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Gateway

to Canyon Country

A guide to Page, Lake Powell, Kanab and the Grand Circle

HIKING WILLIS CREEK
A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE GEM
OF A SLOT CANYON

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**Cover photo /
Bob Hembree**

Navajo Hoop Dancer Tomas Hunt is appearing at the 2024 Fine Arts Festival. Page 10

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Gateway to Canyon Country Spring 2024 5



HIKING WILLIS CREEK

A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE GEM OF A SLOT CANYON

story and photos
by **STEVEN LAW**/
CONTRIBUTOR

Hiking Willis Creek slot canyon is a beautiful little gem of an outing.

It's a fantastic hike for several reasons: One, it's very scenic. The walls of the canyon are comprised of cross-bedded sandstone, which add a very pleasing visual texture. Tall pine trees and shorter juniper and pinyon trees grow on the surface above the slot canyon and occasionally they peek over the edge. Columbine flowers and grasses grow in the cracks. The water has sculpted the sandstone cliff walls into picturesque scallops and curtains.

From the trailhead hikers will walk along a trail about 150 or 200 feet before the trail drops down into the slot canyon. In the beginning the canyon is wide, but very quickly grows narrow. Once you reach the heart of the slot canyon the walls are only five to ten feet apart. Two, it's a very easy hike. From the trailhead to the end of Willis Creek and back is only 3.1 miles round trip. You lose very little elevation from the trailhead to the end of the canyon, and there are no big obstacles you'll encounter, making Willis Creek great for hikers of all ages and abilities.



Water flows in the bottom of the canyon for most of the year. When I hiked it in June, I did it with a group of five adults and we had a great time. We passed several families with kids of assorted ages and they all seemed to be enjoying themselves splashing in the water, and jumping from rock to rock.

Your hike into Willis Creek can easily be turned into a longer hike if you choose to do so. Willis Creek Canyon intersects with Sheep Canyon. At the intersection, if you still feel like hiking, you can turn left and hike up Sheep Canyon or turn right and walk deeper into Sheep Canyon. I was hiking with a group that felt like walking, so after reaching Sheep Canyon we turned right and continued down it for another two miles. We then found a shady spot against the cliff wall where we ate lunch before returning to our car.

It's worth mentioning here that Sheep Canyon, though a deep canyon, isn't technically a slot canyon, in the sense that Willis Creek is. Its walls are wider and the farther down it you travel the higher the cliff walls rise over your head. For anyone who reaches the end of Willis Creek and still feels like walking, I would highly recommend continuing your adventure into Sheep Canyon.

The Willis Creek trailhead is located along Skutumpah Road a 15-minute drive from Cannonville, Utah. Because of its proximity to Bryce Canyon National Park and Kodachrome Basin State Park, it's the perfect side adventure for anyone visiting those places, or for anyone traveling along scenic Highway 12.





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SHAPING TODAY'S PAGE

PAGE FINE ARTS FESTIVAL SET FOR

APRIL 27

story and photos
by **BOB HEMBREE**/CHRONICLE

The first to discover a town's identity is its artists.

Every town has its own DNA. As a community matures, its open spaces, values and culture crystalize, defining its identity, its signature, its brand. Page, Arizona, sprang from a camp for Glen Canyon Dam workers and their families. It was founded 45 years after Arizona became the 48th state on Valentine's Day in 1912. Eighteen years later, March 1, 1975, Page incorporated as a town. Many of the town's residents are descendants of dam workers. Most of the population's ancestors were here long before dam construction, the Diné (Navajo). These diverse forces, their histories and influences, shape today's Page.

The 64,000-year-old cave paintings in Spain, the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, the paintings of the Italian Renaissance, and Japanese anime, all characterize a time and place in history. The timeless Southwest its own color scheme: desert earth, sky and water. These are the dominant colors of Diné jewelry, sand paintings and hand woven rugs.

The young City of Page is grappling with its identity, taking steps toward redefining itself, including a new logo and a new "Welcome to Page, Arizona" monument on Highway 89 emphasizing water recreation. Page is best known for the landmarks it borders, Horseshoe Bend,

Antelope Canyon and Lake Powell, but that's only part of its complex identity. There's the 20th century industrialism, building the Glen Canyon Dam and bridge, then building, and operating the coal burning Navajo Generating Station until its closure Nov. 18, 2019. All this mingles and mixes with Navajo culture, guided tours through canyons, and a love for Canyon Country.

The 2024 Page Fine Art Festival is scheduled for April 27. Page has a wide variety of events for area residents and tourists. There's always something going on. Page City Manager Darren Coldwell said the April art festival was created for residents. "This was mainly targeted toward the residents so that they could see different artists that are in our area," said Coldwell. "They don't travel a great distance to participate in the Page Fine Art Festival. So a lot of them are locals, Navajos. Our hope was to introduce that to the residents of Page."

