



Pull-out hiking guide inside!

Bring this paper to the visitor center desk for travel tips.

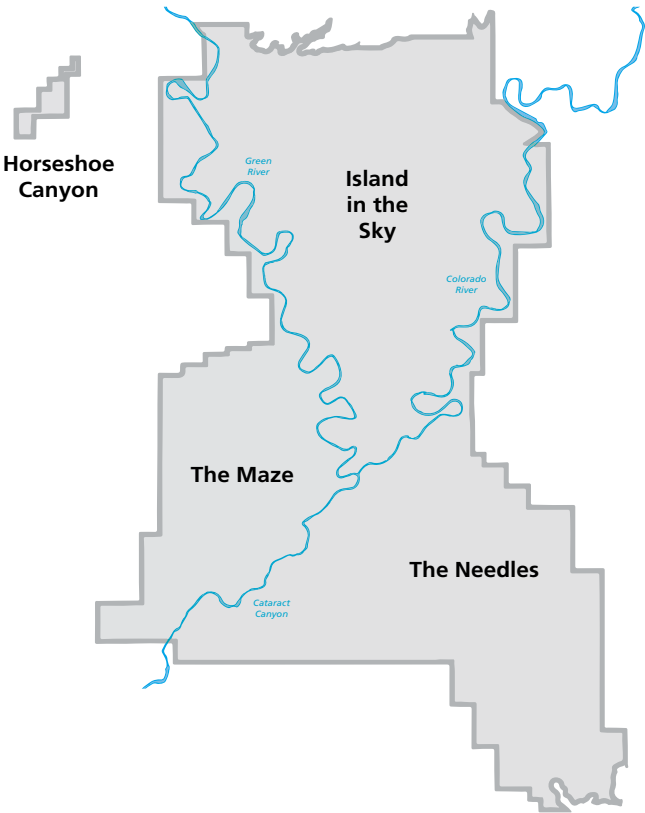
Chesler Park NPS PHOTO / EMILY OGDEN

Welcome

Canyonlands National Park preserves 337,598 acres of colorful canyons, mesas, buttes, fins, arches, and spires in the heart of southeast Utah’s high desert. Water and gravity have been the prime architects of this land, sculpting layers of rock into the rugged landscape we see today.

Canyonlands preserves that natural beauty and human history throughout its four districts, which are divided by the Green and Colorado rivers. **Island in the Sky** is closest to Moab and is the most visited district. **The Needles** is a farther drive, and is great for a day trip or backcountry hiking and backpacking. **The Maze** is the most remote and rugged district, requiring a four-wheel-drive, high-clearance vehicle, and more time. The Maze’s Horseshoe Canyon unit contains intriguing rock markings from tribal cultures. The **Rivers** separate the other three districts and offer world-class boating opportunities.

While the districts share a primitive desert atmosphere, each retains its own character and offers different opportunities for exploration and adventure. Though they appear close on a map, there are no roads in the park that directly link the districts. Traveling between them requires two to six hours by car. Check inside this visitor guide for the best way to plan your visit to Canyonlands.



Welcome to Canyonlands.

Have a safe and enjoyable visit by remembering these rules and advisories.

- 

Drink water. It is easy to become dehydrated here, even in cold temperatures. Plan on drinking at least 1 gallon (4 L) of water per day. You can get water year-round at The Needles and Island in the Sky visitor centers, and seasonally at The Needles Campground.
- 

Respect nature. Leave plants, rocks, and artifacts where you see them. Do not feed or disturb animals.
- 

Find your way. Cairns (small rock piles) mark routes. Don’t build your own; they could mislead other hikers. If you get lost, stay where you are, and wait for rescue.
- 

Keep off the arches. It’s prohibited—and dangerous—to climb or walk on any arch in the park.
- 

When thunder roars, go indoors. There is no safe place outside during a storm. Seek shelter in a safe building or vehicle.
- 

Leave drones at home. Launching, landing, or operating unmanned aircraft (such as model airplanes, quadcopters, or drones) is prohibited.
- 

Respect living things. Stay on trails to protect fragile biological soil crusts and plant and animal habitat, and to reduce your risk of getting lost.
- 

Watch your step. Rocks fall. People fall. Sandstone is slippery when wet or icy. In winter, avoid snowy or icy trails.
- 

Leave the rocks as you see them. Graffiti—carving, scratching, chalking, or any type of marking—is illegal and unsightly.
- 

The sun is intense, and shade is minimal in the high desert. Protect yourself with sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat.
- 

Do not use ATVs. It’s prohibited to use any type of ATV or OHV. There are many roads outside the park where you can use ATVs and OHVs.



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Canyonlands Natural History Association (CNHA), a nonprofit organization that assists the National Park Service in its educational, interpretive, and scientific programs. For more information, see the back page.

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Park Fees

We charge fees for park entrance, camping, and permits. Eighty percent of your fees collected at Canyonlands return to the park to address needs in maintenance, infrastructure, resource management, and visitor services. Fees are subject to change.

Entrance Fees	
Single vehicle (per vehicle)	\$30
Motorcycle (per vehicle)	\$25
Pedestrian/Bicycle (per person)	\$15
Interagency Annual Pass	\$80
Southeast Utah Parks Pass	\$55

Camping Fees (per night)	
Island in the Sky Campground <i>Individual Sites</i>	\$15
The Needles Campground <i>Individual Sites</i>	\$20
Needles Group Sites <i>price depends on group size</i>	\$70 to \$225

General Information



INFORMATION CENTERS

Canyonlands National Park operates visitor centers year-round at Island in the Sky and Hans Flat (The Maze), and spring through fall at The Needles. Hours vary with the season. Many neighboring communities have information centers with knowledgeable staff, brochures, and maps.



WATER

Canyonlands is in the high desert, and it is easy to become dehydrated, even in cold temperatures. Plan on drinking at least 1 gallon (4 L) of water per day. You can get water year-round at The Needles and Island in the Sky visitor centers and seasonally at The Needles Campground.

FOOD, GAS, LODGING, AND OTHER SERVICES

There is no food, gas, lodging, or other amenities at Canyonlands. Come prepared with adequate food, fuel, and water. These may be found in nearby towns—see next page for mileage.



The Needles Campground NPS PHOTO / CHRIS WONDERLY



CAMPING

Campgrounds at The Needles and Island in the Sky have toilets, picnic tables, and fire rings. The park has no hookups or dump stations. Maximum length is 28 feet in most sites. Individual sites at Island in the Sky are first-come, first-served. You can make reservations for group campsites and some individual sites at The Needles online at Recreation.gov, or you can call 877-444-6777 (toll free), 877-833-6777 (TTY), or +1 518-885-3639 (international). There are also many campgrounds outside the park. Both campgrounds have accessible campsites.



BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS AND RESERVATIONS

You must have a permit for all overnight trips in the backcountry. If you're taking a four-wheel-drive, motorcycle, or mountain bike day trip, you must have a day-use permit on Lavender Canyon, Horse Canyon/Pekaboo, White Rim, and Elephant Hill roads. We accept reservations for overnight backcountry permits up to four months in advance, or day-use permits up to 24 hours in advance. You can get permits in person at park visitor centers, or you can reserve in advance at go.nps.gov/canybackcountry.



EMERGENCY

If you have an emergency:

- **Contact a park employee.**
- **Go to a visitor center.** If the building is closed, use the pay phones in front of the building to dial 911 (no coin needed).
- **If service is available, dial 911 on your cell phone.** However, there are many areas without cell coverage in Canyonlands.



Ranger program at Grand View Point NPS PHOTO



RANGER PROGRAMS

Rangers offer evening programs and overlook talks April through October as staffing allows. Check for posted schedules at visitor centers and campgrounds.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Canyonlands experiences wide temperature fluctuations, sometimes over 40 degrees in a single day. Summer temperatures often exceed 100°F (37°C). Late summer monsoons bring violent storms, which often cause flash floods. Severe lightning occurs here. Winters (November through March) are cold, with highs averaging 30° to 50°F (0° to 10°C), and lows averaging 0° to 20°F (-17° to -6°C).



