



**Capitol Reef and Grand Escalante/Staircase Trip Notes
With add-on to Las Cruces Marathon – see separate report
October 25 – November 5, 2013**

I'll go about anywhere new that a hiking group is willing to take me. This area is one that I'd never heard about but turned out to be a stunning delight. While the distances between sights were great, the sights were great enough to warrant the travel. Think about a series of Grand Canyons, and a bunch of larger hoodoos than Bryce, then add the peaks and slot canyons of Zion and there you have it.

It was with Timberline, a group I'd traveled with for a few years and sometimes even as many as seven in a year. I might have numbered 24 hikes with them. But alas, some good things come to an end and I'm fearful this could be the case. The owner guides of 35 years sold the company, a number of our favorite guides left for better things or more consistent work, some administrative staff left the company etc., all of which might be why many mistakes have been happening – some little and some frightening.

Pre-tour I gave myself a couple days – yet again – in Salt Lake City. There is much to be seen in Salt Lake City; even despite my having toured in 2010 in conjunction with the marathon and then again this August. This time I had a walking tour of the 1911 Grand Hotel (later called the Utah Hotel) that the Mormons renovated, and another shorter-version tour of Temple Square. I'd heard about the downtown renaissance and the shopping centers all under glass and connected by waterways (that recreated the original Salt Lake City waterways) and that these waterways even had fish in them. There were also a series of fountains to keep the 'water' theme and many were designed by Bellagio's creator and feature music and water play.

It was amazing how fast this old city took a new shape: to see Nordstrom and Macys plus many big name stores already established; it was quite the surprise as none of this existed in 2010. The picture is a view of Temple Square from atop the hotel which is now an administrative building. Plus the hotel itself.

The city is clean and pristine where the Mormons have anything to do with it.



The hiking group



This group photo and the next few pictures are by the professionals. Cathy and Gordon to the left.

The guides! They have quite a bio: Cathy and Gordon Illg run nature photography tours under the name Adventure Photography. Their photographs can be seen in nearly every major nature publication, including the covers of Backpacker, National Geographic Young Explorer and National Wildlife. Several of their images also decorate the tails of Frontier Airlines' jets.





Thank you Cathy and Gordon for some pictures of me. I rarely have them. The red shirt? It's because I couldn't decide if I was hot or cold.



New hiking company coming up!

The good news is that our favorite guides that left the company are starting their own guide service, with the new website and 2014 offerings just released. They are highly recommended. They are the guides who created most of my favorite hikes. They are the guides who won't take me on a trail that they haven't previously scouted.

www.ParksPlusHiking.com

It will be nice to know who your guides are, that they pre-scouted the trails, and that they are experienced, ready and able.

There are Guides and then there are Guides

These guides were Gordon and Cathy who I'd never met but who have their own photography touring company. I'd been reticent but assured that this wasn't a hike where we'd be stopping and setting up tripods and that there'd be plenty of hiking. That was mostly true but you can't stop a dedicated photographer and some patience was called for. Gordon and Cathy were good guides given what they had to work with. They had some dedicated photographers and they didn't have the benefit of having scouted the trails ahead of time. If one wants a slower hike focused on photography, they would be fine. Their tour offerings and website are wonderful and especially for the photographer.

Hotels are not the focus to be sure

There probably isn't much competition out in the boonies of these parks and that proved to be the case. Where it said "luxury resort" it was clear that "luxury" was in the eye of the beholder. But all hotels were sufficient and likely the best that could be found.

Restaurants closed for the season?

The guides were challenged by the season having come to a close and many restaurants were closed. For instance, our first two nights gave the option of the motel or the sandwich shop. Both were 'dry' with only 3.2% beer and limited food offerings. The 'resort' gave interesting food but we were captive audiences.

Hiking variety for sure

Each hike was absolutely super yet be clear that this company doesn't waste money on scouting ahead of time and only since our guides were experienced did it come off okay. The stated hikes in many cases either didn't exist or were 26 miles more out of dirt and gravel road and illogical to do. While we missed the slot canyon, we found slick rock mountains with much interest instead. While one of the stated hikes wasn't flat and was much longer than expected, it was well worth the hike. All ended well and most of us were very happy. This problem is as much due to the low cost of the hike and if you want scouting then you might need to pay double for a Country Walkers or triple for a Backroads.