Sheri Ptacek, part of the Page Community Development team, organizes the festivals. She expects the number of artist participants to increase this year. In 2023, there were about 40 booths of artists displaying original works, including jewelry, paintings, carvings and photography.

This year's featured artist is Diné artist Elwin Shorthair, known for his oil portraits of Diné elders in feathered headgear. Shorthair was at last year's festival when Daniel



The 2023 Fine Art Festival featured about 40 art exhibits

Josley was the featured artist. Ptacek said, "When we did the fine art festival last year, I just fell in love with Elwin's art, and I said, 'Can we just make him our premier artist?'"

Fine art festivals are new to Page, so Ptacek and city staff reached out to communities with art festival experience, like Sedona, Flagstaff and St. George for guidance. She learned that it's best to not oversaturate a particular category. A landscape photographer is less likely to participate if there are too many similar photographers. When it comes to accepting applications, Ptacek and team are selective and have the tricky task of distinguishing fine art from crafts. The key factor is that items are 100% original and made with the artist's own artistic vision and hands.

The 2023 festival featured an eclectic mix, fine Native American jewelry, photography, paintings, decorative wooden

furniture and Cassidy Finn's collectables -- Bigfoot and aliens. Finn had a booth in the 2022 and 2023 festivals. She's applied for this year's event. Finn is the treasurer for Grand Circle Art Alliance (GCAA) and her building on 71 Seventh Street is home to The Grand Circle Arts Gallery.

Finn uses a variety of mediums. The most striking are her multilayered wood sculptures. She features space aliens and Bigfoot with iconic local landmarks like Tower Butte, Navajo Mountain and Rainbow Bridge. "I have Navajo people coming to me all the time when I'm doing an outdoor show to tell me that their family member saw Sasquatch or their family member when they were a kid saw a flying saucer," said Finn. "And it's just interesting because rumor has it, first people have been visited before anyway."

"I came from Seattle, where I participated in a lot



Photo by Bob Hembree



Navajo Hoop Dancer Tomas Hunt is appearing at the 2024 Fine Art Festival

Photo by Bob Hembree

of street fairs and vending opportunities, and I was really excited to find out that there was actually an organization in town that was trying to put together events locally here in Page. I was interested in joining, but I wasn't sure that what I was doing was considered art. Sometimes you're your worst critic."

Finn said asking too many questions in 2020 led to her position as treasurer for the nonprofit GCAA.

"There were roughly 50 members when I joined. I started asking questions right away, where does the membership money go? How do you track memberships? Is it from their date of joining? And then the following year, that's when they owe, or is it from January to December? And I started asking too many questions, and then the board came, said, 'Would you like to be the treasurer?' And so I said, yeah, I'd see what I could do to help out."



Randy Rhodes and Cassidy Finn at the Grand Circle Art Alliance during the 2023 Page Balloon Regatta Street Fair.

Photo by Bob Hembree

Though GCAA is not involved with the 2024 Fine Art Festival, Ptacek and Coldwell both said they'd support GCCA having their own festival in the fall. Coldwell said the Fine

Art Festival was purposely scheduled offseason for residents. He suggested a September or October date for a GCCA festival because more tourists are visiting,

which means potentially more art sales.

GCAA is an inclusive group. They accept all artists, crafters, musicians, and supporters. Finn said art



Cedar City's Reality Check performed classic rock hits at last year's festival.

Photo by Bob Hembree

supporters make up 20% of their membership.

In addition to art displays, the 2024 Fine Art Festival will feature live music by Utah's Runaway Fire, and Native American Hoop Dancers. The event is free to all.

A Best in Show dinner for artists and the public at Gone West Family Restaurant is also scheduled. Tickets are \$25 each or \$45 for couples. "Each artist will bring one piece of their art, and then the people that attend it actually vote for the best art," said Ptacek.

Between the City of Page and Grand Circle Art Alliance art events, the town's identity is beginning to crystalize and shine.



A wide variety of original art was displayed at the 2023 Fine Art Festival, including decorative rustic wood furniture.

Photo by Bob Hembree



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'ROUND THE BEND

JUST IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T MADE THE
JOURNEY YET

photo
by **STEVEN LAW**/CONTRIBUTOR

This is one of the reasons you came here in the first place. Horseshoe Bend has become one of the most recognized and visited places in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. And even though Horseshoe Bend is on National Park Service land, it's free and accessible to everyone.

Horseshoe Bend itself is in the park, but the parking lot is on city land. The City of Page requires visitors to pay for parking at the Horseshoe Bend trailhead. National Park Service passes do not apply for the parking lot.

