

Safety Tips

To ensure that your stay in the San Rafael area is a safe and enjoyable experience, consider the following safety tips:

A dry wash can flash flood in a matter of minutes even if you don't see a cloud in the sky. Never camp or park your vehicle in a stream bed.

Water is essential - at least a gallon per person per day in the summer. If you find free-flowing water, it might not be safe to drink. Carry your own.

Wear a hat in the summer and remember that extreme temperature changes are possible in all seasons.

Anticipate problems. Take extra food, clothing and vehicle repair parts and fluids. Let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return. If you should break down or become lost, stay with your vehicle - it's a lot more visible to searchers.

And speaking of getting lost: the map in this brochure is a general guide. It is a good idea to pick up a large-scale map that shows roads, trails and topography in detail.

The San Rafael has historically been a mining area. When you are exploring around mines, be very careful; old mines and the ground around them can be dangerous. If the mine is currently being worked, please respect the miner's claims.

Very few desert creatures are dangerous to humans but all creatures can be dangerous when cornered. Observe the wildlife but leave it alone.

Enjoy the San Rafael, take a few reasonable precautions, and have a safe trip.

Bureau of Land Management

Recreation Guide to the San Rafael Area

**Bureau of Land Management
San Rafael Resource Area**

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Loving The Land

Although the San Rafael area looks rough and barren, it supports a fragile desert ecology that can easily be damaged by human actions. It's a great place for camping and outdoor fun but keep a few things in mind:

If you camp someplace other than a campground with trash cans and bathrooms, carry out what you carry in and bury all bodily wastes.

Use existing firepits and clean them after you're through. If you make a bare ground fire, let it burn to ashes rather than burying the charred stubs.

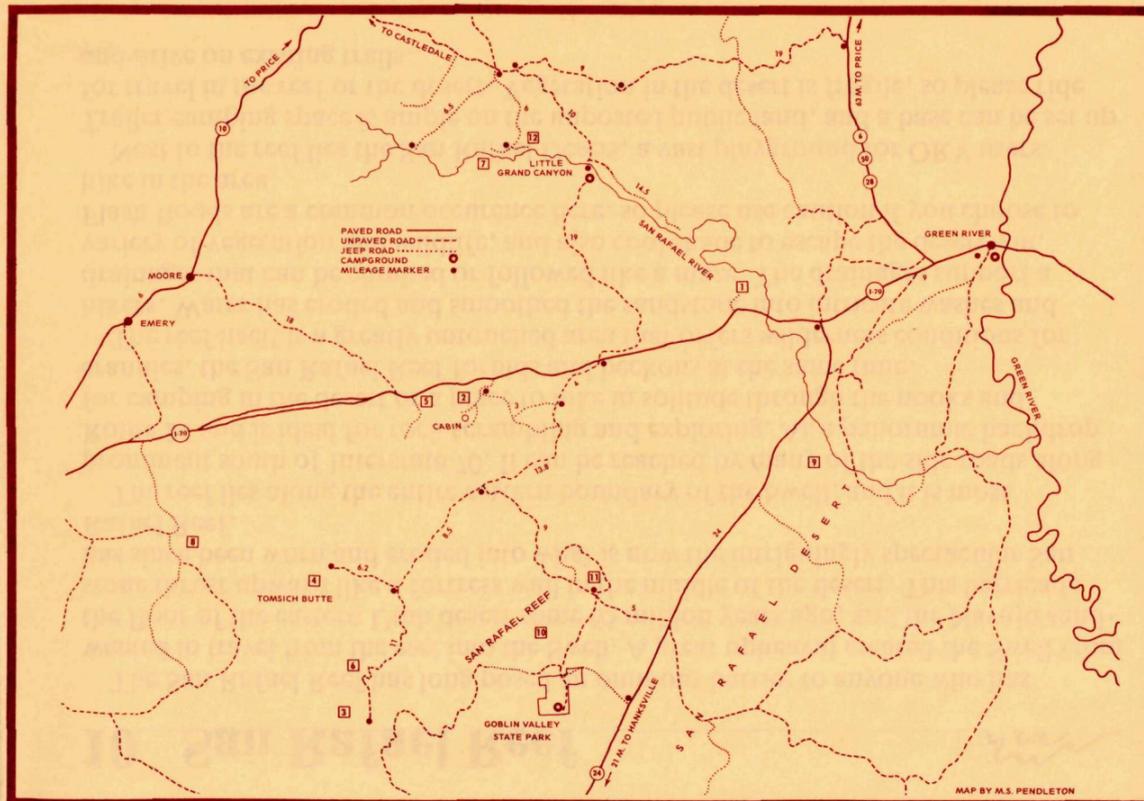
Ride ORVs on existing trails to protect desert vegetation.

