Welcome to Cedar Mesa

Cedar Mesa is one of the most significant cultural landscapes in the United States, with thousands of archaeological sites and important areas of cultural significance. Abundant rock art, ancient cliff dwellings, standing structures and countless artifacts provide an extraordinary archaeological and cultural record, all surrounded by a dramatic backdrop of deep sandstone canyons carving through desert mesas. Rare perennial springs and streams sustain vigorous riparian ecosystems, while rugged desert animals thrive across the arid mesa tops. The area is sacred to many Native American tribes today, who use the lands for ceremonies, collecting medicinal and edible plants and visiting ancestral homelands.

Visit With Respect

When traveling around Cedar Mesa, you will likely encounter evidence of past human activity. Ancestral Pueblosans inhabited the canyons and mesa tops between 700 and 2500 years ago. Many of their dwellings, farming areas and rock art sites remain in excellent condition. Stone and bone tools, pottery pieces and other artifacts give us hints into the lifestyle of these people. Treat everything you find with care and respect. Please leave all artifacts where you find them and don’t touch walls or rock writing since these remnants of past cultures may be more fragile than they appear.

The canyons and mesas of the area are important to many modern day tribes, including the Hopi, Navajo, Ute and Zuni, among others. This area has been home to many and is a rich source of medicinal and ceremonial plants, firewood and game today. It is our shared responsibility to protect this special place. You will find tips for visiting with respect in the orange boxes throughout this guide.

