

DAY HIKING IN DINOSAUR NATIONAL MONUMENT

Rugged terrain and the absence of potable water sources limit hiking possibilities here; most of the established trails are fairly short. For your safety, and to protect the fragile soils and plant life of this semi-desert land, please stay on the trails and do not shortcut across curves or switchbacks. Vehicles and pets are not allowed on the trails. Wear good footwear, and carry drinking water--water from springs and streams is unsafe to drink unless boiled or chemically treated (and not all chemicals are effective against the widespread parasite *Giardia*). Summer days can be hot; mornings and early evenings are the best times to hike.

Short Nature Trails

Red Rock Trail (2-mile loop), at Split Mountain Campground, passes through open country with moderate to steep hills. Self-guiding leaflets, available at the trailhead or at the Quarry Visitor Center, feature the geology and plant life of the Split Mountain area. Allow 1½ to 2 hours to walk this trail.

Harpers Corner Trail (2 miles round trip) starts at the end of the Harpers Corner Scenic Drive, 31 miles north of monument Headquarters. The trail has moderate inclines, but pinyon-juniper woodland provides intermittent shade along the way; the walk takes 1½ to 2 hours. The trail follows a ridge affording spectacular views of the Green and Yampa River canyons and Echo Park, 2500 feet below. Self-guiding leaflets are available at the trailhead or at Headquarters. Photography is best in the late afternoon.

Plug Hat Trail (½-mile loop) is adjacent to the Plug Hat Picnic Area, 4 miles from Headquarters on the Harpers Corner Scenic Drive. Exhibits along this easy, level trail describe local history and geology.

Gates of Lodore Trail (1½ mile round trip) follows the Green River from Lodore Campground to the dramatic entrance to the Canyon of Lodore. Most of the trail is fairly easy, and it can be walked in 1 to 1½ hours. Self-guiding leaflets are available at the trailhead or the Lodore Ranger Station. Morning light is best for photography.

Longer Trails

Jones Hole Trail (8 miles round trip) leads from the Jones Hole Fish Hatchery to the banks of the Green River in Whirlpool Canyon. The trail, much of it easy walking, follows Jones Hole Creek through a deep, picturesque canyon, shady most of the way. Short spur trails lead to prehistoric Indian pictographs (please do not touch, even gently!) and a small waterfall on Ely Creek. This is an excellent day hike.

Ruple Point Trail (8 miles round trip) begins at the Island Park Overlook on the Harpers Corner Scenic Drive and follows an abandoned 4-wheel-drive road along the top of Ruple Ridge. The trail has only moderate grades but crosses open, dry terrain; carrying water is essential, and a hat is also a good idea. The trail ends on a rocky point with a spectacular view of Split Mountain Gorge and the Green River.

Echo Park--Sand Canyon hike (about 6- to 8-mile loop, depending on exact route) is not a maintained trail, but can be followed by walking up the Yampa River from Echo Park to the mouth of Sand Canyon, up that drainage until it opens out, and then across open benchland to the Echo Park road in lower Pool Creek Canyon. The route may be impassable during high water on the Yampa River (generally late May to late June); also there is some scrambling over rocks in Sand Canyon.

BACKPACKING

Overnight hiking is possible here, but there are no designated backpacking trails or backcountry campsites except for two sites at the Jones Hole-Ely Creek confluence. Except at those two sites, backpackers must camp at least one-half mile off any established road or trail. A free backcountry permit, available at the visitor centers, is required for any overnight hike within the monument.