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New Mexico, USA

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Lower Colorado River Scenic Byway



The Colorado River Scenic Byway is composed of a Lower Segment (Utah State Hwy 279 – Potash Road) and an Upper Segment (Utah State Hwy 128).

Great Road Trips Series

110 N. Ash Ave ~ Aztec, NM 87410 ~ (505) 334-9551

Lower Colorado River (UT 279)

The Lower Colorado River Scenic Byway follows Utah State Hwy 279 from Moab to the Intrepid Potash Mine, approximately 15.0 miles along the Colorado River.

1. Courthouse Wash Rock Art

38.606121 -109.579824

Located just north of the intersection of UT 128 and US 191, is a place to park and walk along the bike path to Courthouse Wash Rock Art.

2. Little Arch

38.563683 -109.585754

A small arch located on the west side of the highway. Not easily visible unless one takes the 4x4 Poison Spider Mesa Trail.

3. Potash Petroglyphs

38.544187 -109.60041

Several petroglyph panels are located along the cliff side. Signage and areas to pull off the highway are available for viewing the petroglyphs.



4. Poison Spider Dinosaur Tracks and Rock Art

38.532619 -109.609058

This location provides a vault toilet and an informational kiosk providing trail information to the Poison Spider Dinosaur Tracksite, Rock Art, and Long Bow Arch trails.

There are two slabs that have dinosaur tracks. The tracks are from *Eubrontes* and *Grallator* meat-eating dinosaurs that existed ~190 million years ago in the Jurassic Period.

Along the base of the cliff are several panels of petroglyphs. The petroglyphs are of Fremont style and consist of anthropomorphs and various quadroped animals such as big horn sheep and deer. One of the panels seems to be depicting a hunt.



5. Longbow Arch

38.542351 -109.612878

Accessible by an approximate 1.2 mile hike (one-way) from the Poison Spider Trail parking area. The trail the arch is well marked with green dot/dash spots and foot trail through the sandy drainages. Long Bow Arch is approximately 50 ft high with a span of 110 ft.



6. Corona Arch

38.580034 -109.6199826

Located in Bootlegger Canyon, Corona Arch is an old buttress arch formed in the Navajo sandstone formation. The arch spans 140 feet with a height of 105 feet. The trail is approximately 2.5 miles round trip from the parking lot to Corona Arch. This arch provides for many photographic aspects depending upon the time of day and direction.



At a certain angle, one can see the Eototo (Hopi Chief Kachina) peer out through the arch.



7. Bowtie Arch

38.580715 -109.621655

Located on the same trail to Corona Arch, it can often be photographed with Corona Arch at the ladder and Moki steps along the trail.



8. Pinto Arch (aka Gold Bar Arch)

38.581621 -109.627433

Located north of the Corona Trail, access to this arch requires some rock climbing as it is not easily accessible.

9. Jug Handle Arch

38.548863 -109.647657

Located adjacent to the highway just before the Intrepid Potash Mine.



10. Cane Creek Mine Memorial

38.524831 -109.654765

(Information from the Memorial Plaque)

Early in 1961, Texas Gulf Sulphur Company, the original owners of the Cane Creek Potash Mine (located just west of this marker), contracted Harrison International, Inc. to sink the shaft and develop the underground mine to access sylvite (potash) ore thousands of feet below the surface, On August 27, 1963, at 4:40 PM, a devastating methane gas explosion occurred nearly 3,000 feet below in the mine. At the time of the explosion twenty-five Miners were working underground, Eighteen of those miners were killed, either outright from the blast or by smoke inhalation.

Ten of the miners initially survived the explosion, As these men headed towards the shaft station to escape they were forced to turn back due to white smoke rolling towards them. The only option was to head to the deepest part of the mine, which was just over 3,000 feet from the shaft station, and construct a barricade. Only seven miners made it to the barricade, After fifteen hours, two of the survivors, Hanna and McKinney, left the barricade and made their way to the shaft station, For several hours they repaired a portion of an airline near the shaft blown out by the blast with the hope that the much needed air would make it back to the men they haft behind in the barricade, After a while, Hanna and McKinney were able to make contact with a rescue team. This team was making their way in an ore bucket clearing a way down through the debris which was stacked up at the bottom of the shaft from the explosion so that following rescue teams could get into the mine and begin the search for survivors. The other five miners behind the barricade were later rescued on August 29, 1963, over fifty-hours after the explosion.



