



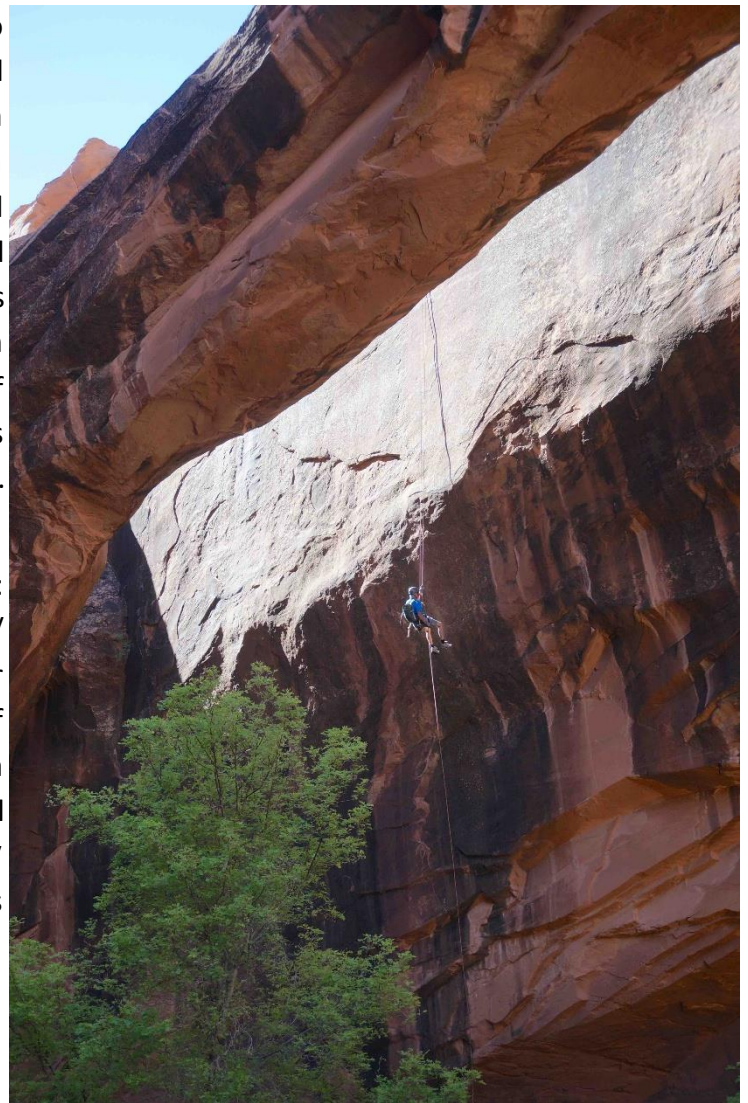
Candlestick Tower from Holeman Basin

Our caravan will depart from the Rifle rest area at 7:30 on Monday, May 12, heading west on I-70. We'll make a scheduled pit stop at a scenic overlook just a few miles into Utah. After returning to westbound I-70, we'll exit at #204 for Cisco and UT128. DO NOT take the first Cisco exit (Danish Flat #214). UT128 eventually joins the Colorado River at Dewey Bridge and continues to parallel the river all the way to Moab. There are three scheduled hikes on Monday, all easily accessible from UT128. Leonard will be leading a hike to Fisher Towers, a local landmark easily visible from the road between Cisco and Moab. Popular with both photographers and rock climbers (see photo next page), these spires mark the entrance to Professor Valley...or the Richardson Amphitheater...depending upon which map you consult. The road from 128 is paved to the trailhead, and the turnoff is clearly marked.

