

Walker Gulch Canyon • Zion National Park

Rating:	3A III ★★☆☆☆
Season:	Summer or fall
Time:	5 to 8 hours
Longest Rappel:	150 feet (45 m)
Access:	Canyon begins and ends at Orderville trailhead (or Dakota Ridge TH).
Permit:	NO. Canyon is on BLM land adjacent to the Park. Group size limit 12.
Emergency:	Kane County Sheriff: 877-644-2349 Ext 1
Seasonality:	The North Fork Road and Orderville Jeep trail tend to be impassable when wet or snowy. Caution advised.
Essentials:	Helmet, rappelling gear, Webbing and rapid links. The first rappel requires 30 feet of webbing so bring at least that much.
Cold Protection:	None required.
Drinking Water:	None available.
Flash Flood Risk:	Low - the drainage is small and wooded.
Skills Required:	Navigation, basic anchor rigging
Anchors:	Natural anchors.

Walker Gulch is a fun and scenic canyon that unfortunately is bit short on technical interest. The first rappel (of three) is down a wonderful chute. Two short raps leads to a fairly long nice narrows with wonderful striations on the walls. While lovely, not so much technical stuff.

Driving: Walker can be approached from either the "Lower" or the "Upper". The Lower being from the Orderville Canyon Trailhead (aka Cul de Sac), which requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle to get back UP the Jeep trail at the end of the day. The Upper starts and end at the Dakota Ridge Trailhead, and requires high clearance, but not 4WD - but is an hour longer or so at each end. The Lower works better and will be presented first.

Note: the North Fork road can be impassable when wet/muddy, even to 'fully capable' vehicles.

LOWER TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

From the Zion Park East Entrance kiosk, continue East on Route Nine 2.3 miles to a turn left on the North Fork Road. Follow this to the Ponderosa Ranch Resort - we will clock mileage from here. Continue on the North Fork road, which soon turns to gravel, 9.4 miles to the turnoff for the signed Orderville ORV area. Turn left and follow 1/4 mile to the Orderville Corral and a gate across the road. The road past this point is steep, soft and rocky all at the same time, in places. HC 4WD required. Continue down the Jeep road to the flats of Orderville Canyon, then down the canyon 1.5 miles to the end of the road. Park here.

UPPER TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

See directions above. From the Orderville ORV turn, continue on the North Fork road another 2.5 miles to a sharp turn to the right. The Dakota Ridge road goes left here, somewhat obscured by brush. Go left. Pass the wreck of a shack. There are a few places where small washes cross the road, requiring some careful driving. Continue on this road about 1.3 miles to an open area with a

smaller road heading off to the left. You can park here. Most vehicles can drive another half-mile down the main road to either of two off-the-road parking spots, before the road gets difficult.

Approach (LOWER): From the carpark, descend the prominent trail to the wash level, and step over into the wash. The main trail will head left and stay out of the wash. Walk down the wash about 100 feet to where a side-wash comes in on the right. (Note: this is about 200 feet from your car, no more). Step up this wash 10 feet, then left up onto the bench, and follow a bit of a trail across, then up on the next bench. Follow the trail north; it turns into an overgrown two-track, an old wagon road. Follow the road as it turns left and follows the top of the strata west. At some point, it starts showing usage as an ATV trail. Follow west. After passing around a largish sidecanyon, ATV trail becomes less clear, but heads right and starts hill climbing. In a few places, the trail is unclear, so you might have to use the map. At the crest of the hill it enters open ground and again is less clear - follow the most likely looking path north to where it becomes more clear as it cuts into the hillside to descend. Follow this north and down to cross a sidecanyon, the E fork of Walker. Follow the road up the hill on the other side and around a few squiggles, then down into a larger wash, the main fork of Walker. Leave the road here and follow the wash.

Approach (UPPER): Hike down the road. It squiggles past a few drainages. In half a mile, the road turns left and heads more steeply downhill towards Walker Gulch. Go that way. (A trail continues along the ridge, leading to Dead Eye Dick, Eastern Sun and Checkerboard Canyons). From the turn, it is one mile to the drop-in point. The road follows alongside and sometimes in the wash, and there are a couple of points that LOOK like they might be it - don't be hasty. Past the drop-in point, the road climbs the hill on the right, then switchbacks up to climb more.

Canyon: Follow the wash, and in 5 minutes arrive at a cliff with wonderful large Ponderosa pines growing below. The edge of the cliff is unstable - do not approach. Cut left around the cliff and descend steep, somewhat brushy slopes to the canyon bottom. Follow the wash about half an hour through some charming small narrows to the conspicuous first rappel.

R1: 140' down a delightful flute. Anchor off a large rock back from the top of the flute, that requires about 30 feet of webbing to rig. Shortly downcanyon, a hodge-podge of logs and stones is stuck above a short drop. The logs might be unstable.

R2: 15' down under the log jam.

Shortly downcanyon, a chockstone creates a short drop.

R3: 20' off a deadman anchor. That's it for rappels. Hike downcanyon through marvelously striated narrows, with a few bits of downclimbing, to the intersection with Orderville Canyon.

Exit: Turn Left and head up Orderville. It is about 0.6 miles (20 minutes) to Birch Hollow, then another 15 minutes to the slot in the mud of Wild Wind Hollow. Just past WWH is a steep climb up on the right to the next level.

EXIT TO LOWER TRAILHEAD

Continue up Orderville another 0.8 miles (30 mins) to the Orderville Cul-de-sac parking area.

EXIT TO UPPER TRAILHEAD

After climbing to the next level, continue up Orderville, looking for a small canyon coming in on the left, about a tenth of a mile past the upclimb. Hike up the side canyon with a few scramble moves 0.3 miles with 200 feet of gain. Near the top, the canyon splits, go to the right and a few feet further pop up onto an old wagon road, now an ATV track.

Follow it west. In about 1000 feet, the ATV trail becomes less clear, but heads right and starts climbing over the hill. In a few places, the trail is unclear, so you might have to use the map. At the crest of the hill it enters open ground and again is less clear - follow the most likely looking path north to where it becomes more trailish as it cuts into the hillside to descend. Follow this north and down to cross a sidecanyon, the east fork Of Walker. Follow the road up the hill on the other side and around a few squiggles, then down to a larger wash, the main fork of Walker. Cross the wash, and then work your way up to the road. This is the TOP of Walker Gulch, where we originally left the road. Hike back up the road to the Dakota Ridge trailhead and your vehicle.

