

# SANDSTONE MOUNTAIN



**Trail Essentials**

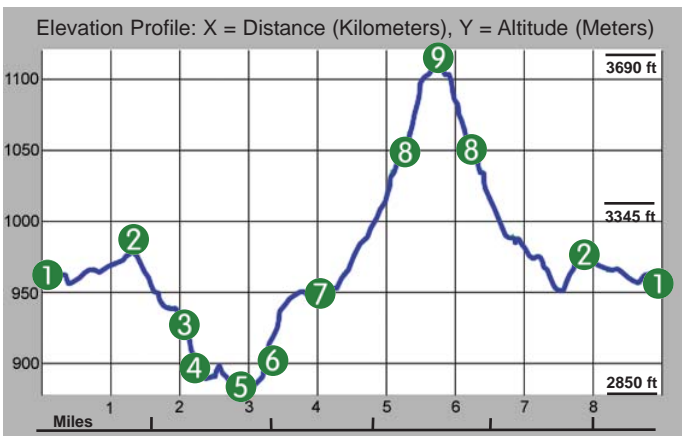
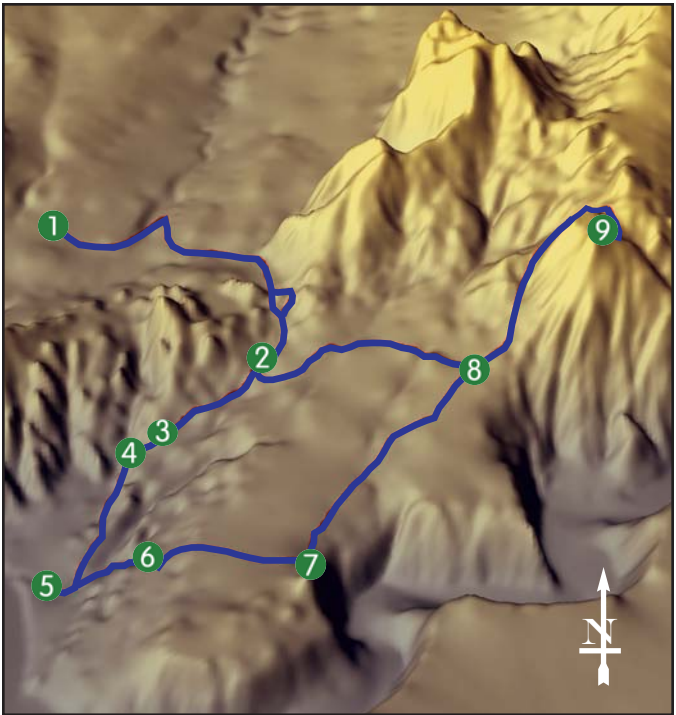
Length ..... Approximately 9 Kilometers (5.7 Miles)  
 Duration ..... Approximately 2 hours  
 El Gain ..... Approximately 280 Meters (920 Feet)  
 Difficulty ..... Moderate to Strenuous (Scrambling and Cardio)  
 Don't Miss..... Sand Dune Descent, Arch, Beach, Crumbly  
 ..... Canyons and the River Overlook

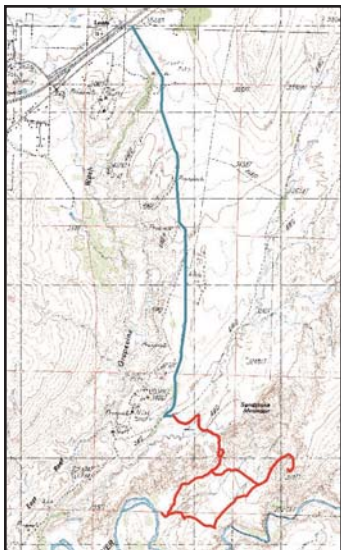
**Landmarks (Distances and UTM Coordinates)**

- |   |                        |       |                    |
|---|------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| ① | Trailhead 1            | ..... | N 4120487 E 292760 |
| ② | Trailhead 2            | ..... | N 4120089 E 293289 |
| ③ | Sand Dune Descent      | ..... | N 4119688 E 292924 |
| ④ | Arch                   | ..... | N 4119687 E 292852 |
| ⑤ | Beach                  | ..... | N 4119355 E 292627 |
| ⑥ | Scramble               | ..... | N 4119354 E 292862 |
| ⑦ | Canyon Overlook        | ..... | N 4119181 E 293262 |
| ⑧ | Junction               | ..... | N 4120068 E 294106 |
| ⑨ | Canyon Overlook Summit | ..... | N 4119839 E 294084 |

