

Grand Canyon National Park: Kanab Creek, May 2016

Greetings! We just returned from a four night backpack in Grand Canyon National Park - here's our trip report.

Day 1

We began our hike at Jumpup Cabin. The road from Jacob Lake was no problem for our passenger car; a few rough spots and a hole behind the cattle grid at the beginning of FR 234 required careful driving, but we encountered no obstacles that would have required high clearance.



We started out in the afternoon and hiked down Jumpup Canyon. A trail leads down to Upper Jumpup Spring, and after that we followed the wash. It took us 2.5 hours to cover the 4.5 miles to Lower Jumpup Spring, and a few times we had to seek shelter from rain.

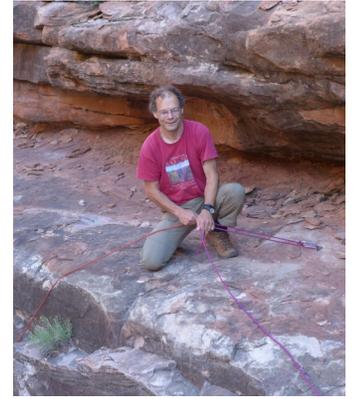


We camped on a bench above the wash, a little bit above the spring. From our tent we could see the moon rise above the cliffs.



Day 2

The next day began with climbing down the jump-up. A bolt on the ledge above the jump-up makes it easy to belay and lower packs. The climb down the ramp was not as scary as it looked from above, and the rickety looking ladder is actually quite stable.



We followed Jumpup Canyon downstream, over beautiful slick rock steps with many little pour offs. The stream vanishes after a while, but there was running water at the mouth of Sowats Canyon—the last water source for the next five hours.

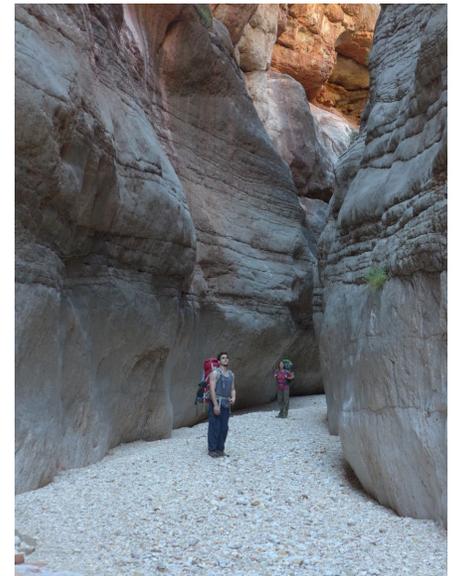


Shortly below Kwagunt Hollow, an hour of walking since the jumpup, we entered the limestone slot canyon. The canyon bottom is filled with gravel of increasing size, and you can find lots of shell fossils. 2.5 hours later we reached the junction with Kanab Creek.

After two more hours of walking over now bigger rocks, we reached the spring, first flowing as a little trickle, then soon becoming a small creek. It is remarkable how much more pleasant it is to walk by a flowing stream.

And then, finally, after another hour: Showerbath Spring!

Showerbath Spring was the most amazing feature of the entire trip. The water emerges from an overhanging lush growth of plants on a limestone overhanging the river, and it is aptly named: you can stand underneath and take an actual shower! On no prior backpack have we been as clean.



We spent the night on the gravel bar near the spring.

This is also where we met the first other hiker on our trip: a young woman who was thru-hiking Hayduke's Trail, a tough 800 mile long distance backpack—very impressive and inspiring.

Day 3

If I have ever entertained the notion of sleeping without a tent—it would be nice to shed the extra weight, and the desert nights certainly are warm enough—I no longer do: the woman hiking Hayduke’s had been stung by a scorpion during the night. The symptoms of a scorpion bite are quite severe, pain and numbness and swelling, but there are no first aid remedies. I hope rest and water helped her recover quickly so she could continue her trip; she stayed by the spring, waiting to hike with a group coming up the canyon behind her.



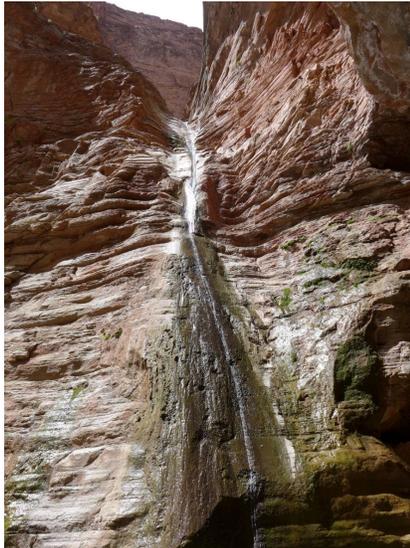
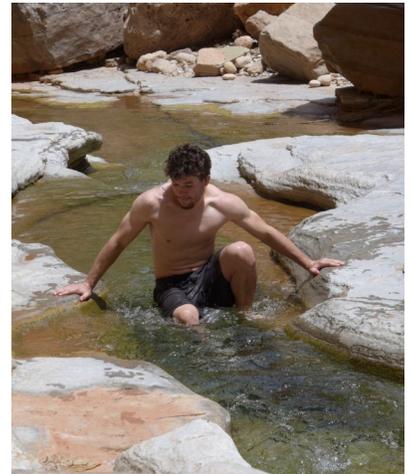
We began our hike by wading through the pool below Showerbath Spring. After an hour, we reached Scotty’s Castle, a cliff towering over a bend in Kanab Creek. The terrain became more difficult; we had to find our way through rock falls, climbing over and around large boulders. It took us two hours to reach Scotty’s False Castle, and the going became easier after that.



We continued downstream, and two hours later found wonderful swim holes which, in the midday heat, were irresistible even to the cold water haters in our party—so we took a long break for a swim. Did I mention how

clean we were on this trip?

Half an hour later we reached the mouth of an unnamed side canyon coming in from the left. The canyon begins unassuming and without running water, but about 15 minutes upstream we reached the first pool. We followed the advice the other hiker had given us and persevered, soon reaching a second pool, and after a short climb up a chute the third below a gentle waterfall, more a slide: Whispering Falls. A cool, serene grotto—our destination for today and point of return.



We hiked back upstream for two hours, with another glorious swim, before making camp on a gravel bar.



Day 4

Hiking back up the canyon. The rocks are riddled with fossils.



We had enough time to take a one hour side trip into Scotty's Hollow and explore the beautiful pools and waterfalls. A magical place that would merit a longer excursion.



We reached Showerbath Spring at 12:30pm and took an extended midday break eating, showering, and swimming in the deep pool downstream from the spring. Because we were planning to hike out the next day, we did not want to camp by the spring, but rather at the junction of Jumpup Canyon—which meant another three hours of hiking and a dry camp, but a shorter day tomorrow. Taking the long break was a wise choice; it had cooled off a bit when we trudged back up the dry portion of Kanab Creek.



Day 5

We woke to the sound of bees buzzing in the bushes around our campsite. In the morning light, the walls of the limestone slot gleamed as if with wetness, but it was only the slick polished rock.

We hiked up Jumpup for two and a half hours until we met the stream coming out of Sowats canyon and stopped to cook breakfast. We took our time and savored the slick rock steps in lower Jumpup canyon,



Climbing up the jump-up was much easier than climbing down. We sat for a long time at the Lower spring, filtering water and watching the many frogs sitting on the walls around the pools before starting the long hot slog up the dry wash to the trailhead.



It was a great hike, and we are glad our 17 year old son was part of it.

Here we are, disheveled and happy, already thinking about the next trip.

