



Oregon State University Alumni Association

Discovering Our Planet Together



Moab, Arches & Canyonlands Escape

Follow the Colorado River on a Red Rock Desert Immersion





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Trip Details:

April 21-25,
2026

Price
From \$4995

Moab, Arches & Canyonlands Escape

Follow the Colorado River on a Red Rock Desert Immersion

Under towering natural arches and deep within labyrinthine canyons, Utah's red rock country reveals its raw beauty. Wind, water and sun have sculpted a mesmerizing landscape of colorful mesas and shadowy gorges, tall rock towers and shark-like stones. On this intimate journey, explore highlights and hidden wonders of Arches and Canyonlands national parks and the Colorado National Monument. Discover Indigenous rock art and awe-inspiring vistas stretching to the horizon. Bypassing the bustle of Moab, relax in rustic luxury at our lodge on the banks of the Colorado River—a lifeline for the animals and plants that manage to thrive in this arid, high-altitude terrain. This rich itinerary delves deep into some of the most spectacular landscapes of the American Southwest, revealing iconic desert wonders in a compact time frame.

Trip Highlights

Arches National Park is world-renowned for a reason; we time our visit to avoid crowds, so you encounter its dramatic formations in a more peaceful context.

See, feel and learn about the life-sustaining Colorado River, which carved much of this complex sandstone plateau and nourishes the vibrant desert ecosystem.

Unpack your bag and settle in at our luxury lodge on the Colorado River outside Moab, a comfortable base with easy access to the surrounding desert wonders.



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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1 Grand Junction,
Colorado /
Optional Colorado National
Monument Tour for Early Arrivals

Day 2
Moab, Utah—Dinosaur Tracks /
Colorado River Float

Day 3 Arches National
Park /
Petroglyphs

Day 4
Canyonlands National Park—
Needles District / Dark Sky
Experience

Day 5
Sunrise over the Colorado River /
Upper Colorado River Scenic
Byway / Grand Junction / Depart

Moab, Arches & Canyonlands Escape Itinerary

Follow the Colorado River on a Red Rock Desert Immersion

Day 1: Grand Junction, Colorado / Optional Colorado National Monument Tour for Early Arrivals

A once humble railroad hub and ranching outpost in western Colorado, Grand Junction has flourished into an agricultural center and vibrant university town renowned for its farm-to-table fare, abundant microbreweries and nearby Palisade wines. It's also a gateway to adventure, especially for the scenic Utah desert that lies nearby.



Our adventure officially begins this evening with a welcome dinner with our Expedition Leaders and fellow travelers. However, guests who arrive before 1 pm may join an optional guided tour to the Colorado National Monument, one of the state's best kept secrets. Although it is filled with stunning red rock canyons and monoliths like the better-known national parks in the region, the monument remains less visited than its more famous neighbors. Following the scenic 23-mile Rim Rock Drive, we climb more than 2,000 feet in elevation. Completed in 1950, the winding two-lane road features three historic tunnels carved through solid rock, with scenic pullouts and commanding views of sweeping canyons, the lone sandstone tower of Independence Monument, and the distant peaks of the Rocky Mountains.



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Day 2: Moab, Utah—Dinosaur Tracks / Colorado River Float

Today we delve farther into the Colorado Plateau, a vast landscape covering 130,000 square miles across parts of Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. The high-desert terrain is characterized by elevations between 5,000 and 7,000 feet and its distinctive geology of deeply eroded canyons, flat-topped mesas and colorful rock formations. From Grand Junction, continue west to Moab, less than two hours away. Our first destination is a dinosaur track site, where we encounter ancient history etched into rock. On a scenic hike, walk through a rugged desert landscape of slickrock and juniper to encounter fossilized footprints left by long-extinct creatures, offering a glimpse into a prehistoric world,

This afternoon, enjoy a placid float on the famous Colorado River through Castle Valley (weather permitting) before settling in to our comfortable base at Red Cliffs Lodge, peacefully located well outside the busy adventure town of Moab. Perched on the edge of the Colorado River beneath imposing canyon walls, the lodge is our high-desert home for the next three nights.

Day 3: Arches National Park / Petroglyphs

Few geological phenomena are as emblematic of a place than the 2,000-plus sandstone arches within Arches National Park. These rock formations are the physical evidence of the power of erosion, as wind, rain, sun and time converge to shape the malleable landscape. The Entrada Sandstone, which comprises most of the park's arches, is particularly susceptible to erosion due to its composition. Water seeps into cracks, freezes and expands, breaking the rock apart, while wind carries away loose particles. The result is an intricate tableau of stone shapes that evoke wonder and whimsy at every turn.