I plan to lead Mary Jane Canyon on Monday, which Leonard plans to lead on Friday on the way home. The turnoff to the trailhead (Professor Valley Road) is 2.6 miles beyond the turnoff to Fisher Towers. The trailhead is 2.2 miles from UT128 on an unpaved road, passable for most vehicles with some caution. They're enlarged the parking lot at the trailhead, so there should be lots of room. It should be warm by the time we arrive. So, splashing around in a cool stream would provide a welcome relief from the heat. We last did this hike in 2014, and my butt is still aching...not from the hike, but from the ass-chewing I got from the BLM district supervisor for failing to retrieve all of our flags and for one of our members camping at the trailhead where it's clearly marked "no camping". I needn't tell you veterans who the miscreant was. Anyway, the hiking route follows the wash of a perennial stream, Professor Creek, for 3.8 miles to a waterfall. Travel beyond the waterfall isn't possible, because it plunges about 20 feet around the sides of a large choke stone that kisses both walls of this narrow canyon. It's very picturesque, and it could provide a welcome respite if you care to immerse yourself in it. Otherwise, the stream is no more than ankle deep...water shoes recommended.

The third option on Monday is the Grandstaff Canyon Trail to Morning Glory Arch. Grandstaff Canyon (formerly Negro Bill Canyon) is named for the same individual, William Grandstaff, for whom the Grandstaff Trail on Red Mountain here in Glenwood also is named. The trailhead is well marked, on the left side of 128, but it may be difficult to find parking here, given its size and proximity to Moab. There is additional parking on the right side of 128 BEFORE you reach the trailhead. It's a short 2-mile hike to the arch with 350' of elevation gain. If you're lucky, you may see rock climbers rappelling through the arch as we did a few years ago (right). There's no leader, but it's an easy DIY hike.

On Tuesday, I've scheduled several hikes up Kane Creek Road: 1) Amasa Back via the Jackson Trail, 2) Pritchett Canyon/Hunter Canyon Rim Loop and 3) Hunter Canyon. Parking for both 1) and 2) is at the OHV staging area on the right side of the road at the mouth of Kane Creek. From there, I'll lead a group to Amasa Back via the Jackson Trail, a single-track trail open to hiking and mountain biking. The Cliffhanger OHV Trail also leads to Amasa Back. It's open to motorized vehicles



The Corkscrew on Fisher Towers



and, as the name implies, it hugs a narrow shelf road along a sheer cliff 400' above Jackson Hole for half a mile. I did not scout Cliffhanger because of the large number of OHVs I saw at the trailhead. I suspect that it would be a white-knuckle affair, trapped between two 4-wheelers approaching from opposite directions with no escape. I decided not to drive it either for the same reason.

Gerry Vanderbeek will lead the second option, ascending Pritchett Canyon and looping back to Kane Creek Road along the north rim of Hunter Canyon. Pritchett Canyon is a 4WD route for hardcore off-roaders. In 2014, we were "treated" to the spectacle of one tricked-out Jeep hung up on a boulder, its right rear wheel wedged between it and another boulder. The driver decided to muscle it off the obstacle by gunning his engine. As the right wheel was spinning without moving an inch, smoke rose from the tire until it flew apart in shreds. That was the last we saw of that group or any other off-roaders for the rest of the day.

Drop a shuttle vehicle at the upper trailhead or hike Kane Creek Road (below) back to your vehicle. The latter adds about 2 miles of road walking...uphill...to an already long hike, so I recommend the shuttle option.



A shorter in-and-out hike in Hunter Canyon may appeal to people looking for a less strenuous hike. But the trail becomes overgrown after a couple of miles. Be on the lookout for poison ivy. **Below:** Hunter Canyon from north rim.



I've also included Dead Horse Point State Park on our Tuesday schedule. I did so because this Utah State Park is offering a ranger-led moonlight hike at 9:00 that night, and you should be able to participate in that evening event using the same day pass (\$20/vehicle). There are numerous trails to explore there during daylight hours, leading to sweeping vistas of this spectacular redrock canyon landscape, including the signature Goose Neck bend in the Colorado River. This is *Thelma & Louise* country.

