



Capitol Reef National Park

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Best Views

- Panorama Point (p170)
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- Cohab Canyon trail overlooks (p165)
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Best Places to Stay

- Torrey Schoolhouse B&B (p174)
- Lodge at Red River Ranch (p174)
- Fruita Campground (p173)

Why Go?

In this forgotten fold of the Colorado Plateau, you'll find slot canyons that appear as cathedrals cut from the earth, and giant cream-colored domes that arc into perfectly blue skies that hold little fluffy clouds.

Capitol Reef doesn't make it onto many Utah national-park itineraries, lending it a carefree air that promises wide-open vistas, limited crowds (for now at least), and plenty of adventurous activities, from hiking through canyons and up to overlooks to dusty-bottoming your way out on rugged 4WD tracks. Or you can simply take in the history and geology that reveals itself in petroglyphs and early Mormon settlements, sandstone streaks and hoodoo towers, and a labyrinth of canyons that stretch back millions of years.

The park's centerpiece is the lazily curving Fremont River and the Waterpocket Fold, a 100-mile buckle in the earth's crust that stymied early explorers.

Driving Distances (miles)

Moab	145			
Salt Lake City	225	235		
Torrey	10	155	215	
Zion National Park (Springdale Entrance)	190	345	310	180

Note: Distances are approximate

Entrances

The usual approach to Capitol Reef is to wind over Boulder Mountain on Hwy 12, then turn onto Hwy 24 near tiny Torrey. You'll pass scenic viewpoints, historic sites and hiking trailheads. South of the visitor center, the park's main scenic drive starts near Fruita, running 8 miles south.

Alternatively, the partly paved Burr Trail is a beautifully scenic back door to Capitol Reef's wonders and is easily accessed from the town of Boulder, and in the park via Notom-Bullfrog Rd.

Coming from Moab, you are likely to take I-70, turning southwest onto Hwy 24, where you pass the worthwhile Goblin Valley State Park.

Hwy 24 cuts through the central section of this long, thin national park, which was dubbed a reef by early explorers, as it blocked their way west like a reef blocks a ship's passage.

To the north of Fruita lies Cathedral Valley with its moon-scape of towering monoliths. This is the least visited corner of the park. Several unpaved roads, accessible mainly by 4WD or high-clearance vehicle, go through the north. The easiest route is the Cathedral Rd.

DON'T MISS

Stay up late to watch the night sky. Summer ranger programs occasionally include star talks. And thanks to the remote location, with pitch-black skies cut only by the Milky Way and a confetti of a billion stars, the park was awarded the status of an 'International Dark Sky Park' by the International Dark-Sky Association.

When You Arrive

- ➔ Entrance to the park is \$10 for motorized vehicles, \$7 for cyclists.
- ➔ Pay at the self-service kiosk and save your receipt, which is valid for seven days.
- ➔ Unlike most national parks, there's no entrance station. Just follow Hwy 24 to the visitor center where you can pick up information, get tips on hikes, sit in on a quick ranger talk, fill your water bottles and watch a short orientation film.
- ➔ The nearest gas stations are in Torrey (11 miles west) and Hanksville (37 miles east).
- ➔ Always tell someone where you will be hiking and when you plan to return, watch out for flash floods, and bring a gallon of water per person per day.

PARK POLICIES & REGULATIONS

Capitol Reef's hiking, backpacking and back-country camping regulations are the same as for all of southern Utah's national parks. The park's pet policies are also the same as those of other parks in the area.

There's no public transportation in the park. Bicycles are only allowed on paved and dirt roads but can't go on hiking trails.

Fast Facts

- ➔ Total area: 381 sq miles
- ➔ Elevation: 5500ft
- ➔ Average high/low temperature (at Fruita) in July: 92°F/65°F (33°C/18°C)

Resources

- ➔ **Capitol Reef National Park** (www.nps.gov/care)
- ➔ **Capitol Reef Natural History Association** (www.capitolreefnha.org)
- ➔ **Canyoneering USA** (www.canyoneeringusa.com)
- ➔ **Utah.com** (www.utah.com)
- ➔ **Wayne County Tourism Office** (www.capitolreef.org)