

**Moab Area Self-Guided Auto Tours**



**Moab Area Travel Council  
Internet Brochure Series**  
*Available from:*  
**discovermoab.com**

**INTRODUCTION**

Estimated driving times from Moab for the tours in this brochure assume that drivers will make brief stops at major points of interest. The estimate of driving time does not allow for side trips. The described routes follow well-maintained public highways and roads. The La Sal Mountain Loop Road includes a short section of graded dirt and gravel roadway.

**Safety Tips**

- Take drinking water and food
- Check that you have enough fuel
- Inspect your vehicle before touring
- Watch out for pedestrians and cyclists

**Minimum Impact Touring Practices**

- Keep vehicles on established travel routes
- Dispose of trash properly
- Leave No Trace of your visit

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**COLORADO RIVERWAY  
UTAH SCENIC BYWAY 279  
(Potash Road)**

*Allow 2 hours round trip*

Begin the tour by driving north across the Colorado River bridge on U.S. Highway 191 and then turning left onto Scenic Byway 279. In 2 miles, the road passes through the Colorado River Portal, and enters a narrow canyon. Altogether, the highway follows the north bank of the river for 17 miles.

The Moab area is known for its abundance of Indian rock art. Petroglyphs were carved on cliff faces during prehistoric times. The tour features several petroglyph panels with many individual carvings depicting symbolic animals and anthropomorphs. A late afternoon start is rewarding as the sunset on the reddish-orange sandstone cliffs along the route is especially beautiful on the return drive to Moab.

After passing through the Portal, JayCee Park recreation site is the first point of interest. This small site has walk-in campsites. Hikers may want to try the 1.5 mile trail to the Portal Overlook which starts at the park. Mountain bikers also use this trail.

Farther downriver, two "Indian Writings" signs indicate the location of petroglyph panels. An interpretive sign provides additional information. Visitors stopping at the "Dinosaur Tracks" turnout will find two view tubes adjacent to the highway about 150 feet beyond the turn off to the Poison Spider Mesa Trail. The first tube points to the location of a series of three-toed dinosaur tracks. The second tube shows another petroglyph panel. Binoculars are required for a close view.

Next, Scenic Byway 179 passes the Corona Arch trailhead. Corona Arch, which has a 140-foot by 105-foot opening, and nearby Bow Tie Arch, may be reached via the 1.5-mile long hiking trail.

Descriptively named, Jug Handle Arch is adjacent to the highway. It is 46 feet high and only 3 feet wide. After Jug Handle

Arch, the canyon bottom widens. The sheer cliffs of Dead Horse Point State Park are visible above the Moab Salt plant. Potash, a mineral used as a fertilizer, and salt are extracted in solution at this facility by flushing large volumes of water through an extensive system of tunnels. The auto tour ends at this point. Ahead, an oiled road leads to a boat launch and then continues as a rough, dirt, two-wheel drive, high clearance, route into Canyonlands National Park. Backcountry permits are required for overnight stays in the park.

**COLORADO RIVERWAY  
UTAH SCENIC BYWAY 128 AND  
LA SAL MOUNTAIN LOOP  
ROAD**

*4 hours round trip.*

*1 mile unpaved - Usually open from  
May through October.*

The La Sal Mountain Loop tour features a wide variety of canyon country scenery. The 60-mile long route begins by following the Colorado River, then it approaches the La Sal Mountains via Castle Valley. The route through the Manti-La Sal National Forest offers great views of the 12,000 foot plus peaks and the red rock canyons far below. Completion of the loop brings the motorist back to Moab via U. S. Highway 191.

Drive north from Moab on U.S. Highway 191 and turn right onto Scenic Byway 128 just before the bridge. Arches National Park is located along the north side of the river.

Negro Bill Canyon's small stream meets the Colorado 3 miles up-river from the bridge. This canyon is well known for its hiking opportunities. Big Bend Recreation Site, located about 6 miles east of the U.S. 191/UT 128 junction, offers access to the river, a nice beach, camping, disabled access facilities and a picnic area. Swimming in the river is not recommended.

At the Castle Valley road, you can either turn right and follow the main loop tour or take a side trip along Utah Highway 128 to Fisher Towers (5.6 miles) and the

historic Dewey suspension bridge (15 miles).

Driving up Castle Valley, the Priest and Nuns and Castle Rock are situated on your left about 4 miles from Scenic Byway 128. If these formations look familiar, it's because they have been "in the movies." The La Sal Mountain Loop Road turnoff is 11 miles from Scenic Byway 128. Turn right.

As you enter the National Forest, notice how the vegetation changes as you gain elevation. Pinyon and juniper trees give way to oak, then to larger pines and aspen. The highest timbered areas are covered with spruce and fir.