ACCESSIBILITY

At Island in the Sky and The Needles, people with mobility impairments can access visitor centers, toilets, and campgrounds. We hold campsites for people with disabilities at both campgrounds. Grand View Point, Green River, and Buck Canyon overlooks (Island in the Sky) and Wooden Shoe Arch Overlook (The Needles) are wheelchair accessible. Other points of interest may be accessible with some assistance.

People with visual impairments can ask at a visitor center for large-print, braille, and audio described editions of the park brochure. Movies at visitor centers are captioned for people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

Service animals, dogs trained to perform specific tasks for a person with a disability, are allowed on trails and in the backcountry. Emotional support (“therapy”) animals are not considered service animals by the Americans with Disabilities Act.



TRAVELING WITH PETS

Activities with pets are limited at Canyonlands. Pets must be on a leash at all times when outside a vehicle. ***The desert can be deadly for pets left in cars.*** You should not leave pets in the car when temperatures are above 68°F (20°C), even with the windows open.

You **may** have your pet with you:

- at developed campgrounds at Island in the Sky and The Needles,
- along paved roads, and
- in your vehicle on the Potash/Shafter Canyon road between Moab and Island in the Sky.

You **may not** have your pet with you:

- on any hiking trails,
- at overlooks,
- anywhere in the backcountry,
- on the rivers, or
- on backcountry roads, even if it's in your vehicle.



NPS PHOTO / NEAL HERBERT

Protect Your Park Stay on Trails

This land is every bit as fragile as it is beautiful. If you step off the trail, you can easily injure the soil's living surface. When biological soil crust is damaged, it can take decades to recover.

Help us protect park soils during your visit. Please walk on trails, rock, or in sandy washes (where water flows when it rains), and keep all vehicles and bikes on designated roads. Read more about soil crusts on page 9.

Island in the Sky

435-259-4712 go.nps.gov/isky

The Island in the Sky mesa rests on sheer sandstone cliffs over 1,000 feet above the surrounding terrain. Each overlook offers a different perspective on the park's spectacular landscape. If you have a short period of time, Island in the Sky is the easiest district to visit. Many pullouts along the paved scenic drive offer spectacular views. Hiking trails and four-wheel-drive roads access backcountry areas for day or overnight trips.

DIRECTIONS

On US 191, drive 10 miles (16 km) north of Moab or 22 miles (35 km) south of Interstate 70 (Crescent Junction), then take UT 313 southwest for 22 miles (35 km). Driving time from Moab is roughly 40 minutes to the visitor center, or 60 minutes to Grand View Point.

BASICS

- The visitor center is open year-round. In January and February, the building is closed Wednesdays and Thursdays. You'll find exhibits, book and map sales, backcountry permits, general information, and park rangers on duty.
- Drinking water is available year-round.
- You can watch the 15-minute orientation movie *Wilderness of Rock* at the visitor center.
- There are toilets at the visitor center, campground, Grand View Point, Green River Overlook, Mesa Arch, Upheaval Dome, and White Rim Overlook. The visitor center toilets are wheelchair accessible.
- The campground has 12 sites, first-come, first-served. No water. No hookups. Nightly fee is \$15 per site.

SCENIC DRIVE

You can tour the entire mesa top via the 34-mile roundtrip scenic drive. If you're looking for a written guide, you can purchase *The Road Guide to Canyonlands - Island in the Sky District* at the visitor center. You can also purchase or rent a self-guiding driving tour CD. Grand View Point, Green River Overlook, and Buck Canyon Overlook are accessible to wheelchairs. There are picnic areas at White Rim Overlook, Upheaval Dome, and the visitor center.



Mesa Arch NPS PHOTO

LEARN ABOUT THE PARK

- We offer ranger programs at various times, spring through fall. Check at the visitor center or campground for locations, times, and topics.
- Learn about native plants and their uses on Mesa Arch Trail.

FOR KIDS

Kids can ask for a junior ranger book at any visitor center. Families can also check out an Explorer Pack filled with activities and supplies to help you have fun in the park (free, one per family). For hiking, kids enjoy visiting Mesa Arch and climbing the back of the whale at Whale Rock. Use caution as there are unfenced overlooks and steep drop-offs on both of these trails.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR DAY

First, stop at the visitor center for current information on trails, roads, ranger programs, weather, or to watch the park movie.

In 2 hours you can: Drive to Grand View Point or Green River Overlook. Hike to Mesa Arch.

In 4 hours you can: Drive to Grand View Point, Green River Overlook, and Upheaval Dome. Hike the Grand View Point, Mesa Arch, and Upheaval Dome Overlook trails.

In 8 hours you can: Visit every overlook. Hike several mesa top trails or one of the more strenuous trails descending to the White Rim. Enjoy lunch on the trail, or picnic at White Rim Overlook or Upheaval Dome picnic areas.

Sunrise and Sunset: Visit Mesa Arch at dawn. Visit Green River Overlook or Grand View Point at dusk for incredible views of sunset over the canyons. Hike to the top of Aztec Butte or Whale Rock for a spectacular view of Island in the Sky and surrounding countryside.

The Needles

435-259-4711 go.nps.gov/theneedles

The Needles forms the southeast corner of Canyonlands and was named for the colorful spires of Cedar Mesa Sandstone that dominate the area. The district's extensive trail system provides many opportunities for long day hikes and overnight trips.

DIRECTIONS

On US 191, drive 40 miles (60 km) south of Moab or 14 miles (22 km) north of Monticello, then take UT 211 roughly 35 miles (56 km) west. Highway 211 ends in The Needles, and is the only paved road leading in and out of the area.

BASICS

- The visitor center is open daily, spring through fall. The visitor center is closed in winter. You'll find exhibits, book and map sales, general information, picnic area, and park rangers on duty.
- You can get drinking water year-round at the visitor center or spring through fall at the campground.
- You can watch the 15-minute orientation movie, *Wilderness of Rock*, at the visitor center.
- There are restrooms with running water at the visitor center and campground (wheelchair accessible). There are toilets at Elephant Hill.
- The campground has 26 sites available, some sites are available for reservation, and other sites are first-come, first-served. No hookups. Nightly fee is \$20 per site.

SCENIC DRIVE

The scenic drive continues 6.5 miles past the visitor center, ending at Big Spring Canyon Overlook. There are several pullouts for short hiking trails, viewpoints, and a picnic area. Graded gravel roads lead to Cave Spring and the Elephant Hill trailhead. Get some of the best views of The Needles on the graded Elephant Hill access road (about one mile from the pavement).

LEARN ABOUT THE PARK

- Take a self-guiding trail at Cave Spring, Pothole Point, Roadside Ruin, and Slickrock.
- In spring and fall, rangers present campfire programs nightly at the campground. Check at the visitor center or campground for details.

FOR KIDS

Kids can ask for a junior ranger book at any visitor center. Families can also check out a Discovery Pack filled with activities and supplies to help you have fun in the park (free, one per family). The Cave Spring and Pothole Point trails are both popular hikes with kids.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR DAY

First, stop at the visitor center for current information on trails, roads, ranger programs, weather, or to watch the park movie.

In 2 hours you can: Drive to Big Spring Canyon Overlook, and hike the Pothole Point trail along the way. Enjoy a picnic and view the Needles from the picnic area.

In 4 hours you can: Explore the scenic drive and graded dirt roads. Hike the Cave Spring, Pothole Point, and Roadside Ruin trails, or the longer Slickrock trail.

In 8 hours you can: After exploring the scenic drive, hike to Chesler Park Viewpoint or around the Big Spring-Squaw Canyon loop. Enjoy lunch on the trail.

Sunrise and Sunset: Sunrise is spectacular from the campground area, especially along the short trail between loops A and B. Visit Pothole Point or Wooden Shoe Arch Overlook to watch the glow of sunset wash over The Needles.