Pictures tell a thousand words



One of our first stops was in Torrey at the Capitol Reef Visitors Center where the photo opportunities were abundant with the Cathedral Rock in glowing red and the cottonwood trees in golden autumn colors. .



Rock formations caused by the water flow were continual reasons for a photograph stop as were the layered rock formations. We would often find ourselves standing on an edge looking down into another canyon and off into the never-land.



Though the weather predictions were not good, the gods protected us and we were saved from rain. We were NOT saved from the severe and strong winds a couple days with gusts easily over 25mph being enough to pick us up off our feet. The weather not only protected us but the sky oftentimes gave a photographers dream.

See the pictures of “dinosaur dung” – well, maybe these big black balls had another meaning. We would come upon them in a smaller variety on one of our last days. From Wikipedia: *Moqui marbles: The Navajo Sandstone is also well known among rock-hounds for its hundreds of thousands of iron oxide concretions. They are believed to represent an extension of Hopi Native American traditions regarding ancestor worship (“moqui” translates to “the dead” in the Hopi language). Informally, they are called “Moqui marbles” after the local proposed Moqui native American tribe. Thousands of these concretions weather out of outcrops of the Navajo Sandstone within south-central and southeastern Utah within an area extending from Zion National Park eastward to Arches and Canyonland national parks. They are quite abundant within Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.*



Here is another picture of the dinosaur droppings. We would later see huge numbers of smaller marble sized rocks.

There were many unique and hard to imagine rock formations but my favorite was the slick rock that would go up and down and on forever and after I understood to trust my shoes to stick to it, I loved it and would enjoy a hike along more slick rock. I suppose if it were wet or icy I wouldn't. And in fact we were only lucky about the slickness since we started hiking in snowfall one day and a couple days with temperatures in the mid-20s. In such conditions "slick" would have been far too true.



Arches were not as common of course as they will be on my May 2014 hike to Canyonlands and Arches National Park but we did find some.



It is my wish that I'd focused on taking pictures of the photographers as they were always amusing in their antics and stances. This was looking down into the canyon with the arch. The slick rock shows tiny hikers upon it and this rock brings a smile to my face as it was the first encounter and one I almost didn't continue up into for fear of the 'slick' situation which simply turned out to be not true. The slot canyon has people in it but they are too small to see since the canyon is so huge. It very much reminds me of a dry Narrows from Zion. We were to see quite a few of these slots or narrows.

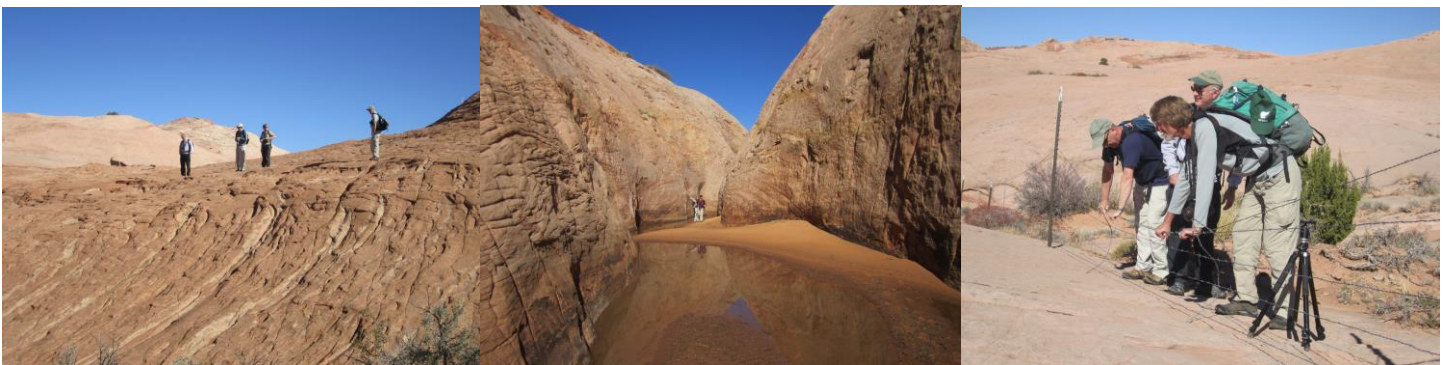




Such variety: through a tree tunnel, along a narrow ledge with a steep drop off, and an overview of reservoir, with red mountains behind, snow- capped mountains behind that, with cloud cover on top and just before the snows came and obliterated our view.



