

The Ultimate ARCHES Guide

2026

Premium Edition

Over 2,000 natural stone arches. One extraordinary desert park.

* 2026 Fact-Checked

* All 18-Mile Scenic Drive Covered

WELCOME

The Greatest Concentration of Natural Arches on Earth

Arches National Park contains more than 2,000 documented natural stone arches -- the highest concentration anywhere on Earth. The park sits just north of Moab, Utah, and the landscape of sandstone fins, balanced rocks, towers, and arches feels genuinely otherworldly. This is especially true at sunrise and sunset, when the Entrada Sandstone ignites to a deep, saturated red that no photograph has ever fully captured.

The park covers approximately 76,500 acres and sees over 1.8 million visitors annually. It is one of the most photogenic parks in the American West, and one of the most challenging to visit well without knowing how it works. The 18-mile scenic drive is the backbone of everything. Parking lots fill fast. Summer heat is serious. And the difference between a frustrating, crowded visit and a transcendent one often comes down to two hours of timing.

This premium guide gives you everything: the geology that created these formations, the complete trail system with in-depth profiles for every major hike, the seasonal strategy that actually works, the permit system explained plainly, where to stay and eat in Moab, a complete 3-day itinerary, photography guidance for every lighting condition, and the insider knowledge that separates first-timers from people who truly understand this landscape.

2026 ENTRY UPDATE -- NO TIMED ENTRY

2026 KEY UPDATE: Arches lifted its timed-entry reservation requirement on February 18, 2026. No advance reservation is needed to drive into the park. You still need a valid entrance pass (\$35/vehicle or America the Beautiful Pass). STILL REQUIRED: reservations for Devils Garden Campground and the Fiery Furnace (both ranger-guided tours and self-guided permits). Fiery Furnace self-guided permits sell out by 8:05am during peak season on Recreation.gov.

Table of Contents

Arches National Park -- Premium Edition

Welcome + 2026 Entry Update (No Timed Entry)	2
Understanding Arches + Planning Your Trip	3
Essential Info + The 18-Mile Scenic Drive	4
Complete Trail Guide (9 Full Hike Profiles)	6
Permits + Access (Fiery Furnace Explained)	13
Night Sky + Stargazing	14
Wildlife + Ecology	15
Where to Stay	16
Where to Eat	17
The Perfect 3-Day Itinerary	18
Pro Tips + Packing Guide	20
Photography Guide	21
Combining Parks (Arches + Canyonlands)	22
FAQ	23
Quick Cheat Sheet	25

A LOOK INSIDE

Three Real Pages From the Full Guide

The following pages are pulled directly from the 25-page premium guide -- no filler, no fluff. This is exactly what you get.

LOCAL INSIDER TIP The primitive section is one of the least-crowded experiences in any major Utah national park -- genuinely on open slickrock with no trail, following cairns. This is the section Edward Abbey wrote about in Desert Solitaire. It still exists. Do the full loop.	TRAIL TIPS + WARNINGS DO NOT attempt the primitive section after rain -- dangerously slippery. Minimal shade after Landscape Arch. Carry 3+ liters per person. Wear shoes with sticky rubber soles. The fin-ledge sections near Double O have significant drop-offs.
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4 The Windows Loop + Double Arch Three massive arches in one short loop -- most efficient hike in the park					NO PERMIT REQUIRED
DISTANCE 1 mi loop + 0.5 mi to Double Arch	ELEVATION 85 ft	TIME 30-45 min + 20 min for Double Arch	DIFFICULTY Easy	FAMILY Yes -- all ages	SEASON Year-round
TRAIL OVERVIEW The most efficient hike in the park. A short loop visits North Window (93 feet wide), South Window (105 feet wide), and Turret Arch -- three massive arches in the same natural amphitheater. Double Arch, a separately accessed formation 0.5 miles away, is the world's largest pothole arch with two openings sharing a common rim 149 feet above the canyon floor -- an experience that is genuinely hard to describe and must be seen from inside.			TRAILHEAD + LOGISTICS Two separate parking areas: Windows trailhead and Double Arch trailhead, both in the Windows Section 11 miles from the Visitor Center. A primitive social trail connects the two through the amphitheater. Most visitors do the loop from the Windows trailhead and drive to Double Arch separately.		
CROWD STRATEGY Windows lot fills by 9-9:30am on peak days. Arrive before dawn for sunrise -- this is the most popular sunrise photography location in the park. After 10am, parking is a genuine problem. However, the Windows Section has more turnover than Delicate Arch (shorter trail, faster rotation) so mid-afternoon often opens up.			PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS The definitive Windows shot: stand inside the amphitheater and look back through North and South Windows as the morning sun illuminates the rock frame from behind. Wide-angle lens captures both arches simultaneously. Double Arch: photograph from below and within the formation -- scale from ground level is extraordinary.		
LOCAL INSIDER TIP Double Arch appeared in the opening scene of Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989). Standing inside and looking up into the converging arches above is one of the most visceral scale-of-geology moments on any easy hike in the park.			TRAIL TIPS + WARNINGS Terrain is easy and appropriate for all ages. In summer, the Windows amphitheater provides some shade in the early morning from surrounding rock faces -- making this a slightly better midday summer option than the fully exposed Delicate Arch trail.		