Bears Ears National Monument

The Bears Ears National Monument (BENM) was established by Presidential Proclamation 9558 on December 28, 2016. On December 4, 2017, Presidential Proclamation 9681 modified the boundaries of the BENM. The revised BENM boundary includes two separate units that are reserved for the proper care and management of the objects of historic and scientific interest within their boundaries. The eastern portion of Cedar Mesa, including the Comb Wash Road, Comb Ridge and the Butler Wash Road, is within the Bears Ears National Monument. As in the rest of Cedar Mesa, most of this area is largely undeveloped, with few directional signs or amenities. Please use caution when traveling here.
State Route 261, four miles south of State Route 95. September 1st through October 31st. The Station is located on interpretive and scientific programs. For Land Management in its educational, History Association (CNHA), a nonprofit for "Cedar Mesa Permits". For more information, follow us on Twitter. Visit the Cedar Mesa website. Open Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 12 noon. Blm_ut_mt_cedarmesa@blm.gov. Monticello Field Office 365 North Main, PO Box 7 Monticello, UT 84535 Cedar Mesa Permit Desk Open Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 12 noon phone: (435) 587-1510 email: blm_ut_mtcedarmesa@blm.gov. U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management. Monticello Area Information at a Glance Cedar Mesa offers the adventurous visitor a chance to test practiced outdoor recreation skills and leave No Trace techniques in a rare primitive setting. Except for a few sites along the State Route 95 corridor near the Kane Gulch Ranger Station, the bullet and trailheads, you will not find vault toilets or picnic tables. There is limited seasonal drinking water available during the summer months at the station, but no trash receptacles. Car camping on the mesa top is primitive and is often accessed along roads requiring high clearance vehicles. Hiking is on slickrock canyon ledges and along wash bottoms and primitive foot paths. There are no constructed trails or directional signs along the hiking routes. Leave No Trace techniques may sometimes seem inconvenient, but are a necessary part of protecting the Cedar Mesa environment. If these techniques are not already part of your camping practices, consider beginning with a less physically demanding hike that will allow you to practice these techniques. Cedar Mesa can be a very difficult place for a first time hiker or backpacker. Remember, your party is only as strong as its weakest member. Beginners may want to consider car camping on the mesa top and attempting a few shorter day hikes (pg. 1) to become familiar with the area, or hiring a local professional guide to see you safely through your trip. You may also want to try a hike at Natural Bridges or Hovenweep National Monuments, where you will also find visitor centers, toilets, campgrounds and constructed trails accessing beautiful canyons with ancient sites. Cedar Mesa Plateau Map #706. The Ranger Station provides information on a seasonal basis are sold inside the Station. The 7 Leave No Trace Principles are shown on page 3. Water conditions vary depending on the canyon and the time of year. During any time of year, water conditions can change. Always check with the Kane Gulch Ranger Station to check conditions before you hike. Most springs are dry during the summer months. You may need to pack in all your drinking water. Recommended minimums are one gallon per person per day. During and after heavy rains, springs can be covered by silt-saturated flood water. The most reliable seasonal springs in Grand Gulch are Toddi Spring, Sheiks Spring and Jailhouse Spring. Use care to avoid polluting water sources. Where permitted, dogs and pack stock must be closely monitored to prevent trampling and defecating in or near water sources. Kane Gulch Ranger Station The Ranger Station is operated by the Bureau of Land Management. Monticello Field Office from March 1st through June 15th and September 1st through October 31st. The Station is located on State Route 261, four miles south of State Route 95. The Ranger Station provides information on a seasonal basis about temperatures, weather forecasts, current road conditions and unusual or noteworthy trail conditions. Bulletin boards at the station and near trailheads describe permit information, low impact hiking and camping information and interpretation of cultural sites. All overnight and Moon House hikers must obtain a permit at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station. Hiking permits may be made in advance on the Recreation.gov website, but the permit must be picked up at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station between 8 a.m. and noon on the day of the trip. Canyonlands National History Association operates a small store selling limited educational and safety items at the Ranger Station. USGS 7.5’ topographic maps and the Trails Illustrated Grand Gulch Cedar Mesa Plateau Map #706 are sold inside the Station. There may be limited water available at the Ranger Station, during business hours only. The closest reliable water is 10 miles north at Natural Bridges National Monument. Trails The trails in the canyons and on the mesa tops are maintained mostly by hikers walking the same route repeatedly, thus allowing a barren path to develop. It is best to stay on the most impacted roads (pg. 5) in the Grand Gulch. No hiking on slickrock or wash bottoms to avoid creating unnecessary “social trails”. Where the trail crosses slickrock, there are often cairns (small rock monuments) to point the way. Please do not add or remove trail cairns. Many routes into the canyons are not marked. It is imperative that you obtain and carry a good quality map and be skilled in orienteering and map and compass reading. GPS units are not always reliable between buttes. Maps weigh less, do not need batteries and will not break when dropped! Fires can cause the trail to rove, vegetation to flatten and lie across the trail for miles and spread much debris across the canyon floor, making hiking tedious. There are usually alternate routes in case of heavy burn. Even if a flash flood comes through the canyons, trails and cairns can be wiped out by one good storm. Volunteer trail crews help to rebuild badly damaged sections of the trail, but there is often a lag time between flash flood season and trail work. Encountering a flash flood is a serious concern while hiking, know the weather forecast before going in the canyons. The dark crumbly looking soils next to the trails are actually living “biological soil crusts”. They are made up of lichens, mosses, green algae, micro fungi and cyanobacteria. These organisms bind the soil together; making it resistant to water and wind erosion. Do not walk on these crusts as you can destroy them! Stay on the trail or try to walk only in washes or on rock when possible. Using Ropes to Access Sites is Prohibited The use of ropes and other climbing aids is not allowed for access to cultural sites or archaeological resources as defined in the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA). Using a safety rope as an aid along a hiking route is permissible. Motorized Vehicles and Bicycles Motorized vehicles and bicycle travel is limited to designated roads. Bicycles are not allowed on hiking trails. All vehicles used on the mesa top as a base for day hiking or overnight hiking in the canyons must have a hiking permit displayed on the vehicle dash or bike handle bars. Permits with more than one vehicle can obtain a secondary vehicle permit from the Kane Gulch Ranger Station. Personal Sanitation Personal sanitation and disposal of human waste is not permitted within 200 feet of a water source, trail, or campground. Human waste must be packed out or deposited in a "cat hole" (six inches deep) and covered with soil. Used toilet paper must be carried out. Do not burn toilet paper. Washing, bathing, or swimming is not permitted in or near water sources such as springs, streams and pot holes. Pack it In Pack it Out All trash, including toilet paper must be carried out. Do not burn toilet paper or trash. All liquids must be strained before disposal and then discarded at least 200 feet from water sources, campsites, and hiking trails. Use only biodegradable soap. Clean up campsites and day use areas. Observe any temporary structures such as rock tables or chairs and tie up posts. Archaeological Sites Cedar Mesa and the adjacent canyons were once home to a remarkable prehistoric people. But this fascinating record of the past is threatened. The unintentional damage caused by visitors is slowly destroying the remnants of the ancient culture. These resources are nonrenewable. Before entering an archaeological site, take a few moments to plan your "exploration strategy" to ensure that your visit results in a minimum impact. Remove backpacks and make sure sharp hiking pole tips are covered. A mitten is a trash pile left by the original occupants of the site. It is usually recognized by darkened soil and perhaps a slightly raised surface near water sources such as springs, streams and pot holes. This can destroy valuable archaeological information and causes erosion which may undermine the walls of structures above it. If a trail has been built across a site, stay on it. Please respect all cultural barriers and any area marked as closed to entry. Climbing on rocks and walls can destroy in a moment what has lasted for hundreds of years. Do not lean on or climb on walls or rocks or enter any rooms. Use extra care around plastered walls. Bump with a backpack can easily break or chip the plaster. When you see "thousands" of potsherds or other artifacts, leave them where they are. If each visitor took just one, there would soon be none left. Putting them into piles takes them out of context. The exposure of them to weather and destroys clues needed by professional archaeologists gathering information about the site. Please do not reuse prehistoric grinding surfaces. Enjoy rock art by viewing, sketching and photographing it. Never chalk, trace, or otherwise touch rock art. Any kind of direct contact causes these ancient figures to disintegrate. Do not add your name or any other modern day rock art. This graffiti is vandalism and is punishable by law. Archaeological and historical sites are protected by the Antiquities Act of 1906 and ARPA. It is illegal to damage or disturb any site or to remove anything from the site. If you discover any illegal activity please notify the Bureau of Land Management or the San Juan County Sheriff Office. No wood or charcoal fires are allowed in any of the Cedar Mesa canyons. Emergencies Knowledge of basic first aid should be a minimum for any hiking party. In case of emergencies, emergency radio communication and limited aid may be obtained by contacting the ranger at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station when the station is open. Cell phones usually do not work in the canyon or many locations on the mesa tops. Extended search and rescue is provided by the San Juan County Volunteer Search and Rescue team through the San Juan County Sheriff’s Office. Response time for the Search and Rescue team can be as much as 24 hours and will usually be conducted in daylight hours only. The rescued party will be held financially responsible for any helicopter flights. Call 911 or contact the San Juan County Sheriff at (435) 587-2237. Page 2 Page 3
The Archaeology

