

Dinosaur

NATIONAL MONUMENT • COLORADO • UTAH

Dinosaur National Monument takes its name from a remarkable deposit of fossil bones in the south-western corner of the area—a spectacular burial ground, which is actually a “sandbar cemetery” on an ancient river course.

Petrified bones of crocodiles, turtles, and 14 species of dinosaurs have been brought to view by excavating river sediment in the 140-million-year-old Morrison Formation.

Rivers also play a vital role in the present natural history of the monument. Not only do the Green and Yampa Rivers provide pleasant streamside habitats, they are master tools of erosion in a rugged canyon wilderness. Here are faults, folds, and other structures in the earth’s crust which have been carved majestically and exposed to view.

Most of the monument land lies northeast of the quarry. It is an area of wild rivers, rich in the history of exploration, reclusiveness, and outlawry that marks it as one of America’s last inaccessible regions—a romantic place where the Old West stayed young.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The monument has *two* important features in separate areas:

Dinosaur Quarry. The highlight of your visit to the monument will probably be the world-famous display of dinosaur fossils in the Quarry Visitor Center. The quarry face is actually the north wall of this unusual visitor center. You can watch “in-place” relieving operations as technicians use jackhammers, chisels, and icepicks to cut away the hard sandstone and expose the fossil bones. Rangers explain the origin of the deposit at frequent intervals in summer. You can also look through a window into the preparation laboratory to see how fossils are cleaned and preserved.

In the Quarry Visitor Center are exhibits which explain the life and extinction of the dinosaurs. The quarry is open daily all year. The winter schedule is 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; these hours are extended in summer.



If you have more time to spend in the quarry area, drive 3 miles to the rugged, scenic mouth of Split Mountain Gorge. The road winds through colorful, upturned rock layers and descends rapidly to the river near the Split Mountain boat ramp and campground.

Canyon Area and Scenic Drive. In 1938, the monument was enlarged from the original 80-acre quarry site to 326 square miles to include a vast tract containing spectacular canyon country of the Green and Yampa Rivers. This rugged back country, largely inaccessible by automobile, is popular with adventuresome boatmen who run the wild rivers in rubber rafts.

There is only one paved road—Harpers Corner Road—which opens the heart of the canyon country to motorists. This 30-mile road starts at monument headquarters 2 miles east of Dinosaur, Colo., on U.S. 40. It is generally open from April through October, but it is closed by snow in winter.

The drive northward past Plug Hat Rock onto Blue Mountain offers broad vistas of the treeless plateaus to the south and west. After passing several signed turnoffs that describe the origin of the landscapes, the road terminates 1 mile south of Harpers Corner.

The 1-mile trail to Harpers Corner offers the best chance to see the canyons. After walking the forested ridge and enjoying spectacular views of the rivers far below, your trail experience culminates on the rocky promontory of Harpers Corner, with Whirlpool Canyon, Steamboat Rock, Echo Park, Yampa Canyon, and Canyon of Lodore spread out in all their magnificence. Fully as exciting as the view itself is the realization that the erosive power of the Green and Yampa Rivers has been at work for eons.

You must return to U.S. 40 over the same road; there is no shortcut or loop drive from Harpers Corner to the Quarry. Plan on 2 to 4 hours to drive from monument headquarters to Harpers Corner and back, depending on whether you walk the



Harpers Corner Trail. There are no food services, gasoline, or other facilities on this road.

FOR A MORE ENJOYABLE VISIT

Pets may be brought into the monument if they are physically restrained. They are not permitted in public buildings.

Firearms. The monument is a wildlife sanctuary; therefore, hunting, trapping, or molesting of wildlife is not allowed. Firearms are permitted only if they are adequately sealed, cased, broken down, or otherwise packed to prevent their use.

Removal and disturbance of plants, rocks, fossils, and other natural features. Please take nothing but photographs and inspiration, leave nothing but footprints and goodwill. Plants, animals, rocks, fossils (including dinosaur bones), and other natural features are protected by law from removal and disturbance.

Camping and picnicking. Be sure to camp and picnic only at designated sites. Carry out refuse or discard it in garbage cans where provided.

Fires. Extinguish all campfires before leaving them. Please be careful with cigarettes.

Fishing for catfish is sometimes good in the Green and Yampa Rivers, and trout fishing is popular in Jones Creek. You must have a Colorado or Utah fishing license, depending on the State in which you fish.

Boating. White-water boating is an increasingly popular way to enjoy the canyon wonders of the monument. But don’t plan a trip on your own—the rivers are turbulent and can be treacherous. You must have a permit from the superintendent or be accompanied by a competent guide who has such a permit. Application for a permit should be made well in advance of your trip. Issuance of permits is based on your experience and equipment.

