

# SILVER REEF



Trail Essentials

Length .....	Approximately 11 km (6.2 miles)
Duration .....	Approximately 4-5 hours
EI Gain .....	approximately 450 m (1500 feet)
Difficulty .....	Hard
Don't Miss .....	The Chimney, Summit View, Stairway to Heaven
Comments .....	Requires Route Finding Skills, Experience with GPS, Excellent Physical Conditioning



Landmarks (Distances and UTM Coordinates)

- 1 Trailhead ..... N 4124521 E 288949
- 2 Beginning of Cliff Ascent ..... N 4124481 E 288301
- 3 Chimney ..... N 4124655 E 288255
- 4 Ridgetop ..... N 4124598 E 288182
- 5 Switchback/Veer Right and Descend ..... N 4123809 E 287478
- 6 Crest/Junction ..... N 4123952 E 287440
- 7 Summit ..... N 4124013 E 287413
- 8 Base of Drainage ..... N 4124243 E 287150
- 9 Slot ..... N 4124674 E 287510
- 10 Sand Dune ..... N 4125176 E 287796
- 11 Stairway to Heaven ..... N 4125480 E 288060

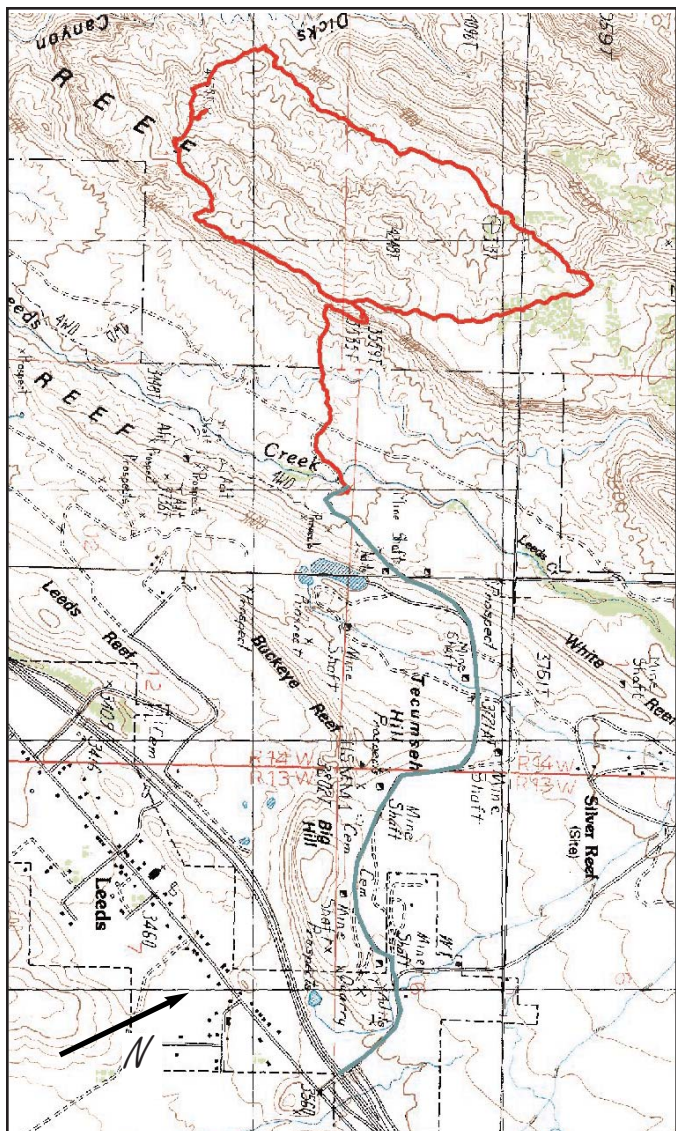
Intro/Directions to the Trailhead

This hike is recommended only for the strenuous hiker with back-country experience and route-finding skills. Ability to use a GPS to find waypoints is critical. Expect two lung burning ascents that will take you up over a thousand feet, slots and obstacles that require agility, upper body strength and the ability to negotiate steep, exposed and sometimes slippery sections of slickrock. The route includes miles of backcountry terrain where mistakes and miscalculations could be disastrous. The hike features some of the most rewarding canyon country vistas and secluded sections of slickrock in the region. Silver Reef, formerly known as "Bonanza City" or "Rock Pile" had its mining heyday in the late 1870's. The area's popularity



Elevation Profile (X = Kilometers Y = meters)





Hike location in red. Access road in green.