Chesler Park NPS PHOTO / EMILY OGDEN

The Maze

go.nps.gov/themaze

The Maze is remote, and all roads are unpaved. You'll need a four-wheel-drive vehicle, more time, and a greater degree of self-sufficiency to visit The Maze. Your trip may take anywhere from three days to a week or more.

VISITOR SERVICES

Hans Flat Ranger Station is open daily year-round. It has a small sales area with books and maps. There are no services, food, gas, or potable water sources in The Maze. These are located in Hanksville, 68 miles (109 km), or Green River, 86 miles (138 km).

BACKCOUNTRY TRAVEL

Trails in The Maze are primitive. Many canyons look alike and are difficult to identify without a topographic map. You must have a permit for all overnight trips. Backpackers stay in at-large zones. Backcountry vehicle campers and mountain bikers stay in designated sites and must provide their own toilet systems.



NPS PHOTO / NEAL HERBERT

HORSESHOE CANYON

Horseshoe Canyon contains several intriguing rock art panels, including “The Great Gallery,” which features remarkable life-sized figures and intricate designs. To visit every rock art panel, plan on a strenuous roundtrip hike of seven miles. A trip to Horseshoe Canyon usually requires a full day.
go.nps.gov/horseshoecanyon



QUESTIONS?

For the most up-to-date information on road and trail conditions at The Maze, call Hans Flat Ranger Station 435-259-2652. (8 am - 4:30 pm)

The Rivers

go.nps.gov/canyrivers

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 The Confluence, the combined rivers’ flow spills down Cataract Canyon with remarkable speed and power, creating a world-class stretch of white water.



NPS PHOTO / NEAL HERBERT

You can take a flatwater trip 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 14 miles of rapids ranging in difficulty from Class II to V. This is a hazardous and isolated section of the Colorado River, and you should not attempt it unless you’re an experienced boater. There are no facilities or potable water sources along the rivers in Canyonlands. Your river trip must be self-sufficient, and you must carry a cleanable, reusable toilet system.

PERMITS

You must have a permit for all overnight river trips in Canyonlands and for one-day Cataract Canyon trips (fee charged). Get your permit online at go.nps.gov/canybackcountry no more than four months before your trip’s start date. We do not restrict launch dates. Maximum group size is 40 people, though to preserve the wilderness character of the river we recommend limiting your group size to 16. For more boating information, visit go.nps.gov/canyrivers.

Backcountry Roads



go.nps.gov/canydriving

There are hundreds of miles of four-wheel-drive roads in Canyonlands, providing access to various campsites, trailheads, and viewpoints in the park’s backcountry. These roads range in difficulty from intermediate to extremely technical. Research your route thoroughly before attempting. Check for current conditions at visitor centers.

If you plan to enjoy the park’s four-wheel-drive roads, please note:

- You must have a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle (low range) on the White Rim Road and all Needles and Maze backcountry roads. All-wheel-drive or two-wheel-drive vehicles are not allowed since they are not equipped to drive on rough slickrock, loose rocks, deep sand, and steep switchbacks.
- You must have a permit for all overnight trips in the backcountry, and for day-use trips on White Rim, Elephant Hill, Lavender Canyon, and Horse Canyon/Peekaboo roads. In spring and fall, demand for permits frequently exceeds the number available. If you plan to visit Canyonlands during peak season, especially to camp along the White Rim Road, you should make reservations well in advance.
- All vehicles must remain on established roads and be registered and operated by a licensed driver.
- ATVs, OHVs, and Utah State Type I / Type II vehicles are prohibited, even if registered. Motorcycles must be interstate highway legal.
- You may take your pets with you on the Potash/Shافر Trail road between Moab and Island in the Sky, but you may not have your pet on the White Rim Road or any other unpaved road.



NPS PHOTO / KIRSTEN KEARSE

Backcountry Roads		
Island in the Sky		
White Rim Road		The White Rim Road loops around and below the Island in the Sky mesa top and provides views of the surrounding area. These 100-mile trips usually take two to three days by four-wheel-drive vehicle or three to four days by mountain bike. Overnight and day-use permits required.
The Needles		
Elephant Hill		One of the most technical four-wheel-drive roads in Utah. Steep grades, loose rock, stair-step drops, tight turns, and tricky backing. Past the hill, equally challenging roads lead to various features and BLM lands south of the park. No water at the campsites. There are vault toilets at all camping areas except New Bates Wilson. If you are camping at New Bates Wilson, you must bring your own toilet. Overnight and day-use permits required.
Colorado Overlook		Moderate road, can be sandy for mountain bikes. You can avoid the large rocks and stair-step drops in the last 1.5 miles by parking on the road and walking to the overlook. (Be sure to leave room for other vehicles to pass.) Outstanding views of the Colorado River canyon. Unprotected overlook; use caution. No vehicle camping.
Horse Canyon / Peekaboo		Frequently impassable due to quicksand. Roads travel along canyon bottoms where deep sand, deep water, and quicksand are common. Too sandy for mountain bikes. There are campsites at Peekaboo with prehistoric rock paintings and peckings nearby. You must have a portable toilet at Peekaboo campsite. You may not drive beyond Peekaboo in Salt Creek Canyon. Horse Canyon Road leads to several arches and Tower Ruin. We recommend traveling in pairs with winch capable, high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicles. Recovery costs are high. Overnight and day-use permits required.
Lavender Canyon		Road follows a canyon bottom where deep sand, deep water, and quicksand are common. Too sandy for mountain bikes. There are major creek crossings with steep banks. You can view many arches and archeological sites from the road. No vehicle camping inside the park. Overnight and day-use permits required.
The Maze		
Four-wheel-drive roads in The Maze are extremely difficult, present considerable risk of vehicle damage, and should not be attempted by inexperienced drivers. A high-clearance, low-range, four-wheel-drive vehicle is required for all Maze backcountry roads. (All-wheel-drive vehicles do not have the clearance or low gearing required.) Towing charges are very expensive; visitors in the backcountry with disabled vehicles can expect towing fees in excess of \$2,000. To plan your Maze trip, ask for The Maze backcountry handout in a visitor center or visit go.nps.gov/themaze.		



NPS PHOTO / JACOB W. FRANK

The Needles offers over 60 miles of interconnecting trails, as challenging as they are rewarding. Many different itineraries are possible, but some of the more popular ones are listed below. Conditions are primitive. Most trails traverse a mixture of slickrock benches and sandy washes. Longer trails are especially rough and require negotiating steep passes with drop-offs, narrow spots, or ladders. Water in the backcountry is unreliable and scarce in some areas. Trails are marked with cairns (small rock piles). Do not disturb cairns or build new ones.

Although strong hikers can hike most trails in a day, many trails form loops with other trails for longer trips. Net elevation change is generally several hundred feet or less, except for the Lower Red Lake Trail, which drops 1,400 feet to the Colorado River.

Remember—help protect park soils during your visit. Please walk on trails, rock, or in sandy washes (where water flows when it rains).



