

**Moab Area 4WD Trails**



**Moab Area Travel Council  
Internet Brochure Series**  
Available from:  
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**INTRODUCTION**

There are thousands of miles of jeep trails in Grand County. Most are unmaintained relics from mining or prospecting for minerals such as uranium, vanadium radium copper, gold, and oil. Yet, except for the trails themselves, there are few scars on the landscape. Some trails are used in current mining and grazing activities, and major access roads receive some maintenance from the county. Others are repaired just enough to get through.

The trails described in this brochure were selected because they are close to Moab and short enough for a partial-day trip. Among the trails is a variety of scenery and a range of challenge to the off-highway abilities of vehicle and driver. The map shows trail locations; the chart gives distances, difficulty, and minimum time to drive each trail without stops.

**Trail Marking**

The primitive nature of 4WD trails makes them hard to mark and keep marked. On some, routes are obscure, while on others, the roads are clear enough but the many unnamed junctions are confusing. Storms can alter roads and remove tracks, while vandals can spoil the markings. Nevertheless, a sign has been placed to identify each trail a short way into the trail. After that, routes and junctions are

marked in ways appropriate for the terrain, wooden posts may have a "trail" sign, slickrock may have painted symbols, and most areas will have cairns -small rock piles-to show the route. Topographic maps provide additional help and add to the enjoyment of off-road travel.

**Difficulty**

4W driving difficulty is hard to describe objectively. Opinions vary, and an individual's judgment may change considerably as he gains experience. The easiest of these trails is suitable for stock high-clearance four-wheel drive vehicles. The most difficult (Moab Rim) is barely passable to first-rate off-road equipment. The other trails are well within the capabilities of stock four-wheel-drive trucks and utility vehicles.

**Precautions**

As with many activities, 4W driving leads its enthusiasts in the direction that more risk is fun. Be aware that difficult 4WD trails entail some risk of damage - even upset - for the vehicle and occupants. Novices are advised to develop experience on easier trails first and to seek advice for reducing risks on difficult terrain.

Getting lost or having a vehicle stuck or disabled is a special risk in this little traveled desert country. Although these trails are not very remote compared to some, the safest procedure is to travel with more than one vehicle. Next best is to be sure someone knows where you are going and when your return can be considered overdue. It is essential to have a good supply of water, and one should never attempt to walk for help in the hot months without carrying water. Other good-sense equipment is also important, including sun protection, adequate clothing for cool nights, first-aid supplies, insect repellent, spare tire, and mechanical equipment to keep the vehicle mobile.

Note: In the trail description text below, numbers in brackets are accumulated mileages from where the trail leaves the pavement.

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**CHICKEN CORNERS TRAIL**

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*Summary: The route travels the Colorado River Canyon just below Moab, follows a spectacular part of Kane Springs Canyon, climbs the Kane Creek anticline to Hurrah Pass, and descends to benches above the Colorado River. The trail dead-ends about 400 feet above the river across from Dead Horse Point.*

Trail Directions: From Main Street at Center Street in Moab, travel south on Main 0.6 mile, turn right on "Kane Creek Blvd.," follow it through two sweeping curves past its junction with "500 W. St.," and continue into the river canyon. When the pavement ends near Kane Creek [0.0], continue on the good gravel road as it enters Kane Springs Canyon and follows the canyon meanders at various levels above the creek. Continue with the good road as it crosses the mouth of Hunters Canyon at a hiking trailhead [3.2].

Further along, the canyon broadens, and you can see Hurrah Pass on the right. The gravel road changes to dirt at the ford of Kane Creek [6.4]. Do not attempt to ford in high water; the water can be window-deep following storms or heavy spring melts. Beyond the ford, stay with the best-looking road as other trails leave to the left in the next half mile, and the road will bend toward the north and begin to ascend the cliffs below Anticline Overlook (note the safety fence on the cliff edge above). The summit of this climb is Hurrah Pass [10.0]. As the trail winds down the other side of the anticline, it shows more four-wheel-drive character.

The trail leaves the cliffs on a gentler slope and drops into a wash bottom. Continue straight (out of the wash) where

Trail Name	Round Trip from Moab	4WD Road	Minimum Time	Difficulty
Gemini Bridges	48 Miles	14 miles	2.5 hours	Easy
Chicken Corners	54 miles	43 miles	3.5 hours	Hard
Poison Spider Mesa	36 miles	16 miles	4.0 hours	Difficult
Moab Rim	15 miles	7 miles	1.5 hours	Very Difficult

a spur trail leaves to the right and follows the rough wash bottom [12.5]. Shortly after that, an optional route enters a small canyon to the left; the preferred route up the rocky slope to the right swings close to the river on a bench above it. Farther on, two trail junctions [14.4 and 14.6] leave to the left in view of a large side canyon and a mound of red rocks not far to the left of the trail. These trails go to the rock mound and its interesting caves. The main trail continues along the river benches, which are capped with fossil-bearing limestone, 'til it crosses a major wash [17.1]. (On the return trip, you will probably spot an unusual arch near the trail east of the wash crossing.) The trail you may see starting up this wash is the Lockhart Basin trail. You follow the main trail straight across the wash and wind along the benches as they grow higher above the water.

