

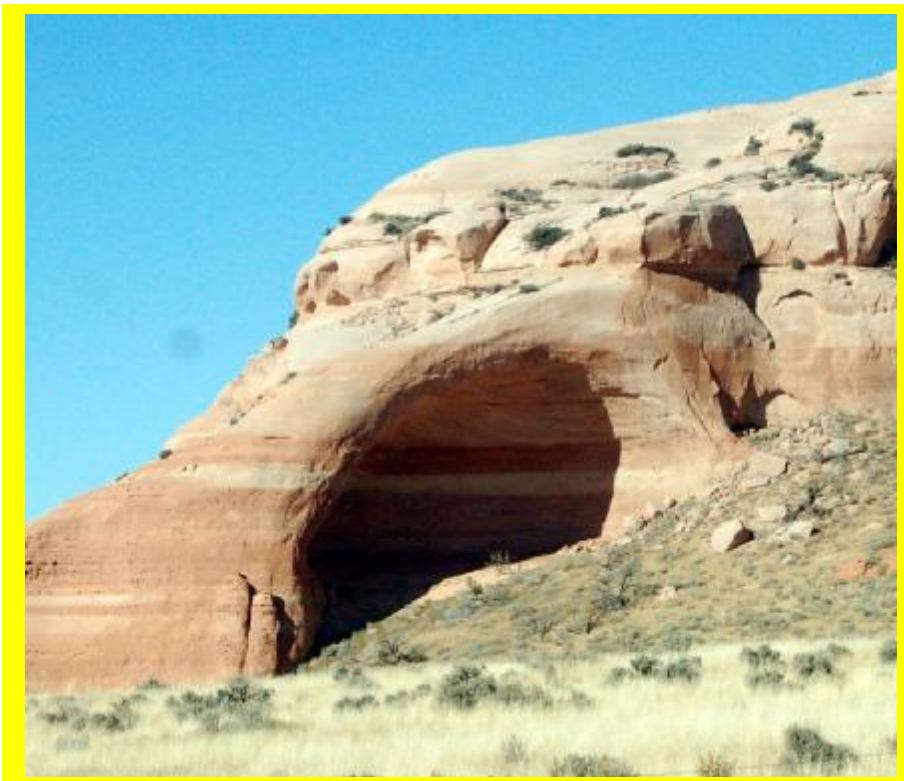
Western Road Trip Newsletter



I should be here for the next 3 to 4 nights

Hello to My Family and Friends

Packed up and was gone from the Needles by 10 a.m. There are some wild rock formations out here.



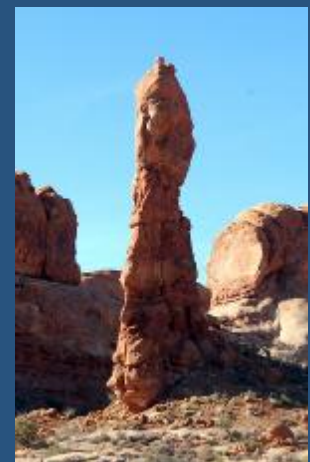
As I was driving along I passed a tourist attraction called "Hole in the Rock". I had read about this sight on the web before my trip but decided to pass it by. It is a large sandstone rock formation that, 75 years ago, a man and his wife carved a home directly into the rock and lived there for many years.

Day 18
Tuesday
November 12th
Needles District
To
Arches National Park

Stats
149 miles today
2659 total miles this trip

Weather
High Temp: 65
Low Temp: 30's
Conditions: Sunny

"No name, just
found it
interesting."