Pothole Point NPS PHOTO / NEAL HERBERT



On the trail to Chesler Park NPS PHOTO

Trail	Distance (roundtrip)	Average Time	Description	♂♂ - toilet at trailhead (no water) ☒ - drinking water at trailhead (seasonal)
Short				
Roadside Ruin	0.3 miles (0.5 km)	20 minutes	A short trail leads to a storage structure built by indigenous people.	
Cave Spring	0.6 miles (1.0 km)	45 minutes	This short loop leads to a historic cowboy camp and prehistoric rock paintings and peckings. You will climb two ladders to complete the route.	
Pothole Point	0.6 miles (1.0 km)	45 minutes	Uneven slickrock leads to diverse pothole communities and views of The Needles. Trail follows cairns.	
Slickrock	2.4 miles (4 km)	1.5 hours	This trail features expansive 360-degree views. Geology guide available. Trail crosses uneven surfaces.	
Strenuous				
Chesler Park Viewpoint ♂♂	6 miles (10 km)	3 - 4 hours	This popular trail leads to a pass overlooking a scenic expanse of desert grasses and shrubs surrounded by sandstone spires.	
Big Spring Canyon to Squaw Canyon ♂♂ ☒	7.5 miles (12 km)	3 - 4 hours	A great introduction to the landscape of The Needles, connecting two canyons for a loop across varied terrain. The route between the canyons climbs steep grades that are dangerous when wet and may make people with a fear of heights uncomfortable.	
Squaw Canyon to Lost Canyon ♂♂ ☒	8.7 miles (14 km)	4 - 6 hours	A wonderful loop hike with some difficult sections climbing between the two canyons. Riparian areas in both canyons attract birds and other wildlife. Route in Lost Canyon passes through dense vegetation and may be very wet. One ladder must be climbed.	
Confluence Overlook	10 miles (16.5 km)	5 - 6 hours	Unlike other Needles hikes, this trail traverses dry, open country along the northern edge of the geologic faults that shaped the Needles. Trail ends at a cliff overlooking the junction of the Green and Colorado rivers 1,000 (304 m) feet below.	
Peekaboo ♂♂ ☒	10 miles (16.5 km)	5 - 6 hours	This trail crosses both Squaw and Lost canyons on its way to Salt Creek Canyon, passing along high slickrock benches with spectacular views. Steep slopes and nearby cliff edges make this a challenging route. Two ladders must be climbed. View prehistoric rock paintings at the end of the trail near Peekaboo camp.	
Big Spring Canyon to Elephant Canyon ♂♂ ☒	10.8 miles (17 km)	4 - 6 hours	This loop features extended hiking on slickrock benches and mesa tops overlooking canyons. Excellent views of sheer cliff walls and other rock formations. You will have to climb two ladders in the pass between the canyons.	
Druid Arch ♂♂	11 miles (18 km)	5 - 7 hours	This trail offers one of the most spectacular views in The Needles. It follows the first part of the Chesler Park trail, then branches off to travel along the bottom of Elephant Canyon through deep sand and loose rock. The last 0.25 mile at the upper end is steep with one ladder and some scrambling.	
Chesler Park Loop / Joint Trail ♂♂	11 miles (18 km)	5 - 7 hours	This trail provides many great panoramas of the Needles formations. The Joint Trail winds through deep, narrow fractures in the rock.	



Several short trails explore the Island in the Sky mesa top with minimal elevation change. Moderate trails involve elevation, such as climbing a sandstone feature or descending partway into a canyon. Long trails begin on the mesa top and descend via switchbacks to the White Rim, or beyond to one of the rivers. These are considered strenuous, with an elevation change of 1,000-2,000 feet (304-609 m). They require negotiating steep slopes of loose rock as well as sections of deep sand.

Trails are marked with cairns (small rock piles). Do not disturb existing cairns or build new ones. There are signs at trailheads and intersections. All trails leading below the mesa top are primitive and rough. There is no potable water along any of the hiking trails. You can get water at the visitor center spring through fall.



Mesa Arch



Aztec Butte NPS PHOTOS / NEAL HERBERT



Grand View Point

Trail	Distance (roundtrip)	Average Time	Description
♿♿ - toilet at trailhead (no water)			
Easy - Mesa Top			
Mesa Arch ♿♿	0.5 miles (0.8 km)	30 minutes	A short hike leads to a cliff-edge arch. Mesa Arch is a classic sunrise spot, and has stunning views towards the La Sal Mountains any time of day.
White Rim Overlook ♿♿	1.8 miles (2.8 km)	1.5 hours	Walk to an east-facing overlook for views of the Colorado River, Monument Basin, and La Sal Mountains. Best in late afternoon. <i>Very limited trailhead parking. Hikers may not park off pavement or in picnic area.</i>
Grand View Point ♿♿	2 miles (3.2 km)	1.5 hours	A stunning out-and-back trail, this walk showcases spectacular panoramic views as it follows the canyon edge.
Murphy Point	3.6 miles (5.8 km)	2 hours	This longer hike leads past a historic corral on the mesa top. The trail ends with panoramic views of Candlestick Tower, the Green River, and the White Rim Road.
Moderate - Mesa Top			
Upheaval Dome first overlook ♿♿	0.8 miles (1.3 km)	1 hour	A short but steep trail leads to a clear view into Upheaval Dome. Exhibits at the end of the trail discuss this unique geologic feature.
Upheaval Dome second overlook ♿♿	1.8 miles (2.9 km)	1.5 hours	This trail splits off from the first overlook trail, following cairns to more views of Upheaval Dome and Upheaval Canyon.
Whale Rock	1 mile (1.6 km)	1 hour	This trail leads up the side of a sandstone dome, ending with broad views of the Island in the Sky. Be careful: steep drop-offs.
Aztec Butte	2 miles (3.2 km)	1.5 hours	The trail follows a sandy wash, then splits. The eastern fork to your right ascends Aztec Butte for spectacular views. The western fork on the left climbs the smaller butte then drops below the rim to two ancestral Puebloan granaries. Both trails require scrambling up slickrock and ledges. <i>Entering, touching, or climbing on archeological sites is strictly prohibited. View structures from a distance to protect fragile walls.</i>
Neck Spring	5.8 miles (9.3 km)	3 - 4 hours	A walk back in time, this loop trail passes historic ranching features and two springs where cowboys watered cattle. With minor elevation changes, this trail is a great way to see some varied plant life.
Strenuous - Mesa Top to White Rim			
Gooseberry ♿♿	5.4 miles (8.6 km)	4 - 6 hours	Island in the Sky's steepest trail rapidly descends 1,400 feet (427 m) to the White Rim bench. Rough switchbacks cross sheer cliffs and scree slopes. Step carefully, and don't forget to look up to take in the view.
Syncline Loop ♿♿	8.3 miles (13.3 km)	5 - 7 hours	This challenging trail follows the canyons around Upheaval Dome and requires navigating steep switchbacks, climbing and scrambling through boulder fields, and a 1,300-foot (396 m) elevation change. Most park rescues occur on this trail. Carry a map, extra gallons of water, and a flashlight. Hike this trail clockwise for more afternoon shade.
Murphy Loop	10.8 miles (17.4 km)	5 - 7 hours	A great full-day hike, this trail drops off the side of the mesa top for a 1,400-foot (427 m) elevation change. The trail offers vast views from the Murphy Hogback, then returns up a wash.
Alcove Spring	11.2 miles (18 km)	6 - 7 hours	After descending 1,300 feet (396 m) past a large alcove, the trail meanders in a wide canyon to the base of the notable Moses and Zeus towers.
Wilhite	12.2 miles (19.6 km)	6 - 8 hours	A primitive trail with steep switchbacks drops 1,600 feet (488 m) into a long, sandy wash. Follow the wash to the White Rim Road. No shade.
Lathrop to White Rim Road	13.6 miles (22 km)	5 - 7 hours	Trail crosses open grassland, then drops 1,600 feet (488 m) into the canyon below. Enjoy views of the La Sal Mountains and fanciful sandstone knobs on this varied and challenging hike to the White Rim.
to Colorado River	21.6 miles (34.7 km)	overnight	Continue on Lathrop Trail by walking south on the White Rim Road, then follow Lathrop Canyon Road to the Colorado River. Cottonwoods and tamarisk offer some shade near the river. Vault toilet at end of trail. No camping at river. Backpacking permits required: see page 9. Total descent from the mesa top to the river is 2,000 feet (610 m).
Trails along the White Rim Road - These trails are not accessible from the Mesa Top.			
Gooseneck Overlook	0.6 miles (1 km)	30 minutes	Along White Rim Road. This short walk ends abruptly at an overlook of a meandering gooseneck bend in the Colorado River. Note the rock layers distorted by salt pushing up from below.
Fort Bottom Ruin	3 miles (4.8 km)	2 hours	Along White Rim Road. Exposed trail crosses a narrow mesa to a high point in a bend of the Green River. A tower structure marks the historic home of ancestral Puebloan people. <i>Entering, touching, or climbing on archeological sites is strictly prohibited. View structures from a distance to protect fragile walls.</i>
Moses and Zeus	1 mile (1.6 km)	1 hour	Along Taylor Canyon Road. Trail ascends 500 feet (152m) to the base of prominent sandstone spires. No need to climb the technical routes on Moses and Zeus towers to enjoy stunning views of Taylor Canyon.