According to the National Park Service, Horseshoe Bend has been featured as a landmark for Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Grand Canyon National Park, the Cities of Page AZ, Kanab UT, St George UT, and the Navajo Nation.

Horseshoe Bend gets its name from the serpentine, 180 degree curve in the Colorado River. The winding section of river has carved out one of the most photographed natural wonders ever.

The parking lot and trailhead is located off US Highway 89, approximately 5 miles south of the Carl Hayden Visitor Center.

The hike to the canyon's edge is 1.5 miles round-trip over a hardened path.

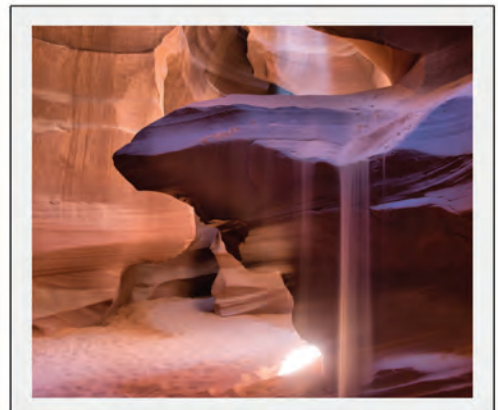




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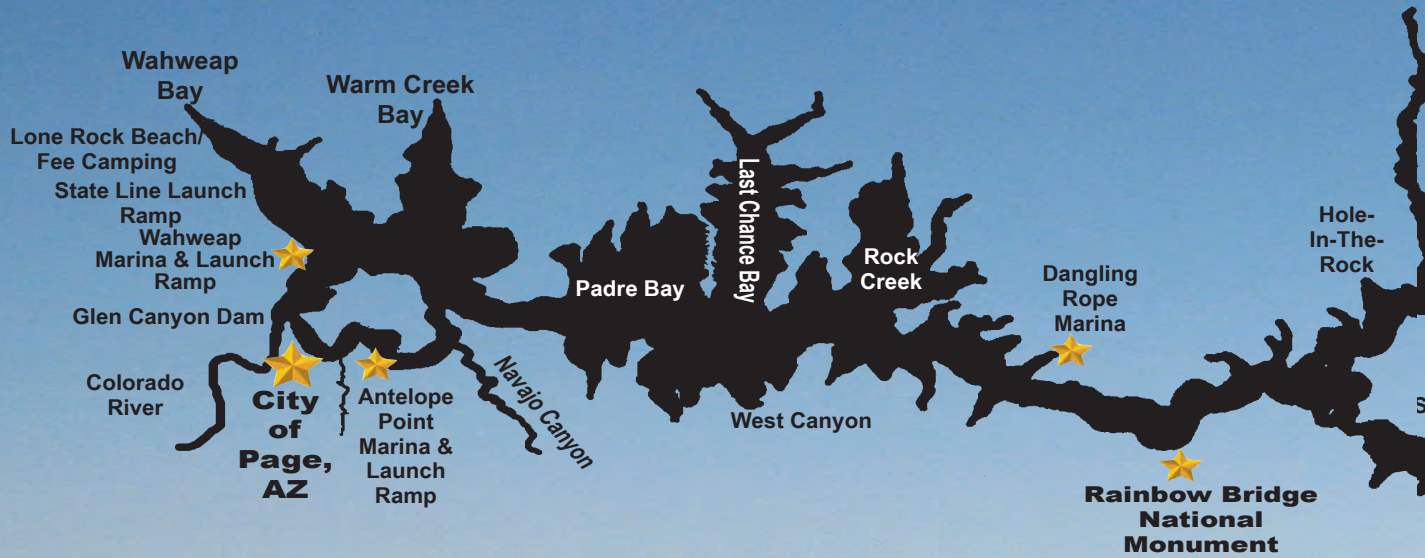
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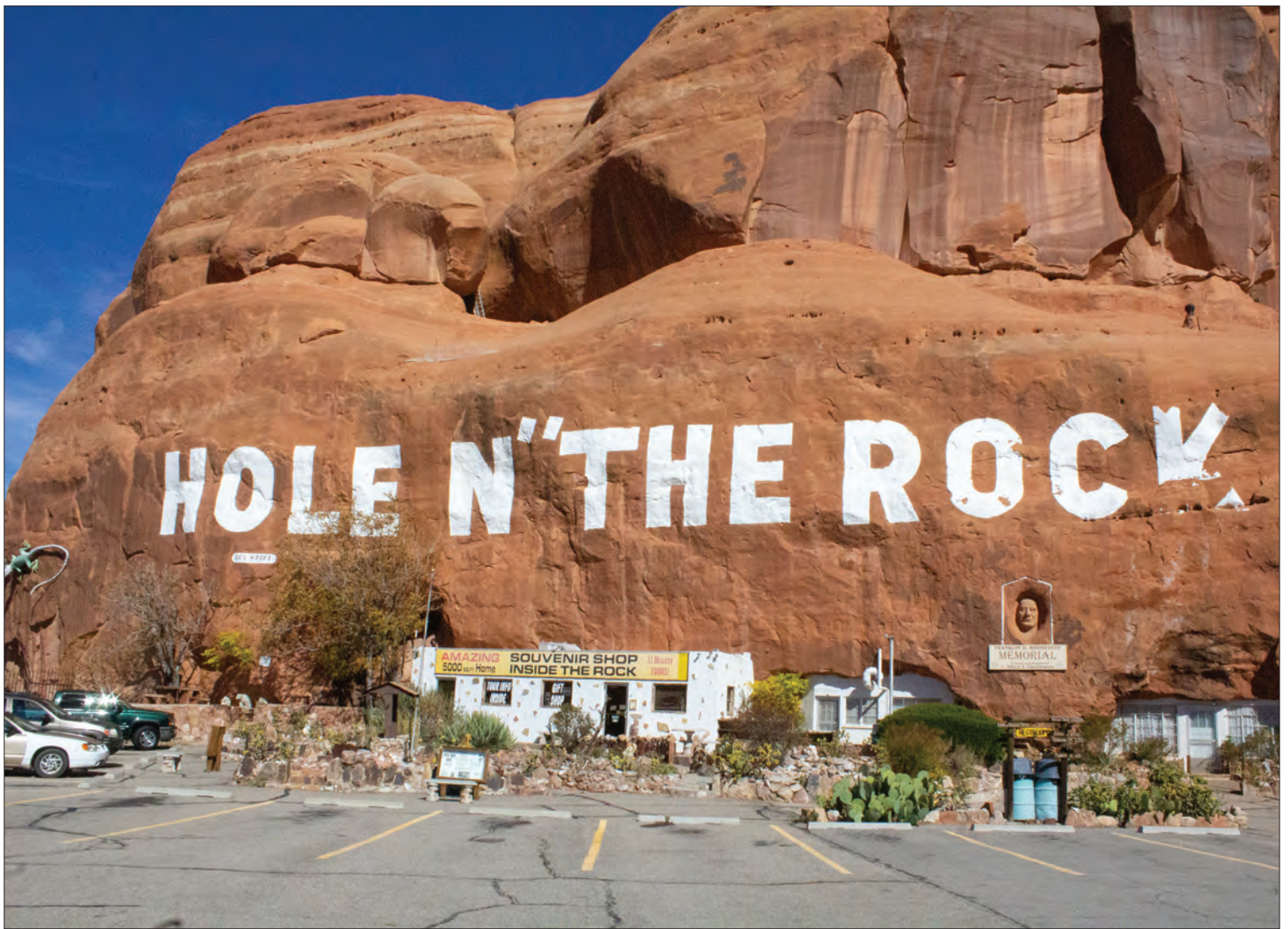
4 Corners Canyon Country



