

# Capitol Reef

Capitol Reef National Park  
Utah

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

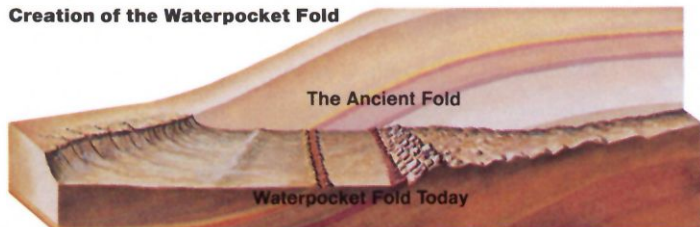
## Official Map and Guide



Aerial view of the Waterpocket Fold (orientation matches drawing below, with east to left, west to right) Michael Collier

A giant, sinuous wrinkle in the Earth's crust stretches for 100 miles across south central Utah. This impressive buckling of rock, created by the same tremendous forces that built the Colorado Plateau 65 million years ago, is called the Waterpocket Fold. Capitol Reef National Park preserves the Fold and its spectacular, eroded jumble of colorful cliffs, massive domes, soaring spires, stark monoliths, twisting canyons, and graceful arches. But the Waterpocket Fold country is more than this. It is also the free-flowing Fremont River and the big desert sky. It is cactus, jay, lizard, jackrabbit, juniper, columbine, and deer. It is a place where Indians hunted and farmed for more than 1,000 years and, later, where Mormon pioneers settled to raise their families. It is the inspiration for poets, artists, photographers, and those who seek only to re-create themselves in the solitude and splendor of its vastness. The world of the Waterpocket Fold stretches for 100 miles . . . and beyond.

### Creation of the Waterpocket Fold



As this artist's conceptual drawing shows, the Waterpocket Fold is made up of many layers of sedimentary rock. These layers, which were originally horizontal, were formed from sediments deposited over hundreds of millions of years in seas,

tidal flats, deserts, and other ancient environments. Then, as the uplift of the huge landmass of the Colorado Plateau began, the rock layers here were bent, or flexed, into a huge fold. Gradually, many of the upmost layers of the ancient Fold (re-

stored here) were completely eroded away, leaving only a hint of the enormity of the Waterpocket Fold in its earlier days. As wind and water continue slowly to erode the Fold, new features are created from the rock.

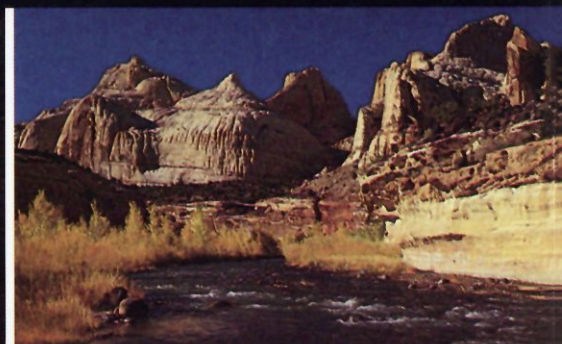
## Exploring Highways and Byways



The Castle: a prominent landmark Stephen Trimble



Grand Wash Trimble



The Fremont River: life-sustaining Trimble

The Waterpocket Fold country can be explored fleetingly along Utah Highway 24, the major east-west highway through the park, and on the Scenic Drive, a gravel road that provides a 25-mile round trip tour of the park. Utah Highway 24, built in 1962, follows the serpentine Fremont River as it winds its way through the Fold. Above the road tower the brilliantly colored cliffs and domes of Cap-

itol Reef, the park's namesake. This especially majestic part of the Waterpocket Fold is named for its vaulted white rock domes and its nearly impassable ridges (pioneers sometimes called these ridges "reefs"). The Scenic Drive follows the west face of the Fold and leads into Grand Wash and Capitol Gorge, two deep, twisting, water-carved, sheer-walled canyons. Along the Scenic Drive

are trails that lead to overlooks, remote canyons, natural arches, and slickrock wilderness. There are spectacular views of the Waterpocket Fold country from highways and byways beyond the park boundaries, too. One such sweeping panorama can be seen along Utah Highway 12 west of the park from an elevation of more than 9,000 feet.

Fremont petroglyphs



Fruita orchard Trimble



Fruita schoolhouse Laurence Parent



Mule deer Trimble



Indian paintbrush Trimble



Yellow-bellied marmot Trimble



Mountain bluebird



## Life Along the River

Life in the Waterpocket Fold country is most abundant along the Fremont River. Native Americans, early pioneers, moisture-loving plants, and many animals have all found refuge near its waters.

