


# TOM'S UTAH CANYONEERING GUIDE

## Archive

### Lower Squeeze Canyon

#### San Rafael Swell, Moroni Slopes, Southern Reef

<b>Rating:</b>	4B IV 
<b>Best Season:</b>	Spring or fall.
<b>Time:</b>	10 to 12 hours.
<b>Access:</b>	Route starts and ends at Hidden Splendor.
<b>Permit:</b>	Not required.
<b>Equipment:</b>	Rappels to 120 feet (40m), webbing, rappelling equipment.
<b>Map:</b>	USGS 7.5' Hunt Draw.
<b>Cold Protection:</b>	Summer wetsuits and dry bags.
<b>Drinking Water:</b>	None, bring plenty.
<b>Flash Flood Risk:</b>	High.
<b>Skills Required:</b>	This is a long and technical canyon. Be prepared for raps to 100', creative natural anchors, pack tosses out of potholes, and some nasty swimming.

Grueling, Technical and Very Cool. The lower part of The Squeeze is a long and difficult technical pothole hop in an obscure corner of the Swell, the Moroni Slopes. Access is from the bottom, via the Grand Gorge of Muddy Creek from Hidden Splendor. This is a very technical route only for experienced, prepared and hardy canyoneers.

What's in store? Hopping through potholes, dropping in and climbing out, murky water, swimming, placing anchors, some difficult shoulder stands, etc. It took us 6 hours in the technical section, and would have required another hour at least if one of the keeper potholes had not been fixed. And it is very cool - a deep and difficult sandstone canyon in a remote corner of the Swell.

You get there by hiking down Muddy Creek from Hidden Splendor, then hiking steeply up the Moroni Slopes for an hour and a half, then working your way down steep slopes and through cliffbands until you can rappel into the middle section of The Squeeze. (The very cool and non-technical upper and middle sections of The Squeeze are covered in Steve Allen's *Canyoneering* guidebook, hike #36). Rap into the middle of Middle Squeeze, then snake downcanyon, past the last non-technical exit, and into a long and grueling section of technical potholes. After

many hours of rappelling, downclimbing, wading and swimming, with the occasional technical pothole problem, you pop out at the bottom and death march your way up the Gorge of Muddy Creek. Big Fun.

**Approach (4WD):** From the Hidden Splendor Airstrip drive south on a very rough road, in and out of washes, then down to the floodplain and past a cottonwood. Continue south to an old miner's shack ("Motel 6") and park a few feet further. This is the end of the road. (UTM: **12S 0504279E 4267588N**)

**Approach (2WD):** From the Hidden Splendor Airstrip (UTM: **12S 0503526E 4268673N**) head east to Muddy Creek. Walk or drive down the switchbacks to the river, then walk down the river into the Gorge.

**Getting to the Squeeze:** walk and wade down the Grand Gorge of Muddy Creek. Near the end, The Squeeze comes in from the right, with the mouth blocked by tamarisks and roses. Continue past the Squeeze until fully out in front of the Reef and the Moroni Slopes. There are a few cottonwoods here, and a well established trail across the front of the Moroni Slopes.



