NEAR MOAB

The early history of the Moab area can be traced back 10,000 yrs and is visible in the area's many panels of ancient petroglyphs. A permanent pioneer settlement was not established until 1880. Today Moab supports a diverse population and economy and is considered one of the most cosmopolitan small towns in Utah. Enjoy the Museum of Moab, Slick Rock Bike Trail, and a wide variety of restaurants and lodging accommodations. Population: 4,242 (as of 2016). Elevation: 4,000 ft.

Colorado and Green Rivers

The lifelines of the Canyonlands Region are its rivers, which offer spectacular views of the forces of nature at work, and exhibit millions of years of geologic history.

Dead Horse Point State Park

Offers dramatic views of the La Sal Mountains, Canyonlands National Park and the Colorado River 2,000 feet below. An almost isolated island-mesa, the area was at one time used as a natural corral for wild horses. A visitor center, museum and campground are open year-round. Fees are collected. Located 34 miles NW of Moab.
Allow 3 hours.

La Sal Mountain Scenic Loop Road

From its junction with Scenic Byway 128, this road passes through Castle Valley (a popular movie and commercial location) and leads to the forests, lakes and streams of the Manti-La Sal National Forest. Sheer walls of red sandstone contrast with the flowing waters of the Colorado River, which runs adjacent to this Scenic Byway. The road connects US 191 with I-70, and features such attractions as Fisher Towers, which loom 1500 feet above the valley floor, and Dewey Bridge, a one-lane suspension bridge, which was used until 1986. Dewey Bridge burned by bushfire in 2008. Scenic Byway 128 begins 3 miles north of Moab and runs 44 miles to the junction with I-70 near Cisco. May be driven in conjunction with the La Sal Mountain Loop Road. The bridge has been placed on the National Historic Register. Hittle Bottom Homestead is located at a popular picnic and boat launch and was the turn-of-the-century home of a local mail carrier.

Arches National Park

Features the greatest concentration of natural stone arches in the world, offering spectacular displays of the natural forces of erosion at work. Hiking trails lead to the world famous free standing Delicate Arch, the impressive 306' span of Landscape Arch and other features. The visitor center and campground are open all year. Entrance fees are collected. Located 5 miles north of Moab, off US 191. Allow 2 hours for a short auto tour, longer for hiking. To avoid congestion, go before 7:00AM, or after 3:00PM.

Island in the Sky District/Canyonlands National Park

From the high broad mesas of the "Island", the canyons of the Green and Colorado Rivers are showcased from easily accessible viewpoints along a paved road. There are no services or water available on the Island, but the primitive campground is open all year. Entrance fees are collected. Located 36 miles northwest of Moab via State Highway 313. Allow 3 hours, longer for hiking.

The Maze District/Canyonlands National Park

The Maze is the most inaccessible of the three park districts, requiring 4-wheel drive to explore its rugged interior. Horseshoe Canyon is accessible by 2-wheel drive and offers hikers an opportunity to view "The Great Gallery", one of the finest panels of Indian pictographs to be found. Primitive camping has no water. Located 46 miles southwest of Green River off State Highway 24.

Canyon Rims Recreation Area

Features extensive, high-desert vistas. 22 mile drive on paved road to the Needles Overlook, a 1,500 foot high mesa overlooking the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park. 16 mile graded gravel road to Anticline Overlook and a view of a geologic anticline, the Colorado River, and Kane Springs Canyon. 52 miles Northwest of Monticello. Allow 4 hrs. for both overlooks.

Newspaper Rock / Indian Creek Corridor Scenic Byway

14 miles N of Monticello. Indian Creek Canyon begins at the bottom of a series of switchbacks (tight turns) and descends from the high-desert near Monticello. This large petroglyph panel, is easily accessed along the road. The rock art is representative of multiple cultures and times. 12 miles W on U211. Allow 1 hour.

Needles District / Canyonlands National Park

Explore the canyons and desert of this colorful section of Canyonlands. Open all year. 4 wheel drive required to access some areas, highway vehicle is okay for others. Entrance fee. Year-round camping. 14 miles N and 32 miles W of Monticello off US191 on U211. Services available at Needles Outpost, close to the park entrance. Spring and fall, half the camping sites are reservable online, summer and winter all sites are first come, first served. Allow 3 hours.

