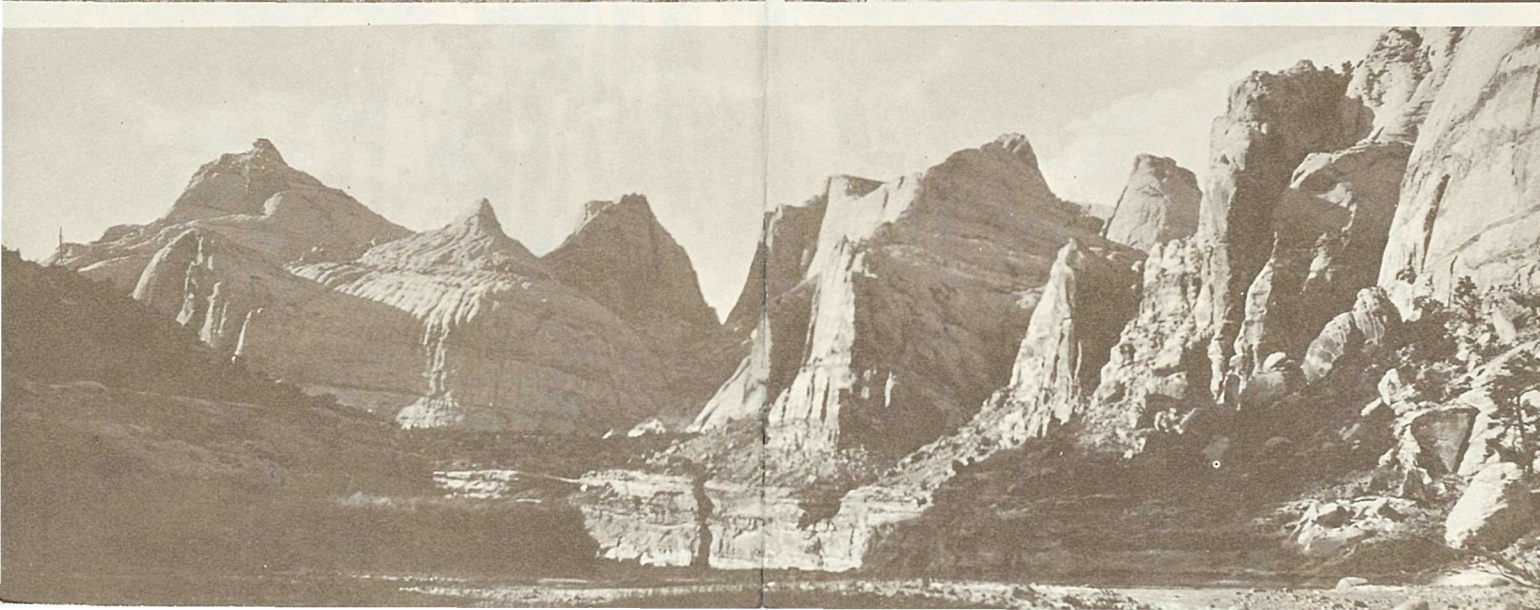


# CAPITOL REEF

NATIONAL MONUMENT • UTAH





## CAPITOL REEF NATIONAL MONUMENT • UTAH

*This great buttressed sandstone cliff stretches 20 miles across the heart of a vast wonderland. Carved by water and wind into fantastic towers, domes, and pinnacles, it rises imposingly above the desert floor. Early geologists called such cliffs "reefs" because of their resemblance to coral formations.*

The monument includes a section of the Waterpocket Fold, a great doubling up of the earth's crust. The western edge of this fold (of which Capitol Reef is a part) is exposed as a great cliff, or escarpment, of brilliantly colored rock layers. It extends from Thousand Lake Mountain southeastward about 150 miles to the Colorado River. The fantastically eroded fold, or reef, was a barrier to the pioneer traveler. It can be crossed in only three places on horseback. One of these passages, following the Fremont River, allows automobiles to cross.