MILEAGE CHART

All mileage is approximate

	ARCHES N.P., MOAB, UT	BRIANHEAD, UT	BRYCE CANYON N.P., UT	CANYON DE CHELLY, NM	CANYONLANDS, UT	CAPITOL REEF, N.P., UT	CEDAR BREAKS N.P., UT	CEDAR CITY, UT	FLAGSTAFF, AZ	GRAND CANYON N. RIM	GRAND CANYON S. RIM	KANAB, UT	LAKE POWELL, HITE MARINA	LAS VEGAS, NV	MESA VERDE, N.P., CO	MESQUITE, NV	MONUMENT VALLEY, UT	NATURAL BRIDGES, NM	NAVAJO, NM	PAGE, AZ	PANGUITCH, UT	PIPE SPRINGS, NM	SALT LAKE CITY, UT	ST. GEORGE, UT	ZION N.P., UT
ARCHES N.P., MOAB, UT		278	270	249	62	145	285	288	419	399	425	321	168	447	149	376	159	129	214	285	291	342	238	341	328
BRIANHEAD, UT	278		56	331	350	179	5	32	292	161	298	68	248	189	431	121	280	301	242	149	35	101	250	85	90
BRYCE CANYON N.P., UT	270	56		294	327	120	56	78	302	155	292	77	223	230	393	162	278	284	230	151	24	107	260	126	84
CANYON DE CHELLY NM	249	331	294		175	551	351	365	181	347	257	268	210	464	221	388	171	185	133	204	340	299	580	383	298
CANYONLANDS, UT	62	350	327	175		230	352	354	282	409	439	331	116	524	122	450	145	81	192	262	320	352	304	414	372
CAPITOL REEF N.P., UT	145	179	120	551	230		178	199	277	275	312	197	123	356	285	282	196	147	246	262	144	219	224	246	204
CEDAR BREAKS N.P., UT	285	5	56	351	352	178		21	304	158	295	64	245	186	427	119	277	299	239	174	32	97	253	88	93
CEDAR CITY, UT	288	32	78	365	354	199	21		322	176	313	79	263	168	445	101	295	317	257	154	50	115	250	53	59
FLAGSTAFF, AZ	419	292	302	181	282	277	304	322		208	78	204	252	268	365	307	176	221	140	136	267	205	503	273	241
GRAND CANYON N. RIM	399	161	155	347	409	275	158	176	208		214	78	401	275	434	201	247	365	203	121	145	92	381	161	119
GRAND CANYON S. RIM	425	298	292	257	439	312	295	313	78	214		202	321	283	357	206	169	287	125	137	301	261	520	303	211
KANAB, UT	321	68	77	268	331	197	64	79	204	78	202		278	203	380	126	196	318	151	74	67	21	303	88	41
LAKE POWELL, HITE MARINA	168	248	223	210	116	123	245	263	252	401	321	278		559	199	484	111	40	162	278	216	299	408	318	397
LAS VEGAS, NV	447	189	230	404	524	356	186	168	268	275	283	203	559		595	77	407	525	365	272	225	182	413	110	153
MESA VERDE N.P., CO	149	431	393	221	122	285	427	445	365	434	357	380	199	595		518	89	158	161	232	419	401	380	461	420
MESQUITE, NV	376	121	162	388	450	282	119	101	307	201	206	126	484	77	518		330	447	288	191	148	105	336	36	76
MONUMENT VALLEY, UT	159	280	278	171	145	196	277	295	176	247	169	196	111	407	89	330		118	163	126	269	217	394	284	242
NATURAL BRIDGES NM	129	301	284	185	81	147	299	317	221	365	287	318	40	525	158	447	118		122	238	256	339	368	410	363
NAVAJO NM	214	242	230	133	192	246	239	257	140	203	125	151	162	365	161	288	163	122		61	226	172	435	239	200
PAGE, AZ	285	149	151	204	262	262	174	154	136	121	137	74	278	272	232	191	126	238	61		141	91	376	153	115
PANGUITCH, UT	291	35	24	340	320	144	32	50	267	145	301	67	216	225	419	148	269	256	226	141		88	376	115	74
PIPE SPRINGS NM	342	101	107	299	352	219	97	115	205	92	261	21	299	182	401	105	217	339	172	91	88		324	67	62
SALT LAKE CITY, UT	238	250	260	580	304	224	253	250	503	381	520	303	408	413	380	336	394	368	435	376	236	324		303	309
ST. GEORGE, UT	341	85	126	353	414	246	88	53	273	161	303	88	318	110	461	36	284	410	239	153	115	67	303		43
ZION N.P., UT	328	90	84	298	372	204	93	59	241	119	211	41	397	153	420	76	242	363	200	115	74	62	309		



ALWAYS WANTED TO STOP

BEST ROADSIDE ATTRACTION EVER VISITED

story and photos
by **STEVEN LAW**/Contributor

I bet I have driven by Hole N' the Rock more than 50 times during road trips and camping trips in southeastern Utah and I've always been curious about it, and I've always wanted to stop there, but I never have until last October.

We were on a family roadtrip traveling from Deadhorse Point State Park to Monument Valley Tribal Park. Not long after driving through Moab our three-year-old daughter was getting antsy and was ready to get out of her car seat and stretch her legs.

"I know the perfect stop just ahead," I told her.

We spent 90 minutes exploring Hole

N' the Rock, inside and out, and loved every minute we were there. Hole N' the Rock is hands-down the best roadside attraction I've ever visited and I have visited a lot in my 48 years on this crazy, beautiful planet of ours.

Hole N' the Rock has character and kitsch. Layers upon layers of kitsch, which is great! I love kitsch, especially in a roadside attraction. The kitschier the better, I say.

On the property visitors will find such things as a wooden Indian, a full-scale Jeep sculpture made of welded-together steel and license plates. One wall, as we entered the petting zoo, is covered in

about a hundred nameplates from classic American cars.

A 20-foot-long lizard sculpture is bolted right onto the cliff wall. There are numerous metal sculptures and stone sculptures.

Most of the metal sculptures are constructed from welded-together metal scraps. Some of the rock sculptures are carved right into the face of the cliff wall.