Our day dawns with sunrise in Arches National Park, where we experience the wonder of first light transforming the landscape with a shifting palette of warm hues. The towering sandstone formations seem to glow from within, their red and orange tones deepened by the intensifying sun's rays. Shadows stretch long across the desert floor, creating striking contrasts that highlight the textures and contours of the rugged terrain. The morning continues with a hike to Delicate Arch, the most recognizable arch in the park and, perhaps, the world. The play of light on rock highlights the natural beauty of the sandstone and surrounding landscape, showcasing nature's geological artistry in new and shifting perspectives. Witnessing this icon up close, we'll surely concur with Edward Abbey who wrote in *Desert Solitaire*, "If Delicate Arch has any significance, it lies, I will venture, in the power of the odd and unexpected to startle the senses and surprise the mind out of their ruts of habit, to compel us into a reawakened awareness of the wonderful—that which is full of wonder."

The remainder of the morning is devoted to exploring more of the park's natural arches and trails with our Expedition Leader, who excels at finding moments of solitude to contemplate the wonders before us. In the afternoon, we stop to view ancient petroglyphs etched into the canyon walls by the ancestral Puebloan people who inhabited this region some 2,000 years ago. These rock carvings offer insight into the lives and worldview of the area's early inhabitants, depicting animals, human figures and geometric patterns.



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Day 4: Canyonlands National Park—Needles District / Dark Sky Experience

Today is devoted to exploring Canyonlands National Park, a vast red rock wilderness carved by the Colorado and Green rivers over millions of years. The park's varied geography spans four distinct sectors, and we focus on the less-visited and more remote Needles District, named for its dramatic spires of Cedar Mesa sandstone—colorful, banded rock pinnacles that rise like sentinels on the landscape. On a hike, we explore at closer range, following a winding trail across slickrock expanses and past ancient rock art, offering an intimate connection to the park's dramatic geology and cultural history.

After a picnic lunch, continue deeper into the park for magnificent views of the Colorado River as it carves its way through the layers of sandstone comprising this landscape. As the day winds down, return to Red Cliffs Lodge in time for a sunset toast on the banks of the Colorado River. The fading light bathes the canyon walls in warm, golden tones, reflecting off the gleaming water as the desert transitions into twilight. After a last dinner together, we head out to experience one of the region's most awe-inspiring spectacles: the dark night sky. Far from city lights, the inky black tableau reveals a glittering expanse of stars, planets, and the ethereal glow of the Milky Way, and our Expedition Leader helps us spot constellations rarely seen in more urban realms. With the silence of the desert as our backdrop, we spend meditative time taking in the grandeur of the cosmos, a timeless reminder of nature's vast beauty and mystery.

Day 5: Sunrise over the Colorado River / Upper Colorado River Scenic Byway / Grand Junction / Depart

Rise early to witness the sunrise this morning on a quiet walk along the Colorado River. Given our lodge's optimal location, we don't have to go far to experience this daily splendor. After breakfast, it's time to start making our way back to Grand Junction along the 44-mile Upper Colorado River Scenic Byway, a winding two-lane road that traces the river's path through a dramatic gorge. Passing through Castle Valley, look for the famous profiles of Castleton Tower and Fisher Towers, observing how the gleaming light of morning transforms them from maroon to vermillion, then rust and gold. The surrounding terrain has been featured in many movies, including famous westerns, which are remembered at the Moab Museum of Film & Western Heritage located at Red Cliffs Lodge. Cross the Colorado River at the site of Dewey Bridge, which was the original wooden span carrying Highway 128 over the river. Built in 1916, the famous suspension bridge was the second longest west of the Mississippi and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places until it was destroyed by a fire in 2008. Once we're back in Grand Junction, you may enjoy exploring this lively western town on your own if your flight schedule permits.



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Accommodation Details:

Red Cliffs Lodge

Hotel Maverick

For detailed descriptions, visit
nathab.com/us-national-parks-tours/moab-arches-canyonlands-tour/accommodations

Moab, Arches & Canyonlands Escape Accommodations

Follow the Colorado River on a Red Rock Desert Immersion



Red Cliffs Lodge

Located along the Colorado River in Moab, this lodge blends rustic seclusion with modern amenities, featuring spacious rooms with river and creek views, a seasonal outdoor pool and direct access to nature.



