

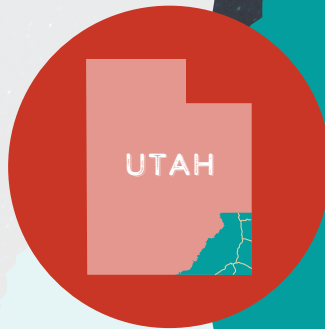
SAN JUAN COUNTY

by Starlight



PARKS, COMMUNITIES, AND NIGHT SKY EXPERIENCES

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Utah's Canyon Country is home to some of the darkest night skies in North America. With minimal light pollution, vast open landscapes, and multiple certified Dark Sky Parks, San Juan County offers unforgettable opportunities for stargazing, astronomy programs, and night sky education. Whether you're viewing the Milky Way with the naked eye or attending a guided astronomy experience, these destinations invite visitors to slow down, look up, and reconnect with the universe.



1 CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Located in the southern portion of Canyonlands National Park, the Needles District offers some of the darkest and most remote skies in the region. Far from major towns and light pollution, this area provides exceptional visibility of stars, planets, and the Milky Way stretching across the desert sky. Visitors can enjoy nighttime viewing from campgrounds, scenic overlooks, and quiet backcountry areas surrounded by the district's colorful sandstone spires and mesas. With its peaceful setting and expansive horizons, the Needles District is an ideal destination for both casual stargazers and experienced night photographers.

2 NATURAL BRIDGES NATIONAL MONUMENT WORLD'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARK

Designated Utah's first national monument in 1908, Natural Bridges National Monument holds a special distinction as the world's first International Dark Sky Park. Its remote location and protected skies make it one of the premier stargazing destinations in the world. Visitors can view the night sky from pullouts along Bridge View Drive or attend seasonal ranger-led astronomy programs. The monument's dark skies offer remarkable visibility of the Milky Way, constellations, and meteor showers.



3 RAINBOW BRIDGE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Accessible by boat or backcountry hike, Rainbow Bridge National Monument is one of the most secluded and awe-inspiring places to experience the night sky. Surrounded by undeveloped land and far from artificial light, this sacred landscape offers profound nighttime stillness and exceptional star visibility. Stargazing here pairs cultural significance with a deep sense of natural wonder.



4 GOOSENECKS STATE PARK

Perched high above dramatic river bends carved by the San Juan River, Goosenecks State Park offers breathtaking views by day and remarkably dark skies by night. The park's elevated overlooks provide wide open views of the horizon, making it a great place to watch the Milky Way stretch across the sky or observe lunar phases and star clusters. A handful of Dark Sky programs are also held here each year, giving visitors added opportunities to experience and learn about the night sky in this dramatic setting. Overnight camping allows visitors to fully experience the park's nighttime beauty.

5 HOVENWEEP NATIONAL MONUMENT

Built between A.D. 1200 and 1300, Hovenweep National Monument combines extraordinary cultural history with outstanding dark sky conditions. The monument's remote desert location creates ideal conditions for stargazing, while the ancient stone structures offer a unique foreground for night photography. Seasonal evening programs and quiet nighttime viewing make Hovenweep a memorable stop for visitors interested in both astronomy and archaeology.



6 TOWN OF BLUFF

The Town of Bluff serves as a hub for dark sky education and community-based astronomy events in San Juan County. In 2025, Bluff received designation as a Certified Dark Sky Community, recognizing the town's commitment to protecting and preserving its exceptionally dark night skies. Through local programs, festivals, and partnerships, Bluff continues to celebrate the region's natural darkness while inviting visitors to experience the night sky in a meaningful way.



Paul Martini

7 BLUFF DARK SKY FESTIVAL MID NOVEMBER

Held annually in Bluff, the Bluff Dark Sky Festival brings together astronomers, educators, and night sky enthusiasts for two days of stargazing, presentations, guided telescope viewing, and family-friendly activities. What sets this festival apart is its incorporation of Native American interpretations of the night sky, offering visitors a deeper cultural perspective alongside astronomy education. The festival highlights the importance of dark sky conservation while creating meaningful, hands-on opportunities to explore the night sky through both scientific and cultural lenses.



8 ULUM MOAB

Recognized by DarkSky International as a Certified DarkSky Resort, ULUM Moab offers an extraordinary opportunity to experience some of the darkest skies in the American Southwest while supporting the preservation of this natural resource. Nestled within a secluded, crescent-shaped desert basin framed by 100-foot sandstone cliffs, the resort combines luxury accommodations with immersive astronomy experiences designed to inspire a deeper appreciation for the night sky. After a day of exploring the surrounding landscape, guests can unwind gathered around a crackling campfire with complimentary s'mores, immerse yourself in a cosmic sound bath, and marvel at the stars overhead with guided stargazing in an exceptionally dark environment.



ULUM

9 GLAMPING CANYONLANDS

Glamping Canyonlands hosts astronomy tours twice per month, allowing visitors to enjoy guided stargazing from a comfortable, remote desert setting. Led by knowledgeable guides, these experiences offer a closer look at the stars, planets, and constellations visible in San Juan County's dark skies. The tours are available for a fee to both guests staying on site and non-guests who wish to join, making it an accessible option for travelers seeking a meaningful night sky experience.



10 BEARS EARS PARTNERSHIP

Bears Ears Partnership is a nonprofit organization based in Bluff that works to protect cultural landscapes and educate the public. Through the Bears Ears Education Center, the organization hosts monthly Dark Sky Programs throughout San Juan County, offering astronomy talks, guided stargazing, and community outreach focused on night sky preservation.

RECREATE RESPONSIBLY UNDER THE NIGHT SKY

- ▶ Use red lights or low-impact lighting at night
- ▶ Avoid light pollution by turning off unnecessary lights
- ▶ Stay on designated roads and viewing areas
- ▶ Respect cultural sites and leave artifacts undisturbed
- ▶ Follow Leave No Trace and Visit With Respect principles

