

# Natural Bridges

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Natural Bridges National Monument



## Visitor Guide



Natural Bridges sits high on Cedar Mesa, 6,500 feet above sea level. Intermittent streams have cut two deep canyons and three massive bridges in sandstone formed from what was once the shore of an ancient sea. At each of the bridges, trails descend into the canyons from the loop road. A longer trail meanders along the canyon bottoms through oak and cottonwood groves (shown above), connecting the three bridges in one loop hike.

### General Information

#### Scenic Drive

The scenic drive is open year-round from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. This paved, nine-mile loop provides access to all the bridges. Each may be viewed by walking a short distance to an overlook. An archeological site may also be viewed from an overlook along the scenic drive.

#### Visitor Center

The visitor center is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours during summer. Exhibits, a video presentation and bookstore are available. Closed holidays.

#### Entrance Fees (good for seven days)

\$3 Individual (walk-in, bicycle, motorcycle)  
\$6 Vehicle

#### Weather

| Month                 | J   | F   | M    | A   | M   | J   | J    | A    | S    | O    | N    | D    |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Average High          | 39  | 45  | 51   | 60  | 71  | 81  | 90   | 86   | 77   | 63   | 50   | 40   |
| Average Low           | 17  | 22  | 26   | 32  | 40  | 49  | 58   | 56   | 49   | 37   | 27   | 19   |
| Average Precipitation | .97 | .95 | 1.22 | .83 | .67 | .57 | 1.45 | 1.59 | 1.07 | 1.48 | 1.11 | 1.28 |

#### Campground

The 13 site campground is open year-round on a first-come, first-served basis. Fee is \$10 per night. Sites will accommodate up to eight people and one vehicle. There is a 26-foot length limit. Each site has a fire grill, picnic table and tent pad. Gathering firewood is prohibited. Evening programs are offered during the summer (check bulletin boards for schedules). Overflow camping is available outside Natural Bridges.

#### Pets

Pets are allowed in developed areas but must be leashed at all times. Pets are not allowed on hiking trails or in the backcountry.

#### More Information

Natural Bridges  
National Monument  
HC 60 Box 1  
Lake Powell, UT 84533  
(435) 692-1234  
[www.nps.gov/nabr](http://www.nps.gov/nabr)

### Visitor Safety

- Check trail conditions at the visitor center before hiking.
- Drink at least one gallon (4 liters) of water each day.
- Remain in one place if you become lost or separated from a group.
- During a lightning storm, avoid lone trees, cliff edges and high ridges. Return to your vehicle if possible.
- Flash floods can occur without warning. Never cross a canyon that is flooding.
- Be careful near cliff edges, especially when rock is wet or icy.
- Do not climb on the bridges; it is both dangerous and illegal.
- Always carry a map, adequate clothing and a flashlight.

