



Foundation Document Overview

Arches National Park

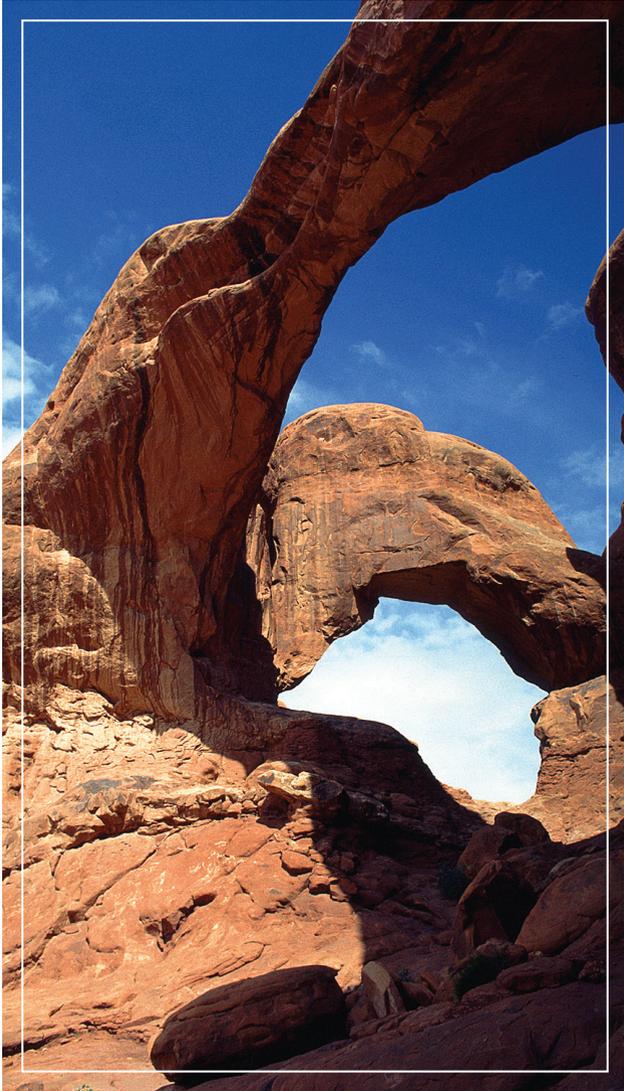
Utah



Contact Information

For more information about the *Arches National Park Foundation Document*, contact: arch_superintendent@nps.gov or 435-719-2100 or write to: Superintendent, Arches National Park, 2282 S.W. Resource Boulevard, Moab, Utah 84532

Purpose



The purpose of ARCHES NATIONAL PARK is to protect extraordinary examples of geologic features including arches, natural bridges, windows, spires, balanced rocks, as well as other features of geologic, historic, and scientific interest, and to provide opportunities to experience these resources and their associated values in their majestic natural settings.

Significance

Significance statements express why Arches National Park's resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Arches National Park contains the largest concentration of natural arches on earth.
- The geographic location of Arches National Park provides visitors with the opportunity to enjoy iconic Colorado Plateau landscapes in a majestic natural setting, with striking geologic features in the foreground and the towering La Sal Mountains in the distance creating expansive views of contrasting colors and textures.
- Arches National Park protects representative examples of Colorado Plateau ecosystems, providing opportunities for scientific studies of natural and human systems in diverse landscape settings over long periods of time.
- Arches National Park protects a notable array of cultural sites and features that reflect the many different ways people have occupied and used Colorado Plateau landscapes over the last 12,000 years.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Geologic Resources.** This includes arches, fins, windows, balanced rocks, spires, natural bridges, and other geologic features such as faults and anticlines. Geologic processes formed and continue to change the landscape.
- **Clean Air and Scenic Vistas.** Clean air and undeveloped natural viewsheds allow for incredible vistas of the nearby La Sal Mountains and other scenic landscapes in and around the park. Clean air enhances the color and contrast of landscape features, allows visitors to see great distances, and safeguards ecosystem, visitor, and staff health.

- **Colorado Plateau Ecosystems.** Clean water, native biotic communities, and the natural hydrologic, geomorphic, and biotic processes necessary for sustaining them are fundamental to the integrity of natural ecosystems protected in Arches National Park.



- **Cultural Features.** Arches National Park includes rare Barrier Canyon style rock art panels, lithic quarries, Civilian Conservation Corps–era structures, one of only 12 known Denis Julien inscriptions, and national registered Wolfe Ranch Historical District.
- **Collaborative Conservation, Science, and Scholarship.** Collaboration with external partners and engagement in scientific and scholarly activities are values and processes that are fundamental for achieving the park’s purpose and maintaining its significance in the context of shared landscape values, rapidly changing social and environmental conditions, and uncertainty in outcomes of management decision making.

Other Important Resources and Values



Arches National Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Natural Soundscapes.** Parts of Arches National Park are free from human-caused sounds and natural sounds of the desert predominate in these areas.
- **Paleontological Resources.** Hundreds of paleontological features have been found in and around the park including fossil evidence of prehistoric vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants.
- **Opportunities for Primitive and Remote Experiences.** The backcountry areas of Arches National Park provide opportunities to experience quiet and solitude in a remote natural setting as experienced at Lost Spring Canyon, Eagle Park, and Salt Wash.
- **Dark Night Skies.** The dark night skies in Arches National Park are generally quite dark, except for the glow coming from the cities of Moab and Grand Junction.
- **Rare and Iconic Wildlife Species.** Desert bighorn sheep, peregrine falcons, and other raptors are viewed and enjoyed by visitors to Arches National Park.
- **Museum Collections.** The park’s museum collections contain three-dimensional objects and natural history specimens and artifacts that are representative of the resources within the park’s boundaries. Archives also are a component of museum collections and document park and resource management history.

Description

Arches National Park is in the heart of canyon country in southeastern Utah and is considered one of America's scenic wonders. The park preserves 76,679 acres of high desert on the Colorado Plateau, punctuated by rocky ridges, canyons, fins, towers, monoliths, pinnacles, and more than 2,000 arches. The park's distinctive landscapes are products of multiple geologic processes including salt tectonics, sedimentation, folding and faulting, erosion, and salt dissolution operating over hundreds of millions of years. Diverse geologic formations, landforms, and soils shape patterns in the distribution and abundance of plants and animals through effects on the availability of scarce water resources in this arid environment. Cultural resources in the park span at least 12,000 years of human occupation and activity and include both prehistoric and historic remains such as those left by ancestral Puebloans and, more recently, by miners, ranchers and Civilian Conservation Corps members.

Arches National Park was first established as a national monument in 1929 and later became a national park in 1971. The park is within the "Grand Circle," a broad geographic region in the southwestern United States that encompasses more than 60 recreation sites in 5 states. The Grand Circle includes some of the Southwest's most unique landscapes, attractions, scenic byways, and national park lands. The nearby town of Moab is a major tourist destination that serves as a hub for a wide range of recreational activities in the surrounding region. The prominent La Sal Mountains to the southeast rise to more than 12,600 feet above sea level and provide a scenic background for the park. Elevations in the park range from 4,085 to 5,653 feet above sea level.