On Wednesday, we'll visit Canyonlands National Park, Island in the Sky District, which we last visited in 2014. That year was a "superbloom" with carpets of bluish-lavender scorpion weed, but I didn't see any evidence of that last week. Nevertheless, we should find a variety of cacti and lots of orange globe mallow in flower. If there is sufficient interest...and someone willing to lead it...I recommend the Syncline Loop. This trail descends steeply to Upheaval Canyon, then continues to circumnavigate the Upheaval Dome in a clockwise direction. The scenery is spectacular, but this trail isn't for the faint of heart. It's a strenuous 10-mile (2000' loss/gain) workout, especially if it's hot, and route-finding can be challenging at times. My photos of it from 2014 do show signage at critical trail junctions. Alternatively, you could hike in from the bottom of Upheaval Canyon by taking the White Rim Road from Horsethief Bottom to Upheaval Bottom (4WD recommended). It's about 5 miles from there to the Upheaval Dome with 700' gain.

The Neck Spring trailhead, just past the Canyonlands Visitor Center, shares a parking lot with the Shafer Canyon Overlook. It's a 5.5-mile loop with 500' loss/gain which passes by an old cowboy camp. Named for "The Neck" or narrow isthmus of the lofty peninsula known by the misnomer of "Island in the Sky". Peninsula means literally "almost island". But "almost island in the sky" doesn't roll off the tongue as mellifluously.

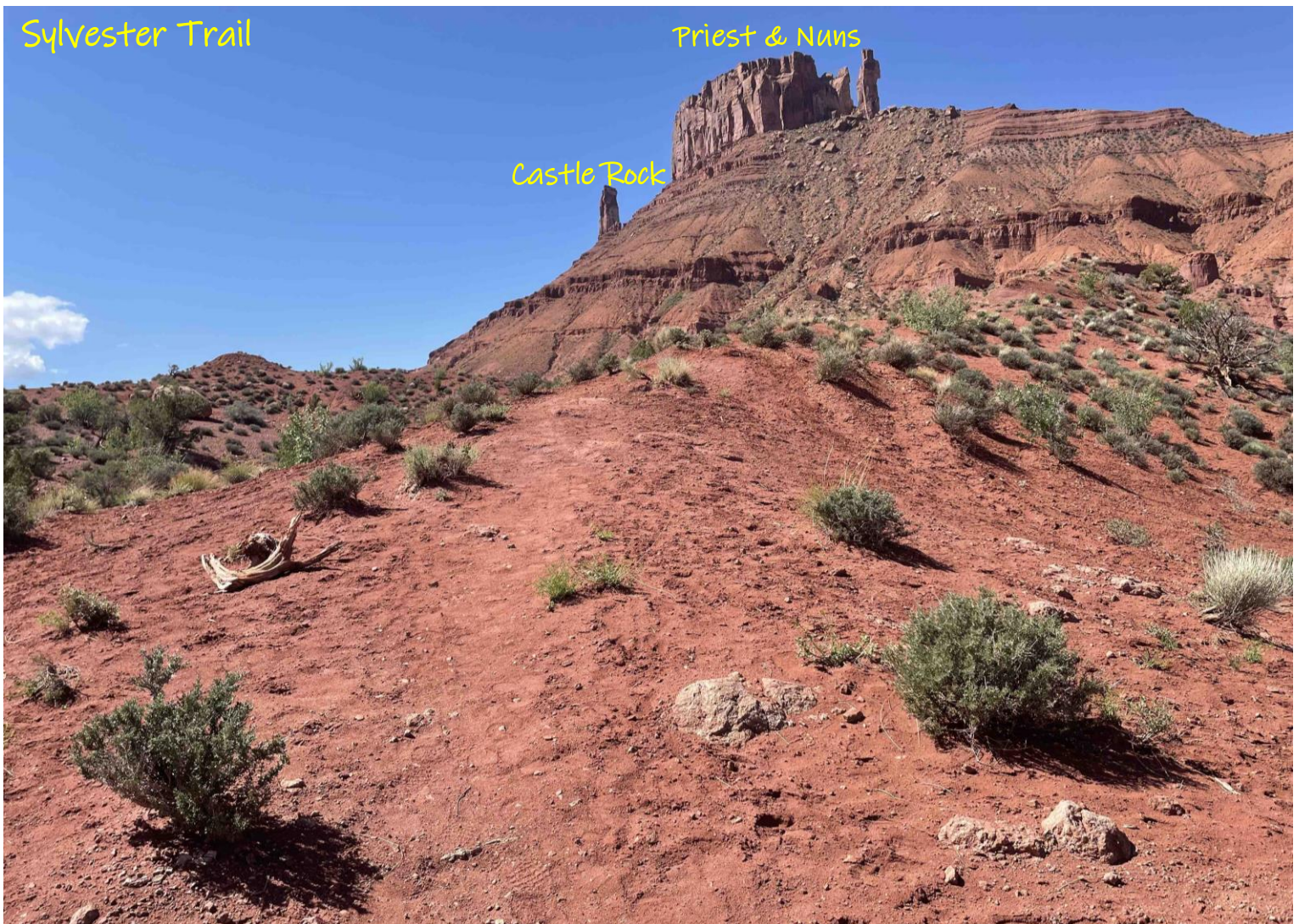
Carpet of purple scorpionweed on the Syncline Loop



