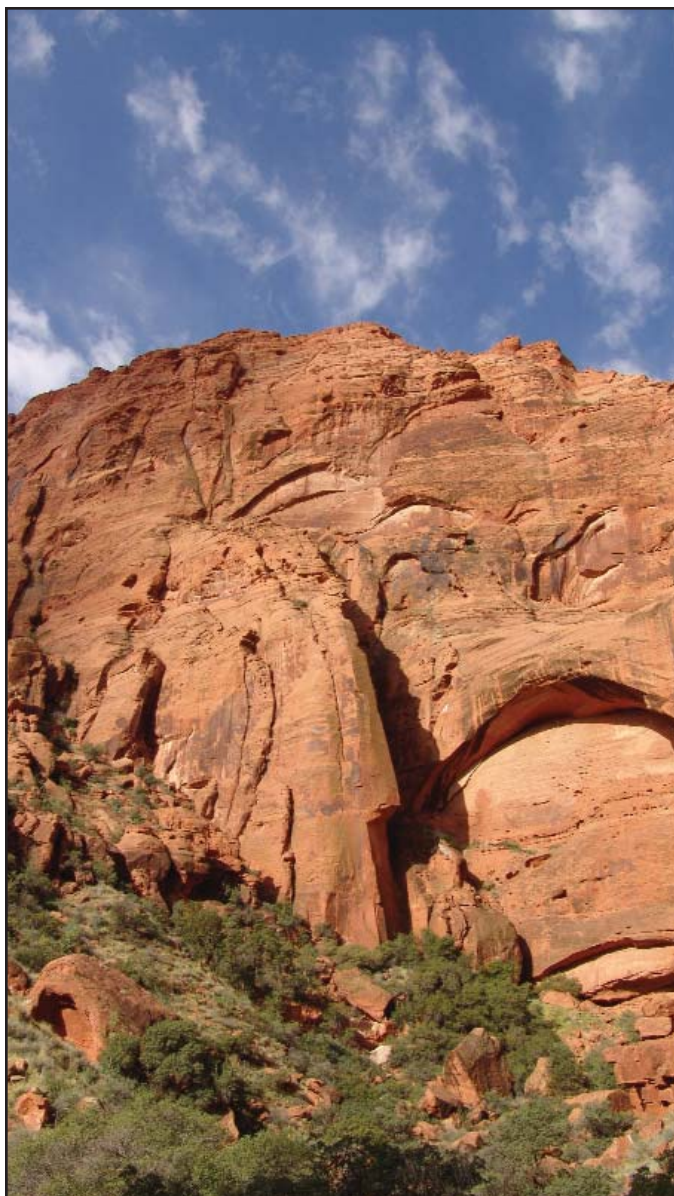


PADRE CANYON



Trail Essentials

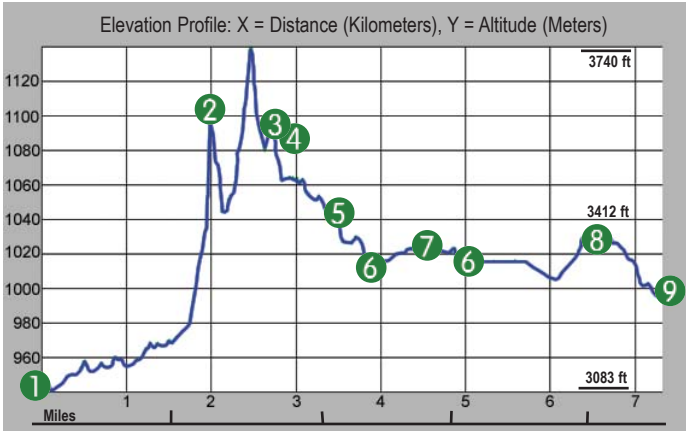
Length.....	Approximately 7.3 Kilometers (4.7 Miles)
Duration.....	Approximately 2 to 3 hours
El Gain.....	Approximately 290 meters (950 ft)
Difficulty.....	Medium to Hard
Don't Miss.....	Obstacle Course, Saddle Overview, Three Ponds
Comments.....	Scrambling and orienteering skills desirable