Although scant evidence exists, the earliest inhabitants on Cedar Mesa are attributed to the PaleoIndian period (about 11500 to 8000 BC). During a cooler and wetter period to about 11500 to 8000 BC, Cedar Mesa’s cultural landscapes were widespread. Remains of early Ohl and Navajo sites are present in Cedar Mesa. These people used a number of materials and techniques in their daily lives, including the use of obsidian and stones for tools and weapons.

Animals

Many animal species that the ancient people used for food and clothing can still be seen on Cedar Mesa. The prehistoric Puebloans used nets or snares to catch cottontail rabbits, which added protein to their diet and warmth to their blankets and robes. Infants were often wrapped in rabbit fur blankets for burial. Rock squirrels were probably eaten and their skins used for small items such as medicine bags.

Plants

The prehistoric peoples of Cedar Mesa used a number of the native plants for food, medicine, clothing, housing, and ornamentation. Indian ricegrass and dropseed were probably the most important of the native grasses. These could be harvested in early summer and ground into meal for bread. Fruits of the prickly pear cactus were peeled and eaten, the peeled and roasted pads were an important food source in times of hardship. The native groups also used four-wing saltbush, blackbrush, Mormon tea, juniper, wild turnips, potatoes, rose hips, and sunflower seeds.

The Fruits of the Land

Early during this period to aid in grinding seeds and nuts, a spear and collecting plants and seeds. The mano and metate appeared to the PaleoIndian period (about 11500 to 8000 BC). During a cooler and wetter period to about 11500 to 8000 BC, Cedar Mesa’s cultural landscapes were widespread. Remains of early Ohl and Navajo sites are present in Cedar Mesa. These people used a number of materials and techniques in their daily lives, including the use of obsidian and stones for tools and weapons.

The historic sites of these early visitors, written with bullet lead and charcoal, may be seen in several places in Grand Gulch. Present day visitors are reminded these names written in the stone hold a great deal of historical value. Please do not touch or deface them. Do not add your own signature or otherwise add modern impacts to historic sites in the Cedar Mesa area.

The prehistoric Puebloans also valued turkey. The feathers were often woven into blankets. It is believed that the turkeys were semi-domesticated animals. In addition to these terrestrial animals, you may also observe a large variety of birds in the area including owls, wrens, vireos, flycatchers, swallows, hawks and eagles.

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Permits and Fees

Cedar Mesa Fees and Reservation System

There are fees for both day and overnight use of Cedar Mesa canyons, including Butler Wash. Fees stay at Cedar Mesa to enhance visitor experience. There are no fees for mesa top use or development sites such as the Mule Canyon Interpretive Site or Butler Wash Interpretive Trail.

Day Use Permits

Day-use permits and seven-day passes for day use can be obtained at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station (when open) or at fee tubes placed at the following trailhead/canyon access points:

- Kane Gulch
- Todie Canyon
- Bullet Canyon
- Snow Flat Road
- Snow Mule
- Collins Canyon
- Fish/Owl Canyons

Walk-in permits also can be obtained from the Kane Gulch Ranger Station. (435) 587-1510. Day-use permits are valid for one day use or overnight permits. Fees stay at Cedar Mesa to enhance visitor experience. Fees stay at Cedar Mesa to enhance visitor experience.

Advanced Reservations

Backcountry overnight and Moon House day use reservations may be obtained on the Recreation.gov website by searching for “Cedar Mesa Permits”. Permits can be reserved 90 days prior to and no later than 5 days before your trip start date. For further information, call the Cedar Mesa Permit line at (435) 587-1510.

- Group size is limited to 12 people for day and overnight use.
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- Commercial and organized groups must obtain an advance reservation through the Monticello Field Office. Applications must be received by December 1st for trips the following spring, or June 1st for fall trips.

Walk-In Permits

Walk-in permits for backcountry overnight and Moon House day use can be obtained at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station on the day of the trip on a first-come, first-served basis. No walk-in permits will be issued in advance of the trip start date. Payments can be made with credit card, check, or cash. If permits for your desired entry location are sold out, you have the option of choosing another trailhead or canyon.

Annual Passes for Day Use

Annual day use hangtags are available at the Monticello Field Office or Kane Gulch Ranger Station. Hangtags must be hung from the rear-view mirror of the vehicle and covers the day for the occupants of that vehicle. These permits are valid for one year from the date of purchase. They are not valid for backcountry overnight use.