Hotel Maverick

A boutique hotel located on Colorado Mesa University's campus, this "New West" property features spacious rooms, an outdoor pool, and a rooftop restaurant with panoramic views featuring distinctive local fare.



A Better Way to Experience Utah's Most Spectacular Landscapes

Few get to experience popular Arches and Canyonlands national parks off the conventional track. Relegated to bus tours or navigating crowded park roads in your own vehicle, along with heavily traveled trails, most visitors miss a quieter encounter with the Southwest's magnificent monuments, including secret spots revealed by our in-the-know guides. Here's what makes our approach better:

1

Experience All the Wonder & None of the Hassle

Arches and Canyonlands are some of America's most popular parks, globally coveted destinations. It's imperative to book accommodations months out, and in-demand lodging often fills within hours of space made available annually. Most visitors end up fighting to see the sights with hundreds of others, trying to plot routes while juggling maps and guidebooks. With Nat Hab, you'll worry about none of that: You get a stress-free trip with outstanding interpretation and no headaches.

2

An Itinerary Shaped by Our 'Insider' Knowledge

There's no question, Arches and Canyonlands are popular parks. But with us, you'll get access to hidden corners others often miss, via our "insider" knowledge, and we make sure you get to the coveted highlights at less-busy times.

3

Small Groups Led by Two Expedition Leaders

Our trips are limited to 13 travelers. Each is guided by two Expedition Leaders, for the utmost in personal attention, flexibility and quieter nature encounters. We divide into even smaller groups, traveling in two vehicles that can access places larger tours can't reach, with opportunities to pursue different activities to suit varying physical ability levels.

4

Our Guides Know Canyon Country Like None Other

With decades of collective experience, our naturalist guides know where to find the "paths less traveled." They have secret spots where we avoid the swarms of tourists that besiege the parks' most crowded locations, and they'll inform you about every aspect of the region's wildlife, geology, natural history and Indigenous cultures. With lots of surprises up their sleeves, our Expedition Leaders share a side of these enchanting landscapes that most visitors miss. See Expedition Leader bios with traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.



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5

Stay at a Secluded Lodge on the Colorado River

You won't be jostling with hordes of tourists at a hotel in downtown Moab. We've chosen a luxury lodge on the banks of the Colorado River, well outside town, as our base for daily forays into the surrounding red rock country. Smell the sage, listen to the water course past, and stay under the stars in peace.

6

Nat Hab's Exclusive Custom Vehicles Enhance Viewing

Our are customized vans that are exceptionally comfortable and equipped with either a pop-top roof or wide roof hatches that open for unimpeded sightseeing and photography. Designed for exploring America's national parks, they offer the best of both necessities: an expedition-ready exterior and a spacious, luxurious interior for the ultimate in comfort. We never fill them to capacity, so every guest gets a window seat plus plenty of room for your personal belongings.

7

Our Quality–Value Guarantee Ensures a Superlative Canyons Experience

With Nat Hab, you receive our exclusive guarantee that clearly states that we will meet the high expectations we set forth in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company.

8

Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey

We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

9

Natural Habitat Adventures Is WWF's Travel Partner

Because of our commitment to environmentally friendly travel, as well as the exceptional quality of our small-group nature adventures, World Wildlife Fund, the world's leading environmental conservation organization, has named Natural Habitat Adventures its worldwide travel partner—a designation that makes us exceedingly proud!



Moab, Arches & Canyonlands Escape Dates, Pricing & Info

Date April 21-25, 2026



Pricing

➤ **Trip Price** \$4995

Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$995.

Deposit: \$500 per person

Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars.

[Please read our Payment & Refund Policy here.](#)

Group Size: Limited to 14 travelers

Included

Accommodations, meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on final day, drinking water throughout the trip, services of Nat Hab Expedition Leader, airport transfer on Day 1 and final day, some gratuities, all permits, entrance fees and taxes.

Not Included

Travel to and from start and end points of trip, alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees, optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, souvenirs, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes, optional travel insurance.

Getting There & Getting Home

Arrival: Arrive in Grand Junction, Colorado by 4pm in order to attend a welcome dinner beginning at 6pm on Day 1.

Please note that guests arriving before 1 pm on Day 1 will have the option of joining a guided scenic driving tour of Colorado National Monument with opportunities for short walks along the way.

Departure: You may depart Grand Junction, Colorado any time after 12:30 pm on the final day.



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