

Canyonlands

National Park
125 West 200 South
Moab, Utah 84532
801 259-7164

Island in the Sky



Shafer Canyon

The Island in the Sky offers views of what has been called "possibly the world's greatest exposure of red rock canyons." A once broad mesa, the Island has been incised by canyons creating an intricate network of rocky fingers 2,000 feet above the Colorado and Green Rivers. To get to Island in the Sky, take U.S. 191

to Utah 313 (10 miles/16km north of Moab or 22 miles/35km south of I-70) and then southwest 22 miles (35km). Twenty miles of paved roads lead to overlooks and trailheads that provide access to spectacular canyon views and opportunities to get close to the beauty of the land.

General Information

A visitor center is located 2 miles (3km) south of the park boundary and is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with extended hours March through October. Elevation: 5940 feet (1810m). An entrance fee is collected March through October. Water, gasoline, food, telephones and lodging are not available. The nearest services are in Moab.

Weather

Canyonlands National Park is a high desert with large daily and yearly temperature extremes, low annual precipitation, and low relative humidity. Summer daytime temperatures climb to over 100°F (37°C) and dip to 50°F (10°C) at night. Spring and fall temperatures are more moderate. Annual precipitation averages 9.2 inches (23cm) coming mostly in the form of winter snows and summer thunderstorms.

Facilities

Picnic tables are located at Shafer Canyon Overlook, Upheaval Dome and near Grand View Point. Vault toilets are available at the visitor center, Upheaval Dome, Grand View Point, and the Grand View picnic area. Water is not available anywhere on the Island. The visitor center and vault toilets

are wheelchair accessible. Some viewpoints have paved sidewalks. Park information is available in German, French, Spanish and Italian.

Pets

Pets are not allowed on hiking trails. They may be taken into the backcountry only in vehicles but are not allowed to accompany bicyclists. All pets must be on a leash 6 feet or less in length. They are not allowed to run loose.

Backcountry Permits

All overnight stays except those at the Willow Flat Campground require a backcountry permit. Permits must be obtained in person at the visitor center. Visitors camping with their vehicles or bicycles on the White Rim must stay in preassigned designated campsites. Backpackers may camp off the mesa top.

Ranger Activities

Talks and campfire programs are presented spring through fall. Check at the visitor center for dates, times and places.

Special Care

Cryptobiotic Crust

An important feature of the Colorado Plateau is the black knobby surface commonly seen growing on the soil. cryptobiotic crust, also known as cryptogamic soil, is a combination of organisms that perform an important function in the desert. The organisms hold moisture, prevent erosion and contribute nitrogen and carbon to the shallow soil. This thin crust is easily crushed by footsteps and tires and then blown away by the wind. Fortunately, because of its distinctive appearance it can be easily recognized and avoided. Please do not walk on microbiotic crust. Walk on exposed rock, in dry washes or stay on trails and roads.

Enjoying The Park

The desert can be a lovely place for its stillness and simplicity. Enjoy the distant views, take time to notice the changing light and shadows, or relax in the shade of a juniper, and certainly search out things that are new and different to you.

What To Do

2 Hours Drive 12 miles (19km) to Grand View Point Overlook stopping at Shafer Canyon and Buck Canyon Overlooks. Take the 1.5 mile (2.5km) dirt road to Green River Overlook. Round trip: 27 miles (43km).

Half Day In addition, drive 6 miles to Upheaval Dome and hike the Crater View Trail (round trip: 1 mile/1.5km). Hike one of the short mesa top trails such as Mesa Arch (round trip: 1/2 mile/.8km) or Grandview (round trip: 2 miles/3km). Round trip: 39 miles (63km).

Full Day Drive all the paved roads and visit the overlooks. Hike several of the mesa top trails or portions of one of the longer more strenuous trails. Come early to view the sunrise or stay late and watch the sunset. Round trip: 39 miles (63km).

Several Days Use the Willow Flat Campground as a base for careful exploration of the surrounding country. In addition to touring the mesa top, take a four-wheel drive or mountain bike trip on the White Rim or backpack into remote canyons off the mesa top. These longer trips into the backcountry require extra planning and a backcountry permit.

Camping

The Willow Flat Campground with 12 sites is 7.5 miles (12km) south of the visitor center. The 1 mile (1.5km) access road is unpaved. The sites are primitive and include tables, fire grills and vault toilets. You must bring firewood with you; do not collect wood inside the park. Sites will accommodate recreational vehicles up to 35 feet long. Sites are first come, first served. Maximum group size is 10 people and 2 vehicles per site. Length-of-stay limit is 7 days. There is no water and no fee is charged. Open year-round.

Mountain Bikes

Spring and fall are excellent times to see Island in the Sky by bicycle. Bicycles may be ridden on designated roads but must not leave the roadway at any time. Bikes may not be carried or ridden on foot trails and pets may not accompany cyclists. A support vehicle to carry equipment is highly recommended on multi-day trips.

Hiking

Mesa top trails lead short distances to overlooks and interesting geologic features. Longer trails lead off the mesa top and require more planning and effort. All trails are primitive and rough; expect hikes to take longer than they normally would. Overnight backpackers must obtain a backcountry permit. Carry enough water with you; do not expect to find any on the trail. Trails are marked at the trailhead with signs and along the trail with cairns (small stacks of rocks). Carry a topographic map. They are sold at the visitor center.

Four-Wheel-Drive Vehicles

The Shafer Trail Road and White Rim Road are the only roads at Island in the Sky that require high clearance four-wheel-drive. These roads are not considered technically difficult but do include sand and steep rocky hills. Carry a spare tire, jack and lug wrench, tool kit, extra water and enough gas to drive 200 miles (322km). Vehicles must remain on roads at all times. ATVs and ATCs are prohibited. Check at the visitor center for current road conditions.