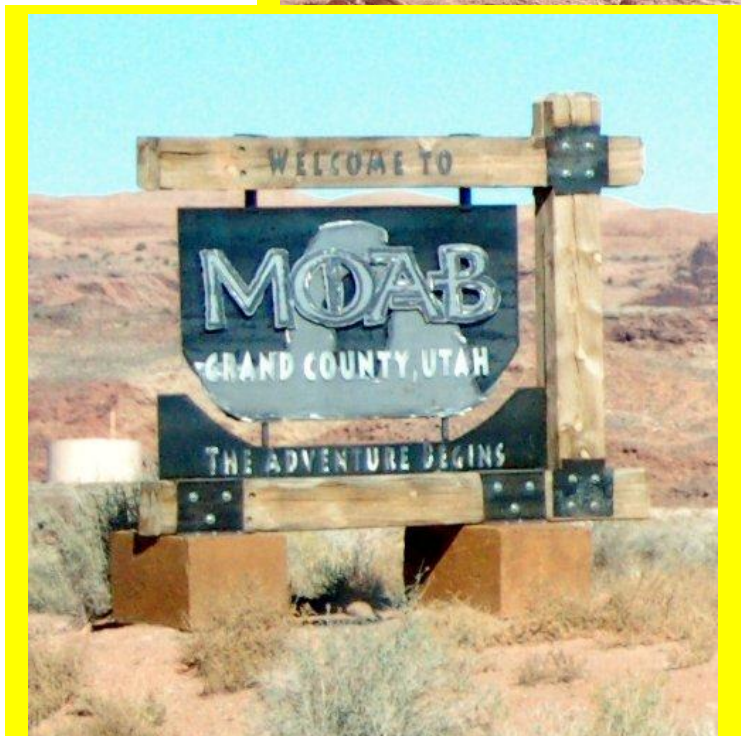
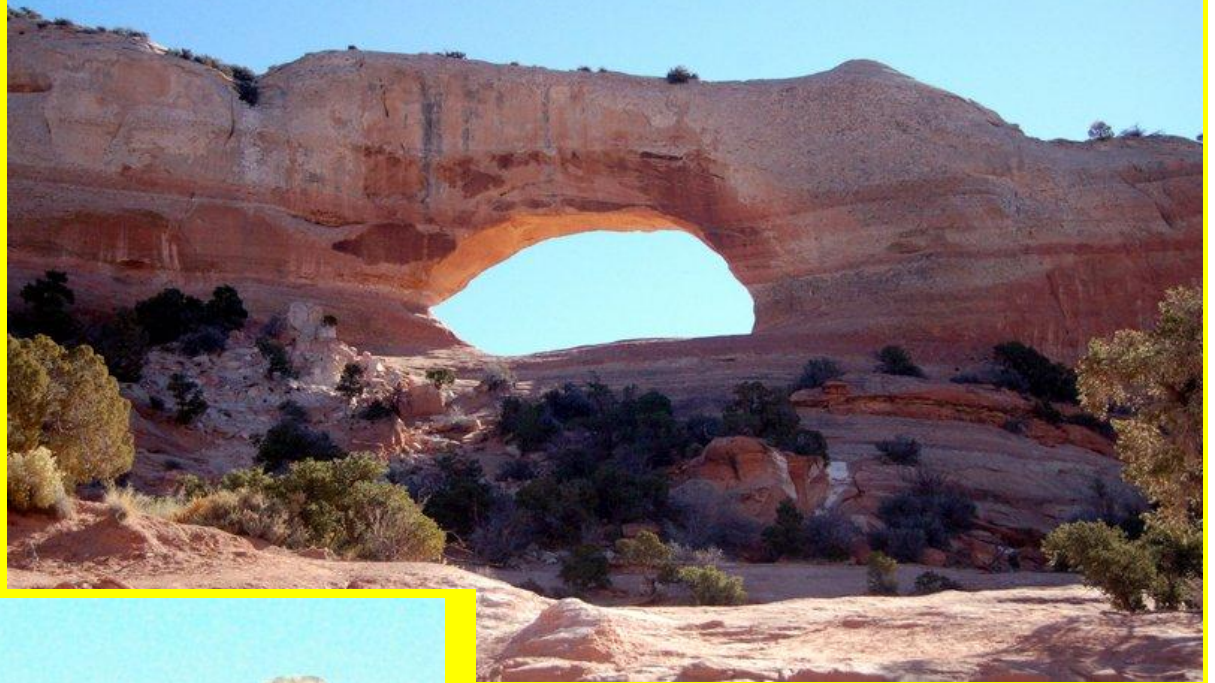
One of the rock
formations in
Arches



Wilson Arch

WILSON ARCH WAS NAMED AFTER JOE WILSON, A LOCAL PIONEER WHO HAD A CABIN NEARBY IN DRY VALLEY. THIS FORMATION IS KNOWN AS ENTRADA SANDSTONE. OVER TIME THE SUPERFICIAL CRACKS, JOINTS, AND FOLDS OF THESE LAYERS WERE SATURATED WITH WATER. ICE FORMED IN THE FISSURES, MELTED UNDER EXTREME DESERT HEAT, AND WINDS CLEANED OUT THE LOOSE PARTICLES. A SERIES OF FREE-STANDING FINS REMAINED. WIND AND WATER ATTACKED THESE FINS UNTIL, IN SOME, THE CEMENTING MATERIAL GAVE WAY AND CHUNKS OF ROCK TUMBLED OUT. MANY DAMAGED FINS COLLAPSED LIKE THE ONE TO THE RIGHT OF WILSON ARCH. OTHERS, WITH THE RIGHT DEGREE OF HARDNESS SURVIVED DESPITE THEIR MISSING MIDDLES LIKE WILSON ARCH.

