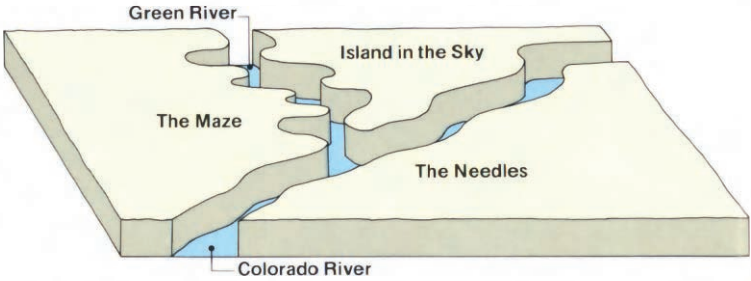


Canyonlands

Canyonlands National Park
Utah

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Canyonlands preserves an immense wilderness of rock at the heart of the Colorado Plateau. Wind and water have been the prime architects of this land, cutting flat layers of sedimentary rock into hundreds of colorful canyons, mesas, buttes, fins, arches, and spires. At center stage are two great canyons, those carved by the Green and Colorado Rivers. Surrounding the rivers are vast, and very different, regions of the park: to the north,



Island in the Sky; to the west, the Maze; and to the east, the Needles. The areas share a common primitive spirit and wild desert atmosphere. Each also offers its own special rewards. Few people were familiar with these remote lands and rivers when the park was established in 1964. Prehistoric Indians, cowboys, river explorers, and uranium prospectors had dared to enter this rugged corner of southeastern Utah, but few others did. To a

large degree, Canyonlands remains untrammelled today. Its roads are mostly unpaved, its trails primitive, its rivers free-flowing. Throughout its 848 square kilometers (527 square miles) roam desert bighorn sheep, coyotes, and other animals native to this land. Canyonlands is wild America.

A Wilderness of Rock

Island in the Sky

Views from Island in the Sky reach from the depths of the Green and Colorado Rivers to the heights of distant mountaintops and above. They stretch across canyon after canyon after canyon to the horizon 160 kilometers (100 miles) distant. A broad, level mesa wedged between the Green and the Colorado, Island in the Sky serves as Canyonlands' observation tower. From its many overlooks sightseers absorb overwhelming vistas of almost incomprehensible dimensions. Closest to the mesa's edge is the White Rim, a nearly continuous sandstone bench 370 meters (1,200 feet) below the Island. Another 300 meters (1,000 feet) beneath the White Rim are the rivers, shadowed by sheer canyon cliffs, and beyond them lies the country of the Maze and the Needles. Outside the park's boundary three jagged mountain ranges abruptly break the pattern of the flat-topped canyon landscape. To the east rise the La Sal;



Reptiles like the collared lizard are among the more colorful of the



Small bands of desert bighorn sheep scramble expertly up and down the



It was "... the splendor of the landscape, the perfection of the silence ..."

David Muench



First a cattle trail, then a road for uranium hunters, Shafer Trail today is a

David Muench

to the south, the Abajos; to the southwest, the Henrys. Rain that passes by the arid soil of Canyonlands keeps these mountains mantled in forests of pine and fir. On the Island, vegetation is much sparser. Open fields of Indian rice grass and other grasses and pinyon-juniper pygmy forests survive on less than 25 centimeters (10 inches) of rain a year. Coyotes, foxes, squirrels, ravens, hawks, and smaller birds share the food of these lands. Herds of cattle and horses once grazed these desert pastures, too; abandoned water troughs and fences are reminders of those bygone days. Rocky ledges that lead down to and below the White Rim are a favorite habitat for many of Canyonlands' desert bighorn sheep. From the Island mesa the sheep look like tan fly-sized specks; only the sharpest

Explorations From U.S. 191 take Utah 313 south to the Island. A paved road continues across the Island. Facilities include: 4-wheel-drive routes; self-guiding and primitive trails; developed campground, primitive campsites (backcountry permit required); picnic areas; overlooks; roadside and trailside exhibits; commercial tours from nearby towns. Reservations for White Rim primitive campsites can be requested in writing; address inquiries to the White Rim Reservations Office in care of Canyonlands National Park. No water is available on the Island. Entrance fee is charged.