The Fremont River and its tributaries, Sulphur and Pleasant Creeks, are the only perennial streams. Many of the water pockets (large potholes in rocky gorges) retain runoff water for long periods. The vegetation is sparse and desertlike. Pinyons and junipers grow on the talus slopes, and cottonwoods along streams.

### Prehistory and History

Prehistoric Indians known as the Fremont Basketmakers raised corn on flat ground near the streams. Smooth cliff walls are marked with many petroglyphs of unusual size and style, enduring figures pecked into the stone by the Indians centuries ago that challenge you to interpret the thoughts of the artists. The Basketmakers lived in open caves but built small stone structures for corn storage. Artifacts and relics from some of these structures are on display at the monument visitor center.

*Among the many impressive formations at Capitol Reef are The Egyptian Temple (upper left), sandstone cliffs at the base of the Aquarius Plateau (upper right), domed pinnacles along the Fremont River (bottom), and The Castle (cover).*

Because of its peculiar geographical isolation, the Fremont River drainage was the last section of Utah to be explored and settled. In January 1854, Col. John C. Fremont and members of his expedition looked down from Thousand Lake Mountain into the present monument. In 1866 a semimilitary expedition of Mormons, under the leadership of Capt. James Andrus, came in from the south over Boulder Mountain. Prof. A. H. Thompson, geographer of the Powell survey, made the first geographic and geologic reconnaissance of the area in 1875, applying many names still in use.

The first permanent settler was Neils Johnson, who located a homestead near the junction of Fremont River and Sulphur Creek in 1880. The pioneers found so many difficulties to overcome in cultivating the tillable land that the area until recently could not support more than 8 or 10 families. Impassable roads discouraged visitors, and the area remained practically unknown to the outside world until the 1930's.

### Geological Significance

Like other parts of the Colorado River basin, the Capitol Reef region was once a low-lying country, consisting of swamps, shallow lagoons, and wide, sluggish streams, inhabited by giant reptiles and amphibians.

For millions of years, streams carried silt, sand, and mud into the swampy lowland. As these sediments were buried, they gradually hardened to become sandstone and shale.

When the Rocky Mountains began to form about 60 million years ago, the rocks of this area were buckled and folded. Water and wind removed the softer upper formations and cut deep gorges in the more resistant

rock along fractures. Erosion is thus the sculptor of the innumerable towers, pinnacles, and great domes you see in Capitol Reef today.

Roads in the monument lie principally upon the Moenkopi formation. This dark-red or brown, ripple-marked shale shows unusual erosional forms along the cliff base and contains fossil footprints of reptiles and amphibians in many places. Stranded on the Moenkopi beds are large volcanic boulders washed down from the high plateaus by melting glacial ice 10,000 years ago. Above the Moenkopi is a thick exposure of Chinle shale in various colors, with the gray-green band at its base a prominent feature. Above the Chinle, 600 feet of red Wingate sandstone forms the sheer, high pinnacle cliffs that dominate the landscape.

Finally, as a cap rock, the gray or white Navajo sandstone rests on top. Its cones, arches, and rounded domes resemble the domes of many capitol buildings.

### Plants and Animals

The vegetation, mammals, and birds of the monument are typical of the pinyon-juniper belt of the Colorado Plateau. Sagebrush, saltbush, and squawbush form much of the shrubby ground cover. Deer, foxes, bobcats, and porcupines and other smaller rodents make up the bulk of the mammal population. Lizards are numerous, but snakes are rarely encountered. Hawks, owls, ravens, and other birds are common.

### Places of Special Interest

All along the road through the monument you will see highly colored, grotesquely eroded cliffs. Colors appear strongest in early morning or late afternoon.

If you travel from the west on Utah 24 you come to a viewpoint near Twin Rocks soon after passing the entrance marker. Two miles beyond, on the right, is the Motorman, and just beyond that is Chimney Rock, on the left. About 1 mile beyond Chimney Rock, a dirt road turns right. At its terminus, a short trail

leads to the rim of spectacular Sulphur Creek Gorge.

