Rethinking Wall Arch

SOMETIMES I'M CONSIDERED BAD LUCK. Things have a tendency to fall wherever I work. In Sacramento, storms toppled trees in my agency’s back yard more than once. When I delivered pizza in college, a large iron parking gate inexplicably crashed to the ground within inches of my car. Later, I began my National Park Service career at Carlsbad Caverns, where a once in a lifetime rock slide occurred shortly before my arrival. So when I drove into Moab on August 5, 2008 to start my new job at Arches, people who knew me were not surprised when they heard that an arch had collapsed that exact same morning.

Everyone else, however, was pretty shocked. After all, Wall Arch had spanned a 71-foot gap in the rock since time immemorial. It was already curving gracefully when the Egyptian pyramids were still under construction. It stood defiantly while the mighty Roman Empire was collapsing an ocean away. It was still holding strong when the Declaration of Independence was being signed in 1776. And, most notably, it was still there on August 4 when everybody went to bed.

So when the remains of the ancient arch were found resting peacefully on the Devil’s Garden hiking trail the next morning, it came as no surprise that the main question surrounding the collapse was “Why?”

One answer is fairly straightforward. Erosion and gravity reign supreme over sandstone. For countless eons, rain, ice, and groundwater slowly but relentlessly ate away at the natural calcium “cement” holding the arch’s sand grains together. Eventually there wasn’t enough of this cement left to withstand the pull of gravity, and so the whole structure finally came crashing down. It’s a bit like sucking on a mint or a candy cane: it slowly dissolves in your mouth but will usually break up into pieces before it’s completely gone. In the case of Wall Arch, that breaking point was August 5. Perhaps that was the night that nature wedged off one piece of rock or sand grain too many.

Whatever the immediate cause, though, there is also a more hidden dimension to the incident worth considering. Beyond the sadness or sense of loss that the collapse might evoke, there is a realization that something will eventually fill the void where Wall once stood. Simply put, another answer to the question “Why?” is, “So nature can make room for something else.”

Consider this: Arches National Park contains a lot of rocks. The area is a virtual layer cake of rock miles thick, a celebration of sandstones, mudstones, shales, salts, and limestones all stacked one upon another. Each layer represents a different environment that existed here in the past. A band of limestone might indicate the presence of an inland sea complete with colorful reefs. A section of sandstone tells the story of wind-blown dunes from a time that was even drier than it is today. A layer of shale contains the relics of a swampy river floodplain ruled by dinosaurs and giant trees. Taken together, these layers reveal...
Camping

Devils Garden Campground has 52 sites and is located 18 miles from the park entrance. Most sites and two groups sites may be reserved in advance (see below). The campground fills daily between March and October, usually by mid-morning. Visitors must pre-register at the visitor center at 7:30 am or at the entrance station later in the day. Tables and fire rings are provided in each site. Water and flush toilets are available in several locations. Individual sites are $20 per night. Wood gathering and ground fires are prohibited. Wood may be purchased from campground hosts March through October. Two group tent sites are available for eleven people or more; Juniper Basin (up to 55 people) and Canyon Wren (up to 35 people). The group camping fee is $3 per person per night, with a $33 per night minimum. No recreational vehicles or trailers are permitted in group sites.

Reservations

Most sites at Devils Garden may be reserved for dates between March 1st and October 31st. Reservations must be made at least four days and no more than 180 days in advance. To make a reservation online, visit www.recreation.gov. To make a reservation by phone, call (877) 444-6777 (Toll Free), (877)833-6777 (TDD) or (518)885-3639 (International). Starting in 2010, all sites at Devils Garden can be reserved through this system.

Accessibility

Not all park facilities meet mandated standards, but we’re always trying to increase accessibility. We would appreciate your comments. Visitors with mobility impairments can access:

Visitor Center
Ramp and reserved parking.

Restrooms
Throughout the park including the visitor center and Devils Garden.

Campsite
Devils Garden site #7.

Park Avenue Viewpoint
Paved path with slight decline near end.

Delicate Arch Viewpoint
Hard surface, level.

Balanced Rock Viewpoint
Paved surface, level.