I also received my first glimpse of a real arch, Wilson Arch. Not much description needed due to the plaque to the left.



I stopped in Moab at the Info Center. I sat in the truck a while talking to a claims company on the phone, finally had cell service, and when I tried to enter the Info Center the sign said they opened at 9:00 every day, except Tuesday. Really? Oh well, back to the truck. Sent off the two late newsletters, checked out the weather in the parks, looked up campgrounds and decided to make Arches my home base for the next few days. After a little shopping to restock the cooler and a full tank of gas, I drove 5 miles north to Arches National Park.



I am just great at self-portraits aren't I? Can you tell by the consternation on my face that this is the fourth or fifth try to get both the sign and my face in the picture?

I stopped at the Visitor's Center and went through the usual routine. The campground is 18.5 miles into the park. It was already 1:30 and I needed to eat some lunch.



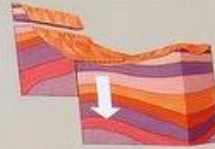
Mv view for lunch

Visitor's Center

Moab Fault

A dramatic break in the earth's surface occurred here about six million years ago. Under intense pressure, unable to stretch, the crust cracked and shifted. Today, the highway (below) parallels this fracture line, called the Moab Fault.

After the rock layers shifted, the east wall of the canyon where you are standing ended up more than 2,600 feet (792 meters) lower than the west side (across the highway).



Individual rock layers no longer line up horizontally here because of faulting. The cliff across the highway looks much like the Entrada Sandstone, but is actually composed of Wingate Sandstone — rock deposited about forty million years before the Entrada.



I know this is almost the same picture, but I wanted to save you all the trouble of backing up to look at the picture after reading the plaque.

I decided I would stop at all the scenic views to my right as I drove to the campground. The less turning and crossing traffic I have to do while pulling the trailer the better. No hiking, just scenic views.



The clean, clear air of this region often permits high visibility. The La Sal Mountains are about 20 miles (32 km) away, and rise to over 12,000 feet (3640 meters) in elevation.



The Rise and Fall of an Arch

Like living things, arches have life cycles, too. Starting as small holes in rock faces, they enlarge and eventually collapse from weathering and erosion.

Water, whether from rain or snow, dissolves the natural cement (calcium carbonate) in the Entrada Sandstone. Sand grains once "glued" together as rock are separated and washed away; arches form, grow, mature, and fall.

Although there are no major arches here at Courthouse Towers, the cycle is continuing. Look for Baby Arch in the rock wall to the left of Sheep Rock. Weathering over time will enlarge this growing arch until it finally collapses.

Fallen Arches
 Sheep Rock is part of an eroding rock wall or "fin" that probably contained arches (outlined at left). We can't be certain, but the sharp cleavage found on Sheep Rock and the shapes of other rock faces near it are clues that an arch once connected the "sharp" to the rock mass it faces.