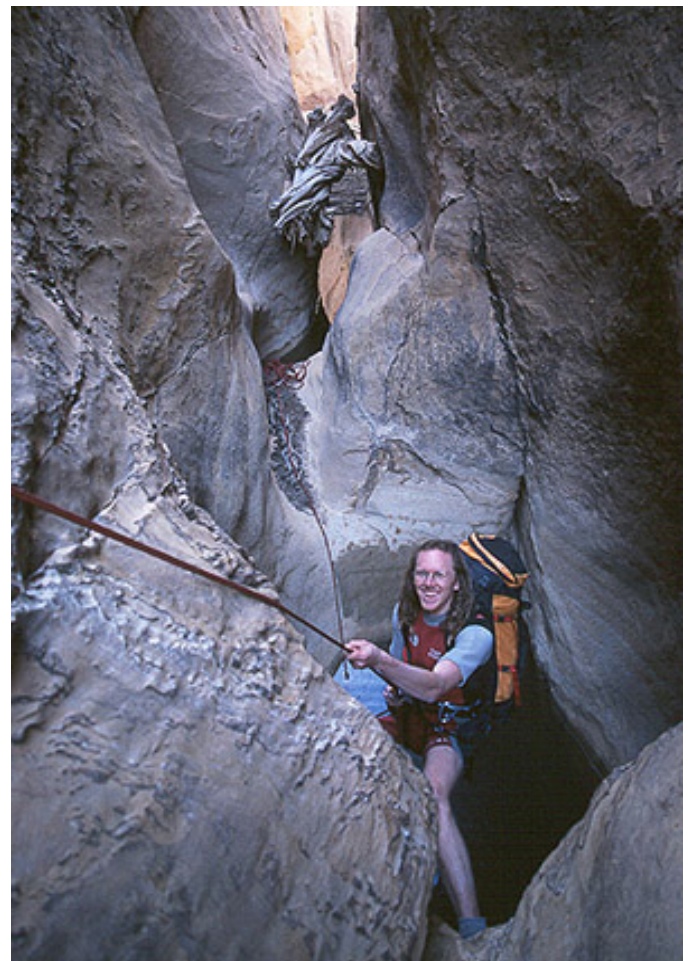
get all the way to the canyon floor - our rap was 120'). (Fully left is a slot that may offer a non-technical walk into the canyon).

The first part of the Squeeze is non-technical. Walk down this delightful, narrow, twisty and scenic sandstone slot. After squeezing through a few places and a few small puddles, one comes to a very large tree wedged in the canyon. Crawl under. A few turns downcanyon, about 5 minutes, is the last possible exit from The Squeeze. Slabs allow an exit to the rib mentioned previously. Now is the time to leave if you have any doubts.

**Let the games begin.** Many, many potholes. Despite the canyon's prior descents, and perhaps because of low water conditions, we ended up placing a few single bolt anchors. We passed numerous difficult potholes with technical pack tosses and Dave's excellent climbing abilities. We enjoyed solving problems with interesting partner climbing stunts. We did a total of 25 raps, up to 100' in length. One particularly nasty deep keeper pothole had a fixed rope between two bolts, allowing us to tyrolean past (although that second bolt looked pretty funky). We also used many shoulder stands and other partner-climbing techniques. Be creative.

**Getting Up To the Start:** OK, the pleasant part is over. From the first clump of cottonwoods on the southwest side of Muddy Creek, locate a small trail cutting diagonally right up the steep, nasty slope to the north. Follow this trail 100' up the face of the Slope, then continue following a small trail up, tending somewhat left. After about 45 minutes, it becomes possible to cross the gulch to the right without losing TOO much altitude. Do this, then climb the slope beyond toward some dead, scraggly trees on the skyline. This is the crest of the bowl. (UTM: 12S 0504000E 4265695N) Prior to this, the slope into the canyon is very steep, except for a steep ridge (Steve Allen's non-technical escape) about 3/4 of the way to the bowl.

Find an easy way through the upper cliff band and hike down the the steep dirt left to the low angle Navajo Sandstone cliff band near the center of the bowl. Work your way down through this cliff band (4th class). All roads from here lead into the canyon, however, the further left you head, the more of the Middle Squeeze you will be able to enjoy. Pick a rib of sandstone and head toward the canyon. Work your way as close to the canyon as you can. Find a tree or other anchor to rap into the canyon with. (Make sure your ropes are long enough to





One year later and all I can say is: "What was I thinking?" This was the last canyon I did before taking on a no-bolt ethic. This and many other difficult canyons were descended safely long before any bolts were placed. How does one descend the Squeeze without the current 25 or so drilled anchors? This is a good canyon to explore natural anchors and creative ways of escaping potholes. Lots of things work, and reaching for the drill is the easiest of them.

**More:** it ain't over till it's over. Thrash your way through more stuff, then pop out the bottom. Push through the bramble to the Muddy. Return to your car, lick your

wounds, drink malt beverages. It's a long way to Ray's, but it might be worth it.

**Our times:**

- Motel 6 to Mouth of Squeeze: 1 hr 25 mins
- Mouth of Squeeze to High Point on Moroni Slopes: 1 hr 20 mins
- Drop through cliffband to floor of The Squeeze: 50 mins
- Floor of Squeeze through to the Mouth of Squeeze: 5 hrs 30 mins
- And back to the car: 1 hr for 10 hrs total.