Biking along the scenic drive.

Backpacking

Arches is a relatively small park, with very few areas far enough from roads to qualify as “backcountry.” Outside the developed visitor area there are no designated trails, campsites, or reliable water sources. If you’d like to backpack, consider nearby places like Canyonlands National Park that offer more extensive backcountry opportunities. If you’d like to backpack, obtain a backcountry permit at the visitor center.

Traveling with Pets

Activities with pets are limited at Arches. Pets are not allowed on hiking trails, at overlooks or anywhere in the backcountry. Pets may accompany visitors in the developed campground, and may be walked in the park along paved roads. Pets must be leashed at all times when outside a vehicle. For your pets’ safety, do not leave them in vehicles when outside temperatures are above 65°F; they can die of heat exhaustion. There are two kennels with boarding services in Moab:

Karen’s Canine Campground
2781 S. Roberts Rd.
(435) 259-7922

Moab Veterinary Clinic
4575 Spanish Valley Drive
(435) 259-8710

Nearby, there are vast public lands that offer great hiking and do allow pets on trails. We recommend that you keep your pet on a leash, even on public lands, to avoid uncomfortable encounters with wildlife and to prevent resource damage.

Four-Wheel Drive Routes

Arches has a limited number of four-wheel drive roads, including the Willow Flats Road that goes west from Balanced Rock to Highway 191. Please check at the visitor center for current road conditions. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has many popular 4WD routes offering a wide-range of difficulty.

Emergency!

Any number of emergencies can occur while you are visiting the park: hiking accidents, medical emergencies or perhaps you have locked your keys in your vehicle. If you have an emergency:

• Contact a park employee. Many park rangers are trained emergency medical technicians. Law enforcement rangers can investigate vehicle accidents, handle other police matters, as well as take reports of lost hikers, fires, or other emergencies.

• Go to the visitor center: If the building is closed, use the pay phones in front of the building to dial 911 (no coin is needed).

• Dial 911 on your cellular phone: You will reach the Grand County Sheriff’s Office, who will contact a ranger in the park.

Ranger-Guided Activities

Each day from mid-March through October, park staff are located throughout the park to help visitors understand the unique elements of Arches National Park. During summer months special family activities take place. Check at the visitor center for specific locations and times. Staff are always available during Visitor Center hours to help inquiring minds get the most out of their visit.

Fiery Furnace Walks

From mid-March through October, rangers lead walks into the Fiery Furnace twice each day. These 2½ to 3 hour hikes wind through terrain that occasionally requires the use of hands and feet to scramble up and through narrow cracks and along narrow ledges above drop-offs. Group size is limited, and these popular walks often fill a day or two in advance. Make your reservation and pay your fee at the visitor center no more than seven days in advance of the walk, and for groups of no more than ten people. Larger groups can request a special tour (a minimum of four weeks notice is advised).

Climbing

Most technical climbing routes here require advanced skills. No permits are required; however, it is your responsibility to know current climbing rules and route closures, so ask at the visitor center. Climbing of any type is not permitted on arches named on the USGS topographic map. Slacklining is also prohibited. Climbers must access routes by using designated trails, slickrock or sandy washes to protect soil crusts. Colorado National Monument Association carries several books with route information.

Biking along the scenic drive.

Interpretive walk

Enjoying sunset at Delicate Arch.
Rethinking Wall Arch, continued...

a picture of a Planet Earth that is forever changing on a time scale beyond human comprehension. As awesome as these previous worlds may have been, nature is the ultimate Etch-A-Sketch, periodically wiping away its old artistry in favor of new masterpieces just as astounding.

Looking around at the park’s current array of arches, fins, and spires, it can be easy to forget that this spectacular scenery is not an end. It is a step on the way to future worlds beyond our wildest imaginings. Will this region someday return to sea level and again be covered by water? Will volcanic activity ever renew the area with fire and lava? Or will there be new sets of mountains, forests, waterfalls, canyons, and deserts? What kinds of bizarre creatures and ecosystems might arise? It is difficult for our minds to fully imagine the wonders that may come to pass.