ISLAND IN THE SKY

Paved road/
Pull out

Unpaved
2-wheel-drive road

High-clearance,
4-wheel-drive road

Hiking Trail

At-large
Backpacking Zone

Name

Name of
Backpacking Zone

Boat Launch

Ranger Station

Picnic Area

Developed Campground

Backcountry Vehicle Camp

Designated Backpacking Site

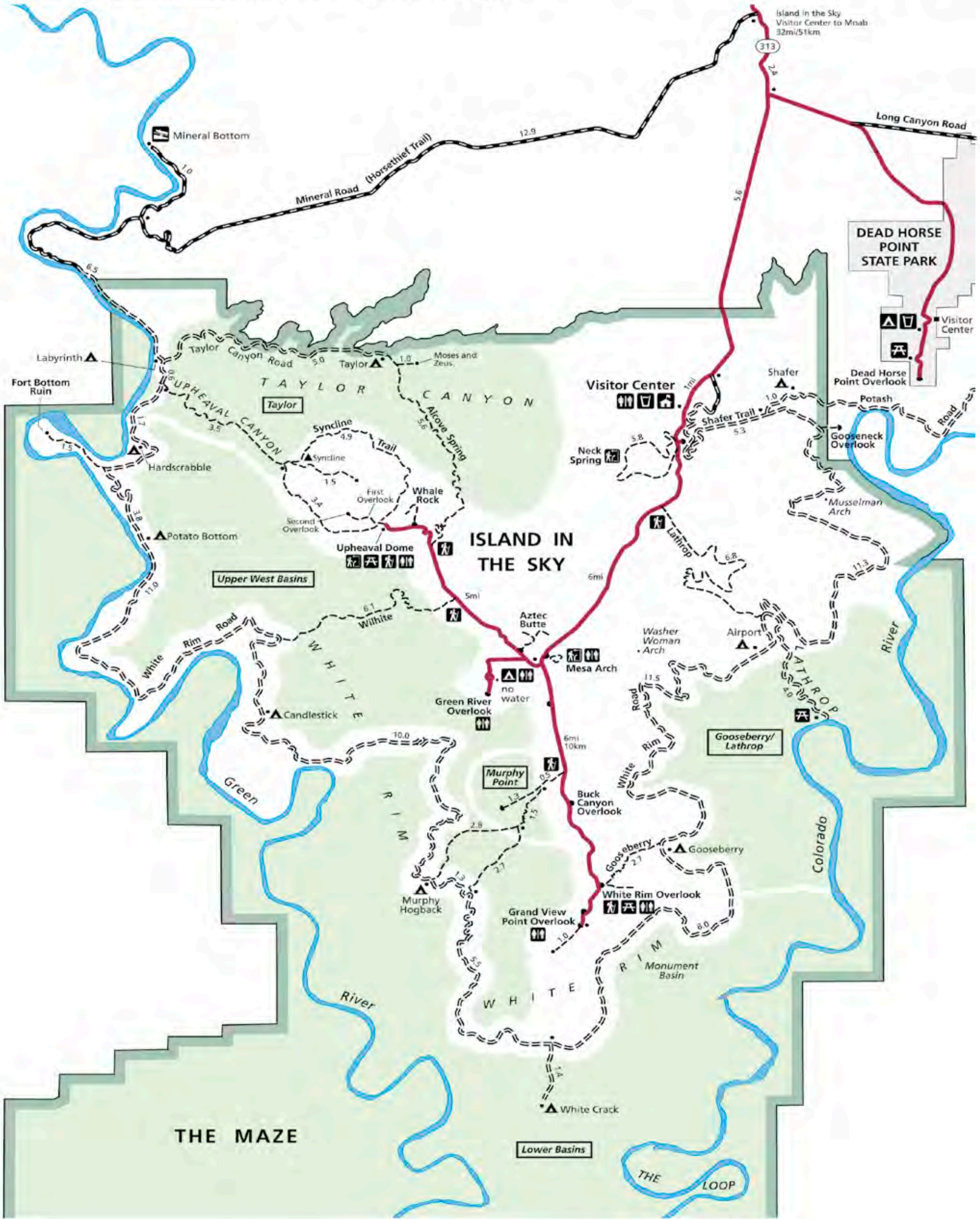
Drinking Water Available

Self-guiding Trail

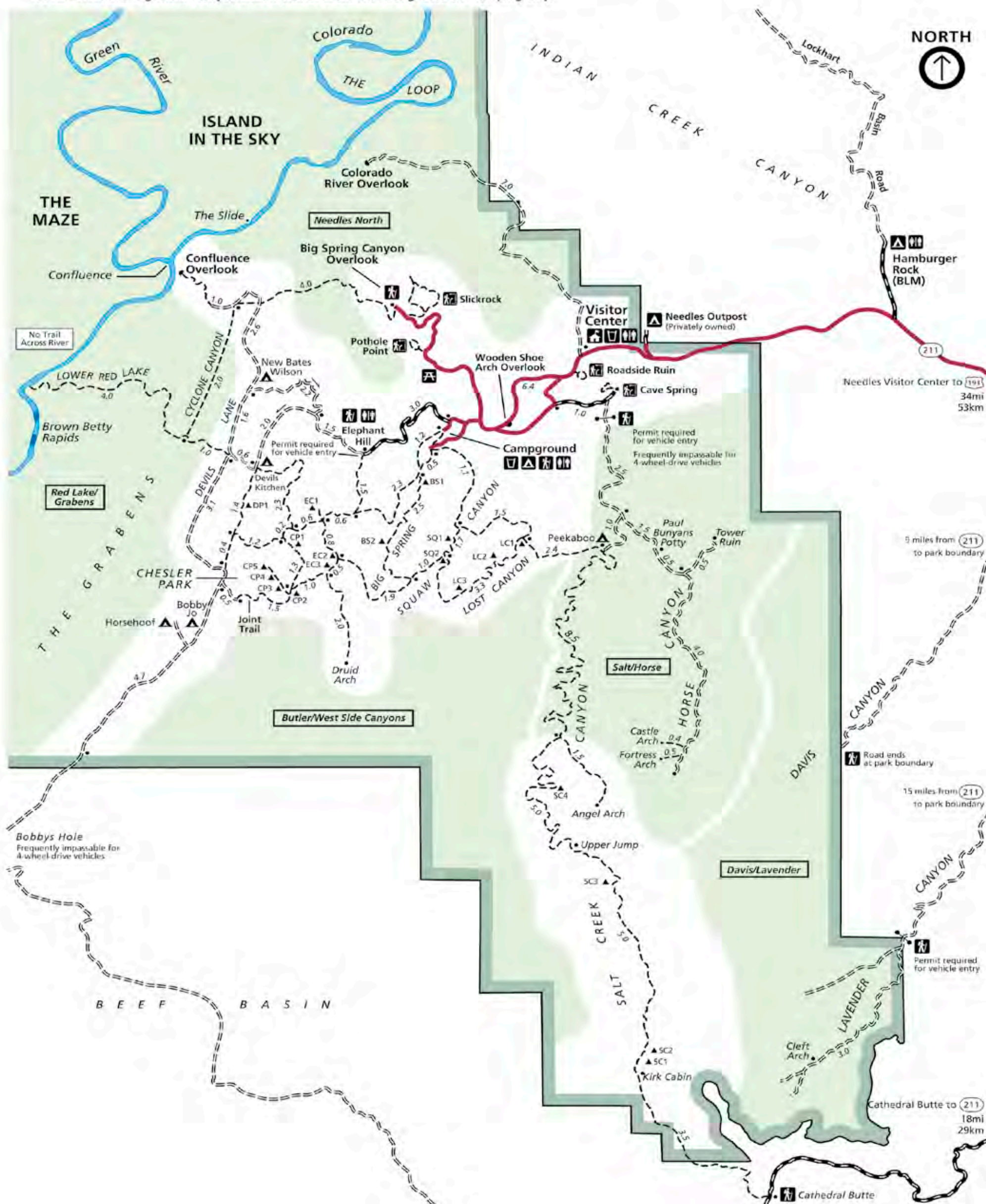
Backcountry Trailhead Parking

Toilet

NOTE: White shading within Canyonlands indicates areas with designated site camping only.



