



## Lower Muley Twist Canyon



The highlight of the hike is a deep, narrow, twisting canyon with large alcoves. The canyon offers many opportunities for side trips and exploring. From 1881 to 1884 the canyon served as a wagon route for Mormon pioneers traveling south toward San Juan County. The canyon was thought to be narrow enough to “twist a mule” hence the name Muley Twist. The Post cutoff trail is marked with rock cairns and signs, but carrying a topographic map is recommended. It is extremely hot in summer and water sources are unreliable; carry adequate water. Use caution in narrow canyons particularly during flash flood season (typically July–September).

Beginning at the trailhead on the Burr Trail Road and hiking down canyon to The Post parking area via The Post cutoff trail is a six-mile (9.66 km) hike but necessitates leaving a vehicle at each end. If you don’t have two vehicles, turn around when you get to the sign indicating The Post cutoff trail for an eight-mile (12.88 km) round-trip hike. A hike through Lower Muley Twist Canyon can be done as a long day hike or as an overnight trip by starting and ending at The Post parking area; total distance 15 miles (24.15 km). Hiking the entire canyon from the trailhead on the Burr Trail Road and back is best done as a two- to three-day trip; total distance is 21.3 or 23.4 miles (34.29 or 37.67 km) depending on the route. Backcountry permits are required for all overnight trips and can be obtained at the visitor center.

---

### Location of Trailheads

1. Top of the Burr Trail Road switchbacks, 35 miles (56.35 km) south of Hwy 24 and two miles (3.22 km) west of the Notom-Bullfrog Road and Burr Trail Road junction. The Notom-Bullfrog Road is hard-packed dirt and is usually passable to passenger cars. At times, the Burr Trail Road may require a high clearance vehicle.
2. The Post parking area, located at the end of a short spur road three miles (4.83 km) south of the Notom-Bullfrog Road and Burr Trail Road junction.

---

**Mileages**

- Burr Trail Road trailhead to The Post cutoff trail..... 4 miles (6.44 km)
- The Post cutoff trail, one-way..... 2 miles (3.22 km)
- Burr Trail Road trailhead to Halls Creek drainage.....12 miles (19.32 km)
- Junction of Lower Muley Twist and Halls Creek drainage to The Post parking area..... 5 miles (8.05 km)
- Total mileage for upper loop (Burr Trail Road trailhead to The Post cutoff trail and back via the Notom-Bullfrog and Burr Trail Roads)..... 10.25 miles (16.5 km)
- Total mileage for lower loop (from The Post parking area and back)..... 15 miles (24.15 km)
- Total mileage for entire loop: Burr Trail Road trailhead to Halls Creek drainage and back via the Notom-Bullfrog and Burr Trail Roads.....21.25 miles (34.21 km)
- Total mileage for entire loop: Burr Trail Road trailhead to Halls Creek drainage and back via The Post cutoff trail..... 23.4 miles (37.67 km)

---

**Hike Description:  
Burr Trail Road trailhead to  
The Post cutoff trail**

Lower Muley Twist Canyon cuts lengthwise along the spine of the Waterpocket Fold creating a colorful, meandering canyon. From the trailhead located on the Burr Trail Road, the route drops quickly and easily into the canyon. A short section of narrows is located approximately two miles (3.22 km) south of the trailhead. The canyon walls on the east side are composed of white Navajo sandstone streaked with black desert varnish. The rust colored walls are the Wingate and Kayenta layers. Four miles (6.44 km) south of the trailhead, a

sign marks The Post cutoff trail. This is a good place to turn back if you are on a day hike. If you left a second vehicle at The Post parking area, continue (east) two miles (3.22 km) via the cutoff trail. The cutoff trail climbs up and over the Waterpocket Fold, providing dramatic vistas. Sections of the trail descend steep slickrock with loose footing and exposure in several places. Use caution, especially if wet or icy conditions exist. If you are continuing into the lower portion of the canyon, follow the directions in the next section.

---

**Hike Description:  
The Post parking area to  
Lower Muley Twist and  
back (lower loop)**

If you are starting from The Post, the cutoff trail heads west from the parking area and climbs steeply up the Waterpocket Fold, providing dramatic vistas. Sections of the trail traverse steep slickrock with loose footing and severe exposure in several places. Use caution, especially if wet or icy conditions exist. A sign marks the point where The Post cutoff trail joins Lower Muley Twist Canyon. Continuing left (south), large dramatic alcoves highlight this portion of the canyon. Here the Kayenta formation has been undercut, forming high overhangs. The canyon continues south for eight miles (12.88 km). Near the end of Lower Muley Twist is Cowboy Cave, a huge alcove, after which the canyon turns toward the east and becomes very narrow with high walls. At this point the high cliffs of Big Thompson Mesa are visible ahead. As you exit the canyon, look carefully for cairns on the left (north) side of the wash which mark a route out of the drainage and over a low ridge to the northeast.

This route connects with Halls Creek drainage and saves hiking time. If you stay in the Lower Muley Twist drainage, the route connects with Halls Creek drainage in approximately one-half mile (0.80 km). Between Lower Muley Twist Canyon and The Post parking area (five miles [8.05 km]), there is a section of Halls Creek that cuts a meandering channel into the Navajo Sandstone of the Fold. This route is longer but more scenic. For a more direct route, follow the remnants of an old road north in the main canyon. If you left a vehicle at The Post parking area, your hike is over.

If your vehicle is parked at the Burr Trail Road trailhead, you can either walk the Notom-Bullfrog Road north and then up the Burr Trail Road switchbacks (4.25 miles [6.84 km]) or return via The Post cutoff trail and through the upper portion of Lower Muley Twist Canyon (6.4 miles [10.3 km]).

---

**Hike Description:  
The Post parking area  
south along Halls Creek  
Canyon to Lower Muley  
Twist**

If you begin your trip by hiking south from The Post parking area along the Halls Creek drainage, it is easy to miss the route into Lower Muley Twist Canyon. Track your location on a topographic map and scan the steep slickrock slopes of the Fold for the upper portion of the north-facing wall of Lower Muley Twist Canyon. The wall is stained with desert varnish

and is visible a good distance away. Stay in the Halls Creek drainage until you encounter the entrance to Lower Muley Twist Canyon further downstream. Follow Lower Muley Twist Canyon north until you reach The Post cutoff trail or continue up canyon to the trailhead on the Burr Trail Road, depending on your destination.

---

**Additional Information**

Maps:  
USGS 7.5 Minute Series:  
Wagon Box Mesa and The Post  
Available at the visitor center

Best Seasons:  
Spring and fall

For more information and backcountry permits, contact  
Capitol Reef National Park Visitor Center at  
435-425-4111