Wall Arch reminds us that, for any future wonders to become reality, the park as we know it today has to crumble away first. Though shrouded in memory and mystery, the arch and its fate are an invitation to reflect upon the eternal cycle of birth and death that characterizes not only our planet, but our entire universe.

Hey Kids —
This One’s For You!
Do you want to really explore Arches and even help protect the park? Then become a Junior Ranger! Becoming a Junior Ranger is a serious and important task, but it’s lots of fun too. Ask at the visitor center how you can get involved. Some options include: completing a booklet, checking out a Red Rock Explorer Pack and/or attending some summer family activities. It’s that simple! You’ll earn a badge and certificate, and join the ranks of the many Junior Rangers that help protect this special place.

IN 2004, CONGRESS PASSED THE FEDERAL LANDS Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which replaced the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program. Authorized through December 2014, the law allows retention of 80% of fees collected at a site to remain there for repair, maintenance, and facility enhancement related directly to visitor enjoyment, visitor access and health and safety. It also includes interpretation, visitor information, visitor service, visitor needs assessments, and signs; habitat restoration directly related to wildlife-dependent recreation that is limited to hunting, fishing (where permitted), wildlife observation or photography; and law enforcement related to public use and recreation.

Congress is interested in your comments regarding the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Forms are available at the Arches Visitor Center.

**ENTRANCE FEES**
The entrance fees at Arches National Park are $10 per vehicle for a seven-day pass, and $5 for bicyclists, those walking, or on motorcycles. The following special passes are now available:

- **Interagency Annual Pass ($80)**  
  Previously the Golden Eagle/National Park Pass  
  Good for twelve months; available to anyone.  
  Free entrance to Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges and National Park Service areas that charge entrance fees. Covers use of Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and Forest Service sites that charge Standard Amenity Fees.

- **Interagency Senior Pass ($10)**  
  Previously the Golden Age Pass  
  Lifetime pass for U.S. citizens sixty-two years of age and older; entrance to all federal fee areas plus 50 percent discount on camping, activity fees, and other special user fees. Previously-issued Golden Age Passes will be honored forever by all agencies.

- **Interagency Access Pass (Free)**  
  Previously the Golden Access Pass  
  Lifetime pass for permanently disabled U.S. citizens; entrance to all federal fee areas plus 50 percent discount on camping, activity fees, and other special user fees. Previously-issued Golden Access Passes will be honored forever by all agencies.

**ACTIVITY FEES**
Fees charged for the popular ranger-guided Fiery Furnace walks will go directly to supporting the program. The cost is $10 for adults; $5 for children six to twelve years old and Senior Pass/Golden Age card holders. Reservations are required and may be made at the visitor center.

**Where does my money go?**
Sections of mountains, forests, waterfalls, canyons, and deserts? What kinds of bizarre creatures and ecosystems might arise? It is difficult for our minds to fully imagine the wonders that may come to pass. Wall Arch reminds us that, for any future wonders to become reality, the park as we know it today has to crumble away first. Though shrouded in memory and mystery, the arch and its fate are an invitation to reflect upon the eternal cycle of birth and death that characterizes not only our planet, but our entire universe.
Be Safe

Each year, park rangers respond to dozens of search or rescue incidents in the park, many of which involve heat exhaustion and/or dehydration or improper footwear. Always carry (and drink) water! Even the shortest stroll will make you thirsty on a 100°F (38°C) day. One gallon (4 liters) per person per day is recommended for longer hikes. Water is available only at the visitor center and at Devils Garden.

- Wear sturdy shoes with enough tread to give you good traction. Do not hike in leather-soled shoes or boots. Some trails cover uneven terrain and follow rock ledges.
- Protect your skin with a hat, long-sleeved shirt, and sunscreen. There is little shade in the desert. The sun is intense year round and can easily burn your skin, especially in the summer.
- Slickrock invites adventure. When you climb or scramble, be sure you can retrace your steps, and remember that it is often easier to go up than down.
- Sudden thunderstorms with deadly lightning do occur here. The distance of lightning can be calculated by counting the time interval between a lightning flash and the subsequent thunderclap. Sound travels about a mile in five seconds; so if the interval is fifteen seconds (or three miles) or less, you should seek shelter immediately. One of the safest places to be during a thunderstorm is in your vehicle with the windows completely closed. If you are unable to reach your vehicle, go to a low-lying area. Stay away from open areas, high spots or tall objects (such as Delicate Arch), and solitary trees. If your skin tingles or your hair stands on end (signs that a charge is building up), crouch down and place both feet together firmly on the ground.