Permits and Fees (cont.)

Changes to the Permit System

The following changes to the Permit and Fee System will be implemented starting in January 2020:

- Day use fees will increase to $5/person/day or $10/person/week.
- Annual passes for day use will be $40 and will be valid for one year from date of purchase (rather than expiring at the end of the calendar year).
- Backcountry overnight fees will increase to $15/person/trip/any trip.
- Butler Wash will be included in the permit and fee system. Daily and annual passes purchased at any location for Cedar Mesa apply.

McLoyd Canyon/Moon House RMZ Permits

Moon House Recreation Management Zone (RMZ) Requires a Special Permit!

Public access is limited to 20 people per day. Entry permits for the McLoyd Canyon/Moon House RMZ are available only at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station during the high-use season. During the off season, permits are available at trailhead fee tubes. Advanced reservations for private groups are available through the Monticello Field Office Permit Desk. All permits must be picked up at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station the morning of the hike. Day Use Only.

Pets are prohibited in the RMZ.

Camping

In-Canyon Camping

For overnight use in Grand Gulch, Slickhorn Canyon, Point Lookout, Fish Canyon, Owl Canyon, North Fork Mule Canyon, South Fork Mule Canyon, Road Canyon, Lime Canyon and their tributaries, you must obtain a backcountry permit. See page 6 for information.

There are no assigned campsites in the canyon systems of Cedar Mesa, or on the mesa tops at this time. Some in-canyon campsites are easily seen from the trail; others are hidden, with side trails leading to them. Slickrock camps are a good option. Camping is not allowed in any alcove, overhang, or archaeological site. Camp in well used campsites only. No new camps may be made.

There is no swimming or bathing is allowed in the pools, streams or potholes.

Slickrock and non-vegetated ground, where there is no living biological soil crusts, are good choices. Camp at least 200 feet from water sources to allow wildlife to visit these areas.

Mesa Top Camping

Cedar Mesa car camping, combined with day hikes, is an enjoyable way to experience the area. There are numerous places on the mesa tops, as well as along dirt roads in Butler Wash, Comb Wash and Arch Canyon to camp. No permits are required for car camping.

Motorized vehicles and bicycles must stay on designated roads. Visiting the area on foot or using an established campsite and avoid impacting pristine, undisturbed areas.

Fires are not allowed in any of the Cedar Mesa Canyons.

Pets

Pets are prohibited in the following canyons and their tributaries:

- Grand Gulch (including but not limited to Kane, Bullion, Collins, Government, Step and Pines)
- Slickhorn Canyon
- Point Lookout Canyon
- McLoyd Canyon/Moon House Recreation Management Zone

Camping is allowed only in well-established campsites. No new campsites may be created. On the mesa tops, fires are permitted only in established campsites and campgrounds. Fires should be contained in a metal fire pan. All ash and charcoal must be carried out, not buried or dumped in the campsite. Leave no trace camping techniques apply here also (see page 2). All cans, trash, organic garbage, (orange peels, egg shells, coffee grounds etc.) and burnable garbage, including toilet paper, must be carried out. Use only biodegradable soap and dispose of liquids at least 200 feet away from camps, trails and water sources.
Suggested Day Hikes in Bears Ears National Monument

Bears Ears National Monument offers several day hiking opportunities, many of which are located on or near the State Route 95 portion of the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway. Most of the paleontological, archaeological, historic and scenic day hikes listed here have no fee, but please check the rules and regulations for the area you plan to visit.

Butler Wash Interpretive Site
This hike is accessed directly off State Route 95. It is signed and the parking area is on the north side of the highway. The parking area is paved and pit toilet facilities are available.

The hiking trail winds its way across some small washes and over slickrock before reaching an overlook of a cliff dwelling. ½ mile across the canyon. Round trip hiking distance is one mile and travel time is approximately an hour. It is an easy to moderate hike. Please recycle interpretive brochures at the trailhead.

Butler Wash Dinosaur Tracksite
This site is located on route B262, approximately ½ mile east of the intersection with SR 95. An interpretive sign and short trail lead to a set of Megalosaurus tracks set down, 160 million years ago.

Arch Canyon
Arch Canyon is a 12 mile long box canyon. The canyon has beautiful red rock walls and it is possible to view several arches at the Forest Service boundary. The creek that runs along the bottom of the canyon normally has water. All water should be treated before drinking. Look along the canyon walls for hanging gardens. You might also spot some cliff dwellings. Please remember to treat these special places with respect.

The access at the mouth of Arch Canyon is Ute tribal land. Please respect this private property and observe all posted signs. Arch Canyon is open to motorized and mechanized access, however, all vehicles must stay on designated routes. Please be considerate of other trail users with whom you may share this route.

Mule Canyon Interpretive Site
The Mule Canyon Indian Ruins Interpretive site includes a surface pueblo, a restored kiva and interpretive information. This hike is accessed directly off of State Route 95. The turn off is signed on the north side of the highway.

The parking area is paved and pit toilet facilities are available. A short, paved walkway leads from the parking area to the ruins and is wheelchair accessible. Viewing this site and reading the interpretive information can take just a few minutes to an hour.