Be sure to stop at the overlooks along the road. A 5-mile long graded dirt side road leads to the Forest Service campground at Warner Lake. The campground has drinking water, toilets, picnic tables, and fire grills. (Camping and picnic fees charged.)

After the Warner Lake turnoff, the Loop Road descends into Mill Creek Canyon and then climbs again before starting its descent to Moab. The tour route rejoins U.S. Highway 191 south of Moab.

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## **DEAD HORSE POINT STATE PARK**

*Allow 3 hours round trip.*

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Dead Horse Point is reached by following the route described for the Island in the Sky Tour. It is 23 miles from U.S. Highway 191 to Dead Horse Point State Park via Utah Highway 313. Four view areas, ideal for photography stops, are located along the highway. Dead Horse Point is a peninsula connected to a large mesa by a narrow strip of land. At one time, cowboys captured wild mustangs by driving them across this narrow neck of land onto the Point, and then closing a brush fence behind them. From the rim of Dead Horse Point, one can view a vast panorama of canyon country. Two thousand feet below, the Colorado River continues to shape its intricate canyon system.

Park facilities include a visitor center, picnic area, and campground with limited

drinking water, flush toilets, and shade ramadas. Nightly campfire programs and daily guided walks are offered from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend. The Park has 10 miles of hiking trails following the canyon rim around the park. Entrance and camping fees are charged.

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## **ARCHES NATIONAL PARK**

*Allow 3 hours for introduction.*

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The visitor center and entrance to Arches National Park are located 5 miles north of Moab along U.S. Highway 191. Arches National Park, known for its dramatic rock formations, includes massive sandstone buttes and walls, petrified dunes, meandering canyons, balanced rocks, and soaring arches. The scenic park highway is 18 miles long. Entrance fees are charged.

From the visitor center, the highway climbs several switchbacks while presenting views of Moab Canyon and adjacent cliffs. Major points of interest along the first half of the road include Park Avenue and Balanced Rock. From Balanced Rock, a paved road leads to the Windows Section of the Park. This area features the Cove of Caves, Parade of Elephants, Turret Arch, the North and South Window Arches, and the fabulous Double Arch. While the arches are visible from the road, they are best viewed from the short walking trails leading from the parking areas.

Beyond Balanced Rock, the main park road continues to the road leading to the Delicate Arch trailhead and historic Wolfe Ranch. From the Delicate Arch turnoff, the Park road travels past Fiery Furnace and Skyline Arch to end at the Devils Garden trailhead. Landscape Arch, an incredibly long and slender span, is an easy 1 mile stroll from the trailhead.

Visitors may obtain a detailed Arches National Park auto tour brochure at the visitor center. The Devils Garden Campground and picnic area are located near the end of the main Park road. Evening campfire programs are presented at the campground several times per week in season. Camping fees are charged.

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## **CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK**

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Canyonlands National Park is divided by the Colorado and Green Rivers. Surrounding the rivers are three vast and very different regions of the Park: to the north, Island in the Sky; to the east, the Needles; and to the west, the Maze. This brochure describes routes along paved roads in the Island in the Sky and Needles Districts. Information about the Maze and additional travel routes is available from Canyonlands National Park. Entry fees are charged.

### **Island in the Sky District**

*Allow 4 hours for introduction.*

To reach the Island in the Sky District of Canyonlands National Park, drive north from Moab 9 miles and turn west onto Utah Highway 313. Highway 313 quickly climbs out of Seven Mile Canyon. The highway travels across a plateau before reaching the turnoff to Dead Horse Point State Park. Continue on the main road toward the Canyonlands National Park visitor center near "The Neck." Be sure to stop at the nearby view point and look down upon the Shafer Trail.

The "Island" gets its name from the fact that, with the exception of the narrow route across The Neck, this huge mesa is isolated from the canyons below by towering cliffs. Major places of interest to the visitor include Grand View Point, Green River Overlook, and Upheaval Dome. From Grand View Point, one can look out over Monument Basin, the White Rim, and the vicinity of the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers. From the Green River Overlook, the view includes the White Rim, the Green River, and the Orange Cliffs. Colorful, crater-like, 1,500 foot deep, Upheaval Dome can be viewed from a 3.4 mile round trip walking trail. Fourteen other hiking trails are located in the Island District. The Mesa Arch Trail, located 6 miles south of the visitor center, offers an easy 1/2 mile loop with beautiful inner canyon views. A nature trail brochure provides an introduction to native plants. Numerous other viewpoints are available along the main roads.

Willow Flat Campground, a primitive camping area with limited facilities and no water, awaits those who plan to extend their stay. No food, water, gasoline or lodging is available at Island in the Sky.

