

## A DAY'S DRIVE FROM BILLINGS

puts an adventure seeker in Moab, the full-service base camp for jaunts into Utah's high desert. Miners, looking for uranium deposits, came here decades ago. Moab's surroundings also drew film makers, who've made multiple box office hits with a backdrop of vast blue skies and table-topped, orange-hued mesas overlooking meandering rivers.

# DESERT DREAMS

MOAB, UT

Now, outdoor enthusiasts seeking fun in the Utah desert sun head to Moab.

You can join mountain bikers and off-road vehicle drivers navigating the area's trademark slick rock, plus rafters, hikers and other modern-day swashbucklers. They've experienced – and you can too – two spectacular national parks, a state park with picture-perfect overlooks of deep canyons and island plateaus, mellow rafting or adrenaline-rush whitewater trips and other outdoor play.

Here's your guide for making the most of a Moab visit.

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by dennis gaub

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Photos courtesy of Moab Chamber of Commerce and Dennis Gaub  
Right: Canyonlands National Park provides a majestic backdrop  
for off-road enthusiasts.





Moab bills itself as home to the greatest mountain biking on the planet – and for good reason. Dozens of singletrack and doubletrack trails give cyclists choices to match their skill levels.

You can challenge yourself on the world-famous and highly technical Slickrock Bike Trail, a 9.6-mile route often labeled the ultimate mountain biking experience. Or, sample the two-wheel smorgasbord at the MOAB Brand Trails (Bar M, Circle O, Rockin' A, Bar B), where loops range from 3 to 25 miles. The Sovereign Trail mixes smooth-flowing sections with technical sections.

Ready for more? The new Rockstacker/Arch & Jackson trails test even top-caliber riders.

### Mountain and road biking

Road riders are heading to Moab, drawn by miles of paved routes (some with designated bike lanes) that open up views straight out of the many movies filmed here. If you're looking for an organized ride to kick off your cycling season, check out the annual Skinny Tire Festival, a four-day, fully-supported event held in early March. The route follows the Colorado River valley and dips into Dead Horse Point State Park and Arches National Park. Of course, you can plan your own trip to those spots at other times of the year – just avoid midsummer days when temperatures routinely approach or top 100 degrees.

### Off-highway vehicle riding

For nearly a half century, the Moab area has been a Mecca for off-highway vehicle riding. If you're new to the sport, try the White Wash Sand Dunes and Hurrah Pass Trail. The area, 48 miles northwest of Moab, features cottonwood trees growing in the dunes with a backdrop of red cliffs to the east.

In the vicinity, the off-road enthusiast can explore miles of dirt road that access Crystal Geyser and the Green River. For a



more challenging outing, try the Monitor & Merrimac Trail. Note: Off-highway-riding is not allowed within either Arches or Canyonlands National Parks, except for White Rim Road with limitations (street legal road bikes only, 10 mph speed limit.) Montana owners of all-terrain vehicles and off-highway motorcycles can use their machines in Utah without obtaining a non-resident permit under a reciprocity agreement between the two states.

### Water fun

Adventures on the Colorado, Green and San Juan Rivers await you. One option – take a morning or afternoon guided rafting trip on the Fisher Towers section of the Colorado River, a mild outing suitable for everyone from children to senior citizens willing to get their feet wet. Full-day trips are possible.

Want more thrills? Try a whitewater trip in Cataract or Westwater Canyons. Or, if you have the skills, rent a canoe, raft or kayak and head off on your own. And you can spread the fun over several days by camping on the river banks of the Fisher Towers sections or in the canyons.

Canoe trips can also be arranged on the Green River, and outfitters offer rafting on the San Juan River and in the Desolation and Gray Canyons on the Green River.

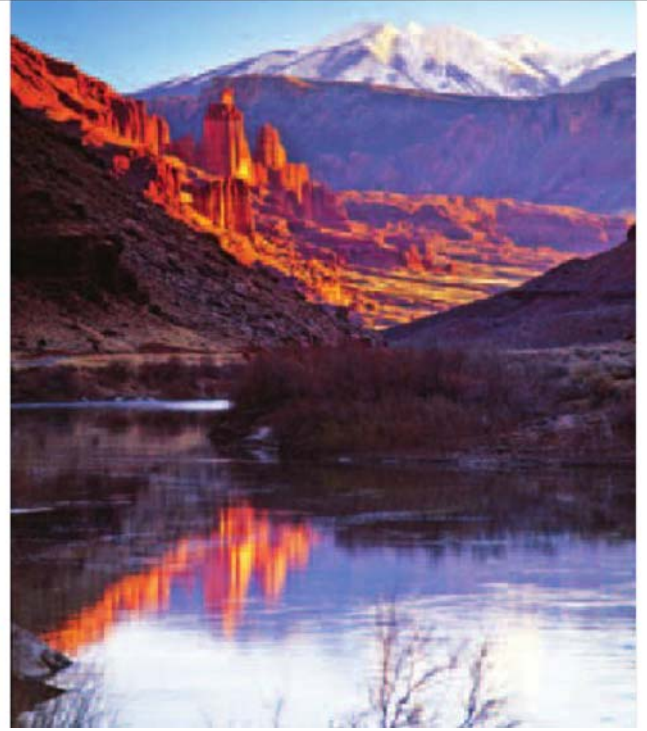
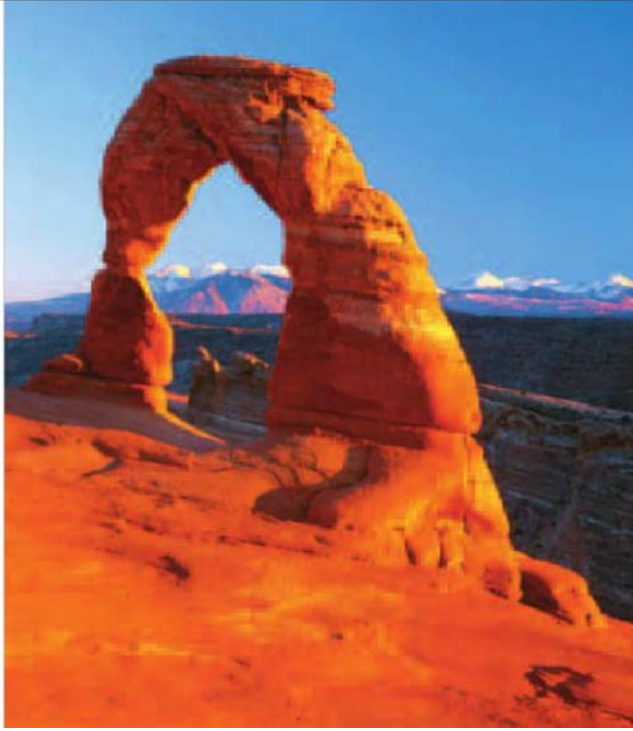
### Sightseeing and hiking

