

Mule, Arch, Hotel Rock, Mule Towers, Cedar Mesa

(1 mile) from the highway and park at the lower end of the **North Fork of Mule**. Further up the road is a good campsite at Dog Tank Spring. If you have a HC/4WD, you can drive on to **Texas Flat** and the **Arch Canyon Overlook** at 2060m altitude. This is 9.7 kms (6 miles) from the highway. In 1985, the author drove his VW Rabbit there, but since that time, a **rough place** has developed about 5 kms (3 miles) from the highway. To see **Mule Canyon Towers**, turn south off Highway 95 near **mile post 102** (400m southeast from Road #263), open & close a gate behind you, then drive 1 km (.6 mile) along a very rough track (cars may be parked at the drill hole, but the author's VW Golf made it to the TH).

A recent find (**2 north face ruins**) the author made was just south of Highway 95. Go to near **mp 96** and look for a road to the south. Park next to the highway, or drive a little ways & park and/or camp. **Trails/Routes** From the trailhead at the lower end of **Arch Canyon**, there's a rough sandy 4WD track up to the confluence of Texas & Butts Canyons. Arch Canyon has been proposed for a Wilderness Study Area, but 4WD's, and especially ATV's, are doing what they can to nullify that possibility. If you hike on weekends, especially in spring or fall, you will have noisy competition. If 4WD's and ATV's are allowed in the canyon, then mtn. bikes are also an option, so you could save a lot of walking by biking up to the confluence, then hike into the 3 upper tributaries of Arch Canyon. There are developing trails in each. At the confluence of Texas & Butts there's a big grove of Ponderosa pines, which makes a nice camping area. All vehicles are supposed to stop there. Less than 1 km from the trailhead there's a **large fenced ruins** or habitation site against the south facing north wall. Further upcanyon are a number of other ruins as shown on the map. Some are hard to see, so take a pair of binoculars.

About 1 km south of the mouth of Arch Canyon is the lower end of **Dog Tanks Draw**; just south of that is another minor drainage which has at least 4 ruins, but they're not much to look at. Also, upslope west from the old **Perkins Ranch** is a rounded knob with some pretty good petroglyphs. Or, drive 1.6 kms (1 mile) south from the highway on **Road #235** along **Comb Wash** and turn west into **Lower Mule Canyon**. It can be sandy in places so watch out if you have a 2WD vehicle! Park 500m from the main road; or with a 4WD, continue upcanyon about another km, then walk 200m east to see several more Anasazi ruins.

From the **Hotel Rock TH** (1555m), walk northwest upslope along a homemade 4WD & ATV track. Be sure to veer right at 2 trail junctions. After the slope eases up and becomes less steep, you'll come to the prominent outcrop called Hotel Rock. At the south end of that are half a dozen Anasazi ruins.

There are now hiker-made trails into both **North** and **South Forks of Mule Canyon** and it's easy walking right up the mostly-dry creek beds. What water there is can be avoided and there's very little brush. As you walk up either canyon, the walls get higher and higher. Along the way are Anasazi ruins always on the right or north side facing south, and under overhangs. Of the 2 drainages, the South Fork seems to have the most ruins. One is especially interesting; it was built on a west-facing wall. Also in South Fork, continue to near the upper end to see another really good one labeled **Doorway Ruins**. Easiest way to get to it is via the little side-drainage, then ledge-walk back through a doorway.

Mule Canyon Towers are on the rim of the upper part of **Lower Mule Canyon**, the part that's below or south of Highway 95. It looks like there were 5-6 towers or some kind of structures up to about 5m in height at one time, plus a number of other dwellings in the canyon below. Use binoculars to see the biggest site which is far below on a ledge. You can climb down and visit all. Also, right where floods pour off the top and under that ledge, is a spring and pipe. Above is someone's grave in a fenced place.

From **mp 96**, Highway 95, walk southwest, first along an old vehicle track. Look for a short drainage into the upper end of Fish Creek Canyon. Just as it make a big drop, or dryfall, look to the south and under an alcove to see **2 northfacing Anasazi ruins**. Route-find down to see them.

Elevations Mouth of **Arch Canyon**, 1517m; confluence of Texas & Butts Canyons, 1707m; **Arch Canyon Overlook**, 2060m; **Hotel Rock** trailhead, 1555m; **Hotel Rock**, 1908m; **Mule Canyon** trailheads, about 1820m; bottoms of the upper canyons, 1950m; **Lower Mule Canyon**, 1463m; **Mule Canyon Towers**, 1804m.

Time Needed From the car-park at the mouth of **Arch**, up to **Texas Canyon** is about 13 kms, and another 7 kms or so to the head of **Butts**. This hike can be done from the trailhead in one long day round-trip, but to explore the upper reaches of the canyons, 2-3 days may be needed. A mtn. bike would shorten that hike (to drive it you'll need a HC/4WD). To walk to **Hotel Rock** and back should take 3-4 hours. To see either the **North** or **South Forks of Mule Canyon** and return isn't a long hike, but with all the ruins to see, it may take up to a full day (7-8 hours) to explore each.

Water Always take some with you. The map shows running water at the time of the author's visits. In drier times there could be much less in Mule Canyon, but the presence of so many Anasazi ruins indicates a more-plentiful water supply. There's an excellent spring and campsite at the head of Dog Tanks Draw. The author found running water in much of the Arch Canyon. There may be cattle in the area too, but the water seemed good to drink as is in the upper forks. If cattle are there when you arrive, purify or filter the water to be on the safe side. There is normally some running water in much of Lower Mule Canyon below the highway. The amount of running water depends on the time of year (much more in winter & spring), and how long it's been since the last storm or flood.

Maps USGS or BLM map Blanding (1:100,000) for driving & orientation; Kigalia Point, South Long Point, Hotel Rock & Bluff NW (1:24,000--7 1/2' quads) for hiking; or perhaps the best one now is the plastic Trails Illustrated/National Geographic map, Grand Gulch Plateau (1:62,500) for hiking & driving.

Main Attractions **Arch Canyon** is a deep, rugged and scenic red rock canyon, with Ponderosa pines in the upper forks. It has several arches, Anasazi ruins and a good water supply. **Hotel Rock** has 6-7 cheap moki rooms, and **Mule Canyon** is one of the best places on the Colorado Plateau to visit Anasazi ruins in a natural state, and **without supervision**. This means each hiker must supervise him/herself as well as some companions in order to preserve these sites. The South Fork has more ruins than the North, but both canyons are worth a visit. **Lower Mule Canyon** below the highway has several ruins as well.

Best Time to Hike Spring or fall, or some winter warm spells. Also, the higher altitude of the upper canyons makes them tolerable hikes in summer. Early summer brings many large horse flies which bite bare legs, so wear long pants then.

Boots/Shoes Any running or trail running shoes. In spring, you'll likely get wet feet in Arch Canyon. **Author's Experience** The author spent 2 days in Mule Canyon, one in each fork, back in the 1980's, then other similar trips in 2005 & 2010. Each hike lasted about 6 hours. A third time both forks were done in one day. Later he walked from his camp at the mouth of Arch, up into Texas, and later into Butts Canyon; a total of 7 1/2 hours in Arch Canyon, and on 2 trips. He drove to the mouth of Lower Mule and spent 5 hours seeing most of that drainage below the highway. His hike to Hotel Rock lasted 2 3/4 hours. In 3/2011, he spent 1 1/4 hours exploring the ruins & rock art below Mule C. Towers.

Map 58, Mule & Arch Canyons, Hotel Rock and Mule Canyon Towers, Cedar Mesa Country, Utah