Hiking Etiquette

- Stay on established trails and/or solid rock; follow the rock cairns. Help protect the fragile biological soil crust and other vegetation in our desert environment.
- Leave no trace: move like a shadow, and please take out the trash, even if it isn’t yours.
- Pets and bicycles are not permitted on hiking trails.

Hiking Trails

EASY TRAILS

Balanced Rock

Start: Balanced Rock parking area
Length: 0.3 mile (0.5 km) round trip
Time: 15 to 30 minutes
A loop trail at the base of fragile, picturesque rock formation.

The Windows

Start: Windows parking area
Length: 1 mile (1.6 km) round trip
Time: 30 to 60 minutes
A gentle climb up a gravel loop trail leads to three massive arches (North and South Windows and Turret Arch). An alternate return, slightly longer, is by way of the primitive loop around the back of the two Windows. The primitive loop trail starts at the South Window viewpoint.

Double Arch

Start: Double Arch parking area
Length: 0.8 mile (1.2 km) round trip
Time: 15 to 30 minutes
A relatively flat, sandy trail leads to the base of two giant arch spans which are joined at one end.

Delicate Arch Viewpoint

Start: Delicate Arch Viewpoint Trailhead
Length: 100 yards (91 meters) round trip
Time: 10 to 15 minutes
In addition to the short accessible trail, another (moderately strenuous) hiking trail climbs 0.5 mile (0.8 km) toward Delicate Arch and ends at the rim of a deep canyon that separates the viewpoint from the arch. This is not the popular trail to Delicate Arch, which starts at the Wolfe Ranch parking area.

Sand Dune Arch

Start: Sand Dune Arch parking area
Length: 0.3 mile (0.5 km) round trip
Time: 15 to 30 minutes
Trail leads through deep sand to a secluded arch among sandstone fins. Do not climb or jump off the arch.

Broken Arch

Start: Sand Dune Arch parking area or Devils Garden camp ground across from campsite #40
Length: 1.3 miles (2.1 km) round trip; 2 miles (3.2 km) including the loop
Time: 30 to 60 minutes
From the Sand Dune Arch parking area, the trail crosses a large meadow to the arch and continues to the campground. Trail leads through fins with sand dunes and slickrock.

MODERATE TRAILS

Skyline Arch

Start: Skyline Arch parking area
Length: 0.4 mile (0.6 km) round trip
Time: 10 to 20 minutes
A short hike on a flat, well-defined trail. On a cold November night in 1940, a large chunk fell out of the arch, instantly doubling the size of its opening.

Landscape Arch

Start: Devils Garden trailhead
Length: 1.6 miles (2.6 km) round trip
Time: 30 to 60 minutes
A relatively flat, gravel-surfaced trail (usually heavily populated with hikers) leads to a spectacular ribbon of rock, whose span is more than a football field in length. Short side trips to Tunnel and Pine Tree Arches. Trail guide available at trailhead.

Delicate Arch

Start: Wolfe Ranch parking area
Length: 3 miles (4.8 km) round trip
Time: 2 to 3 hours
Elevation change: 480 feet (146 m)
Take at least 2 quarts (2 liters) of water per person! Open slickrock with some exposure to heights and no shade. The first half-mile is a well-defined trail. Upon reaching the slickrock, follow the rock cairns. The trail climbs gradually and levels out toward the top of this rock face. Just before you get to Delicate Arch, the trail traverses a rock ledge for about 200 yards (183 m).

Devsils Garden (includes primitive loop)

Start: Devils Garden Trailhead
Length: 7.2 miles (11.6 km) round trip, including all spur trails to points of interest
Time: 3 to 5 hours
Longest of the maintained trails in the park, Devils Garden Trail leads to eight awe-inspiring arches. Expect narrow ledges with rocky surface hiking and scrambling on slickrock. Not recommended when rock is wet or snowy. Trail guide available at trailhead.