Going down was a challenge and took scooting on our butts. We worried about how we'd get back up. Here I am enjoying the main view of the hike which gave us an overview of the Water-pocket-fold. Then see Linda helping Rebecca get back up out of the canyon.



Patterns in the slick rock, my favorite hiking surface of the trip. See that slot canyon? It was wet so I didn't go in. But I did go over the barbed wire probably intended to keep the cows out, but then on the way back I hiked a bit and went around the wire.



The hotels were colorful at least. This last one was a one-night-stand and the bed featured animals such as my lion. Other rooms had a teddy bear. Then there is my THE END when on Halloween at a restaurant a 'pope' blessed us.

Daily Diary

Salt Lake City on Saturday

Plain old breakfast just like you would expect at a cheap hotel. Cheap it is and you have a lot for the money.

Their trains are brand-new and clean and called UTA TRAX. Even better they are very cheap at five dollars round-trip for \$2.50 reduced fare for seniors.

This is one time the tour company chose a hotel that had transport near as well as restaurants near. This train goes direct into the city.

Once inside the city there are some very unusual things that I simply could not explain. The Mormons being unusually good about taking care of people to include the other religions then it makes no sense that there are so many homeless people on the streets. I asked in at Temple Square about the homeless and was told that there is an organization of people in that those on the street are there every day and that they only get a small part of what they collect.

The other oddity that is very nice but is hard to imagine is how quickly and how well they can build new centers. What they accomplished in less than five years might've taken 15 years in New York City area. All the slums downtown are gone and this most amazingly beautiful and clean shopping area to include Macy's and Nordstrom's are there as though they belong. To mimic history there is a water stream running through and across the street which ties together all of what they call city center or city Creek.

Another unique and surprising thing about Salt Lake City is the huge numbers of babies and pregnant women that you see. Yet very few obese people as most of these people look young and fit.

At Temple Square I was surprised at the numbers of weddings. Yet I was told that they often times have as many as 45 in one day. The numbers used to be closer to 200 until they started having missionaries work longer and a little bit older.

I had a walking tour of the old 1911 grand Hotel later called the Utah hotel and then in the 70s taken over for renovation by the Mormons. Tours are conducted by a Mormon and while I had been

impressed in Jerusalem that proselytizing was not allowed in fact in Salt Lake City it is also not allowed. Nor were they allowed to take my donation as a thank you for the tour.

Sunday - Day 1 of hike from Salt Lake to Torrey

Fortunately we broke the 4 hour drive into two parts with the usual stop to get sandwiches at subway.

The hotel is a best western but outside looks like an old motel. Inside is much better. The little balcony out back is better yet with these dramatic red rock cliffs everywhere you look. The sunset was dramatic with the spikey mountains in silhouette.

The hike was after a nice stop at the Capitol reef visitor's center. There one is surrounded by majestic cliffs. Inside I watched the entire movie and bought three books. One a picture book, another on the geology and then a story book of area reminiscences.

After the hike we were given another photo stop or a choice of going back to the hotel. As it was already 4:15 the stated 5:30 didn't make much sense. It was later moved but I was the only one wanting to return to the hotel.

The leaders apparently haven't done a hike with timberline before and admitted such at lunch over indecision as to where to eat our subways.

Nor did they know that most restaurants close down for the season. We ate at a sandwich or pizza shop on paper plates. And this isn't their fault but it's basically dry. No wine. No wine! But with a BBQ sandwich guess the beer was fine. This is going to be a big profit maker for timberline with this kind of eating.

Monday - In Torrey Utah at the best hike for a long time

This area called Capital Reef is quite amazing. Think about putting a lot of small Grand Canyon's together add to send Chiracahua and adds a bit of fat hoodoos of Bryce Canyon and put it altogether over a huge expansive area and you have Capital Reef. Yesterday short hike was nice and a good surprise but only a 3 mile hike. Today was something over 10 maybe up to 12 miles and just full of surprises and dramatic lookouts and the thought that you just could never make this up in your mind. It ended with a 3 mile hike down a tall narrow canyon that would remind you of Zion's Narrows.

We had breakfast at the hotel at 8 o'clock and it was fine especially considering that there are only two restaurants open in the entire area.