NEAR BLANDING

Edge of the Cedars State Park, home to an Ancestral Puebloan site, is a repository for artifacts from the Four Corners region. View one-of-a-kind artifacts: macaw feather sash, a prehistoric loom, and an ancient place setting of wooden plates and exquisitely made knives. The Dinosaur Museum will take you even farther back in pre-history. Beginning point for Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway, an auto tour through the heart of Utah's Canyon Country. Visitor Center. Restaurants and lodging. Centrally located for easy access to parks, monuments, and Lake Powell. Population: 3,500. Elevation: 6,200 ft. for easy access to parks & monuments. Population: 2,000. Elevation: 7,069.

Harts Draw Road

Paved into the Manti-La Sal National Forest, reaching an elevation of 8,200 feet. The road crosses the flank of the Abajos where deer and turkeys can be seen foraging. A spectacular overlook into the desert and access to several small fishing lakes are on the route. Two USFS campgrounds. W of Monticello 9 miles via 200 South St. then 8.5 miles on County Rd. 101. to junction with U211 - access to Canyonlands National Park. The Abajo Loop Scenic Backway follows the same route before turning south through the mountains to end in Blanding. Reaches an elevation of 10,500 feet and is suitable for high clearance vehicles. 34 miles of graded gravel and native surface. W of Monticello 5 miles on County Rd. 101 to junction with CR285 then S 29 miles to Blanding. Allow 4 hours.

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area/ Rainbow Bridge National Monument/Lake Powell

Over 1,800 miles of shoreline. Two marinas serve Utah's Canyon Country on the eastern side of the lake. Halls Crossing Marina is 90 miles SW of Blanding via Utah Hwys. 95 and 276. Ferry crosses to Bullfrog Marina daily during summer. Scenic and charter flights available at Cal Black Mem. Airport. Hite Marina is 87 miles SW of Blanding via Utah Hwy. 95. Rainbow Bridge, the world's largest natural stone bridge, is accessible via tour from Halls Crossing Marina or by trail from Navajo Mountain (a permit is required from Navajo Parks & Recreation). 2 hours drive time from Blanding to each marina. Tour to Rainbow Bridge is 8 hours. Trail from Navajo Mt. is 14 hours one-way.

NEAR BLUFF

Situated in the center of the Four Corners region, Bluff offers the visitor a desert hideaway and shopping in trading posts and galleries for contemporary fine art and excellent examples of native craft. Experience the excitement of a river trip on the San Juan river, enjoy the thrill of hiking the backcountry with a knowledgeable guide, or visit surrounding ruins and rock art. Delve into the past of this historic western outpost with a stop at the Bluff Fort. Centrally located for easy access to parks, monuments, the San Juan River, and Monument Valley. Hosts the annual Bluff International Balloon Festival, Bluff Arts Festival, and Solstice Celebration. Population: 380. Elevation: 4,350 ft.

Bluff Historic Walking / Biking Tour

This pioneer settlement dates to the late 1800's and many of the original homes remain. Built in the Victorian style but with sandstone block, these homes are along the historic tour. The tour guide book discusses the natural history of the area and is available at local businesses. Allow 2 hours for the tour.

Hovenweep National Monument

Six groups of Ancestral Puebloan sites await your exploration at Hovenweep. Square Tower Group, with walls 20 ft. high, is just steps from the visitor center. Square, round, and D-shaped towers are unique at this park where you can travel on back roads to outlying sites or thoroughly explore the sites near the visitor center. Campground and fees. Located 45 miles southeast of Blanding. Allow 3 hours.

Natural Bridges National Monument

Tucked away in White Canyon, this small park shows off three of the world's largest natural stone bridges. Each can be seen from overlooks on Bridge View Drive, an 8 mile loop through the park. All are accessed by trail, the easiest and shortest (4/10 of a mile) is to Owachomo Bridge. 13 space campground. Visitor Center. Fees. Located 47 miles SW of Blanding on U95. Allow 3 hours.

Valley of the Gods

Valley of the Gods, a miniature Monument Valley, is home to towering sandstone formations with fanciful names like Seven Sailors, Southern Lady, and Battleship Butte. The perfect place for a tour in the spring and fall when temperatures are cooler. Native surface road suitable for high clearance vehicles. Entrance from US163 12 miles W of Bluff or from U261 8 miles NW of Mexican Hat. Allow 3 hours.