Leave artifacts and rock art where they are for others to enjoy. Respect the rights of other recreationists - don't leave your graffiti to spoil their view. And please respect the rights of miners' claims.

Some parts of the San Rafael are high-use areas. For example, Buckhorn is being "loved" to death. Explore and sample some of the lesser-known parts of this magnificent land.

Have fun during your stay in the San Rafael and help preserve its scenic wonder. The best way to love the land is to leave it with no trace of your ever having been there!

DESIGNED BY MICHAELENE PENDLETON '86



1 Black Dragon Wash



Black Dragon Wash has some of the most interesting and best preserved pictographs in the San Rafael Swell. The wash itself is named for the "Black Dragon," an ancient drawing that resembles a prehistoric pterodactyl. Some of the other figures look like they may have once visited the Indians from outer space—what they mean is up to the observer's imagination.

The wash is a secluded area in the San Rafael Reef, great for hiking and camping nearby. It lies a mile-and-a-half north of Interstate 70, and can be reached by a dirt road two miles west of the Route 24 intersection. The road winds along the reef and up into the wash and is generally passable in times of good weather. Flash floods are a common occurrence, so please use caution if you choose to hike or drive in Black Dragon.

Short hikes in the area soon turn into long ones as the wash unfolds and curiosity leads the hiker on. The sandstone walls offer cool shade to escape the summer sun, and a great cave lies hidden behind the Talus slope above the pictographs. The cave is a natural break in the sandstone that opens up like an underground vault, and there is plenty of room to hike inside. It is clean and free of most marrings by man. Please help keep it this way.

3 Hidden Splendor



Hidden Splendor lies deep within the southern end of the San Rafael Swell and is one of the most secluded points accessible to recreation. It is tucked in a canyon where Muddy Creek cuts through the San Rafael Reef and offers a variety of water, motorcycle trails and abandoned mines to explore.

Hidden Splendor is accessible by 44 miles of dirt road from the Frontage Road Ranch exit on Interstate 70. Head south and follow the signs to Hidden Splendor until the road meets Muddy Creek at the mine.

The mine at Hidden Splendor is one of Utah's most famous and was featured in the November, 1954 issue of *Life Magazine*. Originally named the Delta, it was started by Vernon Pick in June, 1952. Pick took \$1 million dollars worth of ore from the mine before he sold it to the Atlas corporation for another \$9 million. The mine never reached its estimated potential after Pick sold out, and Atlas abandoned the mine in 1957. It has been worked sporadically since then, but is for the most part left alone. Mine exploration can be dangerous, so please use caution if you choose to hike in the area.

Muddy Creek passes Hidden Splendor and winds into the reef. When the creek is low, the canyon offers secluded hiking. The rest of the area around Hidden Splendor is open to motorcycle riding and ORV use. Be aware that Muddy Creek is prone to flash flooding.

2 Head of Sinbad



Like the land of the Arabian Knights and Alibabah and the Forty Thieves, the Head of Sinbad possesses a touch of magic and mystery. Rain and wind have molded limestone pillars into pocketed watch-towers that loom from the floor of the Swell. In between, the view is green with desert pasture and gives way to a vast panorama from the top of the San Rafael.

The Head of Sinbad lies in the heart of the San Rafael Swell and is split by Interstate 70. The Swasey clan built a cabin there, and the area has been used by the Swaseys for grazing cattle since the turn of the century. Today Sinbad offers excellent camping, backpacking and rock scrambling activities, and is an ideal place to get away in the Swell.

