



TOM'S UTAH CANYONEERING GUIDE

Archive

Davis Gulch • Canyons of the Escalante

Rating:	3B 5.6 IV ★★☆☆
Best Season:	Spring or Fall recommended. The 4 mile return hike is exposed to the full force of the sun.
Time:	Around 8 hours.
Access:	Route starts and ends at the Hole in the Rock Road.
USGS 7.5' Map:	Davis Gulch.
Permit:	Not required for day use. Free overnight permits required for overnight backpacking, available at VCs and trailheads.
Equipment:	40' of rope, a few slings. As little as possible. Shortie wetsuit recommended.
Drinking Water:	Bring plenty. Pumpable water is available in the canyon near the exit point.
Flash Flood Risk:	Moderate—do not do this route if rain is a possibility.
Difficulties:	Much downclimbing to about 5.6. A couple of short “hand rappels” up to 20'. This is a long day in a Wilderness Setting.
Local Ethic:	The Escalante is a natural-anchors area. This canyon has a large number of natural chockstones for the few, short hand-line rappels.



Lotsa Downclimbing. Davis is an excellent, hard-core Escalante canyoneering adventure. As such, it is not suitable for youth groups, the un-athletic, large groups or other seekers of disaster. The large number of short downclimbs would be exceedingly tedious to rope people down, so all members of the group should be capable of downclimbing slippery 5.6 chimneys.

A Slot: Quite a long one. And tasty. Davis is a long, narrow slot, with quite a few downclimbs and a handful of pools. Near the end of the slot, it steepens up a little and gets wetter, requiring a little bit of easy ropework. I have given this one a "3" rating in the ACA system, because of the intensity and commitment required. It can also be wetter than we found it, in which case wetsuits would be pretty much required to prevent hypothermia.

Getting There: Drive about 52 miles down the Hole in the Rock Road. There is a small camping area to the left of the road, just after the descent of a steep hill. This point is 13.5 miles south of the turnoff for Dance Hall Rock. Decent Slickrock camping is to be had right next to the road.

Enter the Slot. Carry as little gear as possible. From the camping

spot, walk west across the slickrock just north of the road. Davis slot will appear in about 3 minutes. Find an easy way into the canyon. *Photo: The bowels of Davis Gulch. Many pools can be avoided for only so long*

Work your way downcanyon. This involves a few sections of downclimbing and some squiggling through slots. After about 15 minutes, the canyon opens out and escape is possible. **If your party is not worthy, now is your chance to escape with minimal pain. If your party did not ALL enjoy and make short work of the difficulties so far, you should probably bail while the bailing is good.**



For the worthy - continue downcanyon. It starts out narrow and moderately deep, with views of the sky available.

Downclimb numerous obstacles. Most of the canyon is so narrow, that you will need to drag your pack along behind you. Avoid getting wet and cold as long as possible. The canyon soon deepens up and intensifies, and the sun becomes a distant memory.

After about 3 hours of downclimbing, slithering sideways and tiptoeing through pools, the canyon steepens up. A rope is used in two or three places to set up a handline, to control the slide into a couple of pools. After these two pools, the canyon suddenly opens out. If you are lucky, you can find a spot of sun to warm up in.

Start down the middle section of Davis. Keep your eyes peeled for moki steps climbing the canyon wall - there are 3 sets of steps that I know of, including one about 5 minutes downcanyon from the slot.

The middle section of Davis is an interesting and pleasant canyon. Traipse down the sandy wash - it soon widens out to nice meadows with cottonwood trees. Soon after, all the trees are suddenly lying on the ground, clearcut by some beavers

who have obviously not heard of 'sustainable harvest'. Bash through the brush and hop over the downed trees, and the canyon changes character again - cutting deep into the sand at the bottom. The canyon becomes difficult to hike down, a condition soon alleviated by the massive Nemo (or Bement) Arch appearing above. Climb to the Arch if you wish, it provides great views up and down canyon. *Photo: The view upcanyon from Nemo (Bement) Arch. Many*

features were renamed for various politicians and beaurocrats, even though they had good local names already in use.



Work your way downcanyon. About another hour from the Arch, a cowtrail exits the canyon to the left. It is easy to find. Fences and other cowboy relics dominate a sandy fill area on canyon left. There is also an abundance of social trails in the area. Relax in the shade of the canyon before heading up into the sun. Climb the cattle trail and follow cairns up the slickrock away from the canyon.

Photo: Walk toward the Hole in the Rock Arch atop Fiftymile Point.

Heading Home: from the top of the slickrock, spy the Hole in the Rock Arch atop Fiftymile Point - the closest part of the escarpment. The easiest route back is to head west to the crest of the slickrock, then beelining for Hole in the Rock Arch. (Staying close to Davis Gulch requires quite a bit of going in and out of washes). Head back there.

Close to the HITS Road, the terrain over toward Davis Gulch gets steep and complex, so stay away from it. Instead, climb a short cliffband and make your way across the sagebrush flat to the road, then follow the road about a mile back to your camp. Re-hydrate, relax, etc.