5 Fiery Furnace The labyrinthine heart of Arches -- a permit and no marked trail					PERMIT REQUIRED
DISTANCE 2 mi approx	ELEVATION ~200 ft	TIME 2-3 hrs	DIFFICULTY Moderate-Strenuous	FAMILY No (under 5 not permitted)	SEASON Spring and fall

Peregrine Falcon	Nesting cliff faces throughout; frequently near Balanced Rock	Any time; most active mid-morning	Fastest animal on Earth. Listen for high-pitched screeching from cliff faces. Nesting sites may be seasonally closed.
Midget Faded Rattlesnake	Rocky areas throughout, particularly near fin bases and overhangs	Active spring through fall, especially dawn and dusk	Small (24-30 inches), camouflaged, and venomous. Watch where you step and place hands on slickrock.
Cryptobiotic Soil Crust	The black, lumpy, crusty ground cover visible beside every trail	Visible year-round	A living community of cyanobacteria, fungi, and mosses. Took 50-5,000 years to form. One footstep destroys it. STAY ON TRAIL.

DO NOT STEP ON THE CRUST -- CRITICAL ECOLOGY

The cryptobiotic soil crust is the most important ecological feature in the park and the most easily destroyed. The dark, lumpy ground between established trails is alive -- a biological community that stabilizes the desert soil against erosion. A single footstep can destroy crust that took centuries to develop. This is the scientific reason for 'stay on trail' at Arches. It is not an aesthetic preference.

PRO TIPS

What Separates Great Arches Visits from Frustrating Ones

BEATING THE CROWDS	PACKING + SAFETY
-> Arrive at your priority trailhead before sunrise. Drive straight there -- do not stop at viewpoints. The lots fill within 30-60 minutes of sunrise on busy spring weekends. -> Weekdays throughout the season are dramatically less crowded than weekends. A Tuesday-Thursday visit in spring or fall transforms the experience. -> November through February: no crowds, no competition for parking, cooler temps. Snow on red rock is extraordinary. Some mornings icy on slickrock. -> Devils Garden Primitive section and Tower Arch are the two best options for guaranteed solitude even on the busiest days.	-> Water: minimum 1 liter per person per hour in summer. 0.5 liters per hour in spring and fall minimum. No water sold inside the park -- bring everything from Moab. -> Footwear: sticky-soled hiking shoes for slickrock sections. Sandals are unsafe on exposed slickrock. -> Sun protection: hat, sunscreen, UV-blocking sunglasses. The park has almost no natural shade on any major trail. -> Download offline maps before entering: AllTrails or Gaia GPS work with GPS signal even without cell service. Essential for Devils Garden Primitive Loop and Fiery Furnace. -> Headlamp: essential for pre-dawn Delicate Arch hikes, sunset returns, and night sky visits. A red-light mode preserves night vision. Osprey day packs for Arches hiking: osprey.pxf.io/adventurefamily Full gear list at our Amazon shop: a.co/d/004b9eJS

PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDE

Golden Hour, Night Sky, and the Shots Worth Planning

SUBJECT + LOCATION	BEST LIGHT	RECOMMENDED GEAR	INSIDER NOTES
Delicate Arch (3 mi hike)	Sunrise: arch catches first light directly. Sunset: salmon-pink glow -- most dramatic but requires 2-hr early parking arrival.	Wide-angle (24mm) for arch + mountains. Telephoto (200mm) from lower viewpoints.	Lower viewpoints allow distant telephoto shots from the car -- but lack the visceral impact of standing at the arch itself.

What's Inside the Full Edition

25

PAGES

9

TRAIL PROFILES

1

2026
NO-TIMED-ENTRY UPDATE

2026

FACT-CHECKED

In the full guide, you'll get:

- The 2026 timed-entry elimination explained plainly -- exactly what changed on February 18, 2026, and what still requires a reservation (Fiery Furnace and Devils Garden Campground).
- Complete profiles for all 9 major hikes, including trailhead-by-trailhead parking-fill times so you know exactly when each lot fills and where to go instead.
- The Fiery Furnace permit system explained in full -- ranger-led tour vs. self-guided permit, including the 8:05am Recreation.gov sellout window during peak season.
- A complete, hour-by-hour 3-day itinerary built around parking timing, golden-hour light, and the hottest hours of the day.
- A full photography guide for every major arch and formation, plus a dedicated night-sky and Milky Way section for this International Dark Sky Park.
- The insider parking strategy, wildlife and cryptobiotic soil guidance, and our picks for where to stay and eat in Moab.

PREMIER EDITION

Get the Full Arches Guide

25 pages. 9 full trail profiles. The complete 2026 permit, parking, and 3-day itinerary system -- built by locals.

\$15 -- Buy the Full Guide

Available now at
AdventureFamilyVlog.com