

Horseshoe Canyon - Canyonlands National Park

Full Day 4x4/Hiking Tour

Meeting Place: Adrift Adventures, 378 North Main St. Moab, Utah

Meeting Time: 7:30 AM

Age Limit: 4 years and up

Vehicle Type: Ford Excursion or Jeep Wrangler

Special Attractions:

A detached section of Canyonlands National Park

Life-size pictograph panels

Tour Description:

Our experienced and knowledgeable guides will show you a part of Canyonlands National Park seldom visited/seen by other visitors on their own. Our guides will show you how much of Canyonlands' beauty is tucked away beyond the main paved roads. You'll witness breathtaking views while learning about the ancient history of people who inhabited the area over 1000 years ago. There are ample photo opportunities, so be sure to bring your camera. Be amazed by the mazes of side washes and canyons formed after thousands of years of erosion. Witness the natural marvels hidden from the roads, when you experience Canyonlands National Park via a 4x4 tour.

Vehicle Type:

We run our guided backcountry tours in our recent model Jeep Wranglers, which will comfortably seat 4 passengers plus our guide. Jeeps are equipped with air conditioning for your touring pleasure.

Sample Itinerary:

Meet at our office located at 378 North Main Street in Moab, Utah. The tour will set out heading south from Moab on US 191. We will continue on US 191 until we reach the access road into the Needles district of Canyonlands National Park. After entering the park, we will make our way up the Salt Creek dirt road. This road will fork and we will take the left fork into Horse Canyon. The first attraction we will come to is Paul Bunyan's Potty. You may be wondering how an arch got such a name, but once you see this particular arch you will understand. Near Paul Bunyan's Potty is a, not often noticed, Indian ruin that your guide will be sure to point out. As we continue further into the canyon we will make a short detour to visit the renowned Tower Ruin. Your guide will be able to tell you a lot of the history behind the people who would have called this area "home." Making our way further into Horse Canyon, we will stop around mid-day for a nice lunch. From there your guide will take you to the Thirteen Faces pictograph panel. We will also visit Castle and Fortress Arches before making our way back out of the canyon. On our journey back to Moab, we will stop at the well-known Newspaper Rock before concluding your tour back at our office.

History:

Thousands of years of human archeological history can be found in Horseshoe Canyon. Artifacts that have been found in this canyon date back as early as 9000-7000 BC. During this time period we would have likely found Paleoindians hunting megafauna such as mastodons and mammoths throughout the southwest. The pictographs found in Horseshoe Canyon are most commonly painted in what is known as the "Barrier Canyon" style. "Barrier Canyon" relates to the Late Archaic period between 2000 BC and 500 AD. Horseshoe Canyon would have been used by groups of nomadic hunter-gatherers as a seasonal home.

There is also evidence of both the Fremont and the Puebloan cultures in the rock art found in the canyon. Both of these cultures would have used the canyon at a later period and was most likely only for a brief time in comparison with the Paleoindians. The canyon was probably abandoned around 1300 AD.

Found at the end of the canyon is the Great Gallery, which is the most well known and most remarkable of all the panels in Horseshoe Canyon. This panel has both painted figures – pictographs – and ones that have been etched into the rock – petroglyphs.

Though Horseshoe Canyon is most famous for its rock art, the canyon's history has many chapters. Hundreds of years after the prehistoric artists left the area, Europeans arrived. Outlaws like Butch Cassidy made use of Horseshoe

Canyon in the late 1800s, taking refuge in the confusing network of canyons, especially those around Robbers Roost to the southwest. Later, in the early 1900s, ranchers built several stock trails into Horseshoe so cows and sheep could reach water and feed in the canyon bottom. Eventually, the ranchers constructed a pumping operation to fill water tanks on the canyon rim. Many of these modifications are still visible today. Prospectors explored the area in the mid- 1900s, improving many stock trails to accommodate vehicles and drill rigs. Though they searched the rock layers for oil and other minerals, no successful wells or mines were ever established around Horseshoe Canyon. After being added to Canyonlands in 1971, grazing and mineral exploration were discontinued. Today, park visitors descend the old stock trail and marvel at the history of this magnificent canyon.

*Please note that this itinerary is subject to change or be cancelled completely due to: weather conditions, road conditions, time of year, number of scheduled guests, and any other unforeseen factors that may affect the trip in any way.