Swasey's cabin was built in 1921 and is listed on the Utah State Register of Historical Sites. The Swaseys used the cabin as a cowboy camp, and they corralled wild horses by the spring a short distance west of the cabin. Past the spring is a cave called the ice box where the Swaseys cured and kept their meat. The cabin can be reached by a south facing turnoff, 7.7 miles east of the Moore interchange on Interstate 70. From there, go through the gate and bear right 1.2 miles to a second gate. Pass through the second gate and turn right at a V in the road 1.5 miles past the gate. The cabin is one half mile from the V.

The walls of Sinbad Country surround Swasey's cabin and are filled with nooks and crannies that can enchant and haunt the most curious of backpackers. Late evening and early morning shadows give Sinbad a mystical glow, and runoff-carved caves provide cool shade from the mid-day sun.

4 Hondoo Arch and Tomsich Butte



Hondoo Arch and Tomsich Butte combine an area of mining history with scenic wonder and outdoor play. Uranium was mined along the Muddy Creek in the early 1950s, and through the ages the creek carved a spectacular canyon that uncovered the uranium deposits. Today, Tomsich Butte and Hondoo Arch offer the variety of mine exploration, water play and ORV use tucked into a corner of the San Rafael Swell.

Tomsich Butte can be reached by the Frontage Road Ranch Exit on Interstate 70. Head south and follow the signs toward the Hidden Splendor Mine. Turn left one mile past the second sign, and follow the road 8.4 miles to where it divides for Tomsich Butte and Hidden Splendor. Turn right and drive 6.2 miles to Muddy Creek and the mines.

The Dirty Devil Mines of Tomsich Butte were started by W. J. Hanret and John Tomsich in 1951, and three of the mines produced considerable amounts of ore before operations ceased in 1956. The old roads and trails around the mines provide great ORV terrain and easy access for mine exploration. Exploring old mines can be dangerous, so please use caution if you choose to hike in the area.

Hondoo Arch rests high above Muddy Creek and looks down on Tomsich Butte and the Dirty Devil Mines. The Arch was named for its likeness to the knot of a cowboy's lariat loop, and it is unique in its height from the canyon floor and the long, narrow opening it makes through the canyon wall.

Beneath the Arch flows Muddy Creek. In times of high water the creek can be floated by canoe or innertube. It offers a new look at the walls of the Swell and cool, early summer fun at the same time.

5 Justensen Flats



Justensen Flats was once grazed by the sheep of Orson and Buck Justensen. History sent the Justensens off to greener pastures and the area today bears the remnants of their names.

Justensen Flats is a family-oriented place, perfect for camping and quiet nights by a fire beneath the stars. It offers level terrain with sandy trails excellent for horseback or motorcycle riding. The southern edge drops off at the head of Devil's Canyon, offering spectacular views of a remote part of the Swell.

Justensen Flats is also easy to find. On Interstate 70, turn south at the Moore interchange onto the Copper Globe Mine Road. Justensen Flats is a short distance down the dirt road.

The Copper Globe Mine Road carves a twisting route through the area and several miles into the Swell to the Copper Globe Mine. The road is winding and fun for 4-wheel drive and makes a good side excursion. Copper Globe first worked prior to 1900, with increased activity during the World Wars. Limited activity still continues, so please respect the rights of the miner's claims, and use caution if you choose to hike in the area.

7 Floating The Little Grand Canyon



The San Rafael Swell rose from the eastern Utah desert some sixty-five million years ago, but on the northern edge the San Rafael River fought it back and formed what has come to be known as the Little Grand Canyon. The river cut through the Navajo sandstone of the Swell and created 1,000 foot cliffs that line the walls of the greatly untouched canyon.

The canyon can be reached by the road to Fuller's Bottom, 50 miles south of Price. The 15 mile float from Fuller's Bottom to the San Rafael Campground is generally safe yet exciting, and it also offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the Swell. Near the mouth of North Salt Wash lies an old gypsum mine that tunnels a quarter-mile back into the Swell.