People of the little known but widespread "Fremont Culture" lived along the river as early as AD 700, sharing the rugged slickrock wilderness of the Colorado Plateau with the Anasazi who lived to the south.

The Fremont people hunted and gathered their food, and grew corn, beans, and squash as well. When they mysteriously disappeared sometime after AD 1250, they left behind few traces of their life here. The rock art they painted (petroglyphs) and incised (petroglyphs) into canyon walls can still be seen in several places. Later, nomadic Utes and Paiutes hunted throughout the Waterpocket Fold country.

Explorers, Mormon pioneers, and others began to make their way into the valley of the Fremont River in the late 1800s. Settling beyond the valley required a trip across the rough terrain of the Waterpocket Fold. A narrow, rocky travel route that cut through the Fold was Capitol Gorge. One rock wall called the Pioneer Register is filled with the names of miners, settlers, and others who passed through this canyon beginning in

1871. By 1917, the tiny Mormon community of Fruita was bustling on the banks of the Fremont. With skillful irrigation of the good soil of the valley, Fruita became well known for its productive orchards and the quality of its fruit. Flooding sometimes occurred but the town was spared any serious destruction. After Capitol Reef National Monument (later to become Capitol Reef National Park) was set aside in 1937,

the farmers and their families gradually moved away. The heritage of these pioneers is preserved in an old log schoolhouse, where socials, dances, and church meetings were once held, and in other structures scattered around the still-thriving historic orchards and fields of Fruita.

Today, the life along the Fremont River consists of the life of cottonwoods, willows, and ash, which create a fresh rib-

bon of green each spring, and of Indian paintbrush, goldenpea, and other seasonal wildflowers. It is the life of animals drawn by the magnet of water: birds galore, from mountain bluebirds to migratory ducks, and mammals, from marmots to mule deer. But move away from the river—even just a few hundred yards—and the harsh, sparser environment of the desert dominates.

## In the Backcountry



Cathedral Valley: one corner of the backcountry



Golden eagle Trimble



Desert bighorn Tom Bean



Spadefoot toad Trimble

Miles of unpaved roads lead into remote areas of the Waterpocket Fold country, once of interest only to cowboys, geologists, miners, and shepherders. Today, these areas offer natural beauty and solitude to park visitors. In vast expanses such as Cathedral Valley golden eagles soar and solitary stone monoliths tower over sandy desert plains. In secluded canyons such as Halls Creek Canyon hanging gardens of monkeyflower and maidenhair fern grace canyon walls. You may find panoramic views on many roads, including the Burr Trail, where the views become ever more breathtaking as the road climbs to the top of the Waterpocket Fold. On roads or trails deep in the backcountry, the rugged splendor of Capitol Reef National Park is yours to enjoy.

In the backcountry the desert dominates, and it stands in stark contrast to the Fremont River valley, a rare oasis. Less than eight inches of rain fall per year, most of it in late summer thunderstorms. These storms can turn dry, sandy washes into raging torrents, threatening some forms of life while sustaining others. Twisted, stunted juniper and piñon trees, which dot the landscape along with other hardy plants, are testimony to the severity of the desert. But many plants and animals are well adapted for life here. In different ways, kangaroo rats, lizards, cactuses, and saltbush cope with the perennial water shortage of the desert. Some are experts at collecting and storing water; others at water conservation; some at both. Many animals move about only at night to escape the heat

of day, so the casual observer can easily underestimate the richness of animal life in the desert.

Occasionally, pools of rainwater collect in eroded bowl-like depressions in the rock called waterpockets. Oddly, the tiny waterpocket is the namesake of the massive Fold that dominates this landscape. Bighorn sheep, bobcats—and even people—have quenched their thirst at these holes. At least one animal, the spadefoot toad, uses the waterpockets as places to live and reproduce. Eggs laid in the water hatch into tadpoles within days of a rain. Tadpoles that reach adulthood before the pools dry up repeat the cycle when the pools fill again. And life in the Waterpocket Fold country goes on.

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## Visiting the Park

### Visitor Center

The park visitor center offers a variety of brochures, books, maps, exhibits, and a short orientation slide program. Rangers are available to assist in planning your visit and to answer questions. Schedules of special park activities are posted. The center is open daily, except on some federal holidays, year-round. For more information write: Superintendent, Capitol Reef National Park, Torrey, UT 84775; or call (801) 425-3791.