Swimming. Ice-cold water and unexpected currents make swimming dangerous in the Green and Yampa Rivers. Lives have been lost because these

streams were underestimated. *Stay alive by staying out of the water.*

Back-country driving. You need drive only a short distance on dirt roads to reach the back country and become completely detached from everything man made. Before you take such a trip, check with a park ranger at the Quarry Visitor Center or at monument headquarters about road conditions. Your car should be in good mechanical condition, and you should be equipped with spare tires, jack, ax, chains, shovel, extra water (for humans and radiator), and a full gasoline tank. Unpaved roads are impassable when wet and are closed by snow in winter.

In general, back-country driving appeals to motorists who don’t mind rough, dusty roads that lead to remote scenic areas. Some of the roads are suitable for four-wheel-drive vehicles only; others can be driven with care in passenger cars if road and weather conditions permit.

The steep 13-mile grade into Echo Park from the Harpers Corner Road is one of the most rewarding back-road experiences. The road descends 2,000 feet through Sand and Pool Creek Canyons, past Indian petroglyphs and Whispering Cave, and into Echo Park, which is dominated by towering Steamboat Rock. There is a shady, primitive campground near the confluence of the Green and Yampa Rivers. Travel trailers and other heavy vehicles should not be driven into Echo Park or to other remote areas because of sharp curves and steep grades. In back-country camps, use only dead and down wood for campfires.

There are two points of access to monument canyons that are of particular interest to boatmen. Gates of Lodore at the northern boundary is the portal to Lodore Canyon; Deerlodge Park at the eastern edge is the launching area for Yampa River trips. Both areas have a primitive campground, launching ramp, and a reasonably good approach road. Gates of Lodore, at the edge of Browns Park, offers much of scenic and historic interest to the back-country motorist.



A SAFETY NOTE

Most of the accidents at Dinosaur National Monument occur while people are boating the rivers or while climbing and hiking in the rugged canyon country. Please be especially careful while engaged in these activities, and also while camping or driving the park roads. One slip can change a pleasurable park experience into an unpleasant or even tragic ordeal. For your benefit, it is suggested that you check with a park ranger about your plans and about local road conditions.

ADMINISTRATION

Dinosaur National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 210, Dinosaur, CO 81610, is in immediate charge. As the Nation’s principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DINOSAUR NATIONAL MONUMENT



SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Free shuttlebus service is operated between the lower parking area and the Dinosaur Quarry in summer. The bus is necessary because traffic congestion results from unrestricted use of the quarry parking area during the peak travel season.

Campgrounds. The only improved campgrounds at Dinosaur are near the quarry at Split Mountain and at Green River. Green River Campground is the most spacious and shady; only Split Mountain Campground is open all year. Both camping areas have modern comfort stations and individual sites with tables and fire grates. There are no sanitary dumping stations for the flushing of camper or trailer holding tanks.

Back-country campgrounds at Echo Park, Gates of Lodore, Rainbow Park, and other primitive sites are equipped with pit toilets and tables. Drinking water is not always available at some of the back-country campgrounds.

Hiking. Because of the open treeless terrain, trails are few and short at Dinosaur. At present there are short nature walks at Plug Hat and Harpers Corner, and self-guiding nature trails at Split Mountain Campground and Gates of Lodore.

Boat trips are offered daily in summer by concessioners approved by the National Park Service. A ride through the rapids of Split Mountain Gorge in a rubber pontoon raft is an unusual, exhilarating experience. Trips up to 5- or 6-days long can also be arranged. Descriptions, schedules, and current prices of these trips are available from the concessioners, whose addresses can be obtained from the superintendent.

Campfire programs are held nightly in summer at Split Mountain Amphitheater. Check at the visitor centers for time and topics. Ask also about other naturalist activities at the monument.

Visitor Centers. Besides the Quarry Visitor Center, there is an information center at monument headquarters. Visitor information and a free illustrated program on what to see and do at Dinosaur are offered here throughout most of the year.

Public telephones are at monument headquarters, the Quarry Utility Area, and Green River Campground.

Lodging, stores, and medical facilities. There are motels and cafes at Dinosaur, Rangely, and Craig, Colo., and at Vernal, Utah. Groceries, sandwiches, gasoline, and ice are available at these towns and at Jensen, Utah. There are medical facilities in Craig, Rangely, and Vernal.

Transportation. Transcontinental buses serve Vernal (about 20 miles by road from the monument) and Dinosaur. Vernal is also served by a scheduled airline. There is no scheduled transportation from Vernal to the monument. Rental cars are available at Craig, Colo., and Vernal, Utah.