Moki Dugway / Muley Point

A "dugway" is a road or trail along a hillside which is dug out to provide a path for transport. Built in the 1950s during the uranium boom by Texas Zinc Minerals to provide a route for ore haulers from the mines on Cedar Mesa to the mill near Mexican Hat, the Moki Dugway is an 11% grade on gravel. If you don't mind heights, the views from the road and the overlook at the top are worth the trip. Views of Valley of the Gods and in the distance Monument Valley on the southern horizon. Muley Point offers another great view from the canyon's edge into John's Canyon. Dugway: 13 miles NW of Mexican Hat on US 261. Muley Point: 18 miles NW of Mexican Hat (Co Rd 241- native surface) Allow 2 hours for the Dugway, 1 hour for Muley Point.

NEAR MONUMENT VALLEY

Monument Valley, known world-wide, is the quintessential western landscape and the location of many movies. To the Navajo people it is home. The best way to see the valley and the stunning scenery, is to take a tour with a native guide. Guided tours leave from the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park visitor center or from Goulding's Lodge. Visit the original trading post, see the film "Earth Spirit", eat at a table with a view, see a Navajo weaver at work, and visit the movie museum.

Navajo Tribal Park Visitor Center

The center offers information, camping, a restaurant, and tours. Learn about the Navajo people and land they call home. Arts & crafts are available. 24 miles SW of Mexican Hat and 1 mile E of the junction of US163 and County Rd. 421. Allow 2 hours to a full day.

Gouldings Lodge / Trading Post/Museum

Nestled at the foot of towering sandstone cliffs, Goulding's Lodge offers a museum in the original 1926 residence with special emphasis on the Navajo people and the films made in the valley. The cabin from the film She Wore A Yellow Ribbon is here. The lodge offers tours, Navajo arts & crafts, a restaurant, and evening showings of the film, Earth Spirit. Lodging, campground. 2 miles W of the junction of US163 and County Rd. 421. Allow 2 hours to visit the museum and trading post.

The San Juan River

Float trips travel from Bluff to Mexican and on to Clay Hills. This quiet river, with only a few stretches of active water, harbors "sand waves" which provide an unexpected roller coaster ride. Tour operators focus on the natural and human history along the river. Campground at Sand Island where a large petroglyph panel reveals multiple images of Kokopelli, the hump backed flute player of southwestern mythology. Located 4 miles W of Bluff at Sand Island Boat Launch Area. Allow 1 hour for rock art panel.

Comb Wash

Comb Wash is a deep, wide canyon splitting the landscape from the Abajo Mountains to the San Juan River. Hidden along its length are Ancestral Puebloan ruins and rock art for those willing to search. Comb Ridge, on the eastern side of the wash, presented an impassable barrier to the pioneers who were forced to travel along it to the river to bypass its height. Located 7.5 miles west of Bluff. Allow 3 hours for cursory exploration.

NEAR MEXICAN HAT

Nestled amid deep red sandstone cliffs, Mexican Hat is named for the inverted sandstone sombrero which is north of the town. The community is home to several trading posts, motels, restaurants, and is a launch site for San Juan River Trips. Population: 26. Elevation: 4,350.

Goosenecks State Park

The longest entrenched river meander in North America gives this small park its name and spectacular views. The river twists and turns, covering more than 6 miles while advancing less than 2 miles toward Lake Powell. The park offers visitors a close-up view of geology in the raw. Eons of geologic activity are on view. The canyon is 1,500 ft deep and layers are easily seen. Camping & fees. No water. 9 Miles NW of Mexican Hat via US163, US261, and U316. Allow 1 hr.

Grand Gulch Primitive Area

The Ancestral Puebloans inhabited this area over 700 years ago. This canyon, cut into Cedar Mesa, shelters petroglyphs, pictographs, archaeological structures, and artifacts. Travel is restricted to foot or horseback, and camping requires a permit from the BLM. (435-587-1500). Access to Grand Gulch from Kane Gulch Ranger Station is a 5 hour hike. Many day hikes are possible throughout the Cedar Mesa area. Detailed maps are recommended. Ranger station at Kane Gulch, signed. Allow 3 hrs to multiple days.