Exploring on Your Own

By Road Driving in the park can mean a comfortable ride on a paved road or a tortuous 4-wheel-drive climb up a steep, rocky slope. Paved and 2-wheel-drive dirt roads on Island in the Sky and in the Needles lead to interesting natural features, overlooks, trailheads, picnic areas, and developed campgrounds. Four-wheel-drive roads wind throughout the park, offering trips as short as a day or longer than a week. One of the most popular, the 160-kilometer (100-mile) White Rim Trail, can be driven in two days or leisurely explored over many days. Primitive campsites are located along many of these roads. Always carry food, water, and tools

The Maze

The Maze country west of the Colorado and Green Rivers is Canyonlands at its wildest. It ranks as one of the most remote and inaccessible regions in the United States. There is the Maze itself, a perplexing jumble of canyons that has been described as a "30 square mile puzzle in sandstone." Beyond are the weirdly shaped towers, walls, buttes, and mesas of the Land of Standing Rocks, Ernie's Country, the Dollhouse, and the Fins. Man comes to this wilderness of broken rock, little water, and stunted junipers and finds intangible resources hard to find elsewhere: Solitude, silence, and challenges demanding self-reliance. The 183-meter (600-foot) descent to the bottom of the Maze is a plunge into the heart of this country. Until the park was created, only a smattering of individuals had explored these canyons. Even today visitors number less than 8,000 each year. Many come to see the ghostly figures



The claret cup cactus and other desert plants are well-adapted to the arid



From one point of view the Maze's confusion of canyons are an inhospitable no-man's land; from another, an inviting refuge from civilization.

Stephen Trimble

painted on the walls of Horseshoe Canyon, which were left by Indians perhaps as many as 3,000 years ago. The haunting lifesize forms, known together as the Great Gallery, are considered among the finest examples of prehistoric rock art in the country. They are a fitting reminder of the otherworldly spirit of this region, where man comes and goes, but never stays.

Explorations From Utah 24 or 95 take 2- and 4-wheel-drive routes east to the Maze. Facilities include: 4-wheel-drive routes; primitive trails; primitive campsites (backcountry permit required); overlooks; commercial tours from nearby towns. No water is available.

General Travel Information

for emergencies. In remote areas, travel in the company of a second vehicle.

By Trail Both short walks and long hikes lead to some of Canyonlands' outstanding features. Short trails (less than 0.6 kilometer/1 mile) on the Island and in the Needles will take you to overlooks, to arches and other geologic oddities, and to Indian ruins. Some trails have wayside exhibits or brochures, which can be picked up at trailheads or ranger stations. Longer trails penetrate wilder regions. Trails are generally primitive, marked only with rock cairns. They are rugged and require strenuous exertion. Do not hike alone. Stay on trails. Carry a map and water. Obtain a backcountry permit if you plan to camp.

By River Motorboats, rafts, and canoes can navigate the quiet upper waters of the Green and Colorado. Persons boating above the confluence are asked to pick up a backcountry permit. Anyone planning a trip below the confluence through Cataract Canyon in a raft or specialized

The Needles

The diversity of names in the Needles country reflects the diversity of the land itself. Devils Kitchen and Angel Arch, Elephant Hill and Caterpillar Arch. Gothic Arch and Paul Bunyans Potty. The Needles is a startling landscape of sculptured rock spires, arches, canyons, grabens, and potholes. The dominant landforms are the Needles themselves—naked rock pinnacles banded in orange and white. Earth movements fractured the rock, and water, wind, and freezing and thawing eroded it into the jumbled terrain of today. Grassy meadows such as the 389-hectare (960-acre) Chesler Park offer a striking contrast to the Needles' bare rock. And arches add a touch of the unusual to the region. Like Arches National Park to the north, the Needles country boasts a fascinating collection of natural rock spans. Angel Arch, located in a side canyon of Salt Creek Canyon, stands 46 meters (150 feet)



Tower Ruin is one of hundreds of sites in the Needles where signs of ancient Indians exist.

Thia Nordling



Like other Needles' arches, Angel Arch is a creation of weathering by wind and water.

F.A. Barnes



The Needles, massive sandstone spires created by erosion and fracturing, form a giant crazy quilt pattern over a large area of Canyonlands.