Then to lunch making wasn't very good at all because for some reason our leaders decided to fix lunch outdoors on the picnic table and out the back of the trailer. Maybe they didn't notice that it was 43° and the wind was howling along at sometimes up to 20 mph. Nor did they realize that only one or two people could fix a sandwich at a time in the back of the trailer. There are 12 of us.

In addition to the hike which included a short optional out and back to the Cassidy arch bridge that was quite amazing we stopped at some lookouts where the photographers were rather excited to get out and take a picture. These photographers are a different breed of people and something quite new to me. They stayed up last night to take night shots and they got up earlier to get the sunrise. But note that the sun doesn't rise till 8 o'clock anyway.

I was mostly with Rebecca for the hike but many of the gentleman on the hike are true gentleman and took care of us when we were hesitant about some steep drop offs or tall climbs.

Kathy is the roommate of Rebecca and she today was the only one that had a true fall. We were pretty worried about her but after some icing of which she came back early to do and finding her at dinner it seems like she will be okay.

Rebecca and I got lost in a major way and went at least 20 minutes out of our way. We kept following the footprints in the sand and it clearly was a path. But we had missed a turn off and the guides had not waited there to make sure we got the turn off. We finally softened a bit on the guides when they came back to find us and claimed that another Hiker had said we had already gone on to the correct path. I was never worried enough to use my emergency whistle.

The weather was quite good as far as temperature and that it did not rain but the winds were so dramatic that we many times had to stop and plant our poles and both feet and order not to be knocked over. When you're on a real high ledge that is worrisome.

At dinner time which we took at the hotel (still no alcohol) we could see in the distance a really heavy sandstorm or rainstorm coming. The weather report says that it will be in the 20s and snow will fall. We'll see what happens and if we are lucky it will only happen during the nighttime. I have laid out many layers to wear tomorrow since I really do not have winter clothing.

Tuesday in Torrey on way to Boulder Utah

Eee gads but we made lunch outside in 34 degree weather. My fingers froze and I just couldn't get the peanut butter spreadable. Sunrise memorable. Breakfast was 45 minutes coming despite begging. Yet it was plenty and good.

The trail planned for the day was long time closed and still closed. We did two shorter hikes. Golden throne was only about 4 miles but a rocky 1100' elevation with a super lookout.

Next was Capitol gorge which was a flat wash bed in a narrow canyon full of history. Petroglyphs, a register of travelers on the rock face plus a climb up to tanks which I didn't do since it was a scramble.

I found it very rude when the late slow person insisted on doing it all. The same one who complains that one leader makes hikers turn around too quickly. The same one had to tell us that it was the best ever that we missed.

Then a return to hotel to pick up trailer before heading to a most interesting one hour drive to our next two nights in boulder Utah.

The pass was near 10,000 feet and snow covered. The first overlook was dramatic with snow covered mountains behind the red rock canyons. Snow flurries obscured the next two overlooks.

The resort used the term loosely and reminds us that luxury is in the eye of a beholder. It was okay. The restaurant was a big hit and not only because we finally had alcohol. The menu was unexpectedly good and that's particularly good since it's our sole food provider for our two night stay.

I worried about the weather with mid 20s and maybe precip expected. Fortunately the wind died down. It was laundry night.

Wednesday in Boulder Utah

The drive here yesterday was dramatic. The location here is not (dramatic) despite what the website says.

But all you have to do is start the drive up the burrs trail and you can hardly believe your eyes it is so dramatically elegantly beautiful. Around every corner is a change and you go between Escalante grand staircase park and back into capitol reef Park. The drive to our trailhead was about one hour over Windy but beautiful roads and then onto a road that was gravel and pretty rough going. But nobody complained. Well except maybe those in the backseat of the van.

This trail was difficult at the start and many of us thought it was impossible to skinny down the rock face to start the trail. Then it became relatively flat and a lot of sand and in between some big boulders that you had to work your footing across.

After 4 miles that might have taken us an hour and a half to two hours there was a junction that required some scrambling up a rock face. Fortunately some of the very helpful men who were quite fit had come back and or stayed there to help us up that rock. And it did not get any easier and we had about 1 mile of at least 1000 foot elevation to go up. Everybody thought it was worth it despite the scrambling and also deep and hilly sand.

At the top we found a picnic area but only after a few gasps of looking across at the grand staircase and the Mile long water-pocket-fold.