Cave Canyon Towers
Access off State Route 95 near milepost 103. Turn south on the first dirt road east of the Mule Canyon Ruins Interpretive Site. Please close the gate behind you on the access road. Continue on this road approximately ½ mile to several parking areas. From there, it is only a few hundred yards to the towers.

Salvation Knoll
On Christmas Day in 1879, four members of the lost Latter Day Saints San Juan Mission climbed this small knoll and found the route to Utah. Retrace the pioneers’ steps while learning about the historic Hole in the Rock Trail on this ½ mile hike.

Visit Bears Ears National Monument With Respect

- Leave All Artifacts Where You Find Them
- Don’t Touch or Damage Rock Writing
- Leave the Grinding in the Past
- Cairns can increase impacts to sites
- Don’t Use or Touch Grinding Slicks
- Don’t Do It

Natural Bridges National Monument (National Park Service fee area)
Natural Bridges National Monument has several day hikes. There is an 8.0 mile loop hike as well as shorter variations of that hike. These hikes offer views of rock art, prehistoric dwellings and three natural bridges. One campground and limited water are available in the Monument.

Suggested Day Hikes in Bears Ears National Monument (cont.)

Mule Canyon (fee area)

ACCESS POINTS
From Kane Gulch Ranger Station, drive 4 miles north to State Route 95. Go right (east) 14 miles to County Road 263 north, which is ½ mile east of the Mule Canyon Indian Ruins Interpretive site. Once you cross the cattle guard, the bulletin board and fee station for hiking these canyons will be immediately on the left. Continue to drive ½ mile north, where the road goes over Mule Canyon. This is the South Fork of Mule Canyon. Park in the pullout along the road or at the top of the hill as the road turns left. The trailhead is located to the west, just below the road. The North Fork is another 1½ miles up the road where a short bridge crosses the North Fork.

HIKING CONDITIONS
The South Fork of Mule Canyon is easy-to-moderate hiking. Although there is no constructed, maintained trail, the route follows the creek bottom and a commonly used foot path. Boulders and evergreen trees crowd the canyon bottoms in the upper ends, while the lower stretches are wider and more open. The hike is in the canyon bottom and only gains a few hundred feet over the course of 7 miles.

Because of the orientation of this canyon, there are ponderosa pines and Douglas fir among the slickrock walls. This is a good day hike, especially with inexperienced or young hikers. In the first four miles, there are several sites. These are interesting sites, although smaller than those in Grand Gulch. The route begins in the canyon bottom and there is very little elevation change, making it an easy to moderate hike.

WATER
Mule Creek does not flow year round, but there are usually puddles or pools of water in the wash bottom. However, they can be completely dry in summer and fall months. Dogs are not allowed to swim in springs or potholes, as this water is essential for wildlife.

MAPS
The National Geographic #706, Grand Gulch/ Cedar Mesa Plateau map, and/or the USGS 7.5 minute topographic maps: Hotel Rock and South Long Point.

Visit Bears Ears National Monument With Respect

- Use Rubber Tips on Hiking Poles
- To prevent scratching subtle rock art
- Slow Clear of Walls
- Structures can be easily damaged
- Leave the Grinding in the Past
- Please don’t touch or use grinding slicks
- Pets on leash allowed on most BLM day hikes
- Pets are not allowed inside sites or springs
- Don’t Touch the Drought
- Stay on existing trails
- Avoid Building (or Destroying) Cairns
- Cairns increase impact to sites
- Don’t Touch or Damage Rock Writing
- Don’t add anything to or modify the site
- Leave All Artifacts Where You Find Them
- Don’t leave or take anything from the site

The iconic set of granaries known as House on Fire are located in the South Fork of Mule Canyon.

McLoyd Canyon/Moon House RMZ (fee area)

A high-clearance vehicle is required to access the Moon House trailhead. During wet conditions, the Snow Flats Road may be impassable even for four wheel drive vehicles. The hiking is moderate to difficult due to steep terrain and an exposed six-foot drop off. There is little shade along the route and temperatures can be extreme in the summer and winter months. This hike is not recommended for novice hikers.

Moon House Recreation Management Zone (RMZ) Requires a Special Permit! Public access is limited to 20 people per day. Entry permits for the McLoyd Canyon/ Moon House RMZ are available only at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station during the high-use season. Advanced reservations may be made on the Recreation.gov website. This trail is day use only. General Cedar Mesa day use, week long and annual permits do not apply. During the off season, permits for Moon House day use are available at trailhead fee tubes.

Pets are prohibited in the McLoyd/Moon House RMZ.
Kane Gulch to Grand Gulch

Map: USGS 7.5 Kane Gulch and National Geographic #706
Access: Park at the Kane Gulch Ranch Station on State Route 203 and turn west (right). Directly across from the Kane Gulch Ranger Station, turn right (west) onto county Road 203 directly across from the cigarette Springs Road. In 2.5 miles, you will reach a major junction; stay left, heading south. Access No. 4 is 4.3 miles south of the major junction. The road dips down into the wash and continues. There are pullouts on both sides of the road for parking. Access No. 6 is 1.2 miles beyond Access No. 4. The road passes over a cattle guard and enters an area where the trees have been chained off. A corral will be visible at the head of a small draw. Park by the corral and follow the draw west into a side canyon.