The property also includes a gift shop, a convenience store and a small zoo with zebras, American bison, ostriches, camels and many other animals. Visitors can purchase a bucket filled with various things to feed to the animals.

After exploring the kitschy attractions of Hole N" the Rock's exterior amenities, we moved on to the main attraction: a tour of the inside of the rock.

Our tour guide was Shauna Parker. She's been a tour guide at Hole N" the Rock for about six years. She grew up in, and still lives, in Moab, a 20-minute drive north. The interior of the rock home is pleasantly cool. The temperature inside stays between 65 to 72 degrees year-round, Hanson told us as she began the tour.

Hole N" the Rock is carved into a free-standing island of Entrada Sandstone that stands about 1,320 feet high and is a mile around at its base.

The land on which Hole N" the Rock sits was settled by Neils Lars Christensen, who moved to the area in the 1920s and purchased 80 acres. At the time he purchased the land, located about 12 miles south of Moab, Utah, it was one of the



Tour guide Shauna Parker shows us around Hole N" the Rock.

most remote, unpopulated areas in the U.S.

Hole N" the Rock has 14 rooms blasted and chiseled out of solid sandstone. It began as a small cove hollowed

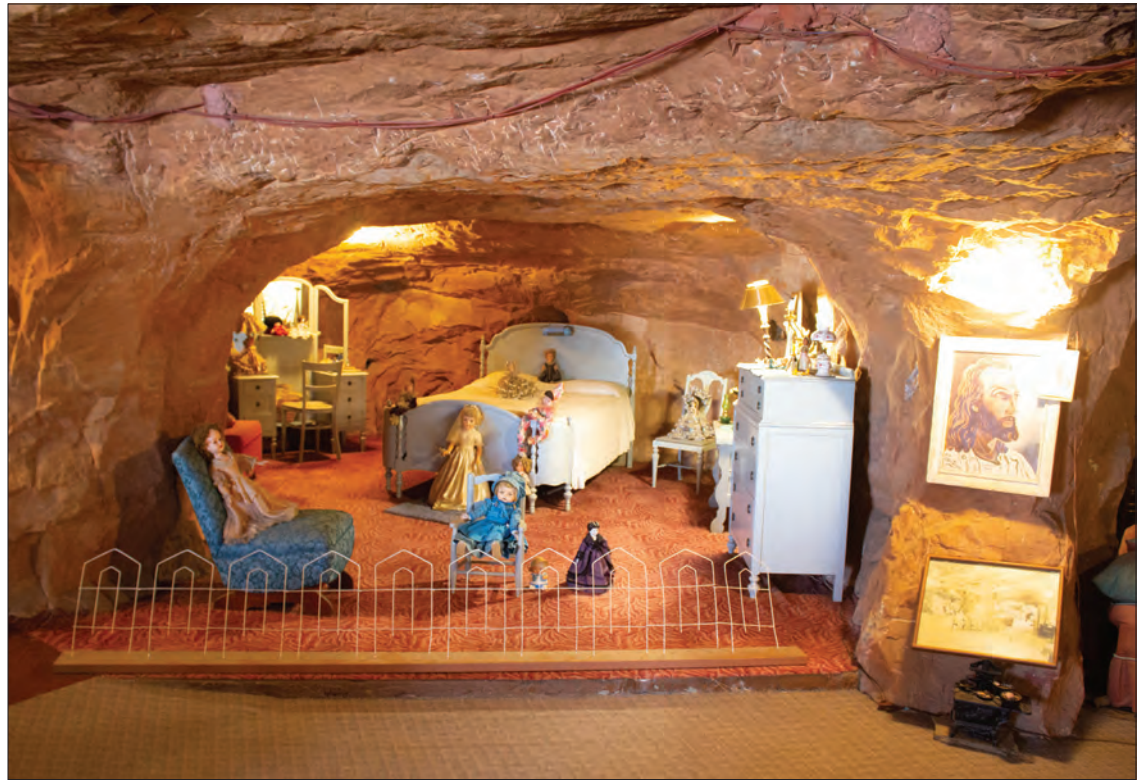


out of the rock to serve as a bedroom for Christensen's five boys, and was continuously expanded for the next 20 years.

Most of the excavation was done by three of Christensen's sons, Albert, Clarence and Leo. The three sons were miners and engineers, our guide told us, and eventually sold their shares to Albert, who made it his full-time home with his wife Gladys. Albert continued excavating the rock adding rooms until he died.

By the time it was complete, Albert had excavated 14 rooms, totaling 5,000 square feet, out of the rock's interior. Albert excavated each room one at a time, leaving pillars between each room to support the cavehouse's roof. The house even features a working fireplace with a chimney that extends 65 feet up through the rock where the smoke finally escapes.

