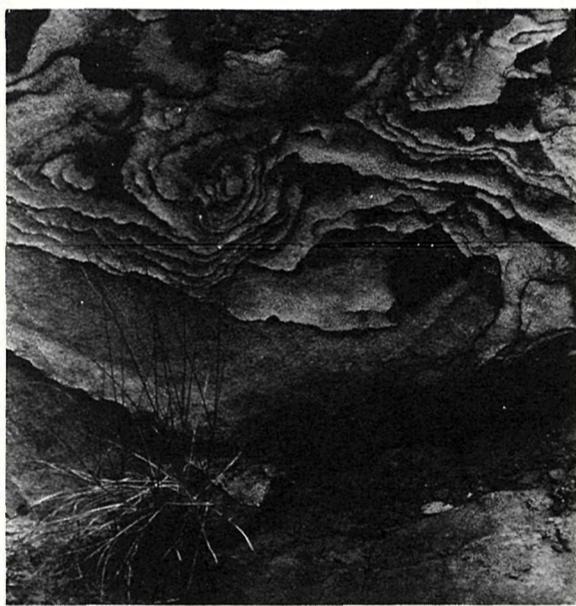


capitol reef

Capitol Reef National Park lies in the slickrock country of southern Utah, an area where water has cut monoliths, arches, and mazes of canyons out of a sandstone-and-shale desert. The term "reef" as applied to land formations means a ridge of rock that is a barrier. This reef was named for one of its high points, Capitol Dome, that resembles the dome of the U.S. Capitol. Penetrated and explored only in the last 100 years, much of the park remains a rugged wilderness.

The rock you see today in the park was laid down, layer upon layer, in past ages. At times this area was a tidal flat whose ripple marks are now hardened into stone. At other times sand dunes drifted across the land, and they eventually were consolidated into crisscrossing beds of sandstone.

You can see present-day counterparts of Capitol Reef's former landforms at the Great Salt Lake in northern Utah, in Everglades National Park, Fla.,



Stephen Frimble

and in Great Sand Dunes National Monument, Colo. The rock of Capitol Reef, like that of many other parks in the Southwest, reveals the earth's history millions of years ago, when dinosaurs were the dominant land animals.

Capitol Reef is located on the Colorado Plateau. It and the Rocky Mountains began rising to their present heights toward the end of the age of dinosaurs. Pressures on the rock increased as the plateau rose, and resulted in the folding of the rock into a 160-kilometer-(100-mile-) long formation called the Waterpocket Fold, considered unique by geologists because of its great size and a primary reason for the establishment of the park. As the rock was folding, it was also eroding, creating the cliff faces, arches, monoliths, and canyons that we see today.

Your first impression of the park from Utah 24 may come from the contrast between the lush growth along the Fremont River and the barrenness of the cliffs and terraces. The year-round water of the Fremont River, which allows cottonwood and the willow to grow, creates this contrast.

Though the Fremont River is an oasis, there is abundant life in other, drier parts of the park. On the more gentle slopes and terraces you'll find pinyon jay, pinyon pine, and Utah juniper, all adapted for

living in a dry climate. A twisted juniper growing from a crack in sandstone is a testimony not only as to how hard life is in this desert, but also as to how hardy life is.

In the narrow canyons and washes, water appears in a flash and mostly disappears in a few hours. Plants grow wherever they can gain a foothold. While risking being swept away in a flash flood, the living things in the sheltered canyons enjoy milder conditions than their counterparts on exposed slopes and cliff faces.

The sandy floor, piles of rock debris, and water-worn holes in the canyon walls make ideal homes for animals such as the side-blotched lizard, antelope squirrel, and canyon wren. Toward dusk, the first bats appear, hunting insects that may be attracted to moisture. Pockets of water often remain after a rain; that's how Waterpocket Fold got its name. These pockets, or tanks, hold surprising kinds of wildlife, such as shrimp and spadefoot toad tadpoles. Tadpoles go through their life cycles so rapidly that when the pocket of water dries, they have become toads and can survive until the next rain, buried in the sand in a protective mucus coat.

To the daytime visitor it may seem that except for lizards, chipmunks, and squirrels, few animals live in the park. But most, like the ringtail cat, fox, mountain lion, and deer, simply come out at night. Wildlife viewing is best at dawn, dusk, and after dark. Remember though, to the animals this place is home; we are merely visitors. Please do not feed, chase, or capture any animal in the park.

