



INFOBRIEF

Capitol Reef National Park

BRIMHALL BRIDGE BACKCOUNTRY HIKE

General Description: A relatively short day hike from Halls Overlook to Brimhall Bridge that requires moderately difficult scrambling and, at times, deep wading.

Location of Trailhead: Halls Overlook, located on a spur road about 3 miles west of the Notom-Bullfrog Road. The Notom-Bullfrog Road is hard-packed dirt, generally passable to passenger cars. The spur road to Halls Overlook is rough but usually passable to high clearance two-wheel drive vehicles. Total distance from Utah Highway 24 is 57.6 miles.

Maps: USGS 15-Minute Series: Hall Mesa. Available at the park visitor center.

Best Season for Hike: Spring (April through mid-May) and Fall (mid-September through November).

For More Information: Contact the South District Ranger or Park Interpreter, Capitol Reef National Park, Torrey, Utah 84775; (801) 425-3871.

Note: Before starting this hike, be aware that the route to Brimhall Bridge is mostly unmarked. Carry plenty of water; water pockets along the route cannot be relied on.

Halls Overlook provides an outstanding view of the lower Waterpocket Fold and Grand Gulch. Brimhall Bridge can be seen from this point in a narrow canyon that cuts into the Fold just across Halls Creek from the overlook.

The steep, switchbacking trail that descends from Halls Overlook to Halls Creek was originally developed by stockmen to provide access between the mesa top and canyon bottom. Today it is used mostly by hikers and backpackers. This part of the route is steep and rough but fairly well marked. Keep in mind that you must climb this steep trail to return to the top of Thompson Mesa. In warm weather this west-facing slope can be very hot, so it's a good idea to time your hike so that you can ascend this trail during the cooler morning or evening hours.

The marked trail ends at Halls Creek; from this point on you will need to do your own route-finding. The following information should help.

After crossing Halls Creek, which is normally dry at this point in its course, walk south along the sandy bench until you reach the first major side canyon on your right. This is Brimhall Canyon.

Notice how the vegetation changes as you make the transition from the wide, dry benches of Halls Creek to the narrow, shady confines of Brimhall Canyon. Rabbit-brush, sage, grasses, and cottonwoods predominate in Halls Creek, while Brimhall Canyon, with its cooler, moister micro-climate, supports a more diverse mix of oaks, singleleaf ash, pinyon, juniper, and a variety of shrubs, including squawbush, buffaloberry, buckthorn, bricklebush, and serviceberry.

Looking up the canyon from near its mouth you can clearly see three of the major rock layers that make up the Waterpocket Fold. The high, sheer walls of the lower canyon are carved into the Navajo sandstone, which is the predominantly exposed white rock of the Waterpocket Fold. Here, within the canyon, weathering has stained this sandstone with reddish and brown tones. The view up-canyon through the "V" of Navajo sandstone reveals the ledgy Kayenta formation, dotted with pinyon and juniper trees, and the smooth, upper surface of the of the Wingate sandstone, reddish-orange in color. These rock layers were originally deposited as flat-lying sedimentary strata about 190 million years ago, but the upthrust in the earth's crust that formed the Waterpocket Fold has tilted these strata at a steep angle and created the topsy-turvy situation in which the older layers lie at the higher elevation.

The first quarter-mile of Brimhall Canyon is an easy hike up the wash bottom. The canyon walls deepen quickly as you walk toward the heart of the Fold, and you soon come to a point where the canyon appears to end in a steep, talus-filled crack straight ahead of you. The main canyon actually makes a 90-degree bend to the right, and you must get around a steeply sloping dry fall to continue. A short, steep

friction climb of the slickrock slope just downstream of the dry fall will get you into the upper canyon.

A short distance beyond the top of the fall the canyon makes another right angle turn, this time to the left, or west. Here the canyon narrows dramatically for a short stretch and can sometimes hold a pool of water that may require a deep wade or a short swim. The upper end of this narrow stretch is choked with many large boulders that require use of both hands and feet to negotiate. As you work your way through the rocks, stay to the left and follow along the high, curving wall of Navajo Sandstone-- this will keep you in the main wash.

Another hundred yards of scrambling will bring you to an impassable dry fall in the main wash. Climbing the steep slope to your right will bring you to the edge of a cliff and an excellent view of Brimhall Bridge. If you want to get closer you will have to work along the ridge to your right and then down the sloping ledges visible below and in front of you.

MILEAGES

Trailhead parking area to Halls Creek.....	1.2 Mile
Halls Creek to mouth of Brimhall Canyon.....	0.2 Mile
Mouth of Brimhall Canyon to Brimhall Bridge.....	0.9 Mile