It should not have surprised us that our tour guides had not done this trail. It is a common situation with Timberline; we get a good bargain but in the interim we don't have trail scouting carefully done before we start. That has had some disastrous situations resulting even in the calling of 911. Which story has been told by many but fortunately was not on one of my hikes. But typically it works out fine and in fact one pair of guides do scouting on their own time. In this case our guides were very conscientious and well fit and did the best with what they had. In particular Gordon came back to help us quite a few times.

Oh I forgot to mention that at least we got to fix our breakfast in the common area room today instead of outside in the bitter cold which was absolutely freezing. But the peanut butter was still hard to spread.

We returned just in time for our dinner reservations and while some people went and cleaned up in 10 minutes time that would never be possible for me. So Rebecca and I went directly to the restaurant before anyone else started and ordered and pretty soon the rest of them came along. This is much preferable to me if it's at all possible because then I can have an earlier evening in. I don't like getting cleaned up the second time of the day.

Dinner was again excellent and tonight I had their unusual chicken enchilada after a salad. Last night I had a lamb mixture stuffed in a bell pepper after having a warm cabbage salad with goat cheese and pine nuts. This restaurant has been a hit and after what we have the first two nights is this no wonder? But probably it would have been good anyway. Tonight we had a party going on out our window with the staff in Halloween costumes and cutting pumpkins.

So I end the day having finished my laundry and talked to Tom and realizing how lucky I am to have had an absolutely amazing hike once again.

Thursday on our way to Escalante

Breakfast was a little bit earlier since the single chef had trouble accommodating us the day before. This day was no different though and it took 45 minutes before anything appeared to include coffee. Thank heavens I eat in my room when I get up. We packed up the trailer and left though not all that bright and early. It was a very brisk morning still.

The drive from Boulder to Escalante was said to be beautiful and it was no disappointment. It probably took near to an hour and was on a very slow and Windy road. The gravel road put a lot of fine red sand into the trailer and covered our luggage.

The itinerary shows that we would be going to a slot canyon called peekaboo. But it was out this gravel road about 26 miles and apparently the road was even closed. So Gordon had found another slot canyon for us to hike to and it was considerably closer but he had not been there before.

The hike was absolutely wonderful for me in that in the effort to find the slot canyon some of us climbed up a number of slick rock Hills. That effort was more strenuous than what we had done before and much more enjoyable for me.

I think I heard Gordon telling some of the others that every time he looked behind him there was Diana. And that was on a number of hills while looking over the edge searching the slot canyons.

My last hike in Italy gave me a very kind compliment also. The Tour guide offered an optional strenuous hike to a fellow and me one afternoon. Michael was quite a bit younger. I'm not sure but what he was trying to outpace me. He said that he was working very hard going up those hills but that every time he looked behind there I was. At the end of the hike he gave me what I felt was a very good complement. He said " you're one tough old broad." Wow!

Anyway, we found two slot canyons but one was full of water and the other was full of brush and water. I also got to carry someone else's pack for a little while despite the boys arguing with me. I explained that I pay to lift weights.

All the terrain of the day was considerably different than anything else we saw. This was in Escalante.

After our hike about 30 minutes away was our home for the night in Escalante. It seems to be quite a bit bigger than Boulder. The boulder population has varied over time from 92 people up to 201 people.

We checked into a very eclectic bed and breakfast of about 10 rooms maximum. We walked down the street to a diner/restaurant where everyone was in costume ready to have a Halloween party. The food was reasonably good and best of all they had a real liquor license. So I ordered a full bottle of Merlot and shared it around. Our next stop after dinner was a small outfitter shop where I bought a small bottle of brandy so I am very happy and content.

Once in this bed and breakfast I telephoned to Tom using my cell phone. There was no phone in the room. Our communications have been even more difficult than when we were in Australia and Hong Kong. Cell service is sometimes totally out and even the land line in Boulder was worse than most cell signals. Wi-Fi and face time have been next to impossible with the local Wi-Fi being so very slow.

I think I understand why the different hotels but I find it a big waste of time to have a hotel for just one night. And despite the bargain I can't understand any company taking you on a hike that they have never been on before. I think I am done with a bargain company who doesn't pre-check their hikes. Having said all that the problems with our hikes all turned out pretty much okay. We were lucky. Much due to experienced guides.

Since we have to start earlier than usual I think it's time to quit and drink my brandy and retire. Tomorrow is our last hiking day and we drive a very long drive back to Salt Lake City.

