

HIKING ITINERARY



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Utah's Canyon Country is an outdoor mecca filled with miles of land for hiking, exploration and adventure. No matter the level of intensity, there are trails for everyone who wants to walk the paths of history and view numerous traces of past cultures and people who previously inhabited the area.

Canyonlands National Park Needles District

As the largest national park in Utah, Canyonlands covers about 527 square miles. The park is divided by the Colorado and Green Rivers into three distinct districts. The Needles District, located in the southeastern section of the park, is the district most easily accessed from Utah's Canyon Country and is well-known for its natural formations and extensive interconnected trail system perfect for hiking. (Park entrance fee required)

Short Hikes

Cave Springs, 0.6 miles

Walk the wide and short trail with a snapshot view into the past with a historic cowboy camp and prehistoric Native American pictographs. The trail has two wooden ladders placed to make it easier to get up the small cliffs and there is a beautiful panoramic view of the area throughout the hike.



Pothole Point, 0.6 miles

True to its name, there are many potholes along the trail as you walk over the slickrock land. Bring family and friends to follow the cairns while viewing all the various potholes, created by rain and wind, that house plants, animals and miniature ecosystems. If you traverse this trail in early spring or late summer, the potholes are full of water and creatures such as Fairy Shrimp, Beetle larvae, tadpoles, snails and tadpole shrimp.

Moderate Hikes

Chesler Park, 5.4 miles

The initial segment of Chesler Park leads visitors to a viewpoint worth the elevation gain. The trail guides hikers over slickrock benches, a rugged, red-rock canyon and climbs a steep rocky slope to reach the overlook destination. Continuing on this trail, advanced hikes can connect it with the Joint Trail.

Slickrock Trail, 2.4 miles

Slickrock Trail includes a loop showcasing three viewpoints for photography and stunning overlooks of the National Park from the tops of plateaus. As you hike, you'll notice shallow potholes that fill with water when it rains.

Difficult Hikes

Druid Arch, 11 miles

In the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park, Druid Arch is the most rewarding scenic view. Located at the end of a 5.5-mile hike, most hikers say this hike is worth every moment. Accessible year-round, hikers should research and prepare for this full-day hike. Bring enough water. As you hike, you will pass a variety of canyons, rock faces, washes and wildlife, all of which are excellent photographic opportunities. Not only do hikers love the view of the massive arch at the end, but they love the view behind them. Take in the 360-degree range of possible pictures that will make you want to hike it all over again next year.



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Chesler Park / Joint Trail, 11 miles

Connected to the Chesler Park viewpoint trail above, hikers can continue on the path over sandstone rock, through canyons to reach a big, grassy field encompassed by tall Needles rock formations. Recommended in spring and fall when temperatures are more mild, this trail is a longer hike located near Monticello and can take over 5 hours to complete. However, the peace and solitude among the natural environment is worth every step.



Chesler Park

Natural Bridges National Monument

Natural Bridges National Monument was designated Utah's first National Monument in 1908. At Natural Bridges, visitors can view three natural bridges (Kachina, Owachomo, and Sipapu) from overlooks along Bridge View Drive, a paved 9-mile loop road, or by short hikes from each trailhead. Leashed pets are allowed on paved trails and roads, but are not allowed on hiking trails or in the backcountry. (Park entrance fee required)

Short Hikes

Owachomo Bridge, 0.4 miles

The easiest bridge to photograph, you can get a great view of the bridge from the overlook and a wonderful view of the twin buttes "The Bear's Ears" on the eastern horizon. In the past, there used to be a creek that passed underneath the bridge and the bridge's delicate form suggests that it has eroded more quickly than the other bridges.



Owachomo Bridge

Moderate Hikes

Kachina Bridge, 1.5 miles

Considered the youngest of the three bridges based on the thickness of the span, the Kachina Bridge can be difficult to see from the overlook because of the smaller opening and orientation. As you descend the switchbacks, notice the "Knickpoint" pour-off in Armstrong Canyon below to your left. During floods, this spout sends a muddy red waterfall plunging into the pool below.

Sipapu Bridge, 1.5 miles

At a high altitude, this hike has one steep staircase and two ladders to traverse and drop-offs alongside the trail. However, being the largest bridge in the National Monument and the second-largest bridge in the world, it's worth the effort! This trail leads you to the bottom of the canyon in a grove of Gambel oak trees where you can glance up at the giant, natural bridge.



Sipapu Bridge

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Difficult Hikes

Natural Bridges Loop, 9.8 miles

When you combine all three Natural Bridges into one hike, you have an 9.8-mile, round-trip experience. When you take this path, you'll be led past each bridge and under a couple of the bridges as you follow the trail along the bottom of White Canyon.

Bears Ears National Monument/ Cedar Mesa



House on Fire

Butler Wash Interpretive Trail, 0.8 miles

Not only a good hiking trail but also an area for nature trips and bird watching, Butler Wash Interpretive Trail is most commonly accessed from May to October. Leashed dogs can also explore this trail where Ancestral Puebloan structures can be viewed at a distance nestled into the cliffside.

Cave Towers, 1.4 miles

With a total of seven towers along the rim of Mule Canyon, Cave Towers is the perfect family hike. Some towers are slightly more than piles of rocks, but one tower still has a large section of wall standing with a doorway intact. These impressive Ancestral Puebloan sites are fragile remains perfect for historical exploration as well as viewing various structures in alcoves and overhangs in the canyon walls. Leashed dogs allowed on the trail.

Moderate Hikes

House on Fire, 3 miles

House on Fire is the first archaeological site located along the trail in the South Fork of Mule Canyon. To capture the picturesque flames above the house, it's best to do this hike in the late morning when the light reflects off the opposite wall of the canyon. Continuing past House on Fire, several additional archaeological sites can be seen. Some are easily accessible and others can be viewed from the trail as they are nestled high in the canyon walls. The trailhead for this hike is located on County Road 263 near mile marker 102. (Fee area, day-use permits available online or at trailhead)

Difficult Hikes

Kane Gulch, 8 miles

Kane Gulch to Junction Ruin is a popular day hike that offers an excellent introduction to Grand Gulch. Recommended in the spring and fall when temperatures are more mild, this hike begins at Kane Gulch Ranger Station and ends at the Junction of Kane Gulch and Grand Gulch, which is where Junction Ruin and Junction Spring are located. For those interested in visiting more archaeological and geological sites, Turkey Pen Ruin and Stimper Arch are both located within 1 additional mile down the canyon. (Fee area, day-use permits available online or at trailhead)

Hovenweep National Monument

Short Hikes

Rim Trail Loop, 1.5 miles

Hikes from the Visitor Center range from a 300-yard paved walk to the Stronghold House, to a 1.5-mile loop trail that takes visitors past structures in and along Little Ruin Canyon such as Hovenweep Castle, Square Tower, Hovenweep House and Twin Towers. Leashed dogs allowed on all trails.



Hovenweep Castle