

Zion National Park: Not Imlay Canyon (2015)

Beta courtesy CanyoneeringUSA.com

A Scenic Tour.

Not-Imlay is a surprise -- a pretty good canyon rather unlike other Zion canyons. The scenery is splendid as it drops steeply towards The Narrows, across from the Mountain of Mystery. Big raps are not unusual for Zion, but there is also a long-downclimbing slot that is fun and challenging, with the spiciest bits easily rappelled. It makes for a lovely day out in the spring or fall.

The name is kinda silly, and like many silly names, I personally take some credit for it. If one were to be so foolish as to undertake the right-hand Imlay Sneak Route without a map or description, one could end up here. It would be unfortunate, as one would have far too little rope to complete this canyon!

The canyon has been off-the-radar, so it shows little sign of passage. A plus to many of us, perhaps to you too. The wilder character is sweet, but with traffic, some of the rappel anchors will need to change to stouter objects, or our use will end up killing the small trees used at some locations. In other words, bring webbing and a refined sense of judgment. Be smart. Back things up. Caveat rappelor.

The other caveat is to be very careful on the last rappel, as it goes into The Narrows in a place where hikers are likely to be hiking by. Thankfully there is little to no loose rock at the end, but it will require conscientious ropework to not endanger those below. The first person will need to rappel with the ropebag rather than tossing it - at least until the landing spot can be seen. Feeding the rope down from the top does not work due to an intervening rope-catching ledge.

All in all, a great canyon, but not a place for beginners. Long rappels, judgment-requiring anchors, the possible people below on the last rap... Not a good place for beginners.

LOGISTICS

Rating	4A III
Season	Spring, Summer or fall
Time	7 to 9 hours
Longest Rappel	300 feet (92 meters)
Access	Starts at Grotto Trailhead, ends at Temple of Sinawava. Use of Park Shuttle required in-season.

Permit Required? Yes.

Zion Wilderness Desk: 435-772-0170

Zion EMERGENCY: 435-772-3322

EQUIPMENT

Essentials	Helmets, rappelling gear, webbing and rapid links.
Protection	None required. The canyon has little water-holding capacity.
Drinking Water	Bring plenty-pumpable water not available.

DIFFICULTIES

Flash Flood Risk	Low/Moderate: small collection basin, but still...
Skills Required	This is a wilderness canyon. You will likely need to build your own anchors. Long rappels require long- rappel-experience.
Anchors	Natural, except for one old bolt.

SEASONAL COMMENTS

Summer-can be very hot in summer. An early start highly recommended.

Winter-snow would make access difficult to impossible. Melting snow would make the canyon run with water-very difficult.

APPROACH

The approach is as for the right-hand Imlay Sneak Route, cutting out right after the first pass.

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From the Grotto Picnic Area, ascend the West Rim Trail to Scout Lookout. Follow the trail left along the ridge, then down to a small wooden bridge crossing a branch of Telephone canyon. Continue along the trail 300 feet (2 minutes) until a zero-impact slickrock route can be found that takes you down and right toward the canyon bottom. Social trails have formed in several locations – follow these down to the edge of the slot, then down into the slot. Cross the canyon and proceed up slickrock and onto the south ridge of PT 6630.

Follow the ridge until a wash is visible down and right. Descend to the wash as early as possible. Climb up the canyon to a pass, then down the other side. Turn right and follow the watercourse down through lush woods, then to a nice slickrock area. Try to stay in the watercourse in this section, but some obstacles will require climbing up the sides of the canyon on steep dirt.

THE BUSINESS

Rappel a few feet to the south (right, looking out) of the watercourse. Seek out a stout tree 20 feet right of the watercourse, and attach a ridiculously long sling to get the rappel ring down the slab as far as practicable.

R1: 270 feet (82m) to a large ledge. First one down can bottom-belay here. Continue the rappel down to the bottom, if the rope reaches. Total length 300 feet (92m)

R2: 115 feet (36m) down a vertical wall off a couple shrubs, or a large rock. Downclimb 7 feet (2m).

R3: 20 feet (6m) down a slot. An abundance of natural anchor opportunities are available. Downclimb the slot to a steep part.

R4: off an old bolt, maybe downclimbable. Drop height about 20 feet (6m).

Below the steep section, the downclimb continues down a fun, easy V-slot chimney. Enjoy. Then scramble through some boulders to a large ledge with a drop beyond.

R5: from a tree or two, rap down a vertical wall about 90 feet (29m).

Sashay down to a VERY large boulder, with a dropoff into The Narrows beyond.

R6: from webbing around the pinch under the VERY large boulder, rappel about 260 feet (79m) to The Narrows below. Bow for the applause.

Be very careful on the last rappel, as it goes into The Narrows in a place where hikers are likely to be hiking by. Thankfully, there is little to no loose rock, but it will require conscientious rope work to not endanger those below. The first person should rappel with the rope bag rather than tossing it. Feeding the rope down does not work due to an intervening rope-catching ledge. People in The Narrows will not be able to hear a call of "ROPE" due to the water noise, and would be unlikely to understand the implications of such a communication. Dropping the rope bag into the Narrows is also not recommended; the bag might get carried away by the current, resulting in an incredibly-annoying unresponsive bottom belay. (Ask me how I know sometime).

EXIT

Hike down The Narrows about 20 mins to the Veranda, then about 20 minutes to the Temple of Sinawava and the shuttle bus.