Friday - last hiking day.

The hike on the itinerary turned out to be correct. Amazing. The guides said that it was 2 miles versus 3 1/2 one way and that it was flat. Wrong on both counts. It was an enjoyable hike out to a huge waterfall along what is called Calf's Creek. The parks being out season meant the restrooms were closed but of course there are plenty of bushes. Too bad the bushes are so low. There were trout in the very clear stream bed and plenty of big red rocks though some of us admitted to being rocked out.

It was a 4 to 5 Hour Drive back to Salt Lake City. We did stop at an interesting little barbecue type shop where I had a bison-elk burger and too many fries. We stopped at the airport for Kathy since we were a little bit late and it was nearing 7 PM and her flight time. Then we stopped on the other side of the airport at a la Quinta inn for Linda and Ron.

It was closer to 8 PM by the time I got calmed down and checked in with Tom. It was midnight before I got through my weeks' worth of emails and bits of business.

The shooting at LAX airport probably caused longer lines at the Salt Lake City airport. I would go through the lines at about 6:15 AM and unfortunately didn't find the TSA pre-check line in time.

Itinerary

Fri Oct 25

4:19pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#485
6:39pm Arrive Denver DEN for plane change

7:10pm Depart Denver DEN via UA#5483
8:40pm Arrive Salt Lake City

Shuttle service from airport provided by Comfort Suites

Host Hotel Comfort Suites SLC Airport – 2 nights reconfirmed 10/19/13; guaranteed late arrival
171 N 2100 W, Salt Lake City, UT 84116 Tele 801 715 8688
Wi Fi yes and free; Coffee service in room yes; Refrigerator in room yes;
2 restaurants within walking area; public light rail close by taking direct into town

Sat Oct 26

Touring Salt Lake City

Sun Oct 27 – Day 1

8:00am Pick up at Comfort Suites Airport in Salt Lake City for transport to Capitol Reef Resort

Overview :

Day 1	Group assembles late afternoon at Capitol Reef Resort in Torrey; visit the Capitol Reef National Park Visitors Center. Short hike to Fremont River Overlook.	3 miles
Day 2	Cohab Canyon Trail: Cassidy Arch, Grand Wash; elevation gain - 2,000' (approx.)	12 miles
Day 3	Rim Overlook Trail: Hickman Bridge view; Navaho Knobs: views of the Fremont River, Fruita orchards, Waterpocket Fold, La Sal and Henry Mountains; elevation gain - 1,040'	9.5 miles
Day 4	Lower Muley Twist Canyon, The Post Overlook and the Waterpocket Fold; elevation gain -1,000'(approx)	10 miles
Day 5	Dry Fork of Coyote Creek: Spooky and Peekaboo Slots elevation gain - 700'	6 miles
Day 6	Lower Calf Creek Falls; elevation gain - 250'; van shuttle return to Salt Lake City.	6.5 miles

Total Hiking Mileage - 47 miles

Summary: This coming year we are lucky to be able to offer our first “photo hiking tour”. Cathy and Gordon Illg have been guides for Timberline for many years. They run nature photography tours under the name Adventure Photography. Their photographs can be seen in nearly every major nature publication, including the covers of Backpacker, National Geographic Young Explorer and National Wildlife. Several of their images also decorate the tails of Frontier Airlines’ jets.

The vast expanse of the Grand Staircase/Escalante National Monument is daunting, to say the least and the inclusion of Capitol Reef National Park with its geographical proximity and geological affinity with the Grand Staircase, creates hiking and photography options without limits. The 1996 creation of Grand Staircase/Escalante National Monument, has provided a partial cloak of protection (falling well short of wilderness designation protection) over some of our nation’s most precious remaining wild-lands in an area that has been a fierce battleground between developers and environmentalists.

You do not need to be a photographer to enjoy this trip and if you are, you will love the guidance that Gordon and Cathy offer. A nice camera, point and shoot or just your iPhone will all work on this trip . Tripods are recommended, especially for some evening work and taking photos of stars. There will be one optional evening presentation. The best landscape shots will be focused on a few areas of each hike, although you are welcome to photograph along the way.

Sun Oct 27 – Day 1

Our hiking tour assembles in Torrey, UT, at the western entrance to Capitol Reef, and we'll provide van shuttle transportation from Salt Lake City early morning of Day 1. We'll arrive at the Capitol Reef Resort early enough to visit the Visitors Center within the park and stretch our legs with a short hike along the Fremont River Trail (overlook) that rises above the river for an outstanding view of the Fruita orchards and several of the park's prominent formations.