### Seasons

The park is open all year. In the summer, temperatures often reach the high 90s °F, although at night it can cool down to the 50s and 60s °F. The July-through-September thunderstorm season brings frequent cloud-bursts, the danger of flash floods and lightning, and the beauty of magnificent cloud formations. Spring and fall—ideal months for long-distance hiking and other strenuous pursuits—are milder, with highs generally in the 50s and 60s °F. Winter daytime highs average below 50°F. Snowfalls, especially in lower elevations, are usually light. Humidity is low all year.

### Exploring by Road and Trail

Many of the natural, geological, and historical features that can be seen along the roads and trails of the park are described on the front side of this folder. An illustrated guidebook for the Scenic Drive is available at the visitor center; guides are also available for road tours of Cathedral Valley, Strike Valley, Circle Cliffs, and Boulder Mountain. Unpaved roads designated for travel by all passenger vehicles—including the Scenic Drive and roads to remote areas south of the Fremont River—are usually passable without difficulty. Because they are rough, other unpaved backcountry roads are suitable only for 4-wheel-drive, or high clearance 2-wheel-drive, vehicles. Rain or snow may make some roads impassable from time to time; check with a ranger for up-to-date conditions before starting a trip.

Trails offer a slower, more intimate way to discover the park. Along a trail you may find a cool shady place to rest near the Fremont River; twist and turn through a desolate, steep-walled canyon; stand atop a high cliff and survey the

enormity of the Waterpocket Fold country; or happen upon hidden geological rarities such as Hickman Bridge, a 133-foot-long sandstone span. Visitors interested in observing wildlife or photographing wildflowers may be rewarded generously. Trails range from short strolls to strenuous hikes over rough terrain requiring a day or more. For information, including topographic maps, guidebooks, and up-to-date trail conditions, stop by the visitor center. Horseback riding is permitted on some trails but prohibited on others; see a ranger for details.

### Special Park Activities

From May to September the park offers many special programs, including guided walks, evening campfire programs at the outdoor amphitheater near Fruita Campground, and automobile caravan tours. Schedules are posted at the visitor center. Another activity you may enjoy on your own is picking fruit in the historic Fruita orchards. Apples, cherries, and various other fruits ripen from June to October. Anyone may pick a handful for a snack. The park super-

intendent sets specific fruit-picking seasons when larger amounts can be picked for a fee. For information, stop by the visitor center.

### Camping and Picnicking

Fruita Campground, which is designed for both tents and recreational vehicles, is open all year on a first-come, first-served basis. There are 71 sites. Picnic tables, fire grills, restrooms, and drinking water are available. A camping fee is charged. School groups and other organized groups can contact the park to reserve a large group campsite. Two primitive campgrounds, Cathedral Valley and Cedar Mesa, are open year-round on a first-come, first-served basis. Each has five sites, tables, fire grills, and pit toilets; neither has water.

Backcountry camping is allowed throughout much of the park; a free permit is required.

A picnic area near the visitor center provides tables, fire grills, restrooms, drinking water, and shade trees. Primitive picnic areas along the Burr Trail and Caineville Wash roads have tables... but that's all: be prepared.

### Area Services and Accommodations

Food, camping supplies, gasoline, and lodging are not provided in the park. Nearby towns provide these and other services.

### Park Safety and Regulations

Always carry water—one gallon per person per day in the summer, minimum. Reliable, drinkable water sources outside Fruita are very rare. Slow your pace to adjust for hot days and high elevations. All animals, plants, geological resources, and historical and archeological artifacts are protected. Do not disturb or feed any wild animal. Hunting or any use of firearms is prohibited. Be careful near cliff edges; rock surfaces can be slippery or may crumble under your weight. When storms threaten, avoid canyons and dry washes, where flash floods may occur, and avoid open, exposed areas prone to lightning. Please do not litter; pack out trash from the backcountry. Pets must be leashed at all times. They are not allowed on trails or more than 100 feet from a road. All vehicles, including bicycles, must stay on maintained roads. In the back-

country, use a campstove: open fires and wood fires are prohibited. Skunks can be bothersome in the campgrounds at times, so take care to store food properly and dispose of garbage promptly.

**Administration**  
Capitol Reef National Park is a unit of the National Park System, which consists of more than 340 parks representing our country's natural and cultural inheritance. The park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.



This map shows most of the prominent natural features, paved and unpaved roads, and visitor services in the park and nearby. Trails are

not shown. Information on trails is available at the visitor center. Topographic maps are essential for hiking in the backcountry.

- Unpaved road (all passenger vehicles)
- Unpaved road (high clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicles)
- Overlook
- Ranger station
- Picnic area
- Campground
- Primitive campground