**Intro/Directions to the Trailhead**

This hike features outstanding perspectives on the friable nature of Navajo Sandstone. The mountains here appear to be literally falling apart. This rapid erosion converts mountainsides into original artistry, sculpting hoodoos, arches, and slots from formless slabs of slickrock. Heading east from St. George on I-15, take the Leeds/Silver Reef Exit and drive through the town of Leeds continuing past the Silver Reef turn-off, where the pavement ends, approximately 0.72 miles and turn south on dirt road. Proceed about 3 miles or so down this road where you'll see a roundabout parking area with an "ORV-proof" gated trail head and government signpost.





Jimson Weed (*Datura stramonium*)

## The Hike

Welcome to Babylon, a portion of the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve set aside for stray tortoises and gila monsters. When development wipes out a few acres of tortoise habitat, inadvertently displacing a tortoise or two, here's where they go, the officially-designated desert wildlife transplant refuge. Its probably the best location in the region for rare reptile sightings. Follow the designated trail (an old two-track) past a deep drainage to its intersection with a jeep trail, hence south-eastward to an old parking area/campground clearing located near the base of the Sandstone Mountain cliffs. Cliffrose, squawbush, and juniper trees grow sporadically nearby. The second trailhead (2) is at the southern end of the clearing and clearly marked by another "ORV-proof" gate. Down the trail a bit, a small, hidden slot on the right offers a passage through the slickrock towards the rest of the trail, which is clearly marked, once you emerge from the slot, with signposts positioned at regular intervals (usually within sight of the last one). The trail follows a easily negotiable route southward over small broken interfluves and through eroded channels leading to the top of a large sand dune (3). The dune can be descended kamikazee like, at full speed, if so inclined. At the bottom, there's a cozy little arch (4), just big enough for three people to walk through, side by side and without hitting their head. Its makes a nice shady rest stop in the summer, a good place to drink some water and dump the sand out of your shoes.

Proceed south down the sandy trail to its intersection with a large sandy wash. To the west is a secluded beach on the river (5). The fluctuating river levels are constantly rearranging the beach and "swimming area" with sand and gravel bars. Retracing your steps from the beach, get back to the main wash and follow it northeastward making a right into the first tributary drainage, through which access to the upper plateau area is provided. This is the most difficult portion of the trail and involves climbing up and over a small slickrock ledge and a short scramble (6) through a steep, narrow passage. Once out of the drainage, follow a vaguely discernible trail east to the canyon overlook (7) for a "Grand Canyon" like vista, and then north towards the valley between the two sandstone mountains in the distance, where the footpath turns into a well-trodden trail. The trail winds its way steadily uphill to the summit of the eastern mountain (9). The 360 degree view from the summit is awesome. Of the many points of interest, the upwarped eastern flank of the Virgin Anticline, the "East Reef", is one of the most intriguing. Its a small remnant of the structural deformation caused by the Laramide Orogeny, which also created the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevadas beginning

as early as 80 million years ago. The effect of the upwarping on Navajo Sandstone is clear. It makes a big, crumbly mess. A beautiful, otherworldly geological mess. Retrace your steps back down the mountain and out into the valley where your ascent began. As the terrain begins to flatten out, you'll see a well-trodden path heading westward back to the main trail where you began (8). Its about a two mile-long walk back to the first trailhead from this junction.



Canyon Overlook (7)



Kissing Rocks?



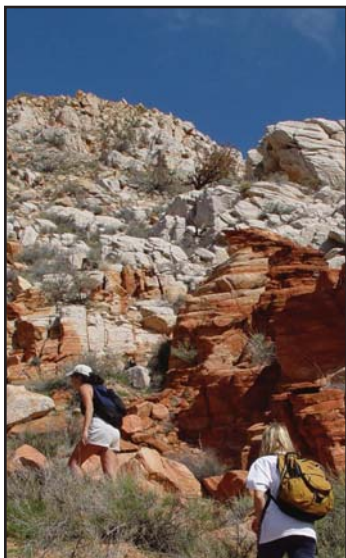
Kamikaze Dune (3)



Sidewinder



Purple Sage



Eye Candy



Happy Hikers at Shady Arch (4)