English

A Wrinkle in the Earth
A vibrant palette of color spills across the landscape before you. The hues are constantly changing, altered by the play of light against the towering cliffs, massive domes, arches, bridges, and twisting canyons. Over millions of years geologic forces shaped, lifted, and folded the earth, creating this rugged, remote area known as the Waterpocket Fold.

Panorama Point at Sunset
Erosion creates waterpockets and potholes that collect rainwater and snowmelt, enhancing a rich ecosystem.

Capitol Dome reminded early travelers of the US Capitol building and later inspired the name of the park.

Creating the Waterpocket Fold
Capitol Reef’s defining geologic feature is a wrinkle in Earth’s crust, extending nearly 100 miles from Thousand Lake Mountain to Lake Powell. It was created over time by three gradual, yet powerful processes—deposition, uplift, and erosion. The result is a classic example of a monocline, or one-sided fold, in the otherwise horizontal rock layers.

Deposition: The climate and geography changed dramatically over the past 280 million years. The environment was once oceans, deserts, swamps, and riverbeds, creating nearly 10,000 feet of sedimentary rock made of limestone, sandstone, and shale.

Uplift: Between 50 and 70 million years ago, an ancient fault was reactivated during a time of tectonic activity, lifting the layers to the west of the fault over 7,000 feet higher than those to the east. Rather than cracking, the rock layers folded over the fault line. Continued uplift occurred again some 20 million years ago.

Erosion: Erosive forces sculpted uplifted rock layers. Much of the carving occurred between one and six million years ago. Water, along with the pull of gravity, is the primary erosive force here. Powerful rains, flash flooding, and freeze-thaw cycles loosen, crack, and wash away stone, creating canyons, cliffs, domes, and bridges.

A Patchwork of Life
Living on the Reef
American Indians
Carvings (petroglyphs) and paintings (pictographs) on rock walls are reminders of the people who lived here from about 300 to 1300 Common Era (CE) and even earlier. They were ancestors of the modern-day Hopi, Zuni, and Paiute tribes. The stories told on these rock walls depict maps, journeys, clan symbols, deities, animals, and calendars. People farmed the fertile land adjacent to the Fremont River and other nearby creeks. They supplemented crops by hunting wildlife and harvesting nuts, berries, and seeds. After 1300 CE no evidence of this culture is found.

Travelers of the Past
The Waterpocket Fold territory was the last to be charted in the contiguous 48 states. Throughout the 1800s numerous travelers ventured into this land. Some were defeated by the imposing conditions. Others prospered. Many left their mark on the Pioneer Register as they passed through Capitol Gorge.

Pioneers
In the 1880s, Mormons established the small settlement of Fruita at the confluence of the Fremont River and Sulphur Creek. They built irrigation systems to water orchards and pastures, and sustain a self-reliant agricultural lifestyle for decades. Families tended the apple, peach, pear, and apricot trees. The park maintains the orchards, schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, and the Gifford Homestead as reminders of pioneer times.

Jewels of the Night
Welcome to dark sky country where open skies and the desert landscape provide the perfect theater for stars to shine, twinkle, and amaze. Take a seat as daylight dims and the stars take center stage.

Truly dark skies are becoming rare. This natural lightscape is a critical nocturnal habitat. Many species of animals rely on natural patterns of day and night for navigation, to cue behaviors, and hide from predators. Ask a ranger what you can do to help protect the night sky.
### Exploring Capitol Reef

#### Fruita Historic District
Includes the Fruita schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, the Gifford House store and museum, and other buildings and features. Orchards have apple, peach, cherry, pear, plum, apricot, and almond trees. Historic and heirloom varieties are found here. You may pick and eat fruit free of charge while in the orchards. A nominal fee is charged to take fruit with you. Harvest times vary. Check at the visitor center or call the fruit hotline 435-425-3791.

#### Facilities, Fees, and Services
- **Visitor Center** The visitor center is open year round 8 am to 4:30 pm, with extended summer hours. Closed some federal holidays. Information, orientation movie, exhibits, and bookstore are available. Park entrance fees are collected at the north end of Scenic Drive and at the visitor center. Nearby picnic area has picnic tables, grills, restrooms, and drinking water.
- **Accessibility** We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

#### Things To Do
- Explore the beauty of Capitol Reef. Ranger-led activities are offered spring through fall. Schedules at the visitor center and on bulletin boards. Ripple Rock Nature Center has interactive displays. Check at the visitor center for hours.
- The paved, 8-mile Scenic Drive offers breathtaking views of the Waterpocket Fold. Entrance fee is charged beyond Fruita campground. Allow about two hours for the round-trip drive.
- A variety of trails from easy to strenuous offer many options to explore the park. Please remember hiking in canyon country can be dangerous.
  - Hike with others and tell someone of your hiking plan.
  - Check at the visitor center for trail conditions.
  - Monitor weather and be prepared for extreme temperatures.
  - Sudden rains can cause flash floods.
  - Carry one gallon of drinking water per person per day.
  - Do not drink unpurified backcountry water.
  - Trail guides are sold at the bookstore.
  - Pets are permitted in developed park areas only, not on hiking trails. They must be restrained on a leash, six feet or less, at all times. Clean up pet waste and place in a dumpster.
  - Bicycles are restricted to public roads at all times.

#### Camping
- **Fruita** Fee. Developed site, 71 spaces. Picnic tables, fire grates/grills, restrooms, water, and RV dump station. First-come, first-served. Limits: eight people per site.
- **Cathedral Valley and Cedar Mesa** No fee. Primitive sites. Picnic tables, fire grates/grills, pit toilets, no water. First-come, first-served. Cathedral Valley has six sites and Cedar Mesa has five.

#### Group Site
- Available by written reservation only. Limit: 40 people.

#### Backcountry Camping
- Free backcountry permit is required. Available at the visitor center for firearms regulations ask a ranger or check the park website.
- Off-road vehicle use is not permitted in the park.
- Check road conditions at the visitor center.
- Ground fires are only allowed in grates provided in campgrounds.
- Do not disturb or collect plants, animals, fossils, artifacts, and minerals.

#### Safety and Regulations
- Safety is your responsibility.
  - Be careful near cliff edges.
  - Carry one gallon of drinking water per person per day.
  - Do not drink unpurified backcountry water.
  - Watch for flash floods. Avoid canyon washes and exposed areas when storms approach.
  - Do not feed or disturb wildlife.
  - Do not litter. Pack out all trash.
  - Hunting is prohibited in the park.
  - For firearms regulations ask a ranger or check the park website.
  - Off-road vehicle use is not permitted in the park.
  - Check road conditions at the visitor center.
  - Ground fires are only allowed in grates provided in campgrounds.
  - Do not disturb or collect plants, animals, fossils, artifacts, and minerals.

#### More Information
- **Capitol Reef National Park**
  - HC 70, Box 15
  - Torrey, UT 84775
  - 435-425-3791
  - www.nps.gov/care
- **Capitol Reef National Park** is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks, visit www.nps.gov.