Fossil beds, petrified wood, Indian Artifacts and petroglyphs, and a variety of wildlife are all present in the canyons, just waiting to be discovered.

A day or a weekend can be spent on a float down the San Rafael, depending if you want to hike or camp in the canyon. The trip itself takes from five to six hours with an average river flow, and you will need to leave a vehicle at the San Rafael Bridge take-out for the end of the journey. The river normally runs highest with the spring runoff the first two weeks of June, and inner tubing is advised for later in the season when the current slows and the river is not so deep. Life jackets are strongly recommended at all times on the river.

9 San Rafael Desert



The San Rafael Desert is a flat land of sand dunes, brush, and open country to be run by ORVs and especially motorcycles. It is the home of the annual San Rafael Mail Run trail bike race, and it is also close to Goblin Valley, Temple Mountain and the San Rafael Reef. As a point to start off or a place for endless miles of ORV riding, the San Rafael Desert offers more than meets the eye.

The Desert is easily reached anywhere along State Highway 24, south of Interstate 70. It lies almost entirely on state and public lands, and it was the range area where the outlaws of Robber's Roost herded their cattle.

The annual San Rafael Mail Run has become a traditional moto-cross race since its inception in 1974. The course follows the old mail wagon route from Green River to Hanksville. Over 200 entries have been made in the race each year, and some cover the 100 mile course in less than two and one-half hours.

Further in the desert toward the Green River, the Barrier Creek section of Canyonlands National Park is home to some of the most impressive life size pictographs in the state of Utah. Barrier Creek and Horseshoe Canyon can be reached by a four-wheel drive or ORV excursion into the desert, and offer a fine record of the prehistoric past.

After a day of trail riding in the desert, Goblin Valley and the San Rafael Reef are excellent places to hike by day or by the light of a full moon.

11 Temple Mountain



Temple Mountain rises like a cathedral to an altitude of 6,773 feet above the San Rafael Reef. It is an area of scenic wonder, intense mining activity, and prehistoric record. The Indians drew their pictographs at the mountain, early prospectors dug for uranium, and countless others have marveled at its unique beauty within the reef.

The mountain is readily accessible via Interstate 70 and state highway 24. Heading south on 24, take the Goblin Valley turnoff to the right and follow the road six miles to the mountain. Here can be found pictographs, good sites for trailer camping, and the start of the old mining roads.

Uranium claims were first staked at Temple Mountain as early as 1898, and the mines have been worked by Joe Swasey and other members of the Swasey clan. The mountain is said to have produced the ore for Madam Curie's early experiments and was the source of the uranium for the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan.

The mines themselves are no longer operated, but claims are still staked should the uranium industry improve. The old roads to the mines offer challenging 4-wheel drive and ORV terrain, as well as spectacular views of the mountain, the San Rafael Reef, and the San Rafael Swell. Exploring old mines can be dangerous, so please use caution if you choose to hike in the area.

Temple Mountain is less than two hours from Price, a short distance from Goblin Valley State Reserve, and is in the center of the San Rafael Reef. The San Rafael Desert lies directly to the east with plenty of open terrain for ORV use. The mountain offers all these opportunities for you to enjoy the great outdoors.

6 Kessel Country

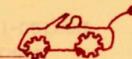


Kessel Country is a fascinating and untouched land of water carved mazes in the southwest corner of the San Rafael Swell. No roads lead in to Kessel Country, the topography forbids them. A road does pass close by, though, and a short hike into Kessel Country will provide an excellent primitive area for rock scrambling and back country camping.

Kessel Country can be reached by the Frontage Road Ranch Exit on Interstate 70. Head south and follow the signs to Hidden Splendor Mine. One mile past the second sign, turn left and follow this road 8.4 miles to where it splits for Tomsich Butte and Hidden Splendor until the labyrinth of Kessel Country unveils itself to the west. The rest is up to foot or horseback into one of the most undisturbed areas of the Swell.

