GUIDE TO
Moab, UT
Backroads &
4-Wheel Drive Trails

EASY Family Fun Runs

MODERATE Sport Utility Adventures

DIFFICULT Hard-Core Challenges

By Charles A. Wells
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- 36. Book Cliffs, Sego Canyon (E)
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- 126. Hell’s Revenge (D)
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- 140. East Moab & Manti-La Sal National Forest
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- 144. Dome Plateau (M)
- 148. Top of the World (D)
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- 172. Southwest Moab & Canyonlands National Park
- 174. Potash Road, Shafer Switchbacks (E)
- 178. White Rim (M)
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- Area BFE
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For information on ATV trails, see page 222.
Trails Listed by Difficulty

Trails are grouped into three major categories: easy, moderate and difficult. Within each group, trails at the top of the list are easier than at the bottom. If you drive a trail and find it too easy, try one lower on the list. Conversely, if you find a trail too difficult, try one higher on the list. You may have to skip several trails on the list to find a significant difference.

**Easy**

- **Gravel, dirt, clay, sand, or mildly rocky road. Gentle grades. Water levels low except during periods of heavy runoff. Full-width single lane or wider with adequate room to pass most of the time. Where shelf conditions exist, road is wide and well-maintained with minor sideways tilt. Four-wheel drive recommended on most trails but some are suitable for two-wheel drive under dry conditions. Clay surface roads, when wet, can significantly increase difficulty or may be impassable.**

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<th>Pg.</th>
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<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>42. Castleton Gateway Road</td>
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<td>134</td>
<td>34 Sand Flats Road</td>
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<td>8. Bartlett Wash Road</td>
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<td>51. Canyon Rim Overlooks</td>
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<td>1. Book Cliffs, Sego Canyon</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>24. Hurrah Pass</td>
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<td>30. Picture Frame Arch</td>
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<td>4. Tusher Tunnel</td>
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<td>6. Hidden Canyon</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>15. Mineral Point</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>16. Gemini Bridges</td>
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<td>210</td>
<td>55. Beef Basin</td>
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<td>39. Dolores River Overlook</td>
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<td>82</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>13. Spring Canyon Bottom</td>
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<td>174</td>
<td>45. Potash Rd., Shafer Switchbacks</td>
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**Moderate**

- **Rutted dirt or rocky road suitable for most sport utility vehicles. Careful tire placement is often necessary. Four-wheel drive, low range, and high ground clearance are required. Standard factory skid plates and tow hooks recommended on many trails. Undercarriage may scrape occasionally. Some grades fairly steep but manageable if dry. Soft sand possible. Sideways tilt will require caution. Narrow shelf roads possible. Backing may be necessary to pass. Water depths passable for stock high-clearance vehicles except during periods of heavy runoff. Mud holes may be present especially in the spring. Rock-stacking may be necessary in some cases. Brush may touch vehicle.**

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<td>14. Hey Joe Canyon</td>
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**Difficult**

- **Some trails suitable for more aggressive stock vehicles but most trails require vehicle modification. Lifts, differential lockers, aggressive articulation, and/or winches recommended in many cases. Skid plates and tow hooks required. Body damage possible. Grades can be steep with severe ground undulation. Sideways tilt can be extreme. Sand hills very steep with soft downslopes. Deep water crossings possible. Shelf roads extremely narrow; use caution in full-size vehicle. Read trail description carefully. Passing may be difficult with backing required for long distances. Brush may scratch sides of vehicle.**

