Your Steps Matter

A lush forest stretches across the landscape of southeast Utah, but it isn’t your typical forest. Instead of trees, soils draped in mosses, lichens and fungi rise up in rugged spires across the desert. Hidden from view, cyanobacteria move through the soil and bind loose particles together in a fibrous web, forming a living, “biological” crust across the desert.

Like trees, biological soil crust prevents erosion, anchoring soil in place and creating a stable environment where seeds can germinate.

Like trees, biological soil crust traps nutrients and water, making these essential elements more available to surrounding plants.

Like a forest, biological soil crust is a complex community of organisms that plays a significant role in ecosystems where it’s found.

Like a forest, biological soil crust may appear unremarkable when it’s young. However, this forest is tiny. So tiny that it can be clear-cut (or trampled) by something as small as the human foot.

In fact, many human activities negatively affect the presence and health of soil crusts. Compressional stresses placed on them by footprints or machinery are extremely harmful, especially when the crusts are dry and brittle. Tracks in continuous strips, such as those produced by vehicles or bicycles, create areas that are vulnerable to wind and water erosion. Rainfall washes away loose material, often creating channels along these tracks, especially on slopes.

Impacted areas may never fully recover. Under the best circumstances, a thin crust may return in five to seven years. Damage done to the fibrous web, and the accompanying loss of soil nutrients, is repaired slowly during up to 50 years of cyanobacterial growth. Lichens and mosses may take even longer to recover.

Your steps really do matter. Help us protect desert soils. Walk on trails, on rock or in sandy washes (where water flows when it rains), and keep all vehicles and bikes on designated roads.

Learn more about desert soils on our website at http://go.nps.gov/soilcrust.

Stay Connected

Join Canyonlands on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr or YouTube and share your park experiences with us and our growing online community:

facebook.com/CanyonlandsNPS
twitter.com/CanyonlandsNPS
flickr.com/CanyonlandsNPS
youtube.com/CanyonlandsNPS
**Backcountry Plan**

**What to Know Before You Go**

- Special regulations apply to these activities.
- Permits are required for overnight trips.
- Groups should arrange their day-hike details (upstream travel time) before contacting us.
- High water may lead to delays.
- There are no designated camps on the rivers.
- Pets must be leashed at all times when in the park.

**Things to Do**

- **Hiking & Backpacking**
  - **WHERE TO GO**
    - **Island in the Sky**
      - The 100-mile “White Rim Road” is the park’s most famous route. The Mesa offers similar terrain, but the roads are more technical.
    - **Hiking Trails**
      - **4th of July Trail**
        - Start: Lathrop Trailhead
        - Length: 22mi/35km round-trip to Colorado River
        - **Mystery Loop**
          - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
          - Start: Murphy Point Trailhead
        - **Murphy Loop**
          - A four-mile hike on the mesa top leads to a steep descent down a cliff face to a bend where the trails divide. One route continues along Murphy Hogback, a flat mesa with great views of the White Rim Formation and the surrounding country. At Murphy camp, hikers follow the White Rim Road outreach for about a mile, then follow a rock-strewn wash back up the hogback. At-large backpacking only.
        - **Lavafield Loop**
          - Stairs: Lava Point Trailhead
          - Start: Lava Point Trailhead
        - **Island Loop**
          - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
          - Start: Upheaval Dome Trailhead
        - **Hogback Loop**
          - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
          - Start: Murphy Point Trailhead
      - **Labyrinth Loop**
        - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
        - Start: Lava Point Trailhead
      - **Rim Rock Loop**
        - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
        - Start: Murphy Point Trailhead
      - **White Rim Road**
        - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
        - Start: Lava Point Trailhead
      - **Hogsback Loop**
        - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
        - Start: Murphy Point Trailhead
      - **Island Loop**
        - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
        - Start: Lava Point Trailhead
      - **Labyrinth Loop**
        - Length: 15mi/24km round-trip
        - Start: Lava Point Trailhead
      - **Hogback Loop**
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      - **Hogsback Loop**
Permits

Much of Canyonlands is managed as its primitive character, so the park is a popular destination for backcountry travel. Hundreds of miles of rugged trails and roads wind through the park. Activities requiring a permit include backpacking, four-wheel drive and mountain bike camping, river trips, and four-wheel drive day trips in Horse and Lavender canyons in the Needles District. Fees are charged and group size limits apply (see chart below).

LENGTH OF STAY
Permits (for up to 14 days) can be issued for up to fourteen consecutive nights. Backcountry may stay up to seven consecutive nights in any one site or zone (two nights in the Masses zone). Visitors using the designated vehicle camps may stay a maximum of three consecutive nights at a site before having to relocate to another area.

OBTAINING A PERMIT
Permits are issued by email from the Reservation Office in Moab, which is open Monday through Friday. Permits are issued up to one hour before the close of business each day.

