



Trail 37--Little Cottonwood Canyon Trail

**kid friendly*

Duration: 2 hours out-and-back

Distance: To first shuttle pullout: 1.71 miles one way;

To second shuttle pullout: 2.56 miles one way;

To the old mill at the top of the trail 2.8 miles one way

Difficulty: Easy; (**Note to publisher: great for kids – maybe put a kid icon on ideal kid trails**)

Trailhead: Temple Quarry Trailhead

Elevation: Trailhead 5414'; Mill 6581'

Avalanche: Low

Map: Salt Lake City 100K; UT, WY or Dromedary Peak and Draper 7.5' quadrangle

GPS Coordinates: Rock building remains/top of the trail--12 T 0439359/4491153

Dogs: Not allowed in Little Cottonwood Canyon

Introduction: The Little Cottonwood Trail is ideal. Because the main trailhead sits at the mouth of the canyon, accessibility is a breeze and parking is ample. The trail also has two other access points farther up canyon which means you can make it a shuttle route if you're not in the mood for an out-and-back. With all these easy access points you can make the trail as long or short as you want. My kids, ages 5-12, enjoy this trail because the elevation gain is imperceptible. They enjoy the jaunt through snow-covered trees and over the semi-frozen yet bubbling creek. Little Cottonwood Trail follows Little Cottonwood Creek at the base of steep granite cliffs. Though the trail also runs parallel with SR 210, the road up Little Cottonwood Canyon, the natural setting is beautiful, dramatic, and the road is not often visible from the trail. This is a great family and beginner trail. Perfect for a quickie when you're short on time.

The Temple Quarry Trailhead is called such because stone for the LDS temple was actively quarried in this area for 25 years starting in 1861. LDS church authorities selected this rock as the best material available in North America. The granite boulders were hauled to Temple Square where stone masons then carved them for the Salt Lake Temple. A small interpretive trail with benches and explanatory signs starts in this same area. It is very short, but may be a good trail for small children to start out on. The giant boulders you see strewn around the canyon were transported by glaciers as they carved Little Cottonwood Canyon. Glaciers pick up masses of rock, and as the glacier melts, the rocks are strewn in various places.

How to get there: The primary trailhead to Little Cottonwood trail sits at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon just behind the large electric sign. Little Cottonwood Canyon sits four miles up SR 210 from the intersection in front of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Park in the Park-and-Ride that sits across the street on the north side of the road. There are two other entry points to the trail farther up canyon. One is approximately 1.7 miles up canyon at the pull-out next to the big shed. This is also the entry to the Great White Icicle, an ice climbing favorite. The other is approximately another mile up canyon and also has a pull-out on the right. There is a sign at this parking area marking the Little Cottonwood trail off the south side of the road.

Trail Description: The trailhead is well marked and easy to find. Little Cottonwood trail follows Little Cottonwood Creek at the base of steep granite cliffs. Above, on the south cliffs, mountain goats make their way and are often seen in herds. The trail is well used and obvious, even if you're making first tracks. Six tenths of a mile up the trail, you'll hit a paved road running past a residential area. You'll most likely have to pull off your snowshoes to pass this area as the road is often cleaned of snow. As you head up the road, the road forks. The upper fork goes residential, the lower fork passes a water plant. Take the lower fork, the trail starts again just past the water plant. At one mile you come to your first small waterfall. At 1.7 miles you hit the turn off for the Great White Icicle which heads up the cliffs to the south. This trail is just a small path through the snow with no visible marking. At 1.73 miles you come to the bridge that crosses to the first parking pullout and possible shuttle locale. You can also start from this point if the snowpack down below is not thick enough to snowshoe, or if you'd like to skip the first portion of the trail. The trail continues up canyon. At 2.13 miles the second bridge crosses the creek and gives beautiful views of wet, chocolate boulders and the water tumbling down canyon. At 2.56 miles the main trail intersects with the turnoff for the third parking area. This one is harder to see because you have to head .10 of a mile up to the road. This is the final shuttle location. A small cascade waterfall sits just below an old rock ruin at 2.78 miles. The old ruin marks the end of the trail at approximately 2.8 miles. The building is formed from granite rocks cut and cemented together. Portions of all four walls still stand and arched doorways show some of the architecture of the old building.