Hotel: Capitol Reef Resort – 1st of 2 nights
2600 E. Hwy 24, Torrey, UT 84775 Tele 435 425 3761
<http://bestwesternutah.com/hotels/best-western-capitol-reef-resort>
Wi Fi free; Coffee service in room; Refrigerator requested and possible upgrade at my expense if a larger room becomes available

From web: A Best Western hotel. From stunning sightseeing and gorgeous mountain views to a relaxing atmosphere, this Torrey, UT hotel is sure to offer just what you're looking for. Starting at check-in, you'll love the cozy, clean and sophisticated rooms that offer abundant amenities, including cable satellite television with Starz® and Encore®, a coffeemaker, free high-speed Internet access and much more. Make your stay extra special by booking a Garden Suite, a mini-suite or a room with a balcony or Red Rock Cliff views. With Chimney Rock Restaurant located on the premises, a delicious meal is never far away. Just one mile from Capitol Reef National Park, you can explore almost 100 miles of natural wonders, including cliffs, canyons, domes and natural bridges. From Hickman's Bridge and Fishlake National Forest to Anasazi State Park and the Prehistoric Petroglyph, there are many other stunning sights to see and they're all within about an hour of this Torrey hotel. Additionally, enjoy easy access to all the area's parks, where you can delight in hiking, backpacking, canyoneering and photo tours. Love outdoor adventure? Our property puts you in the perfect location, as we're situated in the Grand Circle of National Parks - plan a day trip to the Grand Staircase, Bryce Canyon National Park, Canyonlands National Park or Zion National Park.

Following our first of two overnights at the Capitol Reef Resort, we'll hike to Cohab Canyon, climbing initially to a grand overlook of the Fremont River Canyon and then descending into the narrows of Cohab with its soaring sandstone walls. We'll continue on to Cassidy Arch and through the Grand Wash.

Mon Oct 28 – Day 2

Cohob Canyon Trail: Cassidy Arch, Grand Wash; elevation gain approx. 2,000' and 12 miles

Hotel Capitol Reef Resort – 2nd night

Tue Oct 29 – Day 3

The Rim Overlook Trail is our focus for Day 3. We'll hike from the Fremont River, initially to Hickman Natural Bridge and then well beyond to Navajo Knobs, some 2,000 feet above the valley floor. of the Fremont River, Fruita orchards, Waterpocket Fold, La Sal and Henry Mountains. View The views from the Knobs, in a word, are incredible. Elevation gain 1,040' and 9.5 miles.

We'll van shuttle from Capitol Reef late in the afternoon to Boulder and spend the next two evenings at the Boulder Mountain Lodge.

Hotel Boulder Mountain Lodge – 1st of 2 nights
P.O. Box 1397, 20 N. Highway 12 Boulder, UT 84761 Tele 435 335 7460

<http://www.boulder-utah.com>

Wi Fi free; Coffee service in room; Refrigerator in room; problem with no window so am on wait list for any other room

From web: *Boulder Mountain Lodge is an oasis of calm, comfort, and luxury in the middle of Utah's scenic red rock canyon country and mountain forests. It is a perfect location for a family vacation, meeting, reunion, or romantic getaway. The lodge is the ideal home base for exploring Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Burr Trail, Dixie National Forest, Capitol Reef National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Anasazi State Park, and the many other national and state parks in the area. Our mission at Boulder Mountain Lodge is to introduce guests to the unparalleled natural wonders of Boulder-Escalante region, while providing a lodging experience as memorable as the surrounding landscape. (See panorama pictures on website.) Our beautiful rooms have decks or patios with fabulous views, and a wide variety of amenities including robes, satellite television, DVD players, coffee and tea service, refrigerators, and an assortment of Aveda personal products to make you feel truly pampered. Beds are covered with custom tapestry duvets. Rooms are elegantly furnished in a Western style with craftsman-quality wooden furniture. The lodge architecture is a charming Western eclectic-style: red stucco, rose-colored sandstone blocks, massive timbers, and dramatically pitched rusted metal roofs. The lodge itself is an intimate arrangement of buildings set around a eleven acre bird sanctuary. In the main building's large two story common room, you can relax, read, plan adventures, or chat before a cozy sandstone fireplace. An outdoor hot tub, volleyball, croquet, an outdoor stone fire pit, games, books, and DVD's are available for guests as well.*