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<td>28. Behind the Rocks</td>
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<td>104</td>
<td>26. Pritchett Canyon</td>
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Fourteen of twenty trails in Area 2 are rated difficult. They include nationally known names like Poison Spider Mesa, Golden Spike, Moab Rim, Pritchett Canyon, Behind the Rocks and Hell’s Revenge. Obstacles include, among others, White Knuckle Hill, the Golden Crack, Rocker Knocker, High Dive, Hell’s Gate and the Escalator. Many of the trails are featured in the popular Easter Jeep Safari. Where possible, trails match the routes driven during the safari. However, some longer routes have been shortened and include only the best parts of the trails. Other routes like Steel Bender, Bull Canyon and Hell’s Revenge have been expanded, with new side trips and obstacles. When I drove Area 2 back in 1999, for the first edition of this book, route-finding on slickrock trails was almost impossible. This time, trails were better marked with painted symbols and black tire marks. It was much easier to find my way. This allowed me to simplify my directions and to use fewer GPS waypoints. Strike Ravine, Trail #29, is new to this book. The trail has taken on extra importance because of its proximity to newly opened Area BFE, a privately owned extreme 4x4 playground open to the public. (To find Area BFE, see page 214.)

Descending final section of Moab Rim, Trail #25, above the Colorado River, Difficult.
Location: From Moab, head north on Highway 191 about 10 miles and turn left into a large parking lot. The turn is 1.3 miles before Highway 313.

Difficulty: Easy. The once-rocky road has been tamed with rock-grinding equipment. One steep hill after Waypoint 02 still requires four-wheel drive.

Features: Beautiful scenery on way to remarkable Gemini Bridges. The bridges are not apparent until you get close and look down. An extremely popular mountain bike route. Please slow down to minimize dust when passing. To view bridges from below, see Bull Canyon, Trail #19. Turn left on road before Gooney Bird Rock for good camp spots.

Time & Distance: It is 7.8 miles to Gemini Bridges and another 5.6 miles to Highway 313. Allow 2 to 3 hours for this 13.4-mile trip, plus return time.

Trail Description: Reset odometer when you turn left off Highway 191 [01]. Pass through parking lot, cross railroad tracks and turn left. Follow road south along the tracks and turn right uphill in less than a mile. Follow twisting shelf road as it continues south, high above Highway 191. Watch for busy traffic. Descend into a wide valley and continue south past distinctive Gooney Bird Rock. At 4.9 miles [02], turn right at T intersection and climb steep hill. Bear right at 5.4 miles (left goes to Bull Canyon, Trail #19). Bear left at 6.5 miles [03] (right goes to Metal Masher, Trail #17). At 7.5 miles, bear left (right bypasses Gemini Bridges). Stay left into clearing at 7.7 miles. Continue short distance and find a place to park at 7.8 miles [04]. Hike 0.2 miles south downhill to arches (trail is marked with white painted dashes).

Return Trip: Return the way you came or exit west to Highway 313. To exit west, reset odometer, head north from where you parked and turn left. At 0.9 miles [05], turn right at T (left goes to interesting Four Arches Canyon). At 1.6 miles [06], turn left on wide gravel road and head west. When you reach Highway 313 in another 3.7 miles, turn right to return to Moab. Left goes to Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park. You can also return to Moab by turning left on Highway 313 and going down Long Canyon, Trail #18. From there, a left on Highway 279 returns to 191.

Services: Gas and snacks available at campground on Highway 191, just north of Highway 313. Fee parking lot at start sometimes has porta-potty. Vault toilets at view areas along Highway 313.

Trail Information: BLM, Moab Field Office (see appendix).
Starting Point: From Moab, head north on Highway 191 about 10 miles and turn left into parking lot for Gemini Bridges, Trail #16. *Reset odometer.* Cross railroad tracks and turn left. In less than a mile, follow the road right uphill, then south along a high shelf road. Continue through valley past Gooney Bird Rock to T intersection at 4.9 miles. (Gold Bar Rim goes left here.) Turn right and climb steep hill. Turn left at 5.4 miles to start.

Difficulty: Moderate. Much of this trail follows a rocky creek bed which can change after storms. A couple of difficult spots have bypasses. Suitable for aggressive, high-clearance SUVs.

Features: Fun drive through narrow canyons and sandy swales that goes past hiking trailhead to bottom of Gemini Bridges. Park here and hike short distance to incredible view of bridges from below. Trail continues west from Waypoint 04 and eventually narrows where you must turn around. Take short trip south to Surprise Overlook into gaping Day Canyon.