Double O Arch

Start: Devils Garden Trailhead
Length: 4.2 miles (6.8 km) round trip
Time: 2 to 3 hours
Beyond Landscape Arch, the trail becomes more challenging as it climbs over sandstone slabs; footing is rocky; there are narrow ledges with exposure to heights. Spur trails lead to Partition and Navajo Arches. Dark Angel is one-half mile (0.8 km) farther. Trail guide available at trailhead.

Fiery Furnace (Fee Area)

The Fiery Furnace is a maze-like labyrinth of narrow sandstone canyons. To enter the Fiery Furnace, visitors must accompany a ranger-guided hike (see page 2) or obtain a hiking permit at the visitor center. There is no trail, so visitors are encouraged to accompany a ranger — both for their own safety and to reduce impacts on the area.

STRENUOUS TRAILS

Tower Arch

Start: Klondike Bluffs parking area, via the Salt Valley road
Length: 3.4 miles (5.5 km) round trip
Time: 2 to 3 hours
The trail climbs a steep, short rock wall, cuts across a valley and then meanders through sandstone fins and sand dunes. An alternate, shorter trail (0.3 mile [0.5 km] one way), begins at the end of the four-wheel-drive road on the west side of Tower Arch. This unpaved road washes out quickly in ramstorms; check road conditions before heading out.
CAUTION
Stay on trails or slickrock to protect fragile biological soil crust. These tiny organisms are critical to all life in the desert.

Parking is permitted only in designated spaces. If a particular parking lot is full, please return at a later time. Strictly enforced.
Hope on Hooves

SHORTLY AFTER ENTERING ARCHES NATIONAL Park, a large yellow sign with the image of a bighorn sheep alerts us that for the “next three miles” we might encounter them crossing the road. Seeing sheep in Arches is a treat that only a few visitors experience each year, however. Desert bighorns (Ovis canadensis nelsoni) historically ranged in large numbers throughout most of the Colorado Plateau. Today, only a few remain. Life for desert bighorns is tough and they face many challenges that have pushed them close to extinction. The sheep in Arches National Park provide hope that their resilience, combined with our help, will keep them here for many generations to come.

Sheer cliffs, rugged slopes and deep canyons are where bighorns prefer to live, but the rough terrain can work against them, too. Imagine the challenges they face while attempting to outmaneuver a mountain lion or seeking a mate. Male sheep, known as rams, commonly travel over 100 miles to find a mate through an environment where there is very little water, forage, or shelter from predators.

In spite of the harsh conditions, sheep thrived here for thousands of years. Westward expansion in the mid-1800’s brought thousands of settlers and new challenges for bighorns. Unregulated hunting, a loss of good habitat, and deadly diseases transmitted by domestic sheep reduced the once abundant herds. Sheep disappeared completely in some areas, including Arches National Park, by the early 1900’s. In the mid-1980’s, a partnership between the state of Utah and the National Park Service reintroduced 25 sheep to Arches from nearby Canyonlands National Park.

The current Arches herd is only 50 animals. Management and study of the sheep here in Arches will continue in the hope that the bighorns will endure, prosper among their human neighbors, and once again become a stable part of the Arches ecosystem.

Marks on the Land – Links to the Past

EVERY PERSON WHO PASSES through this land makes their mark, leaves their tracks, or stakes their claim. These marks create a link to the past and allow modern explorers to imagine how the area’s 12,000 years of human history has influenced the present.

Groups of Native Americans have traveled through and lived in this area for over 10,000 years. They left behind flakes of chert, which are remnants from stone tool-making. They inscribed on rock walls, creating pictographs (paintings on the rock) and petroglyphs (carvings in the rock). Early ancestral Puebloans wore sandals with raised patterns that left marks on the ground while later groups painted their ceramic pots with elaborate decorations. All of these marks may have helped to link families with the others that would follow. Their stories and culture live on through their descendants.