White Rim Road

This 102 mile (164km) four-wheel-drive route loops around the Island in the Sky mesa. Access is via the Shafer Trail Road or Mineral Road; both descend about 1,400 feet (427m) through a series of narrow switchbacks. Trips commonly take 2-3 days by four-wheel-drive or 3-4 days by mountain bike. Longer trips allow for more leisurely exploration. A total of twenty campsites are arranged in 10 locations. A backcountry permit is required for all overnight stays. Spring and fall are the busiest times. Reservations for campsites are recommended and are accepted by mail or in person. Write to White Rim Reservation Office, 125 W 200 S, Moab, UT 84532. Information: 801 259-4351. Day trips can be taken down the Shafer Trail or Mineral Roads.

Rock Climbing

All features are open to climbing with a few exceptions. Moses and Zeus, Standing Rock, and Monster Tower are popular. A backcountry permit is required for all technical climbs. Sandstone is very soft and crumbles easily. Climbing in canyon country is not for the inexperienced.

Desert Precautions

Heat, intense sunlight, low humidity, and high elevation require humans to adapt to the desert. It may mean more than the difference between being comfortable or uncomfortable; it may mean your survival. ■ Carry and drink one gallon of water per person each day. Active people may require more. Don't wait until you become thirsty, drink often.

■ Avoid overexposure to intense sun. Carry long pants and a long sleeve shirt and be prepared to wear them. Wear a hat and sunglasses. Sunscreen alone will not protect you. Limit your exposure.

■ Save strenuous activity for early morning or late afternoon. Like desert animals, take it easy during the heat of the day.

■ Lightning is common. When a thunderstorm is near--you notice hair standing on end or hear crackling sounds--return to your vehicle and close the windows. If your vehicle is not close, go to the lowest spot in the area or to a grove of trees of equal height. Protect yourself from ground currents by crouching. Make as little contact with the ground as possible. In a lightning storm the most dangerous places are under a lone tree, high on a ridge or near a cliff edge.

■ Climbing slickrock can be hazardous because footholds and handholds are deceiving. It is often easy to climb up and impossible to climb down. People have been stranded on ledges and domes.

■ Be careful near cliff edges; you will not survive a long fall.

■ Flash floods can occur without warning, often from a storm many miles away. Never camp in a dry wash or try to drive or walk across a wash in flood.

■ If you become lost or separated from your group, remain where you are. Protect yourself from the sun and await rescue.



Guide and Map

Short Mesa Top Trails

	Distance	Loop	Oneway	Elevation Change	Round Trip Hiking Time	Description
Shafer Canyon Overlook	200yds/183m		■	100ft/30m	15 min	Easy loose rock
Neck Spring	5mi/8km	■		300ft/91m	2-4 hrs	Moderate sandy terrain
Mesa Arch	.5mi/.8km	■		100ft/30m	30 min	Easy loose rock
White Rim Overlook	.75mi/1km		■	25ft/8m	1 hr	Easy bare slickrock
Grand View	1mi/1.5km		■	50ft/15m	1.5 hrs	Easy cliffs along rim
Aztec Butte	.5mi/.8km	■		25ft/8m	30 min	Easy loose sand
spur to summit	.25mi/.4km		■	200ft/61m	1 hr	Strenuous steep slickrock
Whale Rock	.75mi/1km		■	100ft/30m	1 hr	Moderate bare slickrock
Upheaval Dome Overlook	.5mi/.8km		■	200ft/61m	45 min	Moderate steep, loose rock
second overlook	.5mi/.8km		■	50ft/15m	30 min	Moderate loose rock

Long Trails

Lathrop						
to canyon rim	2.5mi/4km		■	100ft/30m	1.5 hrs	Easy loose rock
to White Rim Road	5mi/8km		■	1600ft/488m	5-7 hrs	Strenuous steep, loose rock
to Colorado River	9mi/14km		■	2000ft/610m	overnight	Strenuous loose sand
Murphy	9mi/14km	■		1100ft/335m	4-6 hrs	Strenuous steep
via wash	3.5mi/6km		■			Strenuous steep, loose sand
via hogback	4.5mi/7km		■			Strenuous steep, loose rock
along White Rim	1mi/1.5km		■			Moderate hard surface
Gooseberry	3mi/5km		■	1400ft/427m	4-6 hrs	Very strenuous steep
Wilhite	5mi/8km		■	1600ft/488m	6-8 hrs	Strenuous loose rock
Alcove Spring						
to Taylor Canyon	5mi/8km		■	1300ft/396m	6-7 hrs	Strenuous steep, loose rock
to White Rim Road	10mi/18km		■	250ft/76m	overnight	Moderate loose sand
Syncline						
around Upheaval Dome	8mi/13km	■		1300ft/396m	5-7 hrs	Strenuous steep, loose rock
spur into crater	1.5mi/2km		■	350ft/107m	1.5-2 hrs	Strenuous no trail
spur to river	3mi/5km		■	400ft/122m	1.5-2 hrs	Moderate loose sand

Short White Rim Trails

Gooseneck	.5mi/.8km		■	50ft/15m	30 min	Easy loose rock
Fort Bottom	1mi/1.5km		■	500ft/152m	2 hrs	Moderate loose rock

Water available seasonally

Ranger station

Picnic area

Self-guiding trail

Restroom

Campground

Primitive campsite

5 Miles

Ranger Station to 191
35km
22mi
Ranger station to Moab
48km
30mi

Unpaved two-wheel drive road

Paved road

Unpaved four-wheel drive road

Trail

Do not use this map for backcountry travel.
Topographic maps are available.