Another option Wednesday is Dead Horse Point State Park, if you hadn't already done it on Tuesday. Enroute to Dead Horse Point, Sevenmile Canyon contains Native American rock art...if you know where to look. The canyon consists of north and south forks. It's not well marked, but the "trailhead" to the South Fork lies just off the paved road to Dead Horse Point and Canyonlands (UT313) on the left side about 2.7 miles from US191. Road Trip Ryan has a comprehensive description of the South Fork. Just beyond that turnoff, on the right side of 313, is the "Intestine Man" pictograph, beyond which the North Fork of Sevenmile Canyon leads to the right just before the first hairpin of 313.

If you're keen to visit Gemini Bridges, I can save you the trouble...and the pain...of doing so. On UT313, just north of the turnoff to Dead Horse Point, you can turn east from 313 and follow an unpaved road to Gemini Bridges. I opted to take the cross-country "shortcut" from there back to US191. While the road from 313 to the Bridges is passable for most vehicles with caution, the road from the Bridges to 191 is best left to bighorn sheep. To call it hideous is to pay it a high compliment. Just when I thought the worst of it was behind me, I encountered another couple heading in the opposite direction. We stopped to share intel on the roads we had just traveled. When I heard their report, it was obvious that the worst was yet to come. A true 4WD road climbed from there up a narrow shelf road with steep drop-offs and precious little room for two vehicles to pass. Fortunately, I met only two 4-wheelers and several dirt bikes where I was able to pull over far enough for them to pass. But I could have kissed the asphalt by the time I reached 191. It took an hour to drive the final 7 miles. Very long story short: Skip Gemini Bridges. IMHO, they weren't even worth the half-mile hike from the road.

Depending upon the status of my ankle, I may lead a hike on Thursday, the Sylvester Trail (below). It shares the same trailhead as Mary Jane Canyon, but it is totally dry, leading toward Castle Rock, a prominent feature of Castle Valley.

