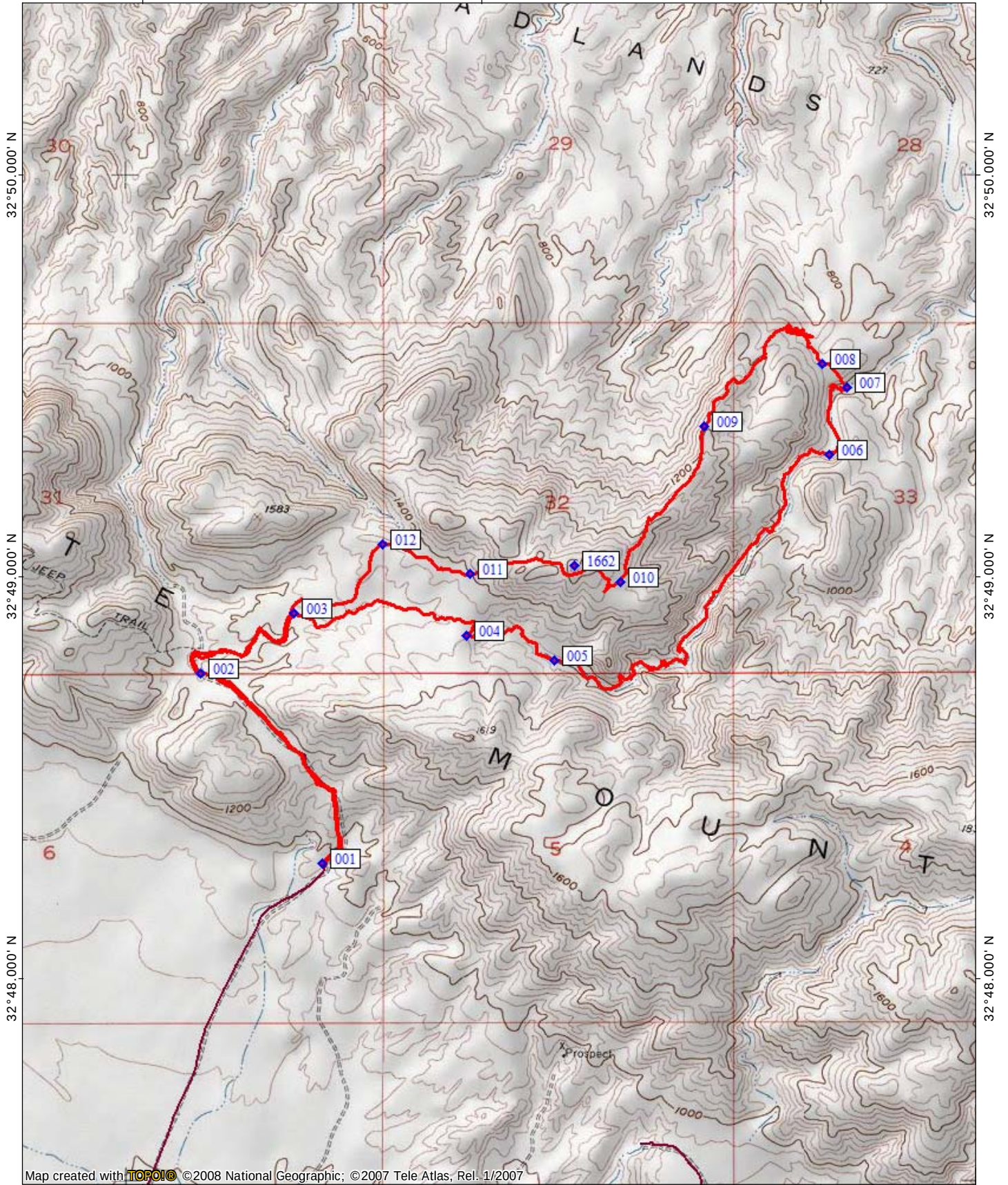


Domelands

116°05.000' W

116°04.000' W

WGS84 116°03.000' W

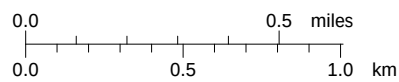


Map created with TOPO! ©2008 National Geographic; ©2007 Tele Atlas, Rel. 1/2007

116°05.000' W

116°04.000' W

WGS84 116°03.000' W



TN★MN
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The Domelands

Distance	6 miles, Loop
Hiking Time	5 hours
Elevation Gain/Loss	1200/1200'
Difficulty	Moderately strenuous
Trail Use	Suitable for backpacking
Best Times	December through March
Agency	BLM/EC
Required Map	USGS 7.5-min <i>Carrizo Mountain</i>
Notes	Navigation required, moderate terrain