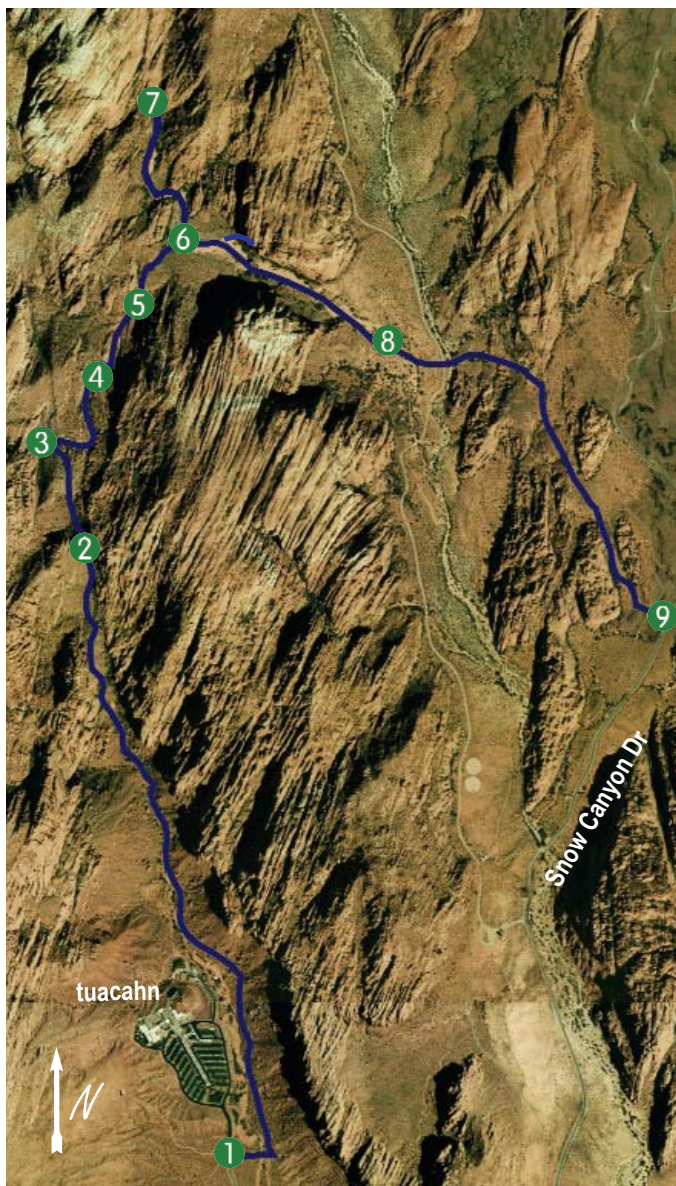
**Landmarks (Distances and UTM Coordinates)**

- ① Trailhead (Gate)..... N 4118882 E 264300
- ② SaddleN 4120786 E 263723
- ③ Purple Rop SlotN 4120786 E 263723
- ④ Start Obst Crse/Padre Arch.....N 4121080 E 263686
- ⑤ Triple Scooch/End Obst Crse.....N 4121493 E 263868
- ⑥ JunctionN 4121702 E 264022
- ⑦ Three PondsN 4122135 E 263924
- ⑧ Horse/Hiker JunctionN 4121702 E 264022
- ⑨ Three Ponds T.H.....N 4120565 E 265484

Intro/Directions to the Trailhead

This hike is fun and inspiring. It offers truly majestic views of Snow Canyon's backcountry and plenty of obstacles including ponds, slots, sand dunes, jumps into deep sand, and other goodies. In the springtime, the wildflower display is nearly overwhelming. In order to access Padre Canyon, hikers must pass through a small section of property owned by the Heritage Arts Foundation, which requires that hikers ask permission before entering (674-0012). This is a point to point hike requiring the use of two vehicles, or a vehicle and a bike/s. The hike includes a steep, lung-burning ca. 800 ft hill climb and plenty of obstacles requiring the ability to negotiate fairly difficult terrain. This includes maneuvering through slots, off ledges, and through holes on your knees, and may involve some wading, especially in the winter and spring. It is not recommended for those without some





backcountry experience. Enter Snow Canyon through either the northern or southern entrance and proceed to the Three Ponds/Hidden Piñon Trailhead. It's best to stash a bike here and proceed in your vehicle to the Tuahcan Property gate (this hike's trailhead). Some will choose to use two cars. If you bring a bike, you can retrieve it at the end of the hike and enjoy a 3.75-mile, mostly downhill ride, through Snow Canyon back to the car. From Snow Canyon State Park's Three Ponds/Hidden Piñon Trailhead, proceed south on Snow Canyon Drive past the entrance station towards Snow Canyon Parkway. Turn right on Tuahcan Drive and follow it north to the Tuahcan property gate.

The Hike

Park the car on the side of the road and proceed on foot east along the fence line through a wash until you reach a small gated entrance. To the east, you will notice a steep sloping hillside that gradually merges upward into vertical Kayenta and Navajo Sandstone cliffs. After passing through the gate, follow a well-worn trail along the eastern margin of the wash northward. The goal is to reach the top of the saddle in the narrowing canyon to the north. The first 0.8 miles slope gradually uphill and are relatively non-arduous. During the springtime this area puts on an incredible wildflower show even in relatively arid years. The key performers are desert bailey, banana and soap tree yucca, brittle brush, creosotebush, indigobush, purple sage, range ratany, palmers penstemon, hedgehog and prickly pear. The wash itself appears to be dominated by Tamarisk, a showy, yet unwelcome water hungry immigrant to our area.

