

Dirt Devils Trip Report Mazourka Canyon and the Alabama Hills by Tim Thomas

Mazourka Canyon, Saturday, November 22, 2025

My family and I arrived around 9:30PM in pitch black darkness on Friday night to the small town of Independence, CA where we stayed at the Courthouse Inn. Looking across the small complex of this motel was another nice looking 4x4 rig. This Bronco happened to be Kevin Williams who was getting his stuff out into his room. Sharing the complex, Kevin joined me for a beer out of the cooler as we got settled and shared some good experiences.

The next day, Saturday, November 22, 2025 when I could actually see what everything looked like in the town of Independence was an overcast, cold day with an amazing amount of snow covering all the mountains. As I went to get supplies and gas for the trail I began to worry if the trail may be closed or not a good day to run up Mazourka Canyon. Meeting at the Shell station in the town were Kevin Williams with his 2023 Bronco, Erick Paule with his Jeep Gladiator, Gerhart Liebel and family with his 2024 Rubicon, and myself and family with my 1993 Toyota Land Cruiser. All the great rigs represented, we were all fueled and on the same club channel traveling immediately on Mazourka Canyon Road.

Mazourka Canyon Road soon became rough to then a dirt road and trail. We aired down tires at a good spot, took some photos and views and then continued to head through the trail. We passed a mine before dirt and saw some more such as the road to the Betty Jumbo mine. Maybe this can be a trail to explore in the future as well as some trails leading to some camping spots. The overall trail is very scenic and well marked with my guidebook assisted with very well too. The day was great for keeping dust down. As we continued to travel up in elevation, my thoughts about snow conditions came true. At first I thought we traveled away from the snowy mountains, then discovered light snow on the ground, and then the trail was covered in a few inches. With the group, we all stopped to take a break, let the kids enjoy some snowplay, and talk amongst ourselves with how we all really like the snow wheeling at this dynamic.

Gerhart was my other set of eyes and navigation. This helped in finding the Mazourka Peak and heading the right direction. I had to backout of a wrong turn. Fortunately, I was the only who had to. Leading the way to the Mazourka Peak, we all were so close to it until we tried to turn a corner in the mountain that finally denied us. I slid and could not get traction from the snow so I pulled to the side. Erick was behind to put his Gladiator to the test. Same problems and he moved behind me. Kevin also decided to give it a try as well. Thanks to Kevin and Erick with trying to use the bigger tires and lockers but still not passable today as we all decided. Regardless, we had ended up at a great viewpoint with a chance to enjoy lunch and let the kids play in the snow once again. The kids were “not having Fun at all” lol.

Traveling down, we went slow through the snow to avoid a bad slide and Gerhart mentioned trying the Pappoose Flat trail. That was okay for a while but then unclear as obstacles became too risky with the amount of snow coverage and not knowing what was under or off the trail and hill. We turned around but had some struggles with sliding. Erick and I were in some awkward positions. I had a moment of scare sliding and Toyota skiing but then thankfully stopped not to run into Erick. We kept a great distance from each other as Gerhart led us down the way we came back. We returned the same way as we decided it was getting later, the snow slush might turn to ice, and we could all have dinner together back in Lone Pine. Where first stopped, Gerhart's son made a snow man. That was a great reference.

Regardless of not meeting the goal to the peak or all the way through to make it on Death Valley Road, we had a great day and stayed safe and cautious. At the gas station, we aired up part of the way for the road travel and to air pressure down still for the Alabama Hills the next day.

Alabama Hills, Sunday, November 23, 2025

The next day, our meeting point was the Mt. Whitney Portal Restaurant and street that led up to Mt Whitney and where we were going, Movie Road. My friend Becky Cordero and her father, Tim, met us for this day's trail. Unfortunately Kevin felt he needed to go home as his friend accidentally locked herself out of his home and no one was around to open the house. It was definitely that time of year and holidays where people are out of town and not around. Kevin is a great friend and went to the rescue. Again, we will have to come out here again and do more exploring.

The Alabama Hills are very simple and there are so many choices to pick and explore. Most are found at the beginning of Movie Road and there are also many good options and places to dry camp, stay slightly off the grid, and relax. Erick and I saw some rock climbers and may get inspired to pick up our rock climbing interests soon again. Along the trail, Gerhard helped sharing where certain spots where movies like Tremors and Iron Man were filmed. I did discover an obstacle that I did not have the clearance or lockers to go up. Erick and Gerhart had some fun to enjoy going up and down. We traveled through lots of the beginning trails. After we headed through most of the front, we stopped for a 10-100 at the Alabama Hills Arch hiking trail. We all took the short hike to the Arch and then back to the vehicles. At the site of where Iron Man was filmed, we had lunch. It was getting later for a Sunday, so Gerhart headed back to get the family home so all were ready for work and school for Monday. Myself, Becky and Tim, and Erick continued through Movie Road to the Hogback Road to end up at the top of where Whitney Portal Road was closed from the snow fall.

We then headed down the hill, returning back to the meeting point. Erick aired up here to travel back home. We said our goodbyes and my family with Becky and Tim planned to meet later at the Mt. Whitney restaurant. We had a good meal, took a walk through the town, and then sat in the lounge of the historic Dow Villa where we shared stories some beverages and snack items. Overall, the trip and travels were amazing. Thanks to the members and guest who joined for a Dirt Devils' run. As always, I look forward to the next one!