NOTE: White shading within Canyonlands indicates areas with designated site camping only.



Backcountry Permits

Much of Canyonlands is managed for 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.

You need a permit for these activities:

- all overnight trips, including backpacking, four-wheel-drive camping, mountain bike camping, and river trips
- day trips using four-wheel drive, motorcycles, and mountain bikes on Elephant Hill, Peekaboo/Horse Canyon, and Lavender Canyon roads in The Needles, and the White Rim Road at Island in the Sky.
- day river trips through Cataract Canyon and all packrafting trips on the river.

We recommend using a topographic map when planning your trip and while in the backcountry. Fees and group size limits apply (see chart at right).

LENGTH OF STAY

You can get an overnight permit for up to 14 consecutive nights. You may stay up to seven consecutive nights in any one backpacking site or zone (10 nights in The Maze zones). If you are using designated vehicle camps, you may stay a maximum of three consecutive nights at a site before having to relocate.

GETTING A PERMIT

You can check permit availability and make reservations online. You can reserve overnight permits up to four months in advance at go.nps.gov/canybackcountry. If available, we issue permits in person seven days a week at district visitor centers. You can get day-use permits up to 24 hours before your trip. Staff in the Backcountry Reservation Office in Moab issue permits Monday through Friday 8 am to 4 pm. Campsites or permits not reserved in advance may be available first-come, first-served at park visitor centers.

If you are interested in White Rim trips and Needles backpacking trips in spring and fall, you should apply online as early as possible.

SITES AND ZONES

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. There are designated sites for vehicles and bicycles along all four-wheel-drive roads. There are also sites for backpackers along some hiking trails, mostly at The Needles. In remote areas where travel is limited to foot or boat, you will stay in at-large zones and may choose your own minimum-impact campsites.

WATER

Water is a limiting factor for most backcountry trips in Canyonlands. Before beginning your trip, check at park visitor centers for reliable water sources. There are some springs scattered throughout the park, mostly in canyon bottoms, but there are also large areas such as The Grabens in The Needles, and the entire White Rim bench at Island in the Sky, where there is no water. Pack in water whenever possible. Some springs shown on maps may dry up during periods of drought. Plan on needing at least 1 gallon (4 L) per person per day.

BEAR CANNISTERS

Campers in Salt Creek designated sites and the Salt/Horse Zone at The Needles need a hard-sided, IGBC-approved bear cannister. All campers should secure food and trash from animals. Visit go.nps.gov/canybackcountry for more information.

QUESTIONS?

You can reach the reservation office by email at canyres@nps.gov. We answer phones Monday through Friday, 8 am to noon Mountain time, at 435-259-4351. If workload permits, we may answer phones until 4 pm.

Fees & Group Sizes	
Activity (Fee)	Group Size Limit
4WD / Mtn. Bike Day Use (Free)	White Rim: 3 vehicles, 15 bicycles Elephant Hill: 3 vehicles, 12 bicycles
Backpacking (\$30)	Island in the Sky: 7 Needles: 7 Maze: 5
4WD / Mtn. Bike Camping (\$30)	Island in the Sky: 15 (limit 3 vehicles) Needles: 10 (limit 3 vehicles) Maze: 9 (limit 3 vehicles)
River Trips (\$30) +\$20 per person	40

Biological Soil Crusts of Canyonlands

In Canyonlands’ high desert, the winding canyons, curving arches, and ancient dwellings draw the eye. But eyes turned downward will notice that most of this place is covered in bumpy, clumpy, blackened soil. This soil may just be more fascinating and more important than any other desert feature. This dirt is alive!

WHAT IS BIOLOGICAL SOIL CRUST?

Biological soil crust is just what the name describes – a living soil that creates a crust over the landscape. Biological soil crust is found throughout the world, from the Colorado Plateau’s high desert to the arctic. In many places, soil crust comprises over 70 percent of all living ground cover. The knobby, black crust here may include lichen, mosses, green algae, microfungi, and bacteria, but is dominated by cyanobacteria.

Cyanobacteria, also called green-blue algae, are one of our planet’s oldest known life forms. Scientists think cyanobacteria were among the first organisms to colonize Earth’s early land masses and played an important part in forming Earth’s early soils. Extremely thick mats of cyanobacteria converted Earth’s original carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere into one rich in oxygen and capable of sustaining life.

In biological soil crust, cyanobacteria are dormant when dry. When wet, they move through the soil, leaving behind sticky fibers that form an intricate web. These fibers join sand and soil particles together, creating a thick layer of soil that’s resistant to erosion. This layer acts like a sponge, absorbing and storing water. Over time, lichens, mosses, and other organisms grow onto the soil as well. Together, these organisms create a continuous living crust.

Not all soil crusts are knobby and black. Younger crusts are flat and brown and look like bare earth. The bumpy crusts—sometimes sprinkled with lighter lichen or moss—are mature. Some crusts can be thousands of years old.

PROTECTOR OF THE DESERT

Biological soil crust has helped shape today’s high desert. Soil crusts help control erosion by keeping soil stuck together. Sediment doesn’t wash away in the rain or blow away in the wind. This is why the Colorado Plateau’s high desert isn’t covered in loose sandy dunes.



NPS PHOTOS / NEAL HERBERT

Mature soil crusts are notable with black, knobby surfaces. Younger soil crusts may not be as obvious, looking like bare earth. Avoid crusts by hiking only on trails, bare rock, or in sandy washes.

Soil crust also holds and retains water. Plant roots tap into this spongy crust to survive drier and hotter conditions. It also promotes plant life by taking nitrogen from the air and changing it to a kind of nitrogen plants need.

Without these effects, animals, and even humans, would not be able to survive well in the desert.