Man at Capitol Reef

Human beings inhabited the Capitol Reef area as long ago as 800 A.D., and perhaps much earlier. The Fremont Indians lived along the Fremont River and other permanent water courses for about 400 years. They left petroglyphs—carvings in rock—that still elude translation. The petroglyphs may have had to do with hunting, for they show desert bighorn sheep and figures of people. They may have had religious significance, or perhaps they were doodles. Study the petroglyphs and come up with your own translations.

The Fremont Indians hunted, gathered wild foods, and farmed. Archeologists have found many of their stone tools in the park. Along some trails you can discover their storage bins—moki huts—made from wood and rock. In these structures corn, beans, and other foods were stored. None of the moki huts has been restored; their sheltered locations have preserved them.

Around 1200 A.D. the Fremont people left, possibly because of prolonged drought.

Later, Paiute Indians lived in the area, passing through Capitol Reef, hunting game and gathering plant foods, but, humans did not live in the park the year round again until 1880. At that time Mormon settlers established a community, later called Fruita, where the visitor center and campground are today. These people earned their living from the crops and orchards they planted. Like the Fremont Indians before them, the Mormon settlers irrigated their crops from the Fremont River and Sulphur Creek. Small lime kilns were operated, making use of Capitol Reef's limestone deposits. In the early 1900s and the late 1940s several small uranium mines were worked. Cattle have grazed Capitol Reef since the early days of Fruita, and some of the park's roads and trails originally served for cattle drives. Today, grazing is being phased out.

With the establishment of Capitol Reef National Monument in 1937, land use began to change. The last residents of Fruita left in the late 1960s. In 1971, a greatly expanded Capitol Reef was designated a National Park. Today this land is set aside and dedicated to human benefit and enjoyment, preserved for present and future generations as a unit of the National Park System.

General Visitor Information

Seasonal Weather Variations

The visitor center at Capitol Reef is about 1,650 meters (5,400 feet) above sea level. The elevation and desert climate make the area prone to temperature extremes. June and July are the hottest months, with midday temperatures in the upper 30°s C (90°s F) common. Summer evenings cool to the 10°-15°C (50°-60°F) range. Thunderstorms can bring flash floods from July through September.

Spring and fall are mild, with warm days and cool nights. Winter daytime temperatures average below 10°C (50°F), dropping below freezing at night. Bitter cold comes occasionally during the winter, but snowfall is usually light and often melts away quickly. The average annual precipitation is less than 18 centimeters (7 inches), with low relative humidity.

Accommodations And Services

There are no services within Capitol Reef National Park. Food, fuel, and lodging are available at the communities to the west of the park and at Hanksville to the east. Please pick up a complete listing of accommodations and services at the visitor center, where park personnel will be glad to help you.

Picnicking

The park has three picnic areas. The one 5 kilometers (3.5 miles) east of the visitor center on Utah 24 has several tables and pit toilets but does not have water. There are firepits, but you must have your own wood or charcoal. Wood gathering is discouraged in the park. From this picnic area you may explore nearby cliff bases or go across the highway for a stroll along the Fremont River.

Another picnic area is near the main campground, about 1.2 kilometers (0.75 mile) down the Scenic Drive from the visitor center. Numerous tables are set in the oasis of orchard land and lawn of the old community of Fruita. Drinking water at designated taps and toilets are available.

The third picnic area, on the Burr Trail in the southern part of the park, provides a superb view of the Circle Cliffs and the Henry Mountains. It has tables, but neither toilets nor water.

Campgrounds

The two campgrounds at Capitol Reef are open year round, and all sites are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

The main campground, 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) down the Scenic Drive from the visitor center, has 53 sites, each with a picnic table and a charcoal fire stand. There are two restrooms with running water and drinking water at designated taps. Wood gathering is discouraged in the park and ground fires are not allowed. Be sure to check the bulletin board at the campground entrance for the latest information on natural history programs, services, and other items of interest. The camping fee is \$4 per vehicle each night.

The Cedar Mesa campground, in the southern part of the park, has five sites, each with a picnic table. There is a pit toilet, but no water. There is no charge at Cedar Mesa.

Group Camping

The park has two small group camping sites near the main campground. These sites must be reserved in advance by writing to the superintendent.