The point where the trail is pinched between rocks on the left and the abyss on the right [20.3] is "Chicken Corners" where Moab area guides were reputed to allow "chicken" passengers to walk, rather than ride, past the narrow, sloping section of trail. The trail continues along the broad bench until it narrows to an old horse trail [21.5]. You can't go much farther, even on foot, because this is the start of a peninsula of land bounded by the gooseneck of the Colorado, the trademark of the spectacular view from Dead Horse Point. Return to Moab by the same route.

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## GEMINI BRIDGES TRAIL

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*Summary: The trail covers a region between Highways 191 and 313, reaches some grand vistas, and accesses numerous other trails. The highlight is the spectacular twin arch, called Gemini Bridges, on the rim of an arm of Bull Canyon.*

Trail Directions: From the center of Moab, travel north on Highway 191 for 9.8 miles (you are still south of the Highway 313 junction). Turn left to cross a cattle guard near an old ore car by the railroad tracks [0.0], cross the tracks, and turn left to follow the southerly dirt road paralleling the tracks. The main trail soon veers right toward the cliffs, and steadily

climbs the cliff slope to Little Canyon, the gap in the cliff rim. Stay with the best maintained trail through upper Little Canyon (old mine trails leave left and right, and a strong spur trail leaves left into a side canyon). Turn right from the wash bottom area [4.8] to climb the steep dugway. The trail passes a gate and winds to higher levels, giving vistas in all directions. Stay with the main trail as spurs leave to the left, and fork right where the good left-hand trail leads to the lower levels of Bull Canyon [6.2] as it begins a sweeping bend to the right. This less-maintained trail is the older route; the graded road is not shown on many trail maps.

As the trail winds still higher, ignore two spur trails to the left and watch for the "Y", junction that indicates that you are near Gemini Bridges. Keep left at the "Y" [7.4] and follow the markings; past visitors have left numerous unnecessary trails. As you approach the canyon, you will see the deep hole [7.8] that opens into the canyon wall leaving the twin spans. Return part way toward the "Y" junction, but take- the short-cut [8.0] to the left to join the main trail that was the right hand fork of the "Y". Turn left on this main trail [8.1], and turn right where a spur trail heads down to Crips Hole [9.0]. The trail joins the graded road that you were on earlier near a drill pad [9.7], and you travel the graded road westerly to paved Highway 313 [13.8]. There, a right turn returns you to Highway 191, while a left heads for Dead Horse Point and Island in the Sky (Canyonlands National Park).

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## POISON SPIDER MESA TRAIL

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*Summary: The trail visits themes atop just north of the Colorado River and west of Moab Valley, and it reaches overlooks of the river and valley. The expanses of unbroken slickrock and views of the Behind the Rocks area and the La Sal Mountains make it one of the most attractive trails in the area.*

Trail Directions: From the center of Moab, travel north on Highway 191 for 5.9 miles and turn left on Highway 279. Continue 5.9 miles from this junction until you reach the "Dinosaur Tracks" sign, where the trail leaves the pavement

to the right through a cattle control gate [0.0]. Although there are spur trails, the strongest trail climbs switchbacks, and each higher level reveals more of the fins and mountains. After the last leg of the switchbacks, mounds of spectacularly cross-bedded Navajo Sandstone appear on the right, and the trail skirts these mounds until it enters a sandy canyon [2.4]. Watch carefully for the route as you climb out of the canyon-it turns on the first ledge, entering a slot to climb higher. These rocky climbs are the most difficult of the entire trail, except, possibly, some sandy areas when they are very dry.

The trail crosses areas of rock and approaches another slot. A slickrock bypass is marked to the left to avoid the side hill in the slot. After an area of sand, a final short, steep climb puts you on a flat area of Navajo Sandstone distinguished by a scattering of rounded, black rocks [3.3]. The rest of the trail is mostly on top of the Navajo Sandstone, but it continues to climb with the rock strata as they tip up toward the east. The trail parallels the river on this flat mesa area for about a mile and is usually the obvious choice over the few spurs that branch right and left. After a smooth dirt section, the trail drops onto another slickrock area where a short spur toward the river gives beautiful overlooks [5.3]. Two established routes cross the next section of slickrock.

The bike trail will rejoin the 4WD route in about a quarter mile. The trail splits again [5.6] to begin a loop. The recommended counter-clockwise direction around the loop requires a turn to the right to reach a large mass of slickrock. Past a large pothole, a startlingly steep descent leads to a short dirt trail section and a side hill climb onto a slickrock parking area [6.0]. A short walk to the right takes you to a good-sized pothole-type arch called "Little Arch," presumably for its apparent size from the river below.

The marked route traverses another large section of slickrock and eventually drops into a sandy wash bottom. The trail soon leaves the left side of the wash on a slickrock slope [6.8] and follows a sandy trail to another slickrock mass [7.1]. The trail continues on uninterrupted slickrock to a trail junction near the base of a sandy hill [7.6]. Turn right for a spectacular rim

overlook [8.3]. Although a trail continues a couple of miles to the north beyond the overlook, it leaves the rim and becomes hard to follow.