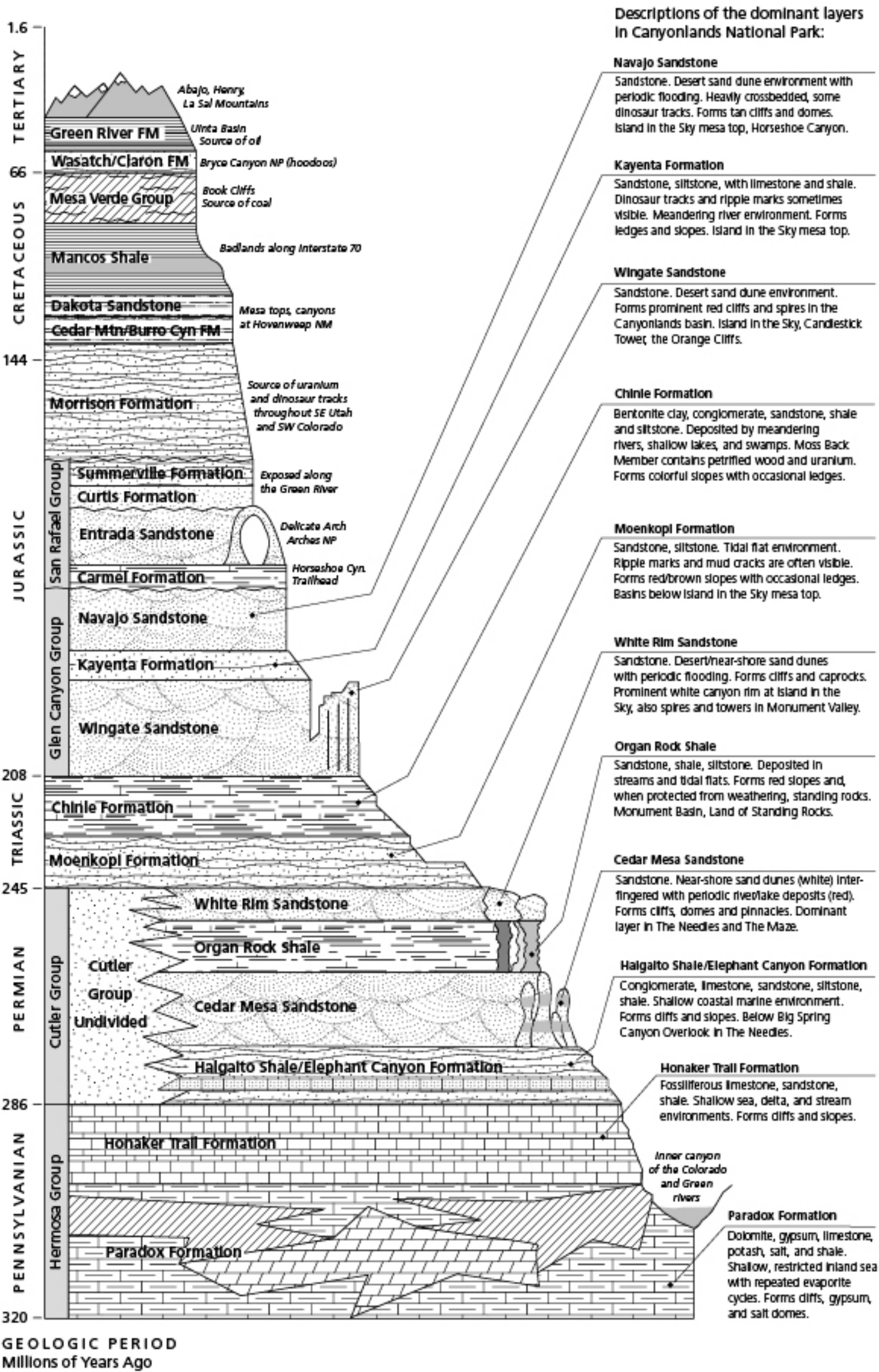
LOOK WHERE YOU STEP

Unfortunately, humans can destroy soil crust and often do so without meaning to. Vehicle tracks, bicycles, and footprints are extremely harmful—even a single footprint can kill the soil crust immediately below. Continuous pressure can break up the crust. Then, rain or wind can scatter the pieces., replacing the soil with blowing sand where plants cannot grow.

Impacted areas may never fully recover. Under the best circumstances, a thin veneer of biological soil may return in five to seven years. Mature crusts can take 50 years to strengthen. Lichens and mosses may take hundreds of years to recover.

Help us protect this fragile, but crucial, life by remaining on designated roads, routes, and trails at all times. Where hiking trails are not established, hike in sandy washes or on bare rock.

Canyonlands Geology



Geology A Window in Time

Canyonlands National Park is a showcase of geology. You can see the remarkable effects of millions of years of erosion on a landscape of sedimentary rock.

Deposition

Most of the rock found in Canyonlands today came from distant mountain ranges like the ancestral Rockies and even the Appalachians. For millions of years, water and wind broke down rock and carried it here, creating deposits that eventually became distinct layers of sedimentary rock.

Rivers laid down some layers, and wind brought some of the thickest layers, creating vast sand deserts or dune fields on the shores of an ancient sea.

Accumulating rock created a geologic layer cake, with most of the material hidden below the surface. But change was coming.

Uplift

Many of the rocks exposed in Canyonlands were deposited near sea level. Today, the average elevation here is over 5,000 feet (1,666 m) above sea level—a significant uplift.

Canyonlands is part of the Colorado Plateau: an area that stands high above the surrounding country. About 20 million years ago, movement in the Earth's crust began altering the landscape of North America, building modern landforms like the Rocky Mountains, Nevada's Basin and Range, and the Colorado Plateau.

Erosion

Today's landscape is one of erosion. As this area gradually rose, rivers that once deposited sediment on the lowlands began to remove it from the emerging plateau. The Green and Colorado rivers began carving into the geologic layer cake, exposing buried sediments and creating the canyons of Canyonlands.

Rivers aren't the only force of erosion. Summer thunderstorms bring heavy rains that scour the landscape. Some layers erode more easily than others. As rock dissolves away, layers of harder rock form exposed shelves, giving the canyon walls their stair-step appearance.

As the work of erosion continues, today's geologic displays will eventually disappear, making way for future wonders.

Preserving the Past

Many first-time visitors to Canyonlands National Park may not realize that the park was established not only for its scenic beauty, but also for its significant archeology. People visit archeological and historic sites because they are a source of inspiration and demonstrate how past people lived in such a seemingly harsh climate. Archeological and historic sites are part of the cultural heritage of America and are irreplaceable.

We see evidence of people living, working, and traveling through Canyonlands over thousands of years. Together these cultural sites make up a landscape containing significant cultural heritage for many American Indian tribes as well as explorers of European descent.

American Indians hold these landscapes as sacred. This place is still alive with the spirit and memory of those who came before, and tribes use these places to pass on their traditions and practices to their descendents. Cultural sites located on federal lands are protected by federal law for the benefit of all.

Here’s how you can help:

- Stay on designated trails or bare rock. If you see an archeological site in the backcountry, enjoy it from a distance.
- Leave artifacts in place. When you pick up artifacts, information about the objects could be lost.
- Keep away from structures. Some have been standing as long as 1,100 years. They could be unstable and could be damaged with the slightest pressure.
- Enjoy rock art with your eyes. Touching or making rubbings of rock paintings or peckings will damage fragile pigments and rock surfaces. Take pictures, or sketch what you see.
- Promote discovery by not sharing site locations or GPS coordinates of sites that you find.
- Visit with respect. Canyonlands is hallowed by people who hold these places as sacred. Help us conserve your heritage.



NPS PHOTOS

Both archeological and historic sites are protected by law. Please visit with respect.

Preserving the Night



Look up on a calm, cloudless night in Canyonlands National Park and you can see the Milky Way arcing across the sky—a glowing band of light created by the millions of stars that live in our celestial neighborhood. It has shimmered above what is now the park since time immemorial. Continents have moved, and the landscape has changed from inland seashore to Sahara-like desert and everything in between; but above it all, the stars shining down at night have remained constant.

The night sky was once a shared heritage, common to every landscape and every people. But in the short time since the electric light bulb was invented, dark skies have been quickly disappearing from view. Today, a growing number of visitors are coming to national parks like Canyonlands specifically to experience the wonders of the night sky.

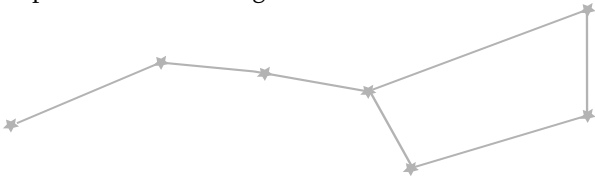
The International Dark Sky Association designated Canyonlands as an International Dark Sky Park in August 2015. This designation not only requires the park to

preserve this precious resource but also to draw attention to its fragility.

International dark sky parks are locations of exceptional nighttime beauty, night sky education, and preservation of the nocturnal environment. Becoming a dark sky park requires documentation of excellent night skies and taking steps to protect them, such as installing fixtures that reduce wasted light. The park also provides opportunities to learn about the night sky by holding star parties throughout the summer.