As the canyon begins to narrow, several winding, well-stomped trails lead up the mountainside on the west (left) side of the wash, toward the saddle. Just make sure to get out of the wash before the channel becomes too entrenched. The terrain steepens drastically about 0.25 miles before the saddle. Watch your footing, as the steep trails to the saddle are eroding and form crumbly ledges over the canyon bottom below. Notwithstanding the condition of the trails, the footing is surprisingly easy and the saddle can be attained with a little patience. The view from the saddle (2) is one of the best in Snow Canyon backcountry. To the north, the white and red hues of Navajo Sandstone are showcased, canyon country style, in the grandest fashion. To the south, beyond Tuahcan, you can see over the low lying basin of the Mojave Desert towards the Utah Range, the first in a long series of ranges of the Basin and Range Physiographic province.

After taking in the views and taking a well-deserved water break, proceed northward down the other side of the saddle and stay on the

well-beaten path. It will lead you down the hillside, across a wash, back uphill, and then down again into another wash. You will be traveling through this wash for the next half mile or so until it emerges into Snow Canyon State Park near Three Ponds. Before you begin the trek, take a moment for a small detour to a shaded rock overhang (3) that contains water most of the year.

Follow the wash back towards where you entered it and keep going east. After a hundred yards or so you'll come to an approximately five foot ledge. This is the beginning of the obstacle course. There are three more ledges like this one to come, each dropping into sand, or small ponds, depending on the season. And each can be avoided by small detours if necessary. At the bottom of the first drop you'll see Padre Arch (4). The second drop is just ahead. Beyond this, the wash will turn to the north. Just ahead you will come to what appears to be a dead end, a sheer 20 ft drop-off. If you stay to the right along the side of a sandstone slope, you will notice a couple of openings or "windows". If your feeling brave, you can take the second window. It's at about waist level and you'll have to crawl through it. Otherwise, skirt the entire outcrop to the right. As you proceed northward, you'll pass two more small drop-offs before you come to a small, narrow depression in a short slot that usually contains water year around. You can straddle it, take a somewhat difficult detour to the right, or wade through it. Further ahead lies the "Triple Scooch" (no instructions required) obstacle (5). This is followed by one more drop-off, at which point the canyon widens and emerges into a relatively broad sandy valley. Here you'll see a sign post (6) pointing the way to Three Ponds and/or the parking lot (the Three Ponds/Hidden Pinyon Trailhead) where the shuttle vehicle/bikes are stashed. Three Ponds (7) consists of three small perennial ponds that drain into each other.

The trail to Three Ponds and about half of the trail to the parking lot is covered with deep sand and makes an interesting sojourn in the dead of summer. It's about 0.3 miles to Three Ponds and about 1.4 miles to the parking lot. As you hike eastward through the sand toward the parking lot, you'll first pass through a high-walled canyon that emerges into a broad wash with lava flows where you'll see signposts designating horse and hiker routes (8). A park service road follows the wash northward and intersects with the path. Cross over the wash where the where the trail is clearly marked and lined with rocks all the way to the parking lot about 0.5 miles southeast.



Soldiering on through the sand



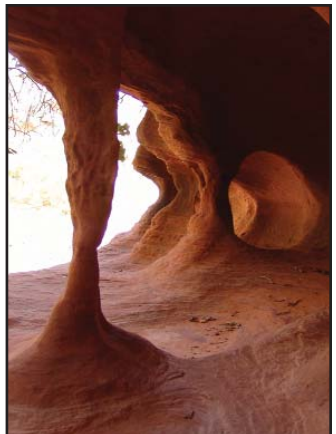
Side-blotched (*Uta Stansburiana*)



Utah Daisy (*Erigeron utahensis*)



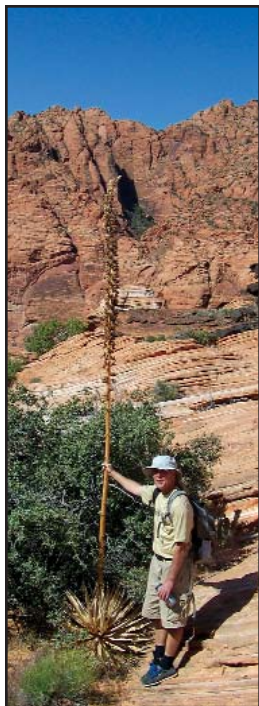
End of obstacle course (5)



Pillars of erosion



Looking down on Padre Arch



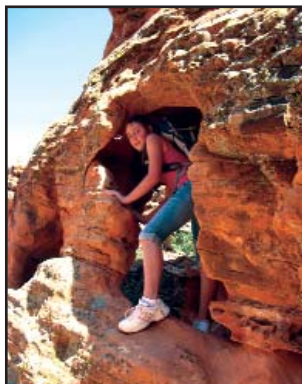
Marc with an Agave Stalk



Purple Rope Slot (3)



Biscuit Root (*Cymopterus purpureus*)



Secret Passage



The Toilet



Lava meets Sandstone



Filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*)



Paintbrush (*Castilleja angustifolia*)



Padre Arch