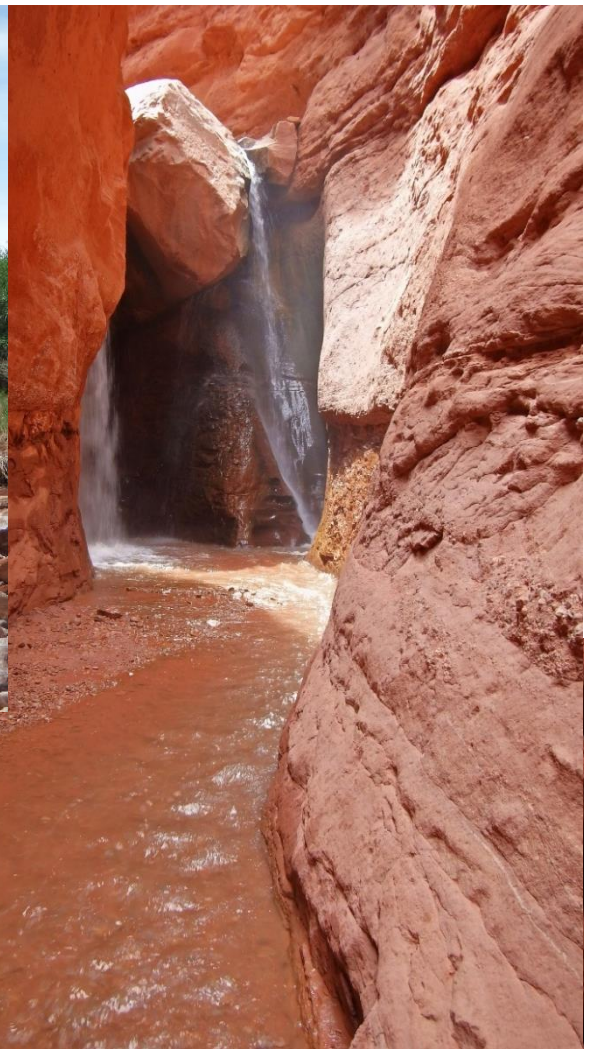


Two of our scheduled hikes on Thursday are along the Potash Road, which is a left turn from 191 north of 128. Both hikes are near the apex of a gooseneck in the Colorado River created the incursion of Amasa Back. Gary Steinen will lead a group to Corona, Bowtie and Pinto Arches. Corona Arch is also known as Little Rainbow Bridge for its uncanny resemblance to that magnificent sandstone feature in Lake Powell. Corona Arch had been used by bungee jumpers and other thrill-seekers. But a fatality there several years ago caused the BLM to put a stop to that. It's a short hike, over mostly slickrock, to all three arches. Another arch, just up the road from Corona is Gold Bar (aka Jeep) Arch. I believe the latter got its name from its shape that resembles the profile of an SUV. It's about 4 miles round trip with 1000' of gain. I may have done this lollipop loop before, but I have no clear recollection of it.

I had a fruitful trip to Moab last week. You could debate whether Wednesday was the most or least fruitful of the three days. I scouted three trails that day, and eliminated all three. But there are several alternatives that I'd be happy to lead in their stead. I only scouted one trail on Thursday, and it was the only trail I hiked in its entirety...a 6-mile loop. What I found most remarkable about this trail was how conducive it would be as a DIYer. While I'd originally intended to lead it on Monday, I think a better option would be Friday, so we can get an earlier start while the air is cool and shadows are long in the canyons. I call it the Mill Canyon Loop, so named for a copper mill that once produced the malleable metal in the canyon during its heyday. It's also known as the M&M loop, neither of which 'M' stands for 'Mill'. Rather, it stands for Monitor & Merrimac, two buttes off in the distance...not actually on the route. The loop begins by following Courthouse Wash to its headwaters, although there was precious little water to be found, despite an evening rain. What makes this a great DIY option is that where the trail climbs out of the wash onto the slickrock, the non-motorized route is marked initially by four boulders placed across the trail to discourage 4-wheelers from using it. At this point, you'll begin to see white markers painted on the slickrock. Just continue to follow these markers as the trail circles around a distant butte before it returns to another sandy wash, Mill Canyon. Another factor in its favor is that while many trails in the national parks or closer to Moab are highly populated, the only people I saw on my 6-mile excursion were at the beginning and the end, with nary a soul in sight for more than 5 miles of delightful solitude. See photos on next page.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this missive, on Friday, Leonard will lead another group on the Mary Jane Canyon splash and dash. If you haven't done this hike before, I highly recommend it. Though the canyon itself is worth the trip, you'll want to be sure to make the 3.8-mile trek to the falls (right).