In 1765, Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera and his company left their mark by becoming the first Euro-Americans to cross the Colorado River at what later became Moab. The efforts of these Spanish explorers led to the lucrative trade route that later became the “Old Spanish Trail”. Nick-named the longest, crooked-est, most ornery pack trail in the history of the United States, this part of Utah was one of the few places to get around impassable canyons. Only sections of the full 1,121 mile trail can be retraced, but part of it is believed to pass through Arches National Park just north of the Visitor Center.

In the 1850’s, waves of settlers from the east began adding their mark. Ranchers tamed the harsh landscape to raise cattle and sheep. John Wesley Wolfe was one such homesteader who set down roots in the future park. His family joined him from Ohio in 1906, and they built a new cabin with a wooden floor, complete with fine china ordered from the Sears Catalog.

Later, others arrived seeking mineral riches, especially valuable uranium. While the inhospitable desert took its claim on many of the prospectors, some struck it rich. Roads, mine shafts, and tailings are the marks they left behind. Other miners found different value in the landscape, like Alexander Ringhoffer who helped create Arches National Monument in 1929.

Today, travelers occasionally leave a different kind of mark. Artifacts that tell the stories of the past are disappearing. Rock art and historic signatures are defaced by new marks, like graffiti. Pieces of the past are lost. Fortunately, National Parks are places where this priceless history is preserved and protected.

For hundreds of years, humans have left their indelible mark on this area. Now, humans take the stage as preservers. The National Park Service protects these places and shares their stories so that each of us can make a connection to our past. How will your mark shape the future of this landscape?

Make your mark a positive one. National Parks protect the irreplaceable evidence of the past.

Be a caretaker:
• Preserve your heritage. Do not enter, alter, or deface historical sites. Leave artifacts undisturbed. (It is illegal to remove them.)
• Explore Arches’ past:
  • See rock art near the Delicate Arch trailhead and lower Courthouse Wash.
  • Ask for information about the Old Spanish Trail at the Visitor Center.
  • Visit the Wolfe family’s cabin near the Delicate Arch trailhead

Sighting Sheep

Your best chance to catch a glimpse of bighorn sheep in Arches is the first three miles of the park road. Slow down and find a pull off and watch for them. Another option is to travel the southeastern boundary of the park by driving north along Highway 128 from its junction with Highway 191. Take along a pair of binoculars to look for sheep across the river.

Remember that “Looking for sheep is an exercise in patience,” according to nature essayist Peter Steinhart, and “it’s usually rhymed with disappointment.”

Knowing they have a safe place here at Arches National Park and that efforts are ongoing to help them survive just might have to satisfy us all for now.

But, give it a try—persevere in bighorn fashion—this may be your lucky day!

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Do not feed wildlife!

Often wild animals become addicted to human food. They start by eating handouts of crackers, potato chips, and cookies, which eventually led them to eating food wrappers, plastic bags, and plastic twine that smell like food.

Autopsies have shown that ingested trash can clog stomachs, limiting the animals’ ability to process food, often causing slow starvation and death.

Wildlife that approaches you, your car, or your picnic table is accustomed to being fed. You can help by discouraging begging animals. Do not let wildlife approach you. Clap your hands. Chase them away. Keep food stored properly in cars and coolers.

Help us keep our wildlife healthy.
ARCHES NATIONAL PARK IS A VIBRANT, LIVING museum where works of art are displayed, preserved and protected. Some of the displays you might find include tapestries, mosaics and jewels. As you travel through the museum, see what catches your eye.

A Shining Example

“In any land what is more glorious than sunlight! Even here in the desert, where it falls fierce and hot as a rain of meteors, it is the one supreme ‘In any land what is more glorious than sunlight!’ Even here in the desert, what is more glorious than sunlight? What is more unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the Park. Encounters with wildlife, night skies flooded with stars and quiet formations and desert vegetation—trademarks of Arches National Park—are among the everyday experiences that make the campground such a special place. Not long ago, in order to keep the place powered-up, the droning of diesel generators were a part of the camping experience, too. Consequently, our mission to preserve these valuables in Arches’ displays in Arches National Park. The park is a perfect gallery to house nature’s amazing works of art. Long after your visit to the park, you can know that the treasures you enjoyed are safeguarded - a lasting legacy for future generations.