Possible fallen arch

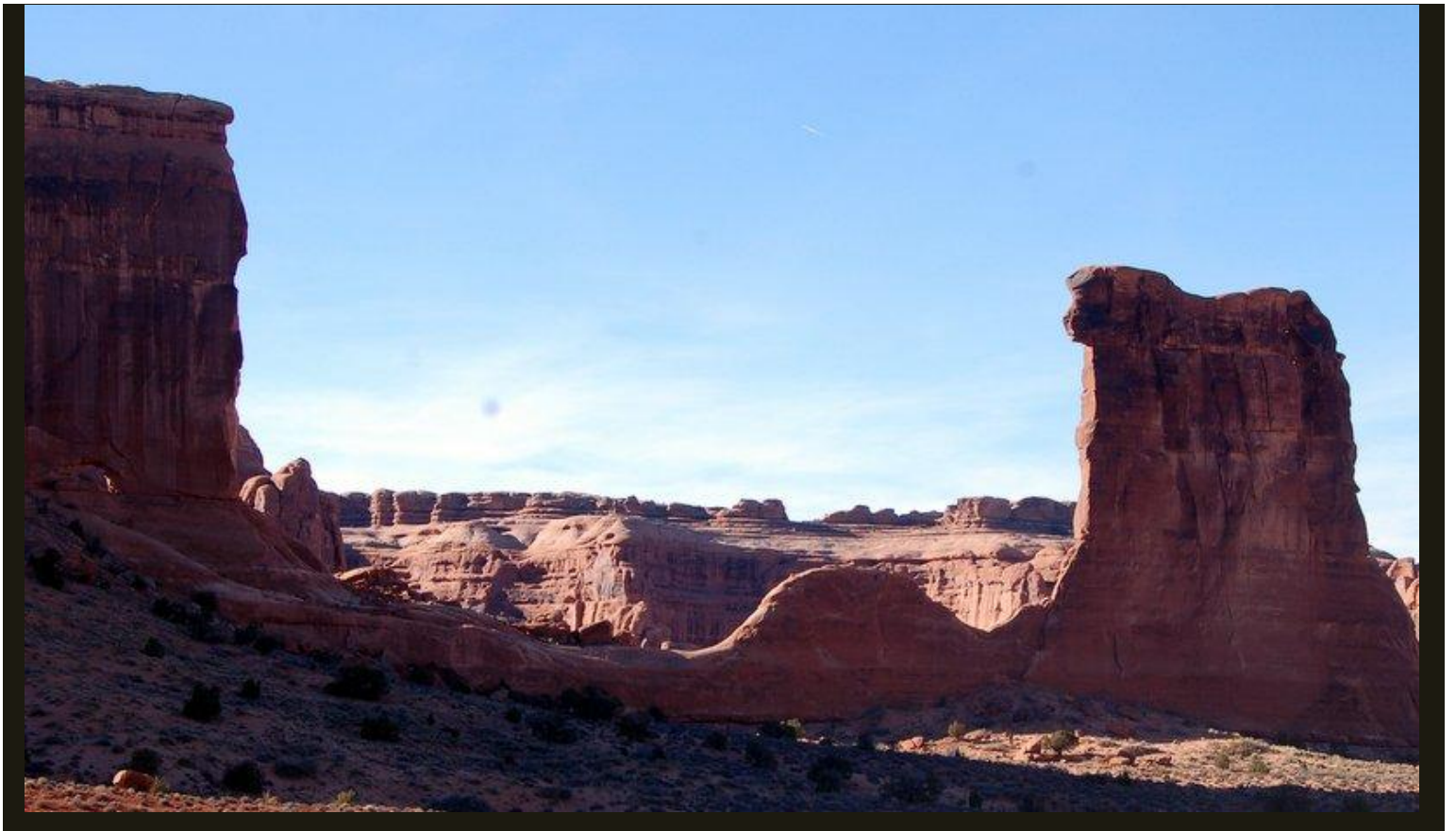
Possible fallen arch

Baby Arch

Sheep Rock



I didn't think all that much of the Courthouse Towers, maybe because there was no plaque telling me where to look. But there was the plaque above which I thought was very interesting. Compare the plaque picture above with the real one below.



I thought the bend of the rock strata in the pic below was rather interesting.

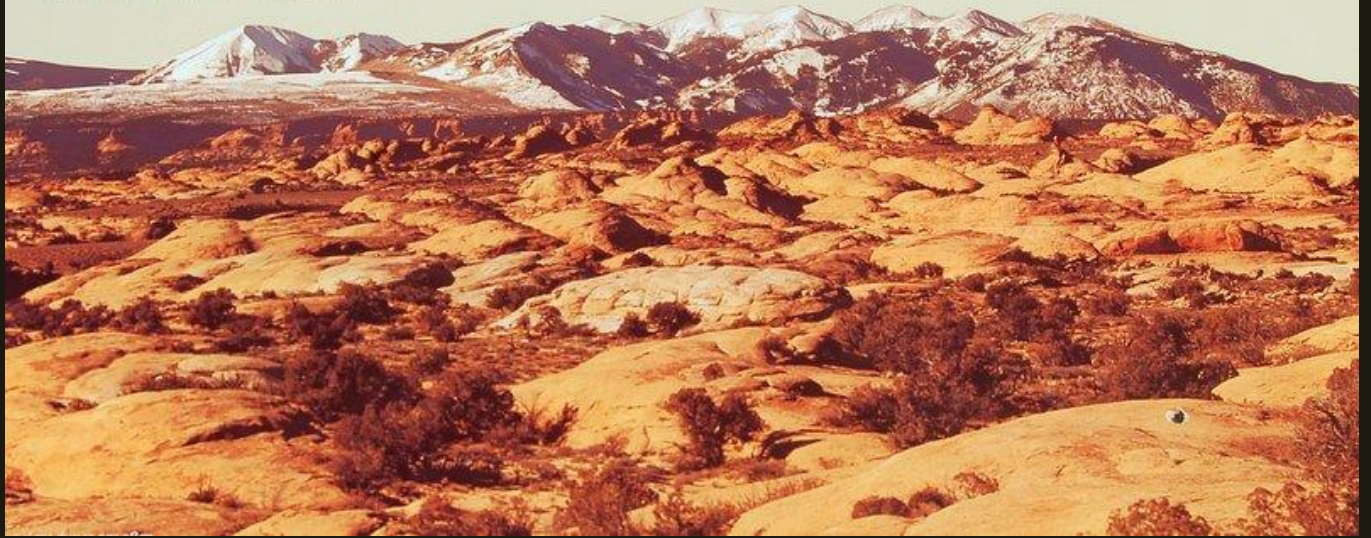


Ancient Sand Dunes

This vast area was once covered by extensive sand dunes. Some 200 million years ago, winds from the northwest carried tons of fine-grained sand into this area, creating an immense desert.