I was surprised to see how



modern the house is. The kitchen is an actual, working kitchen complete with tile-top cabinets, a refrigerator,

and stove. The back of the cabinets have been shaped to fit the contours of the rock.

Our tour guide took us

through the house, room by room. We paused in each room as Parker told us a little about what the room was used



for, and how long it took Albert to carve it from the mother rock.

Hole N” the Rock is now owned by Erik and Wendee Hansen, who purchased the property 18 years ago.

At the time they owned a painting business and they traveled from city to city, state to state on painting jobs. During one of their trips their truck broke down in Moab and they spent a few days there while it was being fixed. While there, Erik saw an ad in the newspaper that Hole N” the Rock was for sale, and they bought it.

At the time a tour of Hole N” the Rock consisted of a visit to the interior of the rock house and a visit to the graves of Albert and Clarence, who are buried on the property.

All the kitschy art and artifacts that now adorn the property, as well as the zoo and the store, have been added since the Hansens became the owners.

“It’s been awesome taking care of this place,” said



Wendee Hansen.

She said all the kitschy touches are no accident.

“We used to travel a lot when we had the painting

business and we stopped at every roadside attraction we came to,” she said. “My favorite ones were the strange, off-the-grid, off-the-

beaten-trail kind of places that had character, so it was only natural that we did the same with this place.”





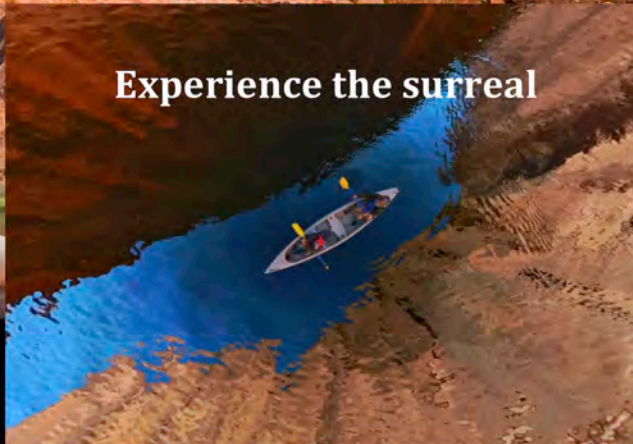
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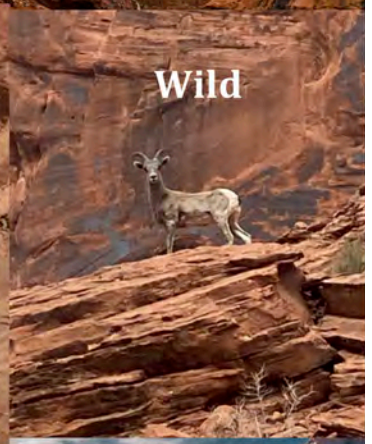
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- 4 hours from Las Vegas, NV



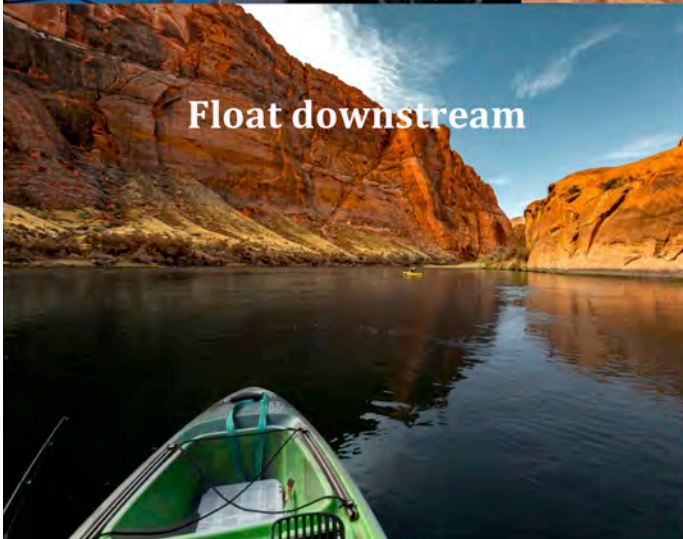
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EXPAND YOUR EXPERIENCE

PAGE'S TOURIST CONCIERGE

story and photos
by **STEVEN LAW**/Contributor

Have you ever experienced Traveler's Remorse? It's the unpleasant knowledge when you return from a trip only to discover you missed some of the area's most popular and interesting attractions. It's a frustrating feeling – knowing you were right there, and you had the time to do it, but you didn't learn about it until you returned from your trip.