Stephen Trimble



Stephen Trimble



Stephen Trimble

As you hike and drive around the park, slow down and look for the touches of beauty you might otherwise miss. The photographs on this side of the folder give you an idea of the varied expressions of nature at Capitol Reef.

Backcountry Camping

Much of the best of Capitol Reef is in its backcountry. If you desire to camp there, please obtain a permit from any park ranger or at the visitor center. These free permits help park rangers monitor the use of the backcountry to better protect it and you, should you need help. Check at the visitor center for maps and advice on your route. Backcountry camping sites must be at least 0.8 kilometer (0.5 mile) off any maintained road or trail. Open fires are discouraged in the backcountry, so bring a stove.

Spring and fall are ideal times for backcountry hiking and camping, because of the mild temperatures. Insects can be a problem to hikers in June and July. Flash floods occur from July through September, so keep an eye on the sky over the higher elevations and above your camping site. Don't camp in the bottoms of drainages.

Naturalist Services

To acquaint yourself better with Capitol Reef, you are invited to attend evening campfire programs in the amphitheater and to accompany a park naturalist on a walk. Naturalists give programs and walks from May through September. Schedules are posted in the campground and at the visitor center, where other information on the park's natural and human history is available.

A Word On Water

Capitol Reef has a desert environment. For the plants and animals native here, the search for water is a constant concern. Be sure to carry water with you even on short hikes. You'll find your trip more pleasant and certainly safer. Most water in Capitol Reef is contaminated with minerals or by animals. Drinking water comes out of labelled taps at the visitor center, and at the nearby picnic area and campground. Water from any other source is not recommended for human consumption. Backcountry users should carry their own water. Do not depend on finding potable water.

Safety And Park Regulations

Capitol Reef National Park preserves a part of America in its wild state. The beauty is preserved along with the hazards of a wilderness. Plan your trip carefully and travel with caution. Both for your own safety and to help preserve the park, please observe these regulations and words of caution:

—Hunting, trapping, or the use of firearms is prohibited. Firearms must be unloaded and cased or broken down.

—Beware of possible flash floods.

—Removing rock, plants, animals, or artifacts steals the pleasure of discovery from future visitors and is prohibited. Please don't litter. If you carry something into the park, be it a cigarette butt, pop top, or food please carry it out with you.

—Pets may react differently away from the familiar surroundings of home. Remember you and your pet are visitors here and native animals have a right to live unmolested. Please keep pets under physical restraint and do not take them onto park trails or more than 90 meters (100 yards) away from the road.

—All vehicles are restricted to maintained roads.

—Be sure to advise a park ranger whenever you hike off established roads or trails.

Capitol Reef National Park

Located in southern Utah, Capitol Reef is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The Superintendent's address is Torrey, UT 84775.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

What To See And Do Along Utah 24

Several scenic pullouts along Utah 24 provide good spots to stretch your legs and to begin slowing down from highway speeds. From some pullouts, you may take a short stroll to points of interest, like the Fruita schoolhouse and the petroglyphs. Other pullouts are trailheads to Chimney Rock, the Goosenecks, Panorama Point, and Hickman Natural Bridge. One of the shortest of these trails, at Goosenecks, leads you to a breathtaking view. Along the self-guided trail to Hickman Natural Bridge you will see much of what is typical in Capitol Reef.

Be sure to stop at the visitor center, which offers exhibits, literature, and an orientation program. At the information desk pick up the park trail map and get answers for your questions.



At the end of the Scenic Drive is Capitol Gorge, an ideal spot for taking a short walk.

Along The Scenic Drive

This well-maintained gravel road takes you on a 40-kilometer (25-mile) round trip. Pick up a drive guide at the visitor center. Along the drive stop your car now and then and enjoy views of the massive cliffs of Capitol Reef. Imagine what the earliest travelers must have thought when they saw these formidable barriers. Take a stroll or a short hike and enjoy two of the park's most precious attractions; its peace and quiet.

The Scenic Drive takes you to Grand Wash and Capitol Gorge, two of the few places along the reef where water has cut completely through. You can take several walks from the Grand Wash and Capitol Gorge parking lots.

North Of Utah 24

Dirt roads, suitable only for high clearance vehicles, lead into the north end of the park through the heart of Cathedral Valley and along the rim of the South Desert. The dirt roads can deteriorate in flash floods. Be sure to check at the visitor center on current road conditions.