Permits for the 2014 season and beyond will be available no more than four months, and no less than two days, prior to the permit start date. Reservation forms (and additional information) are available on our website at www.nps.gov/canyonlands.

In order to protect park resources and prevent crowding, the backcountry of Canyonlands is divided into sites and zones, and access to each is limited. Designated sites exist along all four-wheel-drive roads for use by four-wheel-drive/ mountain bike groups. There are also designated backcountry campsites along some heavily traveled trails, mostly in the Needles District. In remote areas where travel is limited to foot or boat, visitors stay in at-large zones and may choose their own routes and campsites.

RESERVING A PERMIT

Reservations for the 2014 season and beyond will be available no more than four months, and no less than two days, prior to the permit start date. Reservation forms (and additional information) are available on our website at www.nps.gov/canyonlands.

To process a request, we need the following information:

- Name of trip leader
- Name, address, email and phone number for the individual making the reservation.
- Group Size
  - The number of people and, if appropriate, vehicles in your group.
- Type of Trip
  - Select an activity. Multiple activities may be combined on one permit providing group size limits are not exceeded and no more than one activity is chosen on a given day. For example, if part of a river trip group wants to backpack for a night, they must be on a separate permit; if the entire group backtracks, it can occur on the same permit as long as group size limits for the destination are not exceeded.
- Day Use permits are not required for visits to camping sites, or backcountry from the Potash vehicle route. Canyonlands National Park includes the flat water section.
- History
  - List the dates and, if appropriate, campsites or locations desired.
  - No site is available to the same group the following year in the same location.
- Additional Information
  - River trips should indicate launch and take out locations. If a river trip launches outside Canyonlands, please indicate what day you will be entering the park. Flat water trips should indicate upstream travel arrangements.
- Payment
  - Once your reservation request is approved, you will receive an email with payment instructions.

Weather and Climate Statistics

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Weather

Water is a limiting factor for most backcountry trips in Canyonlands. There are springs scattered throughout the park, mostly in canyon bottoms. There are also large areas such as the Gravels in the Needles, and the entire White Rim butte at the rim, where there is no reliable water sources. Obtaining drinking water from either the Green or Colorado rivers is difficult as the water is very salty and hard to purify. Hikers are encouraged to pack in water whenever possible. Some springs shown on maps may dry up during periods of drought. Water source locations and current conditions are available at district visitor centers. Plan on needing at least a gallon per person per day.

QUESTIONS?
Reservation Office staff can be reached by email at reservation@nps.gov. Staff are also available to answer questions and assist with trip planning by phone. Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Mountain Time), at (435) 259-4111. When workload permits, phones may be answered by 4:30 p.m.

If you’re looking for trip planning information, consider posting your question on our Facebook page as someone else might be wondering the same thing.

Fees & Group Sizes

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<th>Activity (Fee)</th>
<th>Group Size Limit (per permit)</th>
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<th>Moab to Needles: 15 (S vehicle)</th>
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Backcountry Trip Planner

Exploring the canyons of the Mune (Day) and the Colorado River

Backcountry Trip Planner
The Needles

• It is illegal to remove natural or pictures, but leave no visible trace of Otherwise, make memories, take hundreds of hours every year removing it.

A Growing Problem

remote camera in Salt Creek Canyon.

Reduce the risk of bear encounters:

Did you know that Canyonlands is bear country? Black bears wander into the park from nearby mountains, and the Maze unit has been spotted in the Needles, the Maze, and the Orange Cliffs unit.

Graffiti

Even though graffiti is prohibited by law, ranger and volunteer groups spend hundreds of hours every year removing it in Canyonlands.

PACK & SADDLE REGULATIONS

Day Use

Day use permits are unlimited and free of charge, except in Horse and Lavender Canyons inside Needles District. Day use is limited to seven animals per day in these areas, permits are available through the information centers, and fees are charged. In all other areas of the park, including Horse and Canyons, group size must not exceed ten animals and ten people.

Overnight Use

Overnight use is permitted only at designated campgrounds. Vehicles must carry a permit. Pets are prohibited in the Maze and Orange Cliffs units. Horses must stay on designated roads. Read more at www.nps.gov/cany/planyourvisit/

For a complete list of regulations, visit www.nps.gov/cany/planyourvisit/

Pack & Saddle Regulations

People have explored the canyonlands area on horseback for over a century. In fact, many routes created by cowboys and sheepherders have become popular four-wheel-drive roads and hiking trails. However, resources, including disease transmission from ticks to wildlife and the spread of exotic plant species, have necessitated special regulations for certain areas. To learn more about access regulations to both the Maze and the Unit and the Maze District of Canyonlands National Park.