Trail: The trail steeply descends 400 feet. Trail erosion and bouldering make the trail difficult and frequently clogged with boulders and there are many pour offs and steep talus slopes to be negotiated, challenging even the experienced hiker. Pets and stock animals are not allowed in Collins Canyon, Point Lookout Canyon or their tributaries. At least four days should be allowed to hike the entire length of the canyon and explore the side canyons. The going is slow. Camping is not allowed within one mile of the San Juan River. This area is reserved camping for river rafters.

Water: Slickhorn Canyon has a few springs in the upper forks of the canyon, but can become extremely dry. Top off water bottles at any water source and return back if little water is found.

Bullet Canyon to Grand Gulch

Map: USGS 7.5 Cedar Mesa North, Polly’s Pasture and National Geographic #706
Access: Drive north from the Kane Gulch Ranch Station on State Route 261 for approximately 4.0 miles to State Route 95. Turn left, driving about 9.0 miles to State Route 206 and turn left again. Near Milepost 80, there is a sign indicating the Collins Canyon Road (County Road 260) to the left (east). This dirt road travels 6.5 miles to the trailhead; there is one fork, stay right. The road ends at the trailhead.

Trail: The trail gradually descends approximately 2 miles to the intersection of Grand Gulch.

Water: Seasonal spring near the top of Collins and at the bottom near the Narrows.

Campsites: None before reaching Grand Gulch.

Todie Canyon to Grand Gulch

Note: Todie Canyon is a suggested entry access for day hikes only. It is not recommended for novice hikers.

Map: USGS 7.5 Cedar Mesa North and National Geographic #706
Access: Drive south of the Kane Gulch Ranger Station on State Route 261 for approximately 3.5 miles (just before milepost 28). Turn right (west) on a dirt road (County Road 234A) which takes you 1.2 miles to the trailhead.

Trail: 2.5 miles to the junction with Grand Gulch; difficult access, not recommended for novice or young hikers. Travel northwest past the parking lot along the south rim of Todie Canyon for 0.6 miles. The trail steeply descends 400 feet. Trail erosion and bouldering make the trail strenuous and technical.

Water: There is a seasonal spring 0.2 miles up Todie Canyon from the junction with Grand Gulch.

Campsites: There are campsites near the spring and at the mouth of the canyon.
Fish Canyon and Owl Canyon (fee area)

Fish and Owl Creeks both cut diagonally across the eastern edge of Cedar Mesa, coming together several miles before they enter Comb Wash. They are both deep canyons, quite narrow, with an abundance of scenic beauty. Fish Creek has created canyons that differ from the other canyon systems on Cedar Mesa by their depth, the narrowness of the canyons, and their pools of water in the spring to fall months. The canyon walls average 500 feet high, with the width varying from several hundred feet to very narrow at the upper reaches of Fish creek.

Many of the pools in these canyons have extensive hanging gardens, offering a wide variety of vrapetology. The vegetation varies from sage flats in the lower ends of the canyons to cottonwood trees and pine stands on the wider benches in the upper forks.

Access: The road access to the trailhead is 1 mile south of the Kane Gulch Ranger Station on State Route 261. Turn east and drive approximately 5 miles on a dirt road to an old drill hole which is the parking area. There is a bulletin board, register box, fee station and pit toilets for day hikers at the trailhead. This road is passable to passenger vehicles (two-wheel drive) during good weather; however rain or snow can make it impassable even for four-wheel drive vehicles.

Access to Lower Fish is 9.1 miles south on Comb Wash Road from State Route 95 or 9.2 miles north on Comb Wash Road from U.S. Highway 163, turn on County Road D229.

Water: Upper Owl Creek has three large springs which are generally dependable in the spring, but do not count on them for water in the summer months. Owl Creek is usually dry from near Neilvi’s Arch to the confluence with Fish Creek. Fish Creek often has water in the stretch beginning approximately 2 miles above the confluence with Owl Creek and continues intermittently to the junctions with the upper forks. Conditions change daily, so check with Kane Gulch Ranger Station before heading out. Filter all water.

Maps: The National Geographic #706 Grand Gulch/Cedar Mesa Plateau map, and/or the USGS 7.5 minute topographic maps: South Long Point, Bluff NW, Snow Flat Spring Cave.

Stock Use in Cedar Mesa

Stock use requires a permit. Commercial and organized groups must obtain a Special Recreation Permit (see page 6). Private groups must obtain an advance reservation for all overnight use and Grand Gulch day use. Reservations are not available via the Recreation.gov website. Reservations are available as early as 90 days and no later than 5 days prior to the trip start date. Walk-in permits are not available for overnight stock use. Permits for Grand Gulch or overnight trips must be picked up from the Kane Gulch Ranger Station between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon on the trip start day. Private day use (with less than 8 individuals) does not require an advance reservation for canyons other than Grand Gulch. All groups of 8 or more must make reservations for day use. The Cedar Mesa permit desk operates Monday to Friday from 8:00 am – noon. (435) 587-1510.