**Needles District**  
*Allow 1 day round trip.*

To reach the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park, drive south from Moab on U.S. Highway 191 for 40 miles and then drive 35 miles west on Utah Scenic Byway 211 to the Park Visitor Center.

On the way to Canyonlands, you will pass through the Indian Creek Canyon portion of the Canyon Rims Recreation Area. During the spring and fall months, Indian Creek is a popular destination for rock climbing. Newspaper Rock displays one of the most outstanding Indian Rock Art panels in canyon country.

Recreation opportunities in the Needles District of the park are centered around the scenic drive and the network of hiking trails and four-wheel-drive routes that lead into a colorful world of open parks, red and white sandstone monoliths, towers, arches, "needles" and canyons.

The campsites at Squaw Flat Campground, the destination for many Park visitors planning an overnight stay, are nicely spaced in a scenic setting. Day-end at Squaw Flat often produces a lovely sunset display upon the nearby rock formations. Drinking water (March-October), picnic tables, and toilets are available at the campground. Camping fees are charged. Limited supplies are available adjacent to the park entrance (in season).

**CANYON RIMS RECREATION AREA**

*Allow 3 hours for round trip to Needles Overlook.*

Canyon Rims Recreation Area is located between Moab and Monticello along the eastern and southern sides of Canyonlands National Park. This immense, diverse area features a full range of recreation opportunities from sightseeing to

backcountry exploration.

The paved entrance road into the Hatch Point district of the Canyon Rims Recreation Area is located 32 miles southwest of Moab along Highway 191.

This portion of the recreation area includes two lofty overlooks and two campgrounds. Comments found in the visitor registers frequently compare the scenery with that found at the Grand Canyon.

The main roads in the Canyon Rims Recreation Area are designed with the photographer in mind. The visitor will find several photo point turnouts and short spur roads to viewpoints.

Nestled between sandstone bluffs, Wind Whistle Campground is 6 miles from the entrance via a paved road. The paved road continues for 16 miles to the Needles Overlook. This overlook offers a sweeping view of the heart of the Canyonlands Region. An interpretive display describes the geologic processes at work in the area.

The Hatch Point Campground and Anticline Overlook may be reached via a high-standard gravel road that branches from the paved road about two-thirds of the way out to the Needles Overlook. These areas are 25 and 32 miles from the entrance. From the Anticline Overlook, one looks across the Colorado River to Dead Horse Point State Park.

The campgrounds have toilets, drinking water (mid April-mid October) and individual campsites. Picnic tables and toilets are available at the overlooks. Camping fees are charged.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

For Canyon Rims Recreation Area and the Colorado River along Utah Highway 128 and Utah Highway 279, contact: Bureau of Land Management, 82 East Dogwood, Moab, Utah 84532, 435-259-2100.

For Arches National Park, contact: National Park Service, P.O. Box 907, Moab, Utah 84532, 435-719-2299.

For Canyonlands National Park, contact: National Park Service, 2282 S. W. Resource Blvd, Moab, Utah 84532, 435-719-2313.

For the Manti-La Sal National Forest, contact: Forest Service, Moab/Monticello Ranger District, P.O. Box 386, Moab, Utah 84532, 435-259-7155.

For Dead Horse Point State Park, contact: Dead Horse Point State Park, P.O. Box 609, Moab, Utah 84532, 435-259-2614  
Reservations: 800-322-3770

**CANYON COUNTRY MINIMUM IMPACT PRACTICES**

1. **Tread lightly when traveling and leave no trace of your camping.** Drive and ride only on roads and trails where such travel is allowed; hike only on established trails, on rock, or in washes. Camp at designated sites or, where allowed, at previously-used sites. Avoid placing tents on top of vegetation and use a camp stove instead of making a campfire. Unless signs indicate otherwise, leave gates open or closed as you find them.
2. **Help Keep Canyon Country Clean.** Pack out your trash and recycle it, clean up after less thoughtful visitors, and dispose of human waste properly.
3. **Protect and conserve scarce desert water sources.** Camp at least 300 feet from isolated water sources to allow for wildlife access. Where possible, carry your own drinking water. Leave potholes undisturbed and wash well away from pools and springs.
4. **Allow space for wildlife.** When encountering wildlife, maintain your distance and remain quiet. Teach children not to chase or pick up animals. Keep pets under control.
5. **Leave historic sites, Native American rock art, ruins and artifacts untouched for the future.** Admire rock art from a distance and never touch it. Stay out of ruins, leave artifacts in place, and report violations.

**Moab Information Center**  
Main & Center St, Moab

**Moab Visitor Information**  
(800) 635-6622  
(435) 259-6281

**discovermoab.com**