LOCATION

The Flats Ranger Station is two and one-half hours from Green River, Utah, and 1½ miles from Utah Highway 24 for 24 miles. A left-hand turn just beyond the turnoff to Goblin Valley State Park will take you along cross-country drive (7½ miles) northeast to the maze watchtower. In addition, four-wheel-drive roads lead north from Utah Highway 24 to Paha Alta. All four-wheel-drive roads may require four-wheel-drive to become impassable when wet, bare or muddy and unimproved.

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LOCATION

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PACK & SADDLE REGULATIONS

Pack & saddle stock may be taken on all backcountry roads in and Horse and Lavender Canyons. Cross-country travel is prohibited. Pack and saddle stock includes horses, burros, and mules. Pets are prohibited in the backcountry.
The Colorado and Green rivers wind through the heart of Canyonlands, cutting through layers of sandstone to form two deep canyons. The calm waters of these two rivers join at the Confluence, below which their combined flow spills down Cataract Canyon with remarkable speed and power, creating a world-class stretch of white water.

Flat water trips consist of floating down either of the rivers as far as the Confluence or Spanish Bottom. There are no rapids above the Confluence in the park, making it an ideal trip for canoes, sea kayaks and other calm water boats. Below Spanish Bottom, Cataract Canyon contains fourteen miles of rapids ranging in difficulty from Class II to V: it is a particularly hazardous and isolated section of the Colorado River and should not be attempted by inexperienced boaters.

There are no facilities or potable water sources along the rivers in Canyonlands. River trips must be self-sufficient and are required to carry a cleanable, reusable toilet system.

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Flat water trips should make their upstream travel arrangements before contacting the park for a permit. Shuttles are limited, while there is currently no limit to the number of flat water permits. The National Park Service does not operate a shuttle service.

The takeout for Cataract Canyon trips is usually Hite Marina on Lake Powell, which can be up to 30 miles from the last rapid. Conditions on Lake Powell vary widely: visit www.nps.gov/cany/river/lakepowell.htm to learn more.

CAMPING
There are no designated campsites along the rivers in Canyonlands. During periods of high water, camps can be difficult to find, especially for large groups. Other times, sandbars can be plentiful and make ideal camps. In Cataract Canyon, there is a voluntary campsite sign-up register for groups traveling below the Confluence.

FISHING
Fishing is not a popular activity in Canyonlands. The muddy waters of the Green and Colorado rivers contain mostly carp, catfish, sand shiners, red shiners and fathead minnows. Visitors must have a valid Utah State fishing license and must comply with all state fishing regulations. Small populations of endangered native fish exist in the park, including colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, humpback and bonytail chub. Due to resource development, competition with non-native species and other factors, native populations have declined and are struggling to survive in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Visitors should become familiar with the above fish and the proper techniques for releasing them unharmed.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages the riverways upstream of the park boundary on both rivers. Permits are required for boating the Green River between Green River State Park and Spanish Bottom (Labyrinth Canyon). There is no charge for Labyrinth permits. If a reservation form is submitted for boating the Green River within Canyonlands and your launch location is in Labyrinth Canyon, the required interagency permit will be included. Permits are not required for the Colorado between Moab and the park.

LAUNCH/TAKEDOWN INFORMATION
The most common river launch ramps are outside the park boundaries at Ruby Ranch or Mineral Bottom on the Green, and Potash or the Moab dock on the Colorado. Green River State Park and Ruby Ranch both charge a small fee for launches. Call Ruby Ranch at (435) 650-3193, or Green River State Park at (435) 564-3633 for more information.

PERMITS
Permits are required for all overnight river trips in Canyonlands, and for one-day Cataract trips (fee charged). River permits are issued by email from the Reservation Office, and may be obtained no more than four months before a trip’s start date. Canyonlands does not restrict launch dates. The maximum group size is 40 people, though to preserve the wilderness character of the river the park suggests groups be limited to sixteen. See page four for more information on permits.

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There is no vehicle access to the rivers near the Confluence or Cataract Canyon. Groups wishing to avoid the white water must travel upstream. Unless groups have their own motors or a lot of time to paddle, upstream travel is via jet boat shuttle back to Potash. This service is available for a fee from two licensed operators: Tag-a-Long Expeditions, (435) 259-8946, and Tex’s Riverways, (435) 259-5101.

River Distances & Float Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>River</th>
<th>Launch Location</th>
<th>Launch Fee†</th>
<th>Miles to Confluence</th>
<th>Days*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado River</td>
<td>Moab</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potash</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2 to 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green River</td>
<td>Green River State Park</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>6 to 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crystal Geyser</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>6 to 9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruby Ranch</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>5 to 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mineral Bottom</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3 to 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cataract Canyon

| Confluence to Hite | no | 45 miles | 2 to 3 |

† Launch fees are not charged or collected by the National Park Service.
* Estimated times. Actual float times will vary with river conditions.