After returning to the junction at the base of the sandy hill [9.9], continue the loop up the hill where it alternates between loose sand and sandstone. When you reach one large sand hill that has three established paths down, you will see why the recommended loop direction was chosen-to go down the sand. The trail continues on sand and sandstone to close the large loop [10.6] begun at mile "5.6" and retraces the earlier trail back to the highway.

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## MOAB RIM TRAIL

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*Summary: The trail climbs the tilted rock strata along the south side of the Colorado River to reach a rim view overlooking Moab, with outstanding views of the river, Spanish Valley, and the La Sal Mountains. The 4WD trail is the boundary of the Behind the Rocks Wilderness Study area and the area west of the trail is closed to vehicle travel to protect scenic and primitive recreation values.*

Trail Directions: Leave Moab as for the Chicken Corners trail. Two miles past "500 W. St.," signs show the trail start [0.0]. This is not a sneaky trail; you know what you are in for in the first hundred yards, as it starts up a steep rock slope with a harrowing drop-off to the left. From here, specific directions are impossible. Just watch for a possible route, often marked by black spots (tire rubber) and light-colored gouges in the rock (made by trailer hitches or more tender underbelly parts). When you find dirt underfoot again, you know you have reached the rim [1.0].

The trail parallels the rim for a short distance and then angles westward from it. After crossing a section of slickrock between massive domes of Navajo Sandstone, the trail forks to begin a minor loop [1.8]. The right-hand fork goes over more rock and sand onto a large slickrock dome [2.6]. It is possible to climb to the top of this dome at angles that seem

unbelievable to most drivers who have not experienced the traction on this sandstone.

The marked route off this dome reaches a visible trail that continues basically south, just across a dry wash, the trail forks [3.7]. The left fork dead-ends at another spectacular overlook of Spanish Valley, while the right fork stops on a ridge. The right-fork trail end [3.9] is a short hike from a high section of the ridge that has some rocks piled in a carefully constructed circle, known locally as "the Indian fort." On the south-facing wall of this section of the ridge are some fine examples of early rock art with numerous animal and anthropomorphic figures pecked into the rock wall. Please do not touch the rock art or disturb the "fort."

The return route is the same until you near the rock dome, where a right-hand fork [4.7] leads down a long, steep sand hill. (An earlier fork leads to a less steep descent.) At the bottom, the trail follows the base of sandstone walls along a minor drainage and rejoins the route taken up [5.6].

The descent from the rim is not as difficult as the ascent, but it can be more hazardous because you can't see the route as well. When a ledge is approached at the wrong angle, your vehicle can tip to a precarious angle very suddenly.

### Canyon Country Minimum Impact Practices

1. Tread Lightly when traveling and leave no trace of your camping. Drive and ride only on roads and trails where such travel is allowed; hike only on established trails, on rock, or in washes. Camp at designated sites or, where allowed, at previously used sites. Avoid placing tents on top of vegetation and use a camp stove instead of making a campfire. Unless signs indicate otherwise, leave gates open or closed as you find them.
2. Help keep Canyon Country clean. Pack out your trash and recycle it, clean up after less thoughtful visitors, and dispose of human waste properly.
3. Protect and conserve scarce desert water sources. Camp at least 300 feet from isolated water sources to allow for wildlife access. Where possible, carry your own drinking water. Leave potholes undisturbed and wash well away from pools and springs.

4. Allow space for wildlife. When encountering wildlife, maintain your distance and remain quiet. Teach children not to chase or pickup animals. Keep pets under control.

5. Leave historic sites, Native American rock art, ruins and artifacts untouched for the future. Admire rock art from a distance and never touch it. Stay out of ruins, leave artifacts in place, and report violations.

### Courtesy on the Trails

All of the trails described are on public lands-some state parcels, but mostly on federally owned land administered by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under the policy of promoting multiple uses. While we enjoy use of the roads built mostly by mining interests, we often find that we are sharing with ranchers who lease the land for grazing. That is why you'll find fences throughout the country. A prime courtesy for our fellow users, therefore, is to leave each gate open or closed, as we find it.

Other users of the road - miners, ranchers, riders of pedaled or powered cycles, and hikers - should find trails as clean as we would like to see them. Unfortunately, the courteous people always clean up after the discourteous, so please carry out more than you carried in.

The occasional muddy conditions found in this area should not be considered part of the four-wheeling challenge. These roads can be severely damaged by use when they are muddy, while it takes only a little patience-usually about one dry day to avoid the problem. If you are not convinced by courtesy considerations, be advised that a heavy shower can make many of these roads impassable, and even dangerous.

You may see occasional vehicle tracks off the trails, left by irresponsible travelers. Our desert plants have learned to grow in pace with the little moisture they receive, and they are slow to recover from a tire track. No one has yet claimed to have traveled all of the established trails in the area, so there should be no need to go off the roads.

**Moab Information Center**  
Main & Center St, Moab

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