Where is Stock Use Allowed?

Grand Gulch (Fee Area) - limited to only one stock trip at any time, day or overnight: 
- Overnight/Day Use Areas: Collins to the confluence of Bullet Canyon and Grand Gulch. Enter at Collins or Government Trailheads.
- Closed to Stock: Kane Trailhead to Bullet Trailhead and below the Collins confluence with Grand Gulch.

Fish/Owl Canyons, Road Canyon, Lime Canyon (Fee Area) From Comb Wash Road access: 
- Overnight/Day Use Areas: Fish Creek Canyon downstream of the Fish/Owl confluence with Owl Creek, Lime Creek Canyon, and Mcloyd Canyon south of the Lime Creek.
- Day Use Only (No Overnight): Fish Creek two miles upstream of Fish/Owl confluence; Owl Canyon from Fish/Owl confluence to Neilvi’s Arch.
- Closed to Stock: Fish Canyon beginning 2 miles upstream of the Fish/Owl confluence and Owl Canyon above Neilvi’s Arch.

Mcloyd Canyon (Fee Area): 
- Day Use Only (No Overnight): Start from Comb Wash at Lower Fish Canyon Trailhead.

Lower Johns Canyon and Arch Canyon (no-fee area): 
- Overnight/Day Use Areas: No fees are charged for private groups.

Slickhorn Canyons and North/South Mule Canyons north of U-95: 
- Closed to Stock: All canyons and tributaries.

Group size for overnight and day use in the Grand Gulch Primitive area and other Cedar mesa Canyons is restricted to 12 individuals and 8 animals (pack and/or saddle).

Camping is allowed only at existing campsites. No new campsites may be developed. No unauthorized use of existing corrals.

Feed for all riding and pack animals must be certified weed-free feed for 48 hours in advance of and for the duration of the trip in public lands. Adequate amounts of certified weed-free feed must be carried.

Loose herding of pack and saddle stock is prohibited. All stock must be under physical control. When tethered, all stock must be at least 200 feet away from any water source and well away from archaeological sites and their surrounding benches.

Road Canyon and Lime Canyon (fee area)

The elevation in the upper ends of both Road and Lime Canyons begins at approximately 6,200 feet and drops to 4,900 feet at the lower ends. The walls of the canyons vary from 100 feet in the upper ends to over 500 feet in the colorful Cedar Mesa Sandstone. There are numerous archaeological sites present in both canyons. Please take care when visiting these fragile sites.

Road Canyon Access: From the Kane Gulch Ranger Station, drive 9.0 miles south on State Route 261 to the Cigarette Springs Road. Turn east and drive 3.5 miles to an unmarked pullout on the north. You will pass the Cigarette Springs bulletin board, register box and fee station for day use permits. The route starts from the northeast corner of the parking area and runs ½ mile through the pinyon and juniper forest to the canyon rim and drops approximately 100 feet to the canyon floor.

Drive 6.1 miles from the junction of State Route 261 and the Cigarette Springs Road. Take an unmarked spur road to the left (north) and travel 0.8 miles to the end of the road on the canyon rim, (high-clearance vehicles only). From the parking area, enter the first drainage to the east and make your way down the main canyon.

Lime Canyon Access: From the Kane Gulch Ranger Station, drive 9.0 miles south on State Route 261 to the Cigarette Springs Road. Turn left (east) and drive 3.4 miles to the Lime Creek Road (unmarked). Turn right and travel south 1.2 miles to a fork. Turn right and travel 3.0 miles to the head of Lime Creek Canyon. This route requires vehicles with four-wheel drive and high clearance. From the head of the canyon, an unmarked route descends into the canyon.

From the Kane Gulch Ranger Station, drive 13.0 miles south on State Route 261 to Milepost 16. Turn left (east) on an unmarked road approximately 10 yards before the milepost sign. Travel 1.4 miles to a fork, then left ½ mile to the head of the canyon. Locate the unmarked trail mentioned above and descend into the canyon. This road requires high-clearance vehicles.

Lime Creek Camp: Car camping is available on the MP 16 access road. High-clearance is required.

Hiking Conditions: Permits are required for hiking these canyons. There are no maintained trails in western Road Canyons. Routes generally follow the mostly dry creek beds. There are long stretches of slickrock in both canyons, with several pull-offs to negotiate. The canyon bottoms are not as lush as some of the other Cedar mesa Canyons and shade is at a minimum.

Water: Both canyons have seasonal, intermittent running water which is usually confined to the upper ends of the canyons. There are several large-pour-off pools to negotiate with large cottonwood trees and extensive hanging gardens in the middle and lower portions of the canyons. No bathing or swimming is allowed in the pools. Remember that certain times of the year, you may encounter long, dry stretches. During summer months, the canyons can be totally dry. Keep water bottles topped off. Filter all water.

