a steep, smooth wall to a large pothole/ledge with a logjam at its exit.

R2: 100 feet (30 m) past several ledges and down flutes to a large ledge. Very scenic!

Anchor is a sling around the logjam.

R3: 80 feet (24 m) off bolts down nice flute.

R4: 100 feet (30 m) off bolts. An interesting arch!

R5: 30 feet (10 m) off natural anchors.

complicated maze of logging roads more or less straight down the fall line, avoiding bushwhacking as much as possible, to the canyon bottom. Follow the grown over logging road east along the right side of the drainage to the Park Boundary (wire fence) and the head of the canyon. Allow one hour walking time to the head of the canyon.

R6: 30 feet (10 m) off natural anchors.

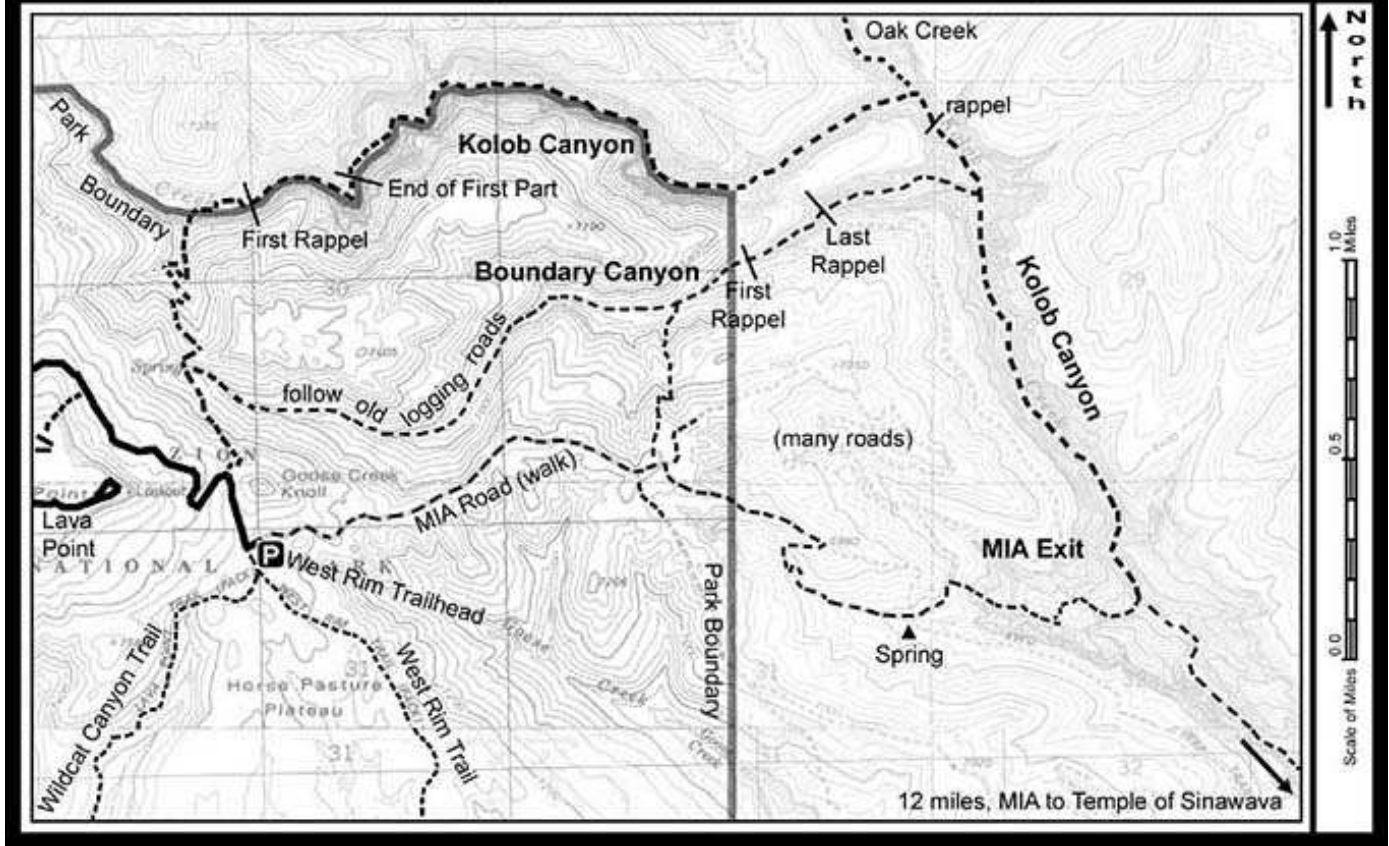
R7: Off bolts, 70 feet (21 m) down a steep wall to the bottom of the canyon.

The rappel sequence leads to the floor of a beautiful canyon, lush with vegetation in the late-fall drying stage, with huge sweeping walls. Descent of the canyon offers few difficulties to the intersection with Kolob Creek – about 1 hour.

MIA EXIT – see description under Kolob Canyon.

KOLOB CANYON EXIT – see description under Kolob Canyon.

KOLOB CANYON, BOUNDARY CANYON, MIA EXIT



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