DIRECTIONS From Interstate 8 at Ocotillo, drive 7 miles northwest on Highway S-2 to where an unpaved road goes northeast toward the base of the Coyote Mountains. (If you reach the county line, where there's a makeshift border patrol station, you've gone too far **on S-2**. Drive 2 miles northeast on the dirt road to a parking area and information board.

Caught in the grip of faults and folds, the corrugated landscape of "The Domelands" exposes millions of years of geologic history. This is a good place to view marine fossils aplenty, but you can't collect samples. The area lies in the Coyote Mountains Wilderness, which protects all natural resources—be they animal, vegetable, or paleontological. This hike, a "cherry stem" loop that involves a long out-and-back approach and a rambling loop at the end, takes you into the heart of what the BLM has designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Your concern should be to tread as lightly as possible over landscape.

On foot, go uphill (north) into some yellowish clay hills on the eroded remnants of a four-wheel-drive road. At 0.5 mile, you pass over a small summit; at 0.8 mile (002), the remnant road veers right (east) up a sandy wash. At about 1.3 miles (003), you'll see footprints veering left out of the wash and onto a terrace just north of the wash, where, again you follow the remnant road veers right (east) up a sandy wash. By 1.6 miles, you reach the foot of a rocky slope, and your choices for further exploration include at least these two options.

For the short option, follow a narrow footpath cut obliquely upward along the rocky slope and discover the wonderland of cavernous sandstone domes outcrops less than a half mile to the east. One such "wind cave" has a sandy floor suitable for a siesta. Enjoy the view over the convoluted Carrizo Badlands to the north. The long option is to veer south and work your way over a series of sharp little ravines 0.2 mile to the rim of a basin draining east. Descend from there into what soon becomes a deep cleft. You pass yellow and gray clay desert-varnished granitic boulders, and sandstone walls tinted various shades of tan and orange. At one point huge chunks of sandstone have fallen from the walls, creating a "fat-man's misery" situation. Farther down the ravine the walls separate somewhat, and you discover (among many other wonders) so-called fossil reefs—marine sedimentary rock containing nearly as much fossilized shell material as cemented-together sand and silt. The shellfish represented by these fossils thrived in the warm waters of the ancestral Sea of Cortez, which covered this area during certain intervals over the past several million years.

When you've traveled about 1.2 miles down-canyon, to a point just above the 920-foot contour, a clay butte with a sandstone cap comes into view up ahead on the right. On the left (west) side of the canyon, you'll discover a small tributary ravine blocked from easy access by a 35-foot dry fall. Just above the top of this dry cliff is a delicate natural bridge—a fin of sandstone about 7 feet long. To examine that bridge first-hand, go down-canyon a bit farther, to where another small ravine on the left lets you climb up out of the canyon. Circle around to the south and drop down into the sculpted ravine containing the natural bridge. From the bridge, make your way west or southwest over the convoluted landscape toward the high ridge topped by peak 1662. To the south, you'll catch sight of more domelike formations on the far

side of the deep canyon you earlier hiked through.

For a super view of the Carrizo Badlands to the north, you can walk along the ridge north of peak 1662. And you can improvise a route south toward the aforementioned wind caves.

When you are finished with your wanderings around this wonderland of rock and fossils, pick up the trail that passes south of peak 1662's summit. Head west and descend to rejoin the route that led you into this area. North of The Domelands, the Coyote Mountains Wilderness consists of a relatively unexplored maze of mud hills, many of them shot through with narrow, sinuous mud caves. Days could be spent wandering here, either by the will of intrepid and informed travelers, or by lost souls endlessly wandering in search of a way out.