Scenes from Mary Jane Canyon

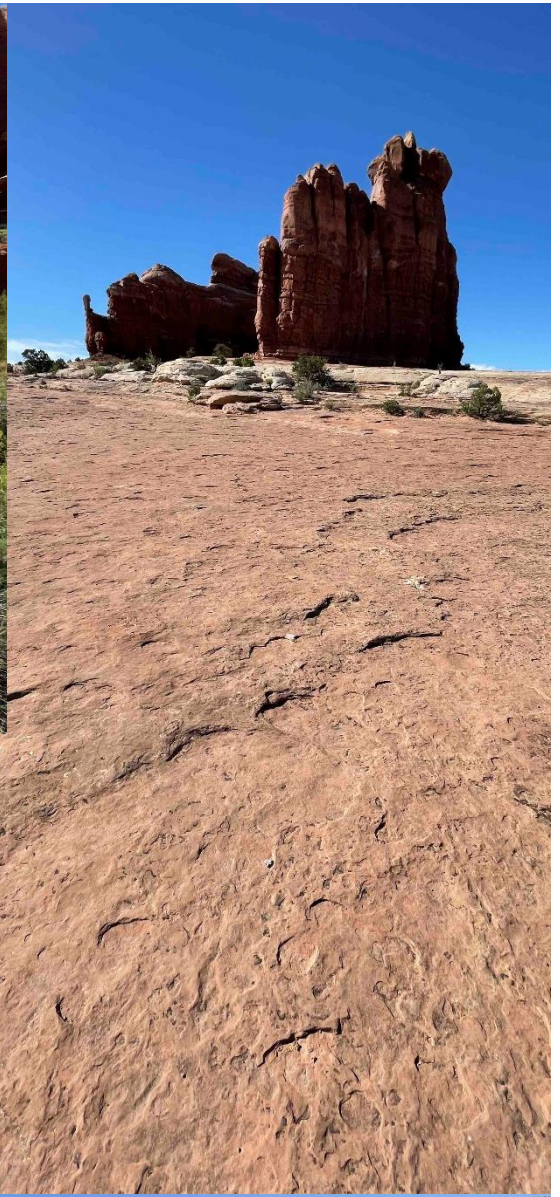
Pritchett Canyon



Syncline Stairmaster



Syncline Butte



Photos from Mill Canyon Loop (clockwise from top left): Mill Canyon pour-off; easy to follow slickrock trail around a distant butte; Monitor & Merrimac as viewed from entrance to Mill Canyon.





Most (?) of us are staying at the Hotel Moab Downtown. It's on Main Street (US191) at the NW corner of 200 South. Look for the huge red sign (above). If you miss the driveway from Main, turn right on 200 South, then right again into the hotel parking lot. There are many restaurants within walking distance, and the traffic signal at Main & 200 South makes egress and ingress relatively easy regardless of which direction you're heading. Although there are left turn lanes on Main Street for most cross streets, there are no green arrows.

Most tailgates will be in a "park" adjacent to the hotel. This is one of those Clint Eastwood spaghetti western situations...the good, the bad and the ugly. The bad: No picnic tables. The ugly: A weedy sandbox rather than grassy park. The good: Two large shade trees and ample room to pitch our camp chairs under them. We'll have a potluck dinner one night at a nearby city park. We'll shoot for Thursday, which is forecast to be sunny and mild. Bruce and I will bring our propane grills. Tailgate assignments during the week are Monday A-J, Tuesday K-N, Wednesday P-Y. We'll meet for all tailgates and the potluck at 5pm. I'll provide directions to the city park at the first tailgate.

We'll rendezvous each morning in the hotel parking lot. If you're staying elsewhere, let me know if you need to rendezvous with the peloton at a different location. Most of our hikes are north of the hotel, except Kane Creek hikes. When I was there 2 weeks ago, there was construction on Kane Creek Road. But I expect that's finished by now.