Road Canyon Camp: Car camping is available on the mesa top near the rims of Road Canyon. From State Route 261 suggested campsites are as follows: 
- 3.5 miles from State Route 261, the campsites are located on the left of the road in the trees
- 3.9 and 3.9 miles from State Route 261, on right
- 6.1 miles from State Route 261, left
- 9.8 miles from State Route 261, at the end of the Cigarette Springs road

Please Visit With Respect at Cedar Mesa and the Bears Ears National Monument:

Leave All Artifacts Where You Find Them
Don’t Take or use anything that does not belong
Don’t Touch or Damage Rock Writing and petroglyphs
No Fires in the Cedars of Cedar Mesa
Use existing fire rings when on the rims
Leave the Grindin in the Past
Protect the grinding sticks
Historic Artifacts Aren’t Trash
Leave artifacts like rusted cans in place
Don’t Disturb Bears with horses
Leave Rock remains when you go/leave
GPS Reveals Too Much
Remove location data for online photos
No Pots allowed in sites or springs
Go to the Bathroom Away from Sites
Pack out all toilet paper. Do not burn it!

Pack out all toilet paper. Do not burn it!

Use existing fire rings when on the rims

Don’t Disturb the Crust
Stay on existing trails

Avoid Building (or Destroying) Campsites
Cairns can increase impacts to sites

Use Rubber: Tips on Hiking Poles in Slickrock
No horse use in slickrock areas

Stay on Designated Routes
Camping off-road can damage sites

Enjoy Archaeology without Ruin
No horse use in slickrock areas

Using climbing gear to access sites is Illegal

Teach Kids Respect

...because only by showing proper care for those who came before, can we protect this special place and our experience here for those who will visit in the future.
#677 National Geographic Grand Gulch and Cedar Mesa Map  Coverage includes BLM/San Juan Resource Area, Cedar Mesa and the Grand Gulch Primitive Area, Northern Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Valley of the Gods, Comb Ridge, Fish and Owl Creek. Includes UTM grid for use with your GPS unit.

#681 National Geographic Manti-La Sal Map  Outdoor Recreation map for the La Sal Mountains, Dark Canyon Wilderness Area, Natural Bridges National Monument; the Abajo Mountains, Bicentennial & Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byways and the Kokopelli Trail. GPS compatible. Full UTM grid.

#3666 Naturalist’s Guide to Canyon Country  by David B. Williams  A comprehensive trailside reference to the plants, animals and geology of SE Utah and adjacent areas. This guide provides easy identification of more than 250 plants and animals plus geology of an area that includes nine national parks and monuments in the Southwest. Maps, color & B/W illustrations.

#3648 Cliff Dwellers of Cedar Mesa  by Donald J. Rommes & William D. Lipe  The authors share their abiding fascination with Cedar Mesa’s deep cultural history. Bill Lipe’s archaeological insights and Don Rommes’ stunning photographs show why they, and so many others, are drawn to this place.

#4197 Ancient Galleries of Cedar Mesa  Photographer Dave Manley focuses his creative eye on the ancient rock art of Cedar Mesa. The indigenous people who lived here for thousands of years left a legacy of beautiful and intriguing marks on the rocks. Dave’s crisp images show the breadth of the rock art found here, from simplistic images to elaborately carved and/or painted panels.

#3289 Comb Ridge and Its People  by Robert McPherson  Whether viewed as barrier wall or sheltering sanctuary, Comb Ridge has helped define life and culture in this region for thousands of years. Homeland to the ancestral Puebloan people, Comb Ridge is also of spiritual and cultural significance to Utes, Paiutes and Navajo peoples and has played a crucial role in the history of European American settlement.

#3177 House of Rain - Tracking a Vanished Civilization Across the American Southwest  Author Craig Childs draws on the latest scholarship, as well as on a lifetime of adventure and exploration in the most forbidding landscapes of the Southwest, to frame the question of what brought about the rapid collapse of the Anasazi civilization in a whole new light.

#4589 Hiking Grand-Staircase Escalante & the Glen Canyon Region  A Falcon Guide  (2nd Edition)  Lace up your boots & sample 59 of the best trails in southern Utah! Includes the Grand Staircase-Escalante, Cedar Mesa & Grand Gulch, Dark Canyon, Natural Bridges & the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness. Detailed maps and descriptions, tips on desert safety, backcountry travel and services.

#3569 What's In Bloom? Flowers of Cedar Mesa and Southeast Utah  Fold out of the major flowers of the Cedar Mesa and Southeastern Utah to carry with you. Great photos taken by Kane Gulch Ranger Station staff and volunteers make identification easy.

#3999 Tortuous and Fantastic - Cultural and Natural Wonders of Greater Cedar Mesa  This special issue of Archaeology Southwest Magazine brings together photos and essays from many disciplines to illuminate the stunning natural beauty and the extraordinary archaeological and historical riches that abound in the greater Cedar Mesa area in southeastern Utah.

#4557 Sacred and Threatened - The Cultural Landscape of Greater Bears Ears  A followup to Tortuous and Fantastic, this issue of Archaeology Southwest Magazine presents a variety of viewpoints on the meaning of these sacred lands, including perspectives from archaeologists, Native American Tribes, and other who are deeply connected to this landscape.