Water run-off toward Muddy Creek has carved Kessel Country into a tangle of little canyons that intertwine amongst themselves and provide solitude for all who enter. Canyons lead into canyons into more canyons, but it only takes a short hike up a canyon wall to set your bearings straight again.

8 Mussentuchit Sand Dunes



Do everything but do not touch Mussentuchit Sand Dunes. Hill climb in the sand, spin ATCs up and down and any way you can, or jump in and go for the slide. Mussentuchit Dunes are an ORV paradise with nothing to hold a vehicle back except for the driver's own daring.

The Sand Dunes are located in the far southwest of the San Rafael Swell. The drive to the Dunes is half the challenge and half the fun. Take the first dirt road to the left (coming from Price), in Emery, and follow it 9.2 miles to the interstate. Cross the interstate and follow the road another 8.6 miles to an intersection at a corral. Turn left and go 2.2 miles to a BLM sign and drive straight past the sign 1.8 miles along the ridge to the Sand Dunes.

If a full day of play in the Sand Dunes doesn't wear your party out, the drive south to Cedar Mountain and the Moroni Slopes offers another adventure. The mountain scenery resembles an eerie moonscape with lava intrusions that rise like spines from the desert floor. The road twists and gnarls between Cedar Mountain and the Chimney, and then it leads on to the Moroni slopes and the edge of the San Rafael Reef. From there a cliff drops away to a vast view of the southern half of the San Rafael Swell with its features standing out like the view from an airplane.

10 San Rafael Reef



The San Rafael Reef has long posed an ominous barrier to anyone who has wanted to travel from the east into the Swell. A great upheaval created the Swell from the floor of the eastern Utah desert some 65 million years ago, and the Navajo sandstone thrust upward like a fortress wall in the middle of the desert. This barricade has since been worn and eroded into what is now the intriguingly spectacular San Rafael Reef.

The reef lies along the entire eastern boundary of the Swell, and it is most prominent south of Interstate 70. It can be reached by many of the side roads along Route 24 and is ideal for rock scrambling and exploring. As a panoramic backdrop for camping in the desert or a place to hike in solitude through the nooks and crannies, the San Rafael Reef forbids and beckons at the same time.

The reef itself is a greatly untouched area that offers wilderness conditions for hikers. Water has eroded and smoothed the sandstone into intricate washes and drainages that can be climbed or followed like a maze. The drainages support a variety of vegetation and wildlife, and also cool shade to escape the desert sun. Flash floods are a common occurrence here, so please use caution if you choose to hike in the area.

Next to the reef lies the San Rafael Desert, a vast playground for ORV users. Trailer camping space is ample on the unposted public land, and a base can be set up for travel in the reef or the desert. Vegetation in the desert is fragile, so please ride and drive on existing trails.

12 Wedge Overlook



The Wedge Overlook is the aftermath of a sixty-five million year struggle of upheaval and erosion between the San Rafael Swell and the San Rafael River. The Wedge itself rose from the East Utah desert along with the swell, but the river fought it back and cut the 1,000 foot deep Little Grand Canyon along the Wedge's edge. Today the Wedge offers a readily accessible vast panorama of the northern edge of the Swell, and it is perfect for all forms of camping and ORV use.

The Wedge Overlook is close to Price and easy to reach. Drive south from Cleveland towards the San Rafael Campground. Go past Buckhorn Reservoir 4.1 miles and drive straight beyond the water tank another six miles. The Little Grand Canyon suddenly opens up at the road's end, and trails lead along the rim towards Buckhorn Canyon.

The Wedge sits above the monument valley of the San Rafael and has inspiring views of Bottleneck Peak, Assembly Hall Peak, and Window Blind Peak--Utah's largest monolith. Several canyons wind their way into the Sid's Mountain area on the opposite side of the Little Grand, and they reveal the history of the mountain layered in stone. Far, far below, the tree-lined water of the San Rafael River continues to cut its way into the Swell.

The top of the Wedge provides level terrain for camping and late night fires beneath the stars. Motorcycles and ORVs can be run across the area on the existing trails that provide miles of back-country riding, only don't get too close to the edge.