No trip to Moab is complete without a visit to at least one of the nearby national parks, Arches and Canyonlands. Make time, too, for sight-seeing in Dead Horse Point State Park.

Arches is closest to town, just 5 miles away. The world's largest concentration of natural sandstone arches, more than 3,000 of them, lies within the Park's 76,500 acres. You'll see other imposing geological features – sandstone fins, gigantic balanced rocks, and soaring pinacles and spires. A paved scenic drive takes you to many of the top viewing and photography points, but it's worthwhile to get out of your car for short hikes, some guided by Park naturalists.

A 32-mile drive from Moab brings you to Canyonlands' Island in the Sky district. True to its name, the district sits atop a 1,500-foot mesa traversed by a





paved scenic drive. Pullouts provide views of canyon country, and hiking trails and four-wheel drive roads access backcountry areas.

At neighboring Dead Horse Point State Park, a plateau that's 2,000 feet above the Colorado River gives a panoramic view of Canyonlands' pinacles and buttes. For a different perspective, bring your mountain bike

(or rent one in Moab) and cruise the Intrepid Trail.

Outside the national and state parks, Bureau of Land Management lands contain pet-friendly trails suited for day hikes. Recommended trails: Negro Bill Canyon, Corona Arch and Fisher Towers.



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**Lodging, dining, guides, outfitters**

Moab provides a full range of visitor services; almost 50 hotels, motels, resorts and bed and breakfasts; about 50 restaurants; and more than 40 public and commercial campgrounds. About 60 firms offer guiding and outfitting services and equipment rental. **M**

**Getting There:**

Take I-94/I-90 to Sheridan, Wyo., I-25 to Casper, Wyo., WY-220/US-287 to Rawlins, Wyo., I-80 to Creston Junction/Baggs, Wyo., WY-789 into Colorado, CO-13/CO-789 to Rifle, Colo., I-70 to Crescent Junction, Utah, US-191 to Moab.

Distance: 776 miles.

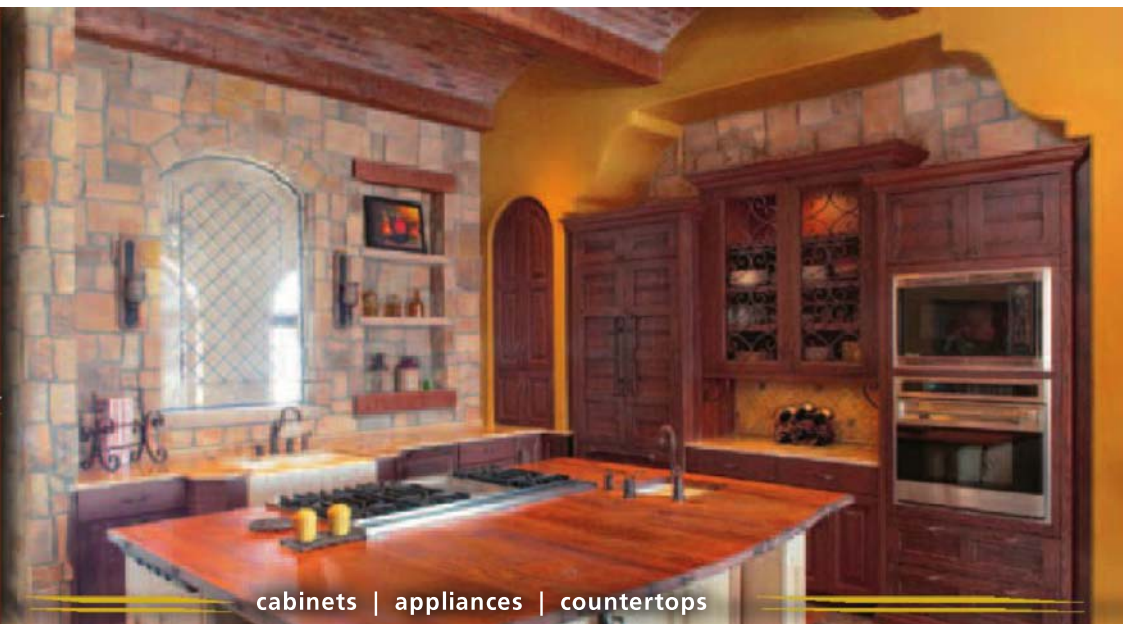
For a comprehensive list of area recreation, activities and resources, visit [www.discovermoab.com](http://www.discovermoab.com) or call 1-800-635-6622.



Top: Red Rock overlook at Dead Horse State Park. Photo courtesy of Dennis Gaub. Right: Warner Lake near Moab.

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