If you enter from the east, you will travel 5.7 miles from the entrance to the visitor center along the narrow Fremont River Canyon. Parking areas offer opportunities for taking pictures and for following a trail that leads into Grand Wash and another trail that leads to Hickman Natural Bridge and Cohab Canyon.

The self-guiding trail to the bridge is an easy ¾-mile hike. The bridge, carved by the forces of nature from the rock, is 72 feet high and has a 133-foot span.

From the visitor center a road leads south to Capitol Gorge, 8 miles. Along this route are road spurs leading into Grand Wash and to Pleasant Creek.

Grand Wash is one of the finest attractions in the monument. From the end of the road in the canyon, you can hike less than a mile and find yourself in the narrows, where 1,000-foot walls are only 16 feet apart. The trail through the narrows ends at Utah 24 in the Fremont River Canyon; 300 yards from the end of the road is the 1½-mile trail to Cassidy Arch.

Capitol Gorge, until recently, was used as the only route through the reef. About 2½ miles into the gorge you will come upon a parking area from which a trail leads to the top of the reef near Golden Throne. On the north wall, a short distance beyond the parking area, you can see petroglyphs estimated to be 1,200 years old. These ancient rock carvings are believed to have been made by the Basketmaker Indians.

Other early visitors also recorded their presence in this rugged, beautiful country. From the end of the road in Capitol Gorge, a walk of about half a mile will take you to another narrows, where pioneers carved their names and the dates of their passage.

Trails into the wild upper sections of the monument should not be attempted without back-country information from the monument office. Do not take shortcuts or wander from the regular trails. Hikers and climbers planning trips into the back country should notify the superintendent before and after each trip.

### About Your Visit

Approaches to Capitol Reef are by way of Utah 24. The monument is 68 miles east of Richfield and Sigurd which are on U.S. 89, and 90 miles west of the junction of U.S. 50-6 and Utah 24.

Monument roads are open all year except for occasional short periods following heavy rain or snow.

An unusually scenic approach is through Escalante and Boulder and over Boulder Mountain, connecting with Utah 24 one mile east of Torrey. This graded road runs through spectacular red-rock country and forests of pine and aspen. It is usually free of snow from June 15 to October 15, but local inquiry should be made before attempting this route.

The visitor center presents exhibits and illustrated orientation programs.

Midsummer daytime temperatures are in the 80° to 90° range, and the nights are normally cool. Spring and autumn are generally mild. From the latter part of December through January it is usually cold.

Capitol Reef Lodge offers sleeping accommodations, tours, and meals for a limited number of guests. Gifford Motel also offers accommodations, including two housekeeping apartments. Both the lodge and the motel are on private lands within the monument boundary; the National Park Service, therefore, exercises no control over them. At the end of the drive and outside the monument is the Sleeping Rainbow Guest Ranch, where tours, meals, and overnight accommodations are available.

Camping space, tables, fireplaces, water, and rest-rooms are provided at the Fruita Campground. Utility connections for house trailers are available at the lodge.

Gasoline, but not auto repair, is available at the lodge and at the Sleeping Rainbow Guest Ranch.

### Preservation of the Monument

Regulations have been designed for the protection of the natural features and for your safety and convenience.

Please do not damage petroglyphs or disturb flowers, trees, rocks, wildlife, or other natural features. Use of firearms is not permitted.

Camp and picnic only in the established campground.

*Help keep the monument clean!*

**FIRES AND SMOKING.** Be careful with all fires, cigarettes, and cigars. *Be sure your campfire is out!*

Pets are allowed provided you keep them under physical restraint at all times.