resulted from news of William Barbee's 1874 development of lucrative silver lodes followed by the collapse of the mining boom in Pioche, NV. A full-blown wild-west mining town of 2000 residents complete with hotels, banks, saloons and brothels sprung up almost overnight. The town's surly nightlife activities were surely source of irritation for the nearby orthodox Mormon communities in St. George. This first and most significant historic mining period ended in 1884 and the town was abandoned nearly as quickly as it had been settled. A single intact structure, the Wells Fargo Express building, remains from the era and has been converted into a museum and gift shop. Stone walls and structural foundations of the Rice Bank, as well as several residences and mining structures, and three segregated cemeteries (Catholic, Protestant, and Chinese) can still be seen in the area. Travelling north on Interstate 15 from St. George, take the Leeds Exit and continue north through town and take the Silver Reef turn-off left about 0.29 miles and make a left on an unnamed dirt road heading west. Proceed approximately 1.53 miles. The road will pass by two old cemeteries and several historic mining sites with barred adits and shafts and run up and over the "reef" or ridgeline. From the top of the ridgeline, proceed about 0.4 miles to the second fork in the road and turn right travelling a short distance and park before the road dips sharply down to Leeds Creek, where the road is impassable without a high-clearance vehicle.

### The Hike

Proceed on foot across the streambed and westward along the two-track 0.16 miles until it intersects with a north-south trending dirt road (1). Cross the road and look for a vaguely discernible foot path winding through thick black brush towards the sandstone cliffs to the west. A clear footpath emerges as you travel westward. Its about 0.3 miles to the base of the cliffs (2) where the ascent begins. From here, the trail follows an eroded, steeply-pitched route up Kayenta Formation slopes and cliffs to a narrow elevated terrace. Proceed along the terrace northward to a hidden chimney switchback (3) that serves as the only possible access route to the top. The chimney requires upper body strength and coordination to negotiate and is followed by more steep scrubby terrain to reach the summit of the ridgeline where a large rockpile marks the destination (4). From here, you can take in the scenic panorama showcasing the remains of Silver Reef's historic mining period below, Quail Creek Reservoir to the south, and Zion to the northeast.

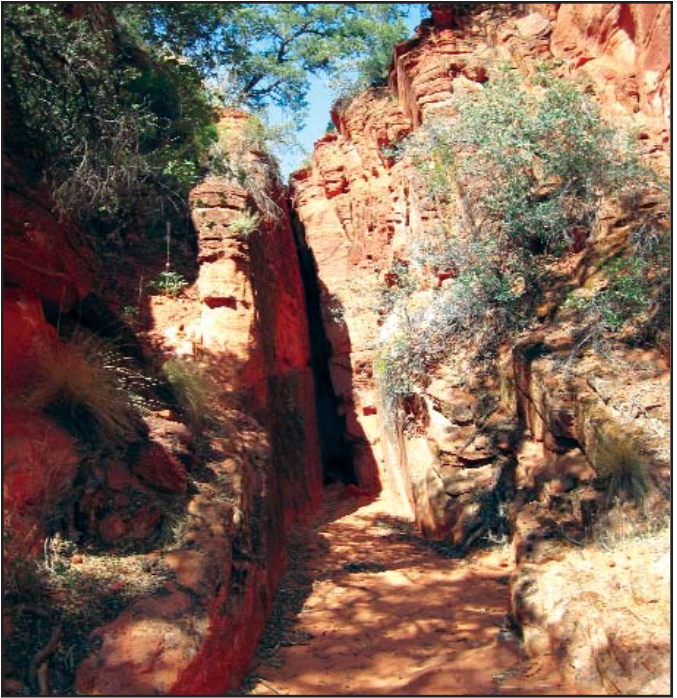
The relatively flat and incredibly scenic ridgeline trail southward allows a half-mile or so to catch your breath. About 0.46 miles down the trail, the clear foot path becomes obscured by slickrock, where you'll look

for a switchback (5) that descends into the scenic valley below and then winds north and then west up another steep hillside. Its a lung burner but will bring you up and out of the Kayenta and into the Navajo Formation to where the trail crests (6). Its important to use patience and caution during this portion of the hike as the trail becomes faint and is periodically obscured beneath slickrock. Choose your steps carefully and avoid using climbing techniques that exceed your skill level. At the crest, you'll see junction with a spur trail heading north to the summit (7) where you can take a well deserved breather and enjoy one of the region's most scenic 360 degree vistas. Find your way back down to the crest and follow the main trail westward and downward. Early in the descent, the trail appears to vanish but continues left around a protruding, angular stone outcrop where you'll carefully tread southward about 20 meters or so along a steeply west-sloping exposure of moki marble-studded sandstone (for traction) down to where the stone slope breaks to a degree allowing a reasonable, but still tenuous, switchback to the north where the trail picks up. From here the trail appears well-trodden and leads gradually northward down into the sandy drainage of a narrow and lush canyon (8) where mountain lion tracks are often sighted.