Over time, the sand drifts were covered by other layers of sediment, compressed, and cemented by quartz and calcite into Navajo Sandstone.

Erosion has since washed away the overlying layers, exposing the "petrified" dunes.





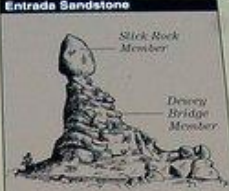
No name, just found it interesting.

Balanced Rock

The forces of erosion are sculpting more than just arches. Balanced Rock clearly shows the various layers responsible for this amazing defiance of gravity.

The caprock of the hard Slick Rock Member of the Entrada Sandstone is perched upon a pedestal of mudstone. This softer Dewey Bridge Member of the Carmel Formation weathers more quickly than the resistant rock above. Eventually, the faster-eroding Dewey Bridge will cause the collapse of Balanced Rock.

Entrada Sandstone



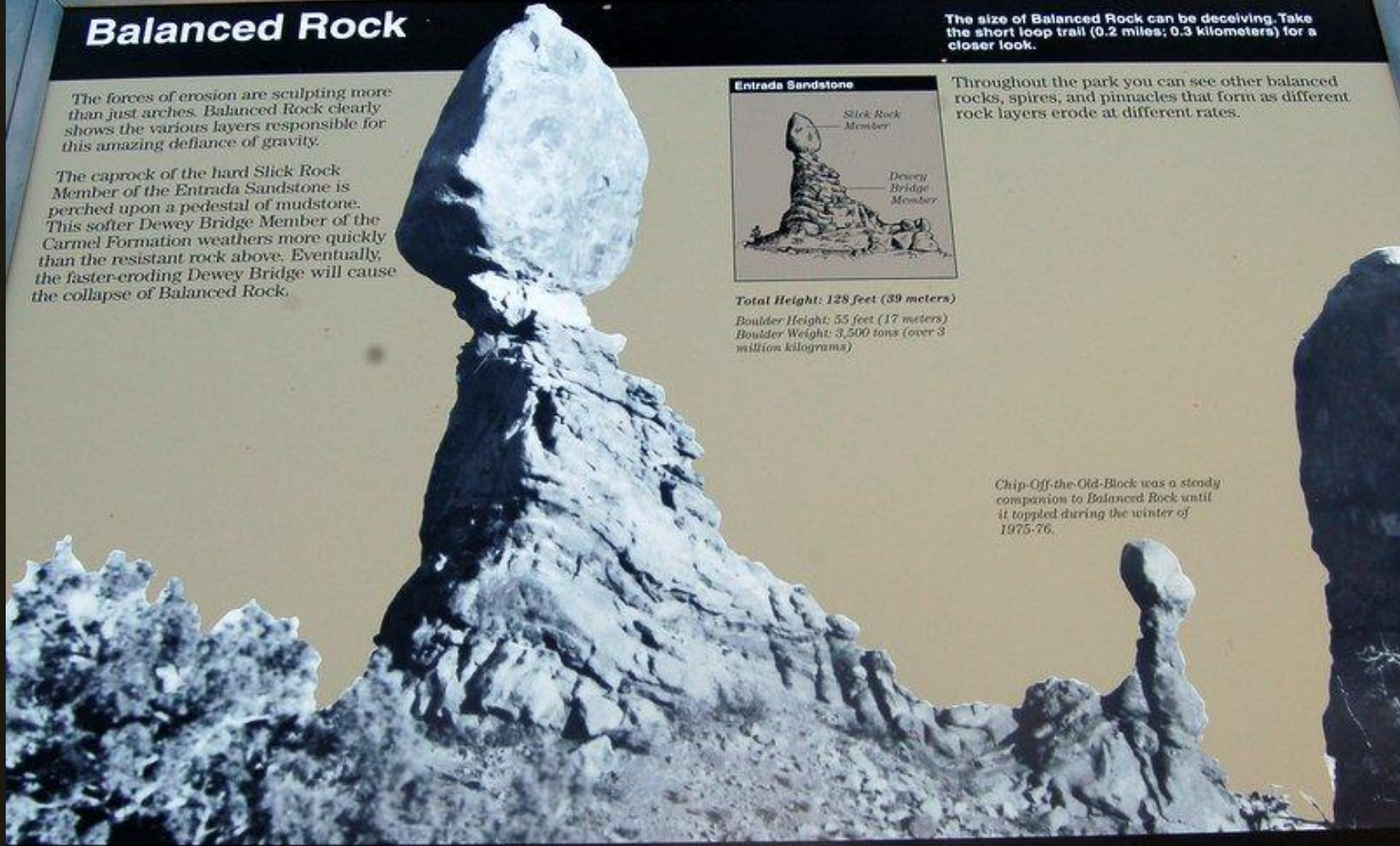
Slick Rock Member
Dewey Bridge Member

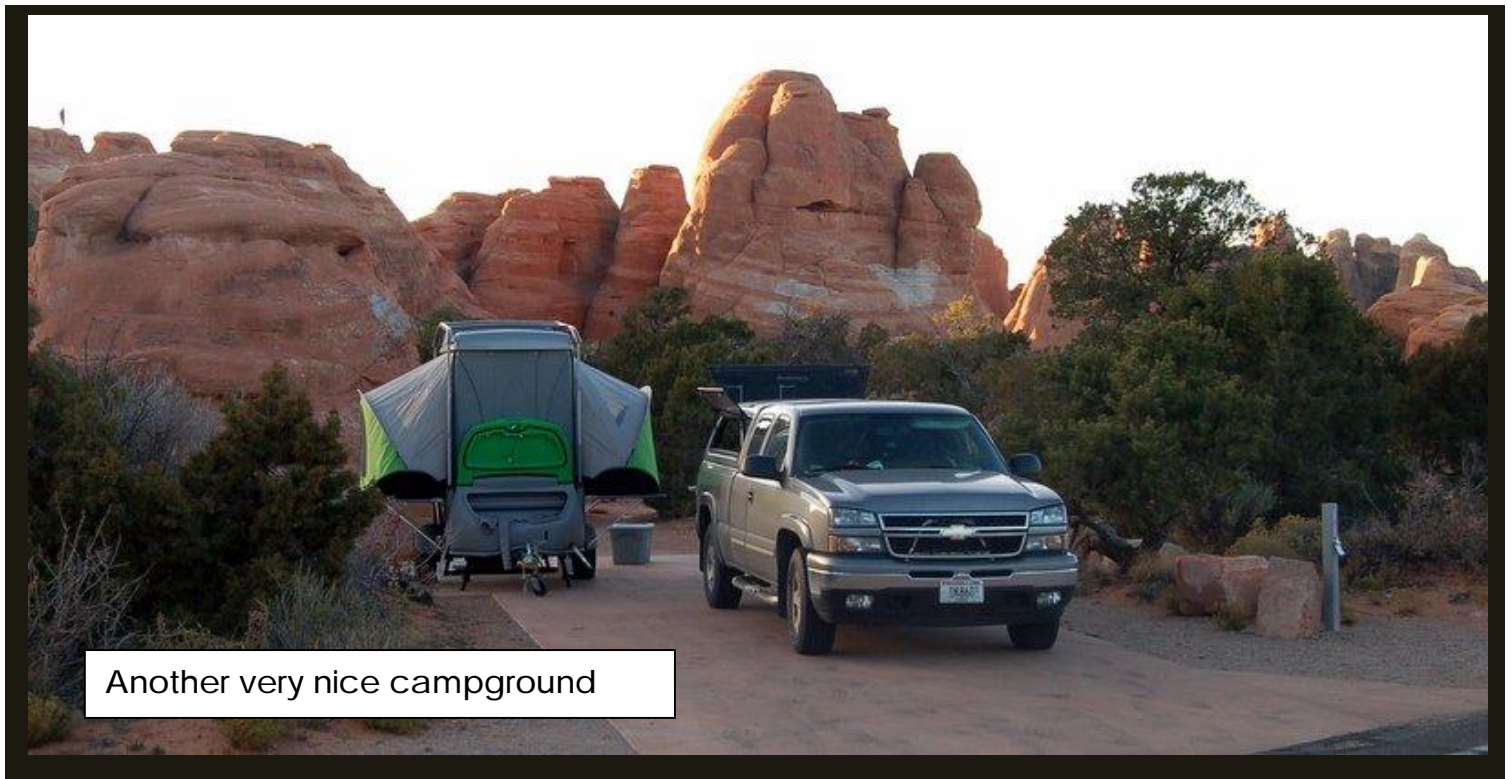
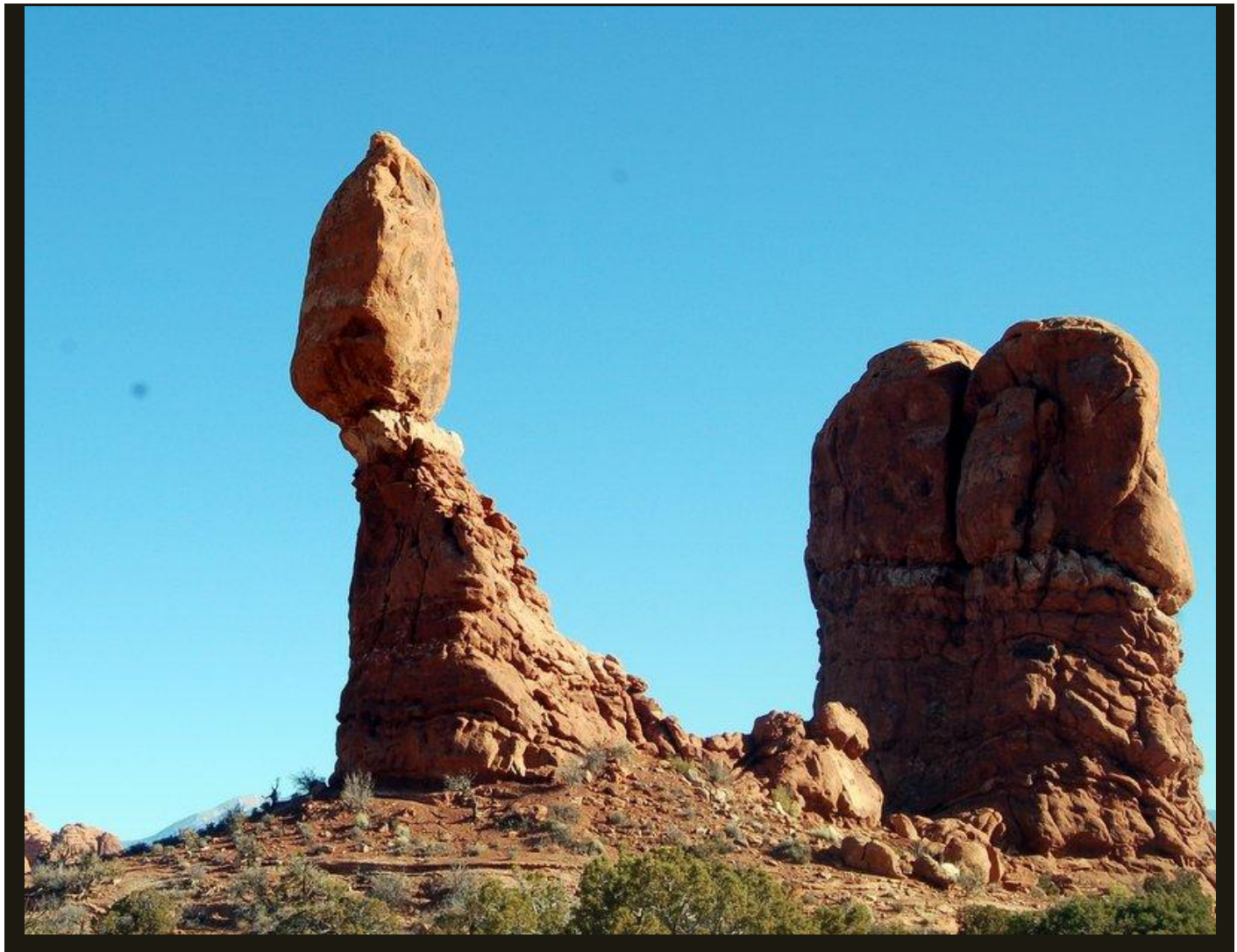
Total Height: 128 feet (39 meters)
Boulder Height: 55 feet (17 meters)
Boulder Weight: 3,500 tons (over 3 million kilograms)