Time & Distance: From start to bridges is about 3.2 miles. Trail continues about a mile west after the hiking trail. Surprise Overlook is 0.4 miles more. This trip, by itself, is a good half day adventure from Moab.

Trail Description: *Reset odometer as you turn left off Gemini Bridges Road [01].* Head south on wide road that gradually narrows and gets rougher. Stay right at 1.1 miles [02]. (Road to left is difficult side trip through Little Canyon that connects to Gold Bar Rim, Trail #20.) At 1.5 miles, turn right downhill into Bull Canyon [03]. Trail winds through narrow wash then opens up into a valley with towering rock walls. Stay on the main route at all times. Stay off illegal side hills. Continue straight at 2.1 and left at 2.9. Wind between sand hills, until you reach hiking trail on right at about 3.2 miles [04]. Park here and hike north about 0.3 miles to reach bottom of Gemini Bridges. [05]. Trail continues west and narrows to point where it is difficult to turn around. Use caution not to go too far. To reach Surprise Overlook, return to Waypoint 03 and turn right. Stay left in sandy wash until trail ends at sandy knoll after another 0.4 miles [06]. Walk south for view into Day Canyon far below. Careful, no guardrails.

Return Trip: Return the way you came. (Option: Difficult Little Canyon)

Services: Gas at campground on Highway 191, just north of Highway 313.

Trail Information: BLM, Moab Field Office (see appendix).
Starting Point: From the McDonald’s Restaurant on Highway 191 on the south side of Moab, head west on Kane Creek Road. Bear left at the first major fork and follow Kane Creek Road south along the river. Continue on a wide gravel road after pavement ends. After a parking lot for bikers, continue a bit further to Amasa Back Bike Trail on the right. Total distance from McDonalds is 5.9 miles.

Difficulty: Difficult. This trail was filled in with dirt for maintenance recently, but the dirt is quickly washing away. Make no mistake, this trail is strictly hardcore with many big ledges and challenging obstacles. Although the big step on the ledge road is tamed somewhat, a new tippy spot has developed farther down the trail. Trail not suitable for most stock vehicles.

Features: Real challenges with incredible scenery, especially at the end. Heavy bike traffic. Be courteous. Pull over and let bikers pass.

Time & Distance: Main route is 4.3 miles one way. Add 1.4 miles for side trip to overlook. Allow 3 to 4 hours for everything.

Trail Description: Reset odometer as you turn right off Kane Creek Road [01]. Air drive down immediately and drop down steep ledges. At bottom of hill, cross creek, follow trail to left up difficult ledge. Stay right at 0.4 miles. Driver's choice at 1.1 miles; circle around to right or cut across slickrock. Bear right at 1.7 where a lesser road goes left before reaching the Z-Turn at 1.8 miles. Zigzag right then left uphill. Stay left at 2.2 miles [02]. Road on right goes to great overlook of Poison Spider Mesa and Colorado River.

As you proceed north on the main trail, it narrows and drops down along the cliff edge with a big step down at 2.5. Continue straight at 3.1 where a lesser road goes right to another overlook. Be very careful at 3.3 miles [03]. You must straddle a narrow ledge that tips you to the right. It's easy to roll over if your right tire slips into the soft dirt. The trail appears to end at 3.5. Make a hard right here up some big ledges. Once on top, swing right then back to the left. At 3.6, climb to opening at top of barren slickrock. At 4.0, stay left up bank. Turn around at scenic viewpoint at 4.3 miles [04]. Great spot for lunch. Caution: dangerous cliffs have no guardrails.

Return Trip: Return the way you came. Option: Add side trip to overlook.

Services: None. Return to Moab.

Trail Information: BLM, Moab Field Office (see appendix).
Whether novice or expert, you'll enjoy this clear, concise guide to Moab, Utah's remote backcountry, including trips inside Canyonlands and Arches National Parks. Completely redone 2nd edition features 55 trails—10 all new—plus 60 full-color maps and over 335 quality color photos. All trails redriven and updated by the author. Thirty-five easy and moderate routes suitable for most high-clearance sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks. Book includes GPS waypoints and most Easter Jeep Safari trails.