The route up the narrow canyon is full of small obstacles that require agility and coordination. About 0.3 miles up the canyon, you'll come to a steeply inclined slot (9), the entrance of which is marked by a hoodoo shaped like a Mexican Hat. If your not up for it, the obstacle can avoided by scrambling up the slope to the left. Continue up the canyon following the main drainage about 0.4 miles where the trail intersects with a small, incised drainage. Cross the drainage and



Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea* sp.)

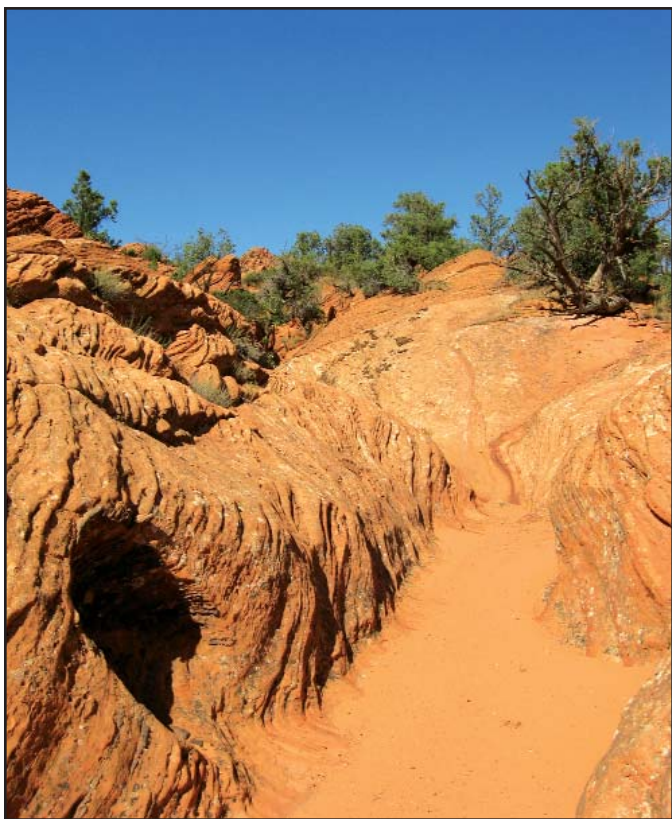


Slot Obstacle (9)

head up the sandune (10) eastward about 40 meters or so where the trail veers northward over the dune down into another drainage. From here, proceed roughly northeastward over slickrock and sand about 0.2 miles to the base of the protruding slickrock cliffs in the distance. The trail becomes a little convoluted here so use caution and keep your eye on the jutting slickrock. Here lies the stairway to heaven (11), a steeply-pitched slickrock incline with multi-layered steps. Climb the stairs staying to the right where the steps are more substantial and slightly less steep. Once at the top, follow the footpath through and around the back of the outcrop where a small drop into deep sand concludes this last obstacle. You may choose to avoid the stairway entirely by simply simply heading due southeast to pick up where the trail loops back towards the ridgeline summit (4). On the way, you'll see many diverging paths. Stay close to the rim of the canyon to the south where the trail is most pronounced. Descending back down the "Chimney" can be a bit unnerving but easily accomplished with patience.



Rock Pea (*Lotus Rigidus*) Blue Dick (*Dichelostemma pulchellum*)

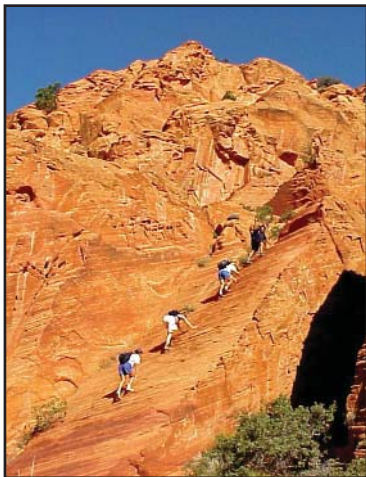


Path to the Stairway





Summit View (7)



Spectacle Pod (*Dithyrea clifornica*), the stairway (11)



Down the chimney (3) Palmers Penstemon (*Penstemon palmerii*)



Ridgetop (4) Princes Plume (*Stanleya pinnata*),  
Desert Marigold (*Baileya pleniradiata*)