There are only a few of the awe-inspiring formations and desert vegetation—trademarks of Arches National Park—among the everyday experiences that make the campground such a special place. Not long ago, in order to keep the place powered-up, the droning of diesel generators were a part of the camping experience, too. Consequently, our mission to preserve “unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system” was being affected. What a quandary!

Before 1995, more than $20,000.00 and lots of staff time each year were required to provide power for three campground comfort stations, two camp host residences, the amphitheatre, and a very deep (1,160 feet) water well. The intrusion on tranquility created by the generators was understandably a real concern for park visitors and the NPS, too. Equally disturbing was engine exhaust, a byproduct of generators running 24 hours each day.

In 1995 the NPS, in partnership with the state of Utah, installed a photovoltaic/diesel hybrid electrical generating system for our campground. What’s photovoltaic technology? Simply stated, it harvests clean energy from the sun—electricity! Designed to store electricity in batteries, the new power source reduced generator run-time to just four hours each day. Noise was reduced, air quality improved, and the yearly cost of providing power at the campground was slashed by more than half. But that’s not the end of the story!

At night, the overhead lighting is turned off and the vault is opened. The prized jewels are displayed in the sky in the form of planets, stars and the Milky Way. It is a constant struggle to keep these valuables in Arches’ gallery because they are so fragile. Each decision the park and the local community makes about outdoor lighting affects their future. It’s a big responsibility for each and every one of us to ensure that these jewels remain for all to see.

Nature’s Art

Look closely at the towers of rock in the park and you will discover the beautiful “tapestries” that adorn these walls. Like tapestries in museums, nature’s tapestries document historical events. Surprisingly, the thread that holds much of the park’s tapestry together is iron. The red “thread” visible in the rock layers is due to “rusting” or oxidizing of iron.

Whitish to yellowish-tan threads are the result of an accumulation of organic acids dissolving the iron and bleaching the rock. Ribbons of turquoise-colored threads run through the tapestry at Wolfe Ranch. This unique blue-green layer was created when volcanic ash settled into a large alkaline lake - an environment with little oxygen. Time can change the design and the story.

Look from the walls down to the floor, and enjoy the covering of “mosaic tiles” in the eye, but after time and frost heaving have been at work and new organisms join in, they appear dark and bumpy and have an antiqued appearance, reflective of their mature age up to 600 years old.

The “tiles” of this mosaic are attractive when viewed individually, but the real beauty lies in the “big picture” they create. Working together, these biological soil crusts stick to grains of sand and literally hold the ground in place. They also absorb water and increase the nutrients that plants need to survive. Intact biological soil crusts provide a strong foundation for the whole park’s ecosystem. This work of art is fragile. Mind the “velvet ropes” and stay on the path.

Remember the Park Service Mission? It reminds us that as stewards of America’s most special places our duties are never ending. We’ve taken advantage of new technologies to enhance our system, adding a solar powered water pump for that deep well. It’s very efficient, and provides visitors with plenty of water.

Currently, 95 percent of the campground electrical needs are captured from the sun, operating costs are minimal, and required maintenance is minor. Soon our generators will be just a novelty—only necessary for emergency use.

Thanks to a productive partnership, wise decisions, effective management and implementation of research and technology, the constant whirring of diesel engines and their exhaust is almost eliminated from the Arches camping experience. So breathe deep and enjoy the serenity!

A Shining Example

IN ANY LAND WHAT IS MORE GLORIOUS THAN SUNLIGHT! EVEN HERE IN THE DESERT, WHERE IT FALLS FIERCE AND HOT AS A RAIN OF METEORs, IT IS THE ONE SUPREME BEAUTY TO WHICH ALL THINGS PAY ALLEGIANCE.”

LATE 19TH CENTURY AUTHOR JOHN C. VAN DYKE

Visitors typically describe their Devils Garden campground experiences as “amazing”, “tremendous”, “spectacular” and “incredible.” Fifty four campsites are nestled among distinct sandstone formations and desert vegetation— trademarks of Arches National Park. Encounters with wildlife, night skies flooded with stars and quiet campfire gatherings are among the everyday experiences that make the campground such a special place. Not long ago, in order to keep the place powered-up, the droning of diesel generators were a part of the camping experience, too. Consequently, our mission to preserve “unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system” was being affected. What a quandary!

