

Calf Creek, Red Breaks and the Cosmic Ashtray

Oct. 13-17 2010

We drove down to Bicknell on Wednesday evening and the traffic was terrible. Through Provo it was 25 mph all the way. After Scipio it got much better but it was also dark. We spent the night at Kathy's house. Prescott surprised us by being in Bicknell before us. In the morning we headed on south to Calf Creek. Jen, Lee, Prescott, Ria and Addison hiked down to the upper falls while I ran the shuttle with Kathy. After the shuttle Kathy drove home and I ran down the trail after the others.



The hike down the creek was beautiful. We were wading in the water at least half the time. Some trees had change color and some hadn't so we had both green and gold leaves through out. The little water falls, cascades and ponds had gold leaves lining their edges. It is a relatively narrow canyon but the vertical walls are not real high so plenty of sunshine reaches the bottom to keep it from getting too cold.



After a couple of hours we reached the lower falls and to my surprise there were some boy scouts at the top of the falls trying to repel down. We look off before climbing out of the bottom of the canyon and traversing over to the point we planned to repel from. It is a truly awesome repel; 200 feet high and all but 10 feet of it free hanging. The wall is fifty or sixty feet away in the middle of the repel. The water fall is a couple hundred feet away with a big

pool at the bottom. As you repel down you can look down on all of it. Very beautiful. Jen went first to check it out with Sunny the dog stuck in her backpack. Then we sent Ria off then Addison, Lee and Prescott. I brought up the rear and cleaned up all the gear. We were all down and the boy scouts were still trying to get down the water fall. The few that had made it were wet and freezing cold. Needless to say we were feeling quite smart.



Another hour of waking on the trail put us at the car. We drove a short 15 minutes to the Sheffield Road and found our campsite. Jen fixed chili for dinner and we sat around the lantern telling stories of the day before going to bed.

OFF TO FIND THE COSMIC ASHTRAY



The next day was Addison birthday and we were up before the sun preparing for the next adventure. We drove four miles south down the Sheffield Road and started hiking. We had two goals for the day; one to explore the canyons of the Red Breaks area and two to find the infamous “Cosmic Ashtray”. After one and a half miles of slogging across the sandy desert floor we climbed the rim of the Red Breaks and started down into the canyon. It was a long canyon starting out in sandy Juniper country but soon a shallow “V” formed. It was

pretty and interesting but still not the narrows we were looking for. We found the narrows not far down and they went on for almost a mile. It had a lot of different kinds of features including supper narrow slot, big chalk stones, water pools and log jams. We came out the bottom to find a rather long dryfall that was impassable. We climbed the left side of the canyon and dropped into the main Red Breaks canyon.



Now our objective was to find the strange and unique geologic feature sometime called the “Cosmic Ashtray”. I had a GPS reading for it and we had a very poor map. We set off across the exotic landscape of the Red Breaks. It is hard to explain the uniqueness of the place so I will just say it has a lot of rock with fractures making a checker board pattern out of most of the country and everything else is sand. It looks more like Mars than earth. We trekked across this strange place for an hour or two before we came to the Ashtray. It was even more un-earthly than the landscape it was in. Prescott, Addison and I had to make our way to the far side, much harder than you would think, so we could climb down into it. You have to look at the pictures. I’m not even going to describe it.





We then had to make our way back to the car and then camp. We hike 12.5 miles that day in about 8 hours. Those girls are getting to be pretty good hikers.

Most of the rest of the weekend was small events. Driving through the Boulder Mountains, took a short hike in Capital Reef NP, stopped by Kathy's again and the drove home the long way on back roads. I think a fun time was had by all.