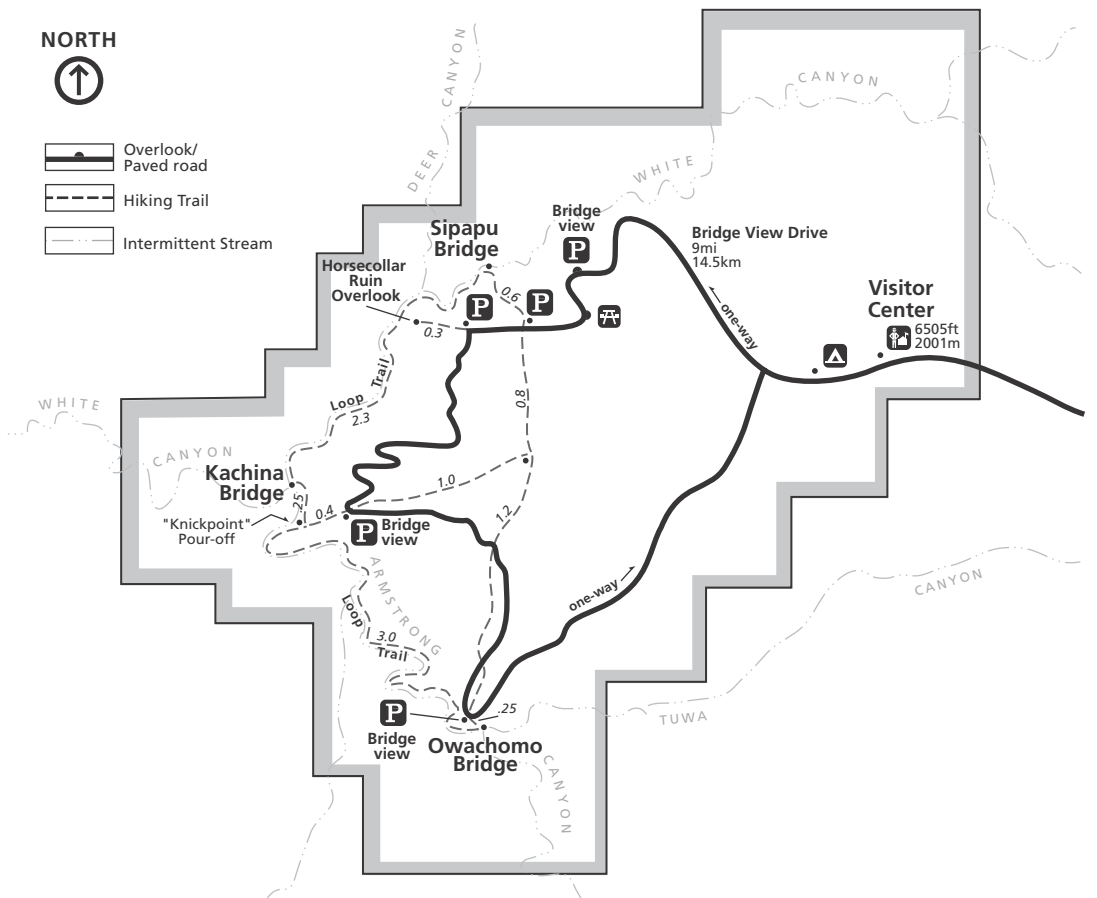
### Caring for the Canyons

Natural Bridges preserves habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Visitors may see mule deer browsing, hear the falling notes of a canyon wren, or smell the sweet aroma of spring wildflowers. To guard these experiences for future generations, please observe the following regulations:

- Pets are not allowed on hiking trails.
- Protect cryptobiotic soil crusts by staying on trails.
- Leave water for wildlife: do not disturb pools or intermittent streams by bathing or swimming.
- Do not enter archeological sites, remove artifacts or touch rock art.
- Camping is permitted only in the campground.
- Vehicles and bicycles must remain on designated roads.
- Vehicles may not be left unattended overnight along the loop road.



Cryptobiotic soil crust



Hikers make their way down the trail to Sipapu Bridge.



Horsecollar Ruin earns its name from the shape of the doors to these granaries.

**Sipapu Bridge Trail**

1.2 mi/1.9 km, 1 hour round trip  
 Elevation change: 500 ft/152 m  
 Sipapu Bridge is the second largest natural bridge in the world (only Rainbow Bridge in Glen Canyon is bigger). In Hopi mythology, a "sipapu" is a gateway through which souls may pass to the spirit world. The trail to the canyon bottom below Sipapu is the steepest in the park. A staircase and three wooden ladders aid in the descent. At the top of the stairway, notice the logs reaching from the cliff wall to the large fir on the other side of the stairs. Early visitors to the park climbed down this tree to reach the canyon. At the base of the tree you can still see the remains of an earlier staircase. The ledge located halfway down the trail provides an excellent view of Sipapu. Please use caution around the cliff edges. The remaining portion of the trail leads down a series of switchbacks and ladders to the grove of Gambel's oak beneath Sipapu.

**Horsecollar Ruin Overlook Trail**

0.6 mi/1.0 km, 1/2 hour round trip  
 This short, mostly level trail leads over the mesa top to the edge of White Canyon. From this perspective you can see the remains of an ancestral Puebloan cliff dwelling in a large alcove near the bottom of the canyon. Two granaries with uniquely shaped doors give this ruin its name. To the left of the granaries is a kiva, the community's ceremonial and meeting room.

**Kachina Bridge Trail**

1.5 mi/2.4 km, 1 hour round trip  
 Elevation change: 400 ft/122 m  
 Kachina is a massive bridge and is considered the "youngest" of the three because of the thickness of its span. The relatively small size of its opening and its orientation make it difficult to see from the overlook. The pile of boulders under the far side of the bridge resulted from a rock fall in 1992, when ap-

proximately 4,000 tons of rock broke off the bridge. As you descend the switchbacks, notice the "Knickpoint" pour-off in Armstrong Canyon below to your left. During floods, this spout sends a muddy red waterfall plunging into the pool below. The bridge is named for the Kachina dancers that play a central role in Hopi religious tradition.

**Owachomo Bridge Trail**

0.4 mi/0.6 km, 20 minutes round trip  
 Elevation change: 180 ft/55 m  
 Owachomo means "rock mound" in Hopi, and is named after the rock formation on top of the southeast end of the bridge. From the overlook, the twin buttes called "The Bear's Ears" break the eastern horizon. The original road to Natural Bridges passed between these buttes, ending across the canyon from Owachomo Bridge at the original visitor center (which was a platform tent). The old trail still winds up the other side of the canyon, but is seldom used. Notice that Tuwa Creek no longer flows under Owachomo like it did for thousands of years. The bridge's delicate form suggests that it has eroded more quickly than the other bridges.

**Loop Trail**

The loop trail provides visitors an excellent way to experience the wonders of Natural Bridges. The full loop passes all three bridges, but shorter loops between only two bridges are also possible. The loop trail may be started at any of the bridge parking areas. Visitors wishing to hike the full loop must follow the trail up the left side of the canyon after passing Kachina Bridge in order to skirt the "Knickpoint" pour-off. Round trip distances are listed below.

- Sipapu/Owachomo Loop: 8.6 mi/13.8 km
- Sipapu/Kachina Loop: 5.6 mi/9 km
- Kachina/Owachomo Loop: 5.4 mi/8.7 km

Printed by Canyonlands Natural History Association on recycled paper (100% post-consumer waste). 04/03 6m