Wed Oct 30 – Day 4

We'll hike Lower Muley Twist Canyon, The Post Overlook and the Waterpocket Fold. Climb from the canyon to the crest of the Fold with its striking views of the Fold and the high peaks of the Henry Mountains to the east. 1,000' elevation and 10 miles

Hotel Boulder Mountain Lodge – 2nd of 2 nights

Thu Oct 31 – Day 5

On Day 5, we'll travel west into the Escalante to experience the remarkable slot canyon hiking for which this region is famous. We'll spend much of the day in the Dry Fork of Coyote Gulch, scrambling, and we do mean scrambling, through slots aptly named "Spooky" and "Peekaboo". We'll spend our final overnight in Escalante.

Hotel: Escalante Grand Staircase B&B Inn – 1 night
280 West Main Street, Escalante, UT 84726 Tele 435 826 4890 (not 4653)
<http://www.escalantebnb.com>
Wi Fi yes; free? NO coffee service or refrigerator in room

From web: *People come from all over the earth to marvel at the Canyons of the Escalante. From the beauty of Lower Calf Creek Falls to the majesty of Coyote Gulch, the Escalante Canyons of southern Utah have become the state's latest and greatest tourist attractions. Sitting in the heart of Utah's National Park country is the city of Escalante, Utah -- gateway to Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Capitol Reef National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. Escalante's Grand Staircase B&B Inn has been accommodating guests since 1998. As our guest, you will be well-rested and well-fed for your national park adventures. We have a history of hospitality -- let us be your home away from home during your stay in Escalante. Quote: "In Escalante, the winsome Escalante's Grand Staircase B&B/Inn is the only lodging with any charm." -National Geographic Adventure, 2001*

These eight suites have 350 to 450 luxurious square feet of complete comfort. Breakfast is served with your stay. All of our new suites have carpeted living areas, tiled baths, vaulted ceilings with fans, Aspen furniture, table with two chairs, In-room breakfast service with advance notification, pedestal sinks, coffee tables, DirecTV, and high speed wireless internet.

Fri Nov 1 – Day 6

For the last day we'll hike to beautiful Calf Creek Falls prior to our return to Salt Lake.

7:00pm Anticipate arrival back at airport and/or hotel

Sat Nov 2

7:45am Depart Salt Lake City SLC on UA#6088

9:13am Arrive Denver DEN for plane change

10:19am Depart Denver DEN on UA#5594

12:04pm Arrive El Paso ELP

Arranged to meet Seth at Hertz counter after picking up checked baggage. Alternate is shuttle to Las Cruces

Tue Nov 5 – with Tom

Drive from Las Cruces to El Paso with Tom who has rental car

2:35pm Depart El Paso on UA#4585

5:55pm Arrive Houston Bush IAH for plane change

6:51pm Depart Houston Bush IAH on UA#1017

11:16pm Arrive Newark EWR

Car ordered

<http://www.capitolreef.org/grand-staircase.html>

Grand Staircase - Escalante National Monument

Dramatic Terrain - Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM) covers a vast 1.9 million acres of canyons, cliffs and rugged backcountry, nearly double the combined land of Utah's five national parks. Managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the monument is bordered by Bryce Canyon to the northwest, Glen Canyon National Recreation area to the east, and Capitol Reef National Park to the northeast. The recreation possibilities within the monument boundaries are limitless, from camping, hiking, biking, bird watching and scenic drives to overnight backcountry treks (permits required by the BLM), extreme canyoneering, off-roading and more. Two major rivers run through the monument's boundaries, the Paria and the Escalante. The topography varies from verdant to desert, and is home to wildlife that is as varied as the landscape. The area is also so rich in dinosaur fossils that some paleontologists say the monument holds the highest concentrations of fossils in the world. GSENM is a photographer's paradise.

Remote Locations - Most of the monument landscape is remote and untamed, the result of billions of years of changing landscape and climate. The uplift of the Colorado Plateau exposed a four billion-year geologic timeline, revealing layers of history from the Chocolate Cliffs in the south to the younger Pink Cliffs at the north. The monument has three geographically-distinct regions: the Grand Staircase, the Kaiparowits Plateau, and the Escalante Canyons.