The size of Balanced Rock can be deceiving. Take the short loop trail (0.2 miles; 0.3 kilometers) for a closer look.

Throughout the park you can see other balanced rocks, spires, and pinnacles that form as different rock layers erode at different rates.

Chip-Off-the-Old-Block was a steady companion to Balanced Rock until it toppled during the winter of 1975-76.





Another very nice campground

Skyline Arch

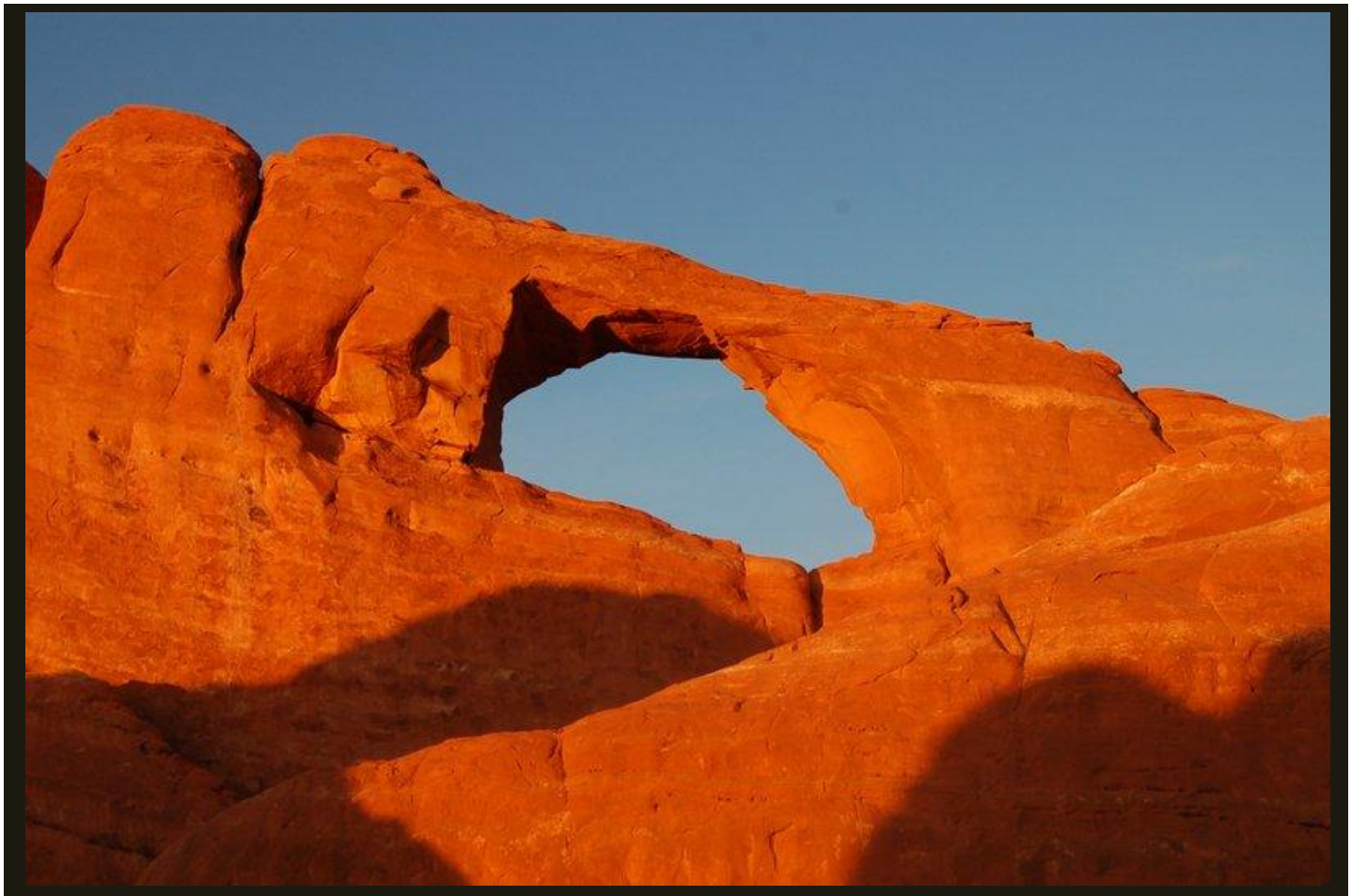
To see some of the rockfall remains, walk the 0.2-mile (0.3-km) trail to the base of Skyline Arch.

Arches usually form slowly, but quick and dramatic changes do occur. In 1940, a large boulder suddenly fell out of Skyline Arch, roughly doubling the size of the opening.

Skyline Arch before (below) and after (right) the 1940 rockfall. The arch now has a span of 71 feet (21.6 meters) and a height of 33.5 feet (10.2 meters).



After getting my camp set up, I decided to try and get a sunset photo. The closest was Skyline Arch.





As I walked back to the parking lot I stopped to watch the actual sunset. There were a few too many clouds for a good one, but it was ok.

Back to camp and dinner. My evening routine is pictured below. Tomorrow I will try to get some sunrise photos for you to enjoy. Landscape Arch is only .8 miles away and is supposed to be about the best trail in the Park. We will see. I am then planning to give my sore toe a little rest. There is a 7 mile drive on an unpaved road to Tower Arch, I think I will give it a try. The weather is sticking in the sixties and sunny, I hope it lasts another couple days. I was very surprised to get a signal with my laptop and was able to send the newsletter last night, only one day late. I know this one is actually yesterdays and today's will be tomorrows.

Good night all....