All vehicles must stay on maintained roads. Cutting across open country damages not only the view for others, but also hinders preservation efforts.

If you have your own horse, you can enjoy good riding in the South Desert. Be sure first to fill out a backcountry permit. No horses are for rent in or near the park.

South Of Utah 24

The major access to the south end of Capitol Reef, which is good hiking country, is just east of the park boundary on Utah 24. The access road goes to the townsite of Notom (now a private ranch) and eventually to Bullfrog Marina in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. This dirt road normally is passable in a passenger car, but because conditions vary, check with a park ranger for the latest information.

Even if you're new to hiking, park rangers can recommend good all-day or overnight hikes. Experienced, well-equipped hikers can take trips into even more remote areas. Ask a ranger for details.

Besides good hiking, the southern area of the park offers spectacular scenery. South of Notom the rock tilts to 70° slopes on the east side of the Reef. You will also pass several washes that penetrate Capitol Reef; they make for excellent day hikes. An overlook off Muley Twist Canyon gives views of the folded strata of Capitol Reef and of the Henry Mountains. Pick up special hiking maps at the visitor center or at information boxes along roads in the south end.

At the junction of the Burr Trail and the road from Notom, a bulletin board with maps and park information is posted for your convenience. As you plan your trip, be especially cautious if rain threatens. Roads become slick when wet, making them impassable.

Westbound on the Burr Trail, usually passable by passenger cars, you come eventually to the town of Boulder. North of Boulder are several national forest campgrounds. South of the town is the Escalante Primitive Area.