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These are only a few of the awe-inspiring displays in Arches National Park. The park is a perfect gallery to house nature’s amazing works of art. Long after your visit to the park, you can know that the treasures you enjoyed are safeguarded - a lasting legacy for future generations.

Food For Thought

Most people know that littering is unlawful, but it does still occur. Small items like twist ties and cigarette butts are most commonly found. Food is considered litter too since it does not biodegrade in the desert. Orange peels and apple cores will dry out and remain long after they have been left behind. Please don’t litter! Be especially careful on windy days when things can fly away.

Aluminum cans may be deposited for recycling through out the park, including the visitor center and Devils Garden campground. Clear and brown glass, tin cans, plastics, corrugated cardboard and aluminum can be dropped off at the Canyonlands Community Recycling Center on the way to the Stockrock Bike Trail in Moab. Keep these items in use — please don’t send them to our landfill!!
Time flies! Use it well

HAVE A LIMITED TIME TO EXPLORE ARCHES? HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS to help you make the most of your visit, even if it is brief.

IF YOU LIKE TO HIKE

Time allocations are based on an average hiking speed of two miles per hour, and include time to drive to the trailheads. (Time spent marveling and contemplating the majestic wonders and sights varies greatly and is not included here.) Add time to take in the scenery from roadside pullouts between destinations.

In 2 hours, you can do one of these 4 routes:
• Hike the Windows loop trail and get an up-close view of the North and South Windows and Turret Arch. Then take the short trail between parking areas and hike up to Double Arch. Drive back to Balanced Rock and take the loop trail around its base. Consider its precarious position as you walk beneath it.
• Take the Delicate Arch Trail from Wolfe Ranch up the sloping slickrock to stand under the best known arch in the world. (During hot months, do this hike early or late in the day.)
• Hike between the tall sandstone fins in the Devils Garden to see Landscape Arch, perhaps the world’s longest. How long will this thin span resist the forces of gravity?
• Walk to Sand Dune Arch, across the grassy field and onward to Broken Arch. Continue around the loop, through the end of the campground, and return. Enjoy the vista toward the distant Book Cliffs, Tapestry Arch and the sandstone fins.

In half a day, take one of these three hikes:
• Hike the entire Devils Garden Trail, all the way out to the spire called Dark Angel. When you return, take the primitive loop.
• Take the moderately strenuous ranger-guided hike through the the Fiery Furnace. Sign up ahead of time at the visitor center.

If you have 1½ hours:
• Drive to the Windows Section and see some of the park’s largest arches. (Add one-half hour to stroll beneath either North Window or Double Arch.)
• Drive to the Delicate Arch Viewpoint and see the world’s most famous arch, a mile distant. Stop at Wolfe Ranch on your way back and imagine what it would have been like to homestead this relatively barren area in the late 1800s.

If you have 3 hours:
Do both drives listed above (or you can do one drive, spending ten minutes at each viewpoint along the way).

If you have 4½ hours:
You can drive all of the paved park roads, spending ten minutes at each viewpoint, and take quick drives to the Windows Section, Wolfe Ranch, and Delicate Arch Viewpoint.

Can’t decide? Well, forget the schedule and stay another day!

IF YOU LIKE TO TOUR BY CAR

If you have 4½ hours:
• Drive to the Delicate Arch Viewpoint and see the world’s most famous arch, a mile distant. Stop at Wolfe Ranch on your way back and imagine what it would have been like to homestead this relatively barren area in the late 1800s.

If you have 3 hours:
Do both drives listed above (or you can do one drive, spending ten minutes at each viewpoint along the way).

If you have 4½ hours:
You can drive all of the paved park roads, spending ten minutes at each viewpoint, and take quick drives to the Windows Section, Wolfe Ranch, and Delicate Arch Viewpoint.

Can’t decide? Well, forget the schedule and stay another day!