There is so much to do in and around Page that trying to choose among the many recreational, dining and adventure options can start to feel overwhelming. If you're one of the millions of tourists visiting Page this year, and you'd like some help



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maximizing your visit to beautiful Page and Lake Powell, the Hub Tourist Information Center can help. And you won't return home with Traveler's Remorse.

Think of the Hub as Page's tourist concierge.

The Hub is a one-stop shop connecting Page's visitors with the many activities, hotels, restaurants and other amenities the area has to offer. And the Hub has the connections, the local knowledge and experience to make it happen.

The Hub books trips for 74% of the tour companies that operate out of Page. The Page area offers amazing hiking, cycling and UTV trails. Looking for something on the water? They can point you toward river rafting, paddleboarding, kayaking, houseboating, water skiing and jet skiing. Page also offers scenic helicopter and airplane flights that leave from Page Municipal Airport every day.

"Whatever you're looking to do, we can help you find it," said Judy Franz, executive director for the Chamber Page/Lake Powell. "We offer a whole host of options from easy to difficult, guided or self-guided, land-based, water-based or air-based. If you want to do a self-guided trip, we can provide you with the maps and information about how to get there and what gear you'll need. If you want to do a guided trip, we can connect you



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PLAN A VISIT NORTH

BEAUTIFUL MORNING TO HIKE THE NORTH RIM

story and photos
by **STEVEN LAW**/Contributor

George and I follow a trail that winds through curtains of cliffrose, lochs of prickly pear cactus blooming with yellow and pink blossoms, and orange firerockets of globemallows. The air is fragrant with the nectary smell of globemallows and the crisp tang of sagebrush and pine trees. It's a beautiful morning for a hike on the Grand Canyon's north rim.

George and I are hiking the Cape Final Trail. After walking an hour we arrive at its terminus, a viewpoint that overlooks a broad, scenic section of the Grand Canyon. The viewpoint is like a long catwalk that extends out and away from

the surrounding terrain like the nose of a ship. The extension is devoid of trees or other objects that would otherwise block our view. George and I sit down on a flat rock and enjoy the 250 degree view into the Grand Canyon.

Through the years I have hiked numerous trails on both the Grand Canyon's South Rim and North Rim, and I much prefer the north rim. There are several reasons why adding a hike on the Cape Final Trail during the summer months is a great idea.

One

Geographically, the North Rim is a little

island in the sky, an oasis of coolness that's much appreciated during the hot summer months. The Grand Canyon's North Rim is a thousand feet higher than the South Rim.

The South Rim is 7,000 feet above sea level; the North Rim is 8,000 feet. Because of that altitude difference, the North Rim is considerably cooler than the South Rim.

During June, July and August the average daytime high is between 75 to 78 degrees. The South Rim, June thru August, is 82 to 85 degrees. That 75 to 78 degree temperature window





makes the North Rim the perfect destination for summer adventurers looking to cool their brows.

Two

One of the main reasons I prefer the North Rim over the South Rim is that it's far less crowded.

Travel statistics show that most visitors to the South Rim visit it as part of a larger travel itinerary to the Grand Circle. Such Grand Circle travel itineraries often include trips to Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park and Monument Valley. For those traveling the Grand Circle as part of the larger itinerary, a visit to the South Rim is quicker, easier and fits in more smoothly. Because of its far greater ease of accessibility, the South Rim receives more attention.

My friend George and I hiked the Cape Final Trail on a summer day. It was a weekend during peak vacation travel time, and we encountered only one other group – a father, mother and their son – hiking the trail that day. Most of the North Rim's visitors tend to cluster around the visitor center, and the trails nearest the visitor center receive the majority of visitation from the travelers wishing to stretch their legs.

Three

The Cape Final Trail is the perfect trail for days when you feel like exploring beautiful terrain without having to exert yourself. The Cape Final Trail is 4 miles long round trip across ground that is mostly flat. The trail winds through pine trees, sage brush and fields of tall grass and wildflowers, which is enough to make it a splendid hike. But the fact that it ends at one of the most beautiful overlooks in the world, will be one of the brightest exclamation points during your explorations of the Grand Circle.







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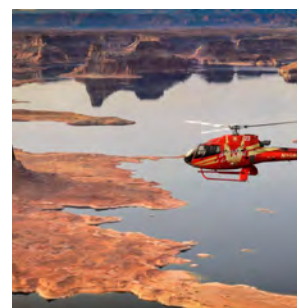
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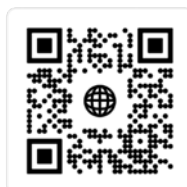
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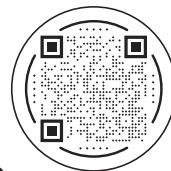


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