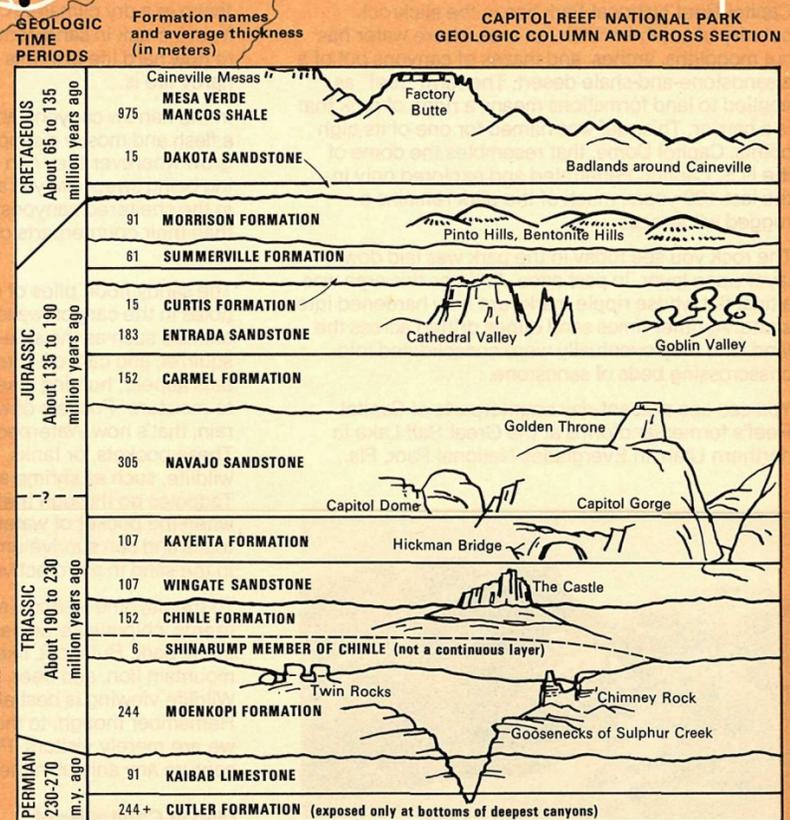
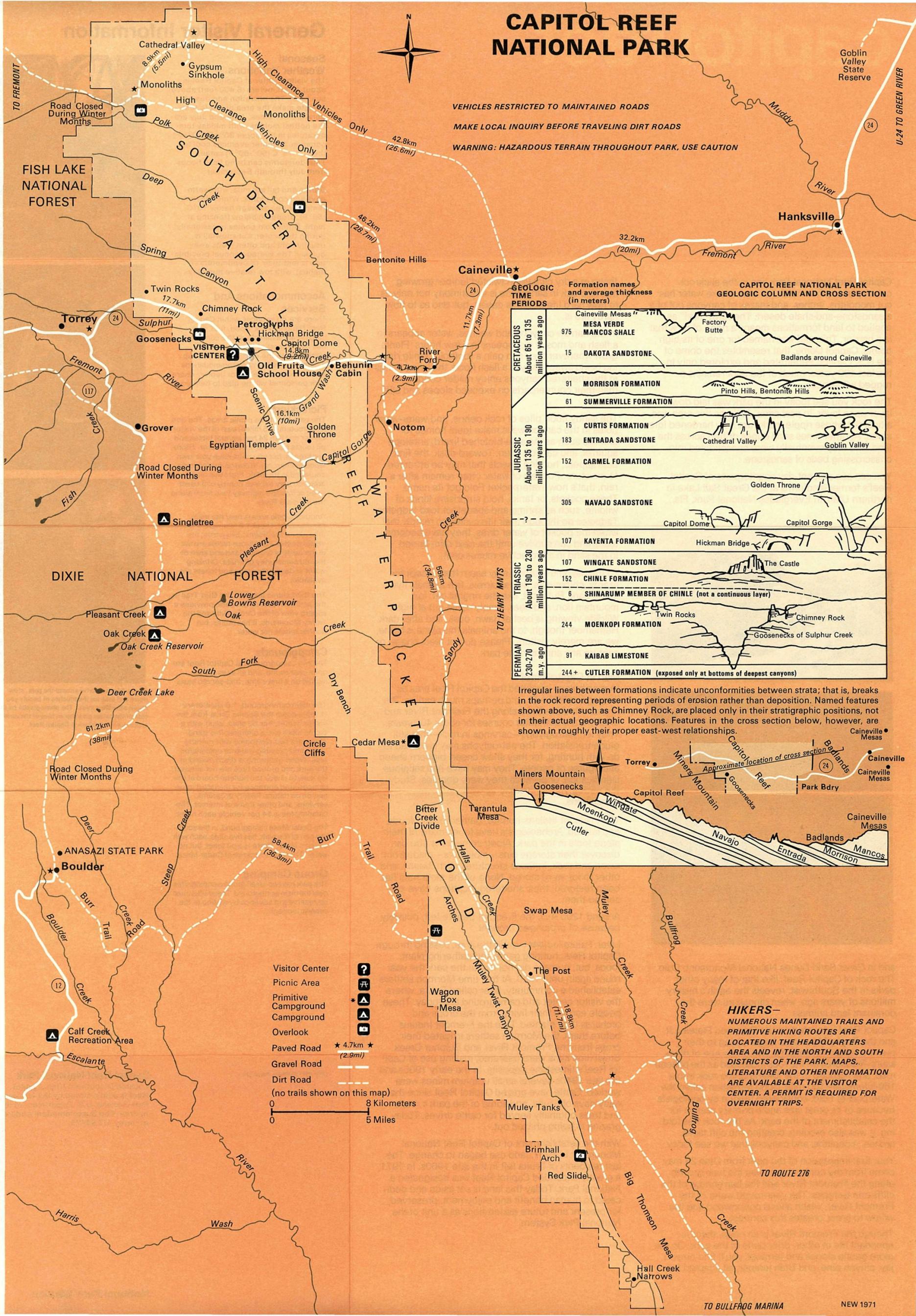
The southernmost part of the park accessible by vehicle is the Brimhall Arch Overlook. This parking area is also an access point for hikers into the Hall's Creek region.

CAPITOL REEF NATIONAL PARK

VEHICLES RESTRICTED TO MAINTAINED ROADS

MAKE LOCAL INQUIRY BEFORE TRAVELING DIRT ROADS

WARNING: HAZARDOUS TERRAIN THROUGHOUT PARK, USE CAUTION



Irregular lines between formations indicate unconformities between strata; that is, breaks in the rock record representing periods of erosion rather than deposition. Named features shown above, such as Chimney Rock, are placed only in their stratigraphic positions, not in their actual geographic locations. Features in the cross section below, however, are shown in roughly their proper east-west relationships.



HIKERS—
NUMEROUS MAINTAINED TRAILS AND PRIMITIVE HIKING ROUTES ARE LOCATED IN THE HEADQUARTERS AREA AND IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH DISTRICTS OF THE PARK. MAPS, LITERATURE AND OTHER INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE AT THE VISITOR CENTER. A PERMIT IS REQUIRED FOR OVERNIGHT TRIPS.