Dr. Brian Greene, author of the best-selling book *The Elegant Universe*, says that a clear view of the night sky “allows anyone to soar in mind and imagination to the farthest reaches of an enormous universe in which we are but a speck. And there is nothing more exhilarating and humbling than that.” We hope that during your visit to Canyonlands you will take a moment to look up and share a view that has humbled and exhilarated people for millennia because it, like Canyonlands, is your heritage.

2020 Night Sky Almanac



Stargazing Tips

Look for a high viewpoint or a wide open area to see the most stars. Give your eyes 20-30 minutes to adjust to the darkness. Skies will be darkest when the moon is out of sight. Use a red flashlight to protect your night vision, or just cover a white flashlight with red fabric or cellophane. Check star charts and other stargazing tips at park visitor centers.

Meteor Showers

(best viewing midnight to dawn)
JAN 4 Quadrantids Meteor Shower
APR 22 Lyrids Meteor Shower
AUG 12 Perseids Meteor Shower
OCT 20 Orionids Meteor Shower
NOV 17 Leonids Meteor Shower
DEC 13 Geminids Meteor Shower

Other Dates

MAR 19 Spring Equinox
JUN 20 Summer Solstice
SEPT 22 Autumnal Equinox
DEC 21 Winter Solstice

Moon Phases

JANUARY
10 Full Moon • **24** New Moon
FEBRUARY
9 Full Moon • **23** New Moon
MARCH
9 Full Moon • **24** New Moon
APRIL
7 Full Moon • **22** New Moon
MAY
7 Full Moon • **22** New Moon
JUNE
5 Full Moon • **21** New Moon
JULY
4 Full Moon • **20** New Moon
AUGUST
3 Full Moon • **18** New Moon
SEPTEMBER
1 Full Moon • **17** New Moon
OCTOBER
1 Full Moon • **16** New Moon • **31** Full Moon
NOVEMBER
14 New Moon • **30** Full Moon
DECEMBER
14 New Moon • **29** Full Moon

Planets

MERCURY
Mercury always stays close to the sun, so you’ll have to look for it low on the horizon at sunrise or sunset.

VENUS
In the first half of the year, you’ll see Venus low in the west after sunset. Through fall and winter, it appears before dawn in the east.

MARS
Most of the year, Mars is visible after midnight. Late in the year, you’ll see it in the evening hours after sunset.

JUPITER AND SATURN
Jupiter and Saturn are near each other through much of the year. They travel across the southern evening sky during the second half of the year. In late December, the two planets will be so close that they’ll resemble a double planet. Look for them in the west just after sunset.



©TYLER NORDGREN

Canyonlands National Park is a proud member of the Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative—a voluntary effort to link communities, tribes, businesses, state and federal agencies, and citizens in a collaborative effort to celebrate the view of the cosmos, minimize the impact of outdoor lighting, and restore and preserve natural darkness on the Colorado Plateau.

Your Fee Dollars at Work

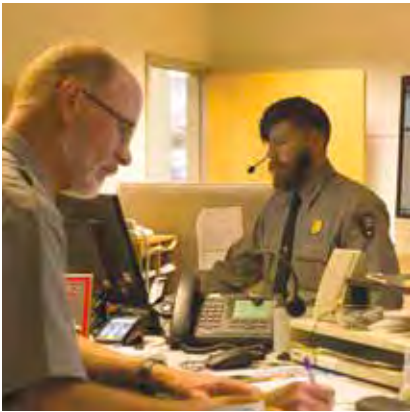
In 2004, Congress passed the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which replaced the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program. The law allows us to use 80 percent of fees collected at Canyonlands National Park for repair, maintenance, and facility enhancement to support visitor enjoyment, visitor access, and health and safety.

Your fees also support visitor information and education; visitor services staff; informational signs; habitat restoration for wildlife observation or photography; and law enforcement services related to public recreation.

Backcountry permit fees also support staffing the backcountry office, river patrols, and managing the backcountry reservation system.

Your user fees funded these improvements at Canyonlands:

- Rehabilitating park trails
- Installing new toilets at Island in the Sky Visitor Center
- Improving backcountry roads
- Enhancing trailheads and pullouts
- Staff to assist with traffic and parking
- Removing invasive tamarisk along river bottoms



Your fee dollars supported (clockwise from top left) new toilets at Island in the Sky, trail work, removing invasive tamarisk along the rivers, and backcountry permit office staffing.

NPS PHOTOS

Doing Our Part



NPS PHOTO

Activities outside the park affect the lands within, and our actions alter the world outside. To address these relationships, we have established an Environmental Management System: a plan that seeks to make park operations more environmentally responsible. The plan provides concrete ways to decrease our impacts such as:

- Reducing our waste production and diverting material away from the landfill through smart recycling.
- Reducing our fuel consumption by choosing appropriate types of vehicles and arranging carpools.
- Reducing greenhouse gas production in park operations through renewable energy use and efficient buildings and equipment.

You can help by using recycling bins located in the park. Ask at visitor centers for more information.

Friends of Arches and Canyonlands Parks

The Friends of Arches and Canyonlands Parks: Bates Wilson Legacy Fund provides direct support to Arches and Canyonlands national parks and Natural Bridges and Hovenweep national monuments in order to enhance existing projects in these spectacular areas, and to conserve the land and its cultural treasures for present and future generations to enjoy.

This mission honors the legendary work of Superintendent Bates Wilson, who came to Arches in 1949, inspiring and leading the effort that resulted in the establishment of Canyonlands National Park in 1964. He is regarded by many as the “Father of Canyonlands.”

Bates Wilson firmly believed that:

- The **park visitor** must have a great experience;
- **Exploratory and educational** opportunities must abound;
- **Preservation** is our obligation to future generations; and
- **Youth** indeed are the future: Bates enhanced the lives of countless young people as they explored and learned to appreciate the parks with him.



Friends of **Arches** and **Canyonlands** Parks

Please visit www.foacp.org to learn more and make your donation. Thanks!

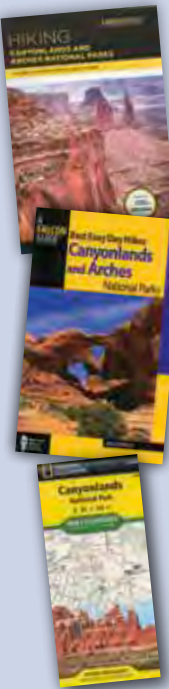
CANYONLANDS Natural History Association *Partners in Public Land Education*

Canyonlands Natural History Association (CNHA) is the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in southeast Utah. Since 1967, CNHA has donated over \$12 million to these federal partners.

CNHA sells hundreds of items about Canyonlands National Park and the rest of Utah’s canyon country. If the park visitor center is closed, please visit the Moab Information Center in downtown Moab (corner of Center & Main).

Your purchase supports Canyonlands National Park.

CONTACT US (435) 259-6003 www.cnha.org



Hiking Canyonlands and Arches National Parks

The most comprehensive guide available to the trails and backcountry roads in these parks. Invaluable information about trip planning and NPS regulations. Photos and maps. 226 pp.

Best Easy Day Hikes Canyonlands and Arches National Parks

A handy, pocket-sized trail guide with descriptions and maps of 21 short hikes in these two parks. 88 pp.

Canyonlands Trails Illustrated Map

This topographic map lists roads, trails, campgrounds, and many points of interest in The Needles, Island in the Sky, and The Maze.



Wilderness of Rock (DVD)

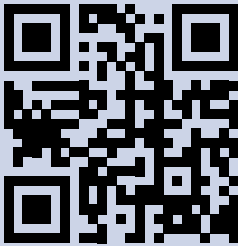
A great introduction to the landscape of Canyonlands. This orientation video is shown in the park’s visitor centers. 15 minutes.

Geology Unfolded Utah’s National Parks

A succinct and well illustrated guide that answers the most often asked questions about the geology of Utah’s national parks.

BECOME A MEMBER

CNHA members enjoy many benefits, including a 15 percent discount on purchases of \$1 or more. For more information, please call us or visit our website at www.cnha.org.



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