### Administration

Capitol Reef National Monument, established on August 2, 1937, and containing 61 square miles, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Torrey, Utah, 84775, is in immediate charge. He can usually be reached at either the visitor center or his residence, 1¼ miles east.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States—now and in the future.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

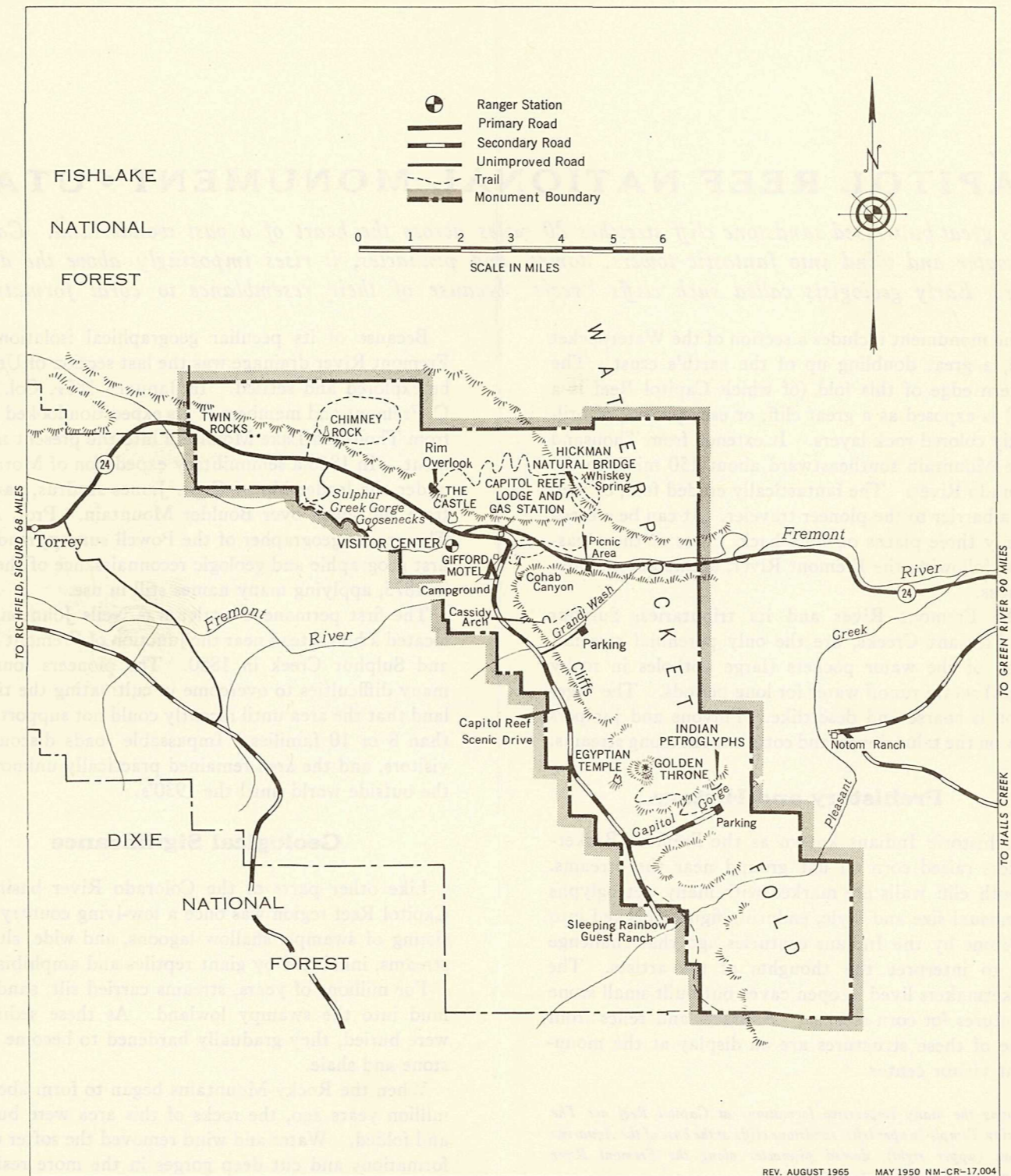


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