In honor and memory of the eighteen miners who 'perished and the seven who survived:

Deceased:

Wesley J. Barber
Myrien H. Christensen, Sr.
Lawrence L Davidson
James N. Hollinger
Ciell Johnson
Emile J. LeBlanc
Fred O, Rowley
Lamar C. Rushton
Peter Sviscsu

Robert Wayne Bobo
Myrien H. Christensen, Jr.
Jesse E. Fox
William Huzil
Jesse C. Kessler
Kenneth Milton
Joseph Rene Roy
Keith Schear
John B. Tinall

Survivors:

Charles W. Byrge
Charles C. Clark

Grant S. Eslick
Donald Blake Hanna
Robert E June
Paul McKinney
Thomas J. Trueman

Memorial erected June 2014 by Intrepid Potash, Inc., current owner and operator of the Cane Creek Mine, The underground mine was converted to solution mining in 1970.

11. Potash Evaporation Ponds

38.491355 -109.687801

Although not considered as part of the Lower Colorado Scenic Byway, an additional 5 mile trip on a dirt road will take you to an unusual view of strange blue ponds.



These man-made ponds are for collecting potash, a potassium-containing salt used in farm fertilizers. A briny solution of salt and water is pumped into deep injection wells. The brine dissolves the potash, leaving other minerals in the rock 2,400 to 4,000 feet underground undisturbed. The mixture of brine, water and dissolved potash is pumped back up into the evaporation pools. The evaporation pools are dyed dark blue to absorb and retain heat from the sun. In the dry desert climate, it takes about 300 days for the brine to dry into salt and potash crystals.

The potash mines here were originally by the Texas Sulphur Company in 1963. At the time, it was a conventional mine, where workers and machines dug underground. But that same year, a horrific gas explosion trapped 25 men underground, killing 18 of them. A few years later the mine was converted so that manned underground mining was not necessary.

BLM Campgrounds

Moab Field Office
82 East Dogwood
Moab, UT 84532
(435) 259-2100
utmbmail@blm.gov

Gold Bar Group Site

38.576105 -109.634344

There are 9 individual campsites available on a first come-first serve basis. Campsites include fire grate, picnic table, and vault toilets. The recreation site also includes 4 group campsites that must be reserved on recreation.gov. Group areas have fire grates, picnic tables, vault toilets and sites A, B, and C have shade shelters. Site D does not have a shade shelter.

Jaycee Park Picnic and Campground

38.556621 -109.590434

Shady walk-in tent sites near the popular Wall Street climbing area. Individual sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Walk-in sites only (no trailers, RVs or large vehicles).

Sites: 7
Water: No
Toilets: No
Hookups: No

Kane Creek Campground & RV Park

38.540547 -109.598482

Privately owned and operated.
Group, Individual, and RV Sites
Primitive and Hookups
www.kanecreekmoab.com

Kings Bottom

38.557729 -109.584251

Individual sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The campground accommodates tents and small RVs only. Eleven of the sites are walk-in only tent sites.

Sites: 21
Water: No
Toilets: Yes
Hookups: No

Moonflower Canyon Group Site

38.554291 -109.587052

Group tent site only. Site has fire grates, picnic tables, vault toilet and a shade shelter. No RVs, tent trailers or campers/camper vans allowed.

Sites: 1 (max 25 people)
Water: No
Toilets: Yes
Hookups: No
Dump Station: No

Williams Bottom

38.537393 -109.604732

Individual sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The campground is located between the Wall Street climbing area and the Poison Spider 4WD trailhead.

Sites: 17
Water: No
Toilets: Yes
Hookups: No