David Muench

high. The Wooden Shoe Arch, on the other hand, has just a small tunnel-like opening. Other arches are shaped like a caterpillar, a wedding ring, a horse's hoof. Most of the arches lie hidden in backcountry canyons and are well-deserved rewards for those who make the long 4-wheel-drive trips or hikes to see them. The Grabens lie at the end of another long 4-wheel-drive journey. To reach these vertical-walled, grass-carpeted valleys requires negotiating infamous Elephant Hill. With steep, rocky inclines and sharp switchbacks, Elephant Hill tests the skills of the most accomplished driver. Continuing past the Grabens, roads and trails lead to the Confluence Overlook, a point 300 meters (1,000 feet) above the meeting place of the Green and Colorado Rivers. Throughout this

whitewater boat must obtain a permit at park headquarters. A limited number of individuals are allowed to run this dangerous whitewater stretch each year. Boat launch sites are at locations north of the park, including Moab and Green River. There are no services along the rivers. The best times for trips are spring through fall.

Guided Tours

Four-wheel-drive tours, hiking trips, horseback rides, and river float trips are operated by commercial tour guides. The tours vary widely in the territory covered, length, cost, and amenities provided. Tours operate out of Moab, Monticello, and Green River year-round. Reservations are usually required. A list of Park Service concessioners is available from the park.

Campgrounds and Picnic Areas

Two modestly developed campgrounds are open year-round on a first-come, first-served basis. Willow Flat, on Island in the Sky, and Squaw Flat, in the Needles, have picnic tables, grills, and toilets. Squaw Flat has water mid-April

mystery. Unfortunately, many pots, tools, and other items crafted and used by these prehistoric peoples are gone, stolen by pot hunters.

Explorations From U.S. 191 take Utah 211 west to the Needles. The paved road continues into the park. Facilities include: 4-wheel-drive routes; self-guiding and primitive trails; developed campground; primitive campsites (backcountry permit required); overlooks; evening campground programs (seasonal); commercial tours from nearby towns. Water is available mid-April through September. Entrance and camping fees are charged.

General Travel Information

through September; Willow Flat has no water. A fee is charged at Squaw Flat April through September. Group campsites can be reserved in the Needles by contacting the park.

Primitive campsites are located along 4-wheel-drive roads and in other remote areas. None have water. Backcountry permits, which are required for primitive camping as well as some other backcountry activities, are available at ranger stations and park headquarters.

Private campgrounds with utility hookups are located in nearby towns. State parks, Bureau of Land Management areas, and the Manti-LaSal National Forest also have campgrounds; the closest are shown on the map.

Picnic areas on the Island and in the Needles have tables, grills, and toilets, but no water.

Safety and Regulations

Be prepared for the heat. Carry at least four liters (one gallon) of water per person per day.

The Rivers

Explorer John Wesley Powell recorded the first impressions of the Canyonlands region as seen from the Green and Colorado Rivers on his pioneer 1869 boat trip. "... we glide along through a strange, weird, grand region. The landscape everywhere, away from the river, is of rock ...," he wrote. More than a century later the rivers still run wild here. Above the confluence, the Green and Colorado meander slowly through deep, sheer-walled canyons. Below the confluence, the combined waters begin a 23-kilometer (14-mile) rush and tumble through the rapids of Cataract Canyon. It is one of the country's most treacherous white water stretches, rivaling any in the Grand Canyon. The Jekyll-and-Hyde personality of the rivers satisfies those looking forward to a quiet float, those eager for a helter-skelter river run, and those who want both. A lazy pace is best suited for investigating river life. As the only major

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Once in Cataract Canyon boats must plunge through one rapid after another: there is no turning back.

Walter Meyers Edwards



Born high in the mountains of Wyoming and Colorado, the Green and Colorado Rivers converge deep in the heart of Canyonlands.

Stephen Trimble

water sources in the midst of a dry expanse, the rivers attract a variety of wildlife. Deer, fox, beaver, bobcats, and migratory birds find shelter in the riverside cottonwoods, tamarisks, and willows. Hanging gardens of lush maidenhair fern, monkeyflower, and columbine cling to the 370-meter (1,200-foot) high cliffs along water seepage lines. As in other corners of the park, cliffside stone houses and pictographs of ancient Fremont and Anasazi Indians are scattered along the rivers.

Explorations Boating is popular above and below the confluence. Permits are required for all river trips. River access is in and near Green River and Moab. Guided float trips are offered in nearby towns.

Climate The park's desert climate is characterized by hot summers, pleasant spring and fall months, and cool winters. Low humidity partially offsets the heat of summer. Precipitation is scarce; most falls in late summer and early fall thunderstorms. Light snowfalls occur in the winter.

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