

Western Road Trip Newsletter



I will spend most of today and all of tomorrow in Utah

Day 8
Saturday
November 2nd
Mesa Verde
To
Natural Bridges
National Monument

Stats
181 miles today
1992 total miles this trip

Weather
High Temp: 65
Low Temp: 40
Conditions: Sunny

"This was the best day and night of my entire trip!"

Hello to My Family and Friends

Got up early to try and get an early start. I decided to skip the Hovenweep National Monument, I thought you and I had seen enough ruins already at Mesa Verde. Even with the early start, and it was only 29 degrees while I cooked my breakfast of pie iron French toast and a sausage patty, it was probably close to 10:00 by the time I hit the road.

I headed southwest to catch the Four Corners Navajo Monument. It is not owned or operated by the US Government, but by the tribes.



This is from my campsite as I got ready to leave



Looks like a recent landslide

Kind of a teaser for Monument Valley. I thought it looked neat in the haze.



The doors that you see are access to the back of a stall. The Monument is surrounded by stalls with Navajo Tribe members selling all sorts of souvenirs, mostly hand-made items - Jewelry, dream catchers, t-shirts, hand painted pots. etc.





My best side? Standing in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona, all at the same time.

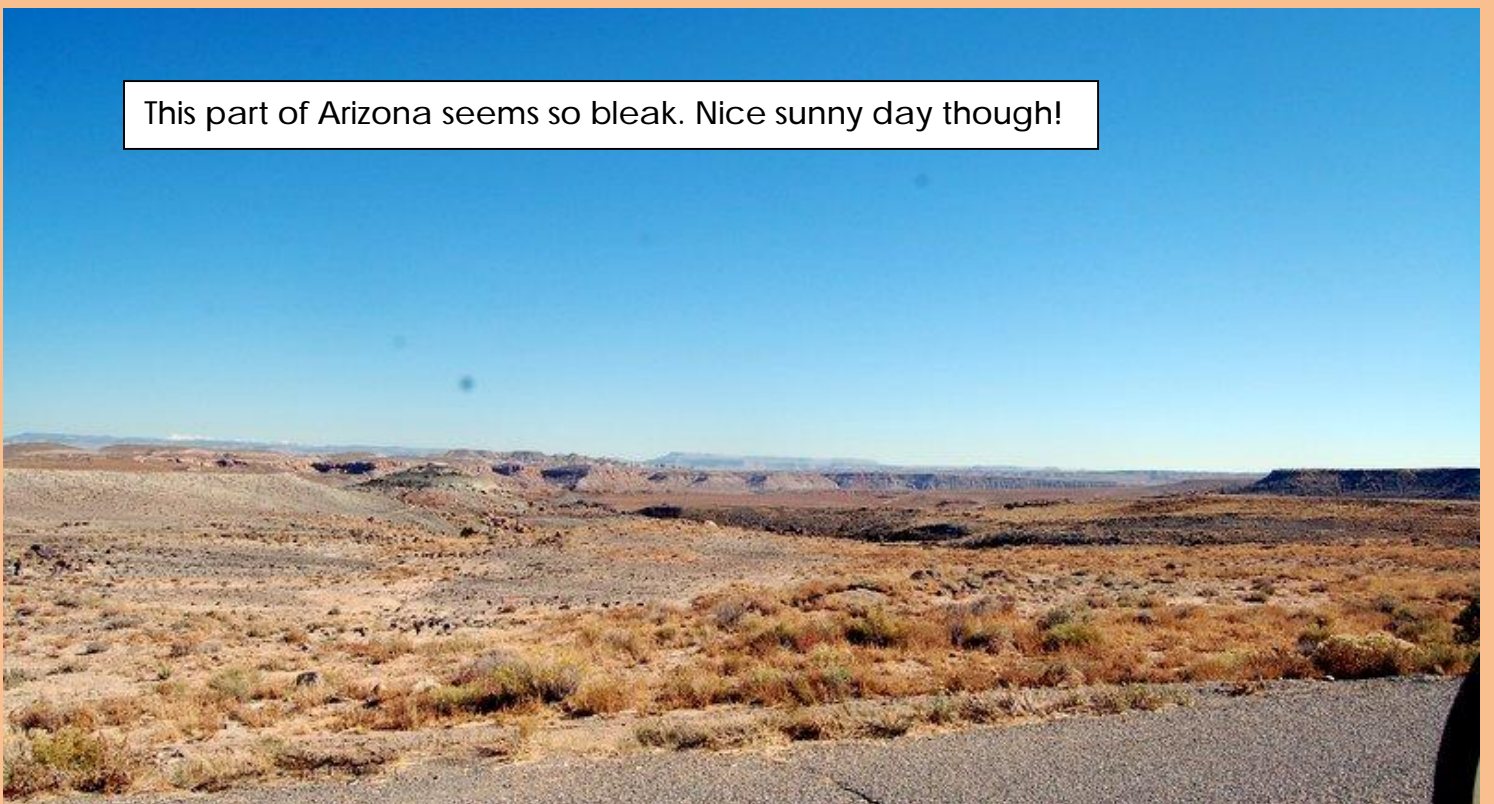


I really liked this gentleman's hand-painted pottery. Unfortunately, the pot he is painting is a couple hundred dollars asking price. Besides, where would I transport it that it would not be in a million pieces by the time I get home.

I noticed this on my way out. Take note of the building in the background that is under construction. It is going to be a restroom. Now follow the state line from the center of the monument. I wonder who will claim the sewage, New Mexico or Arizona.



This part of Arizona seems so bleak. Nice sunny day though!





It's unfortunate that you can't see the colors I can. Those hills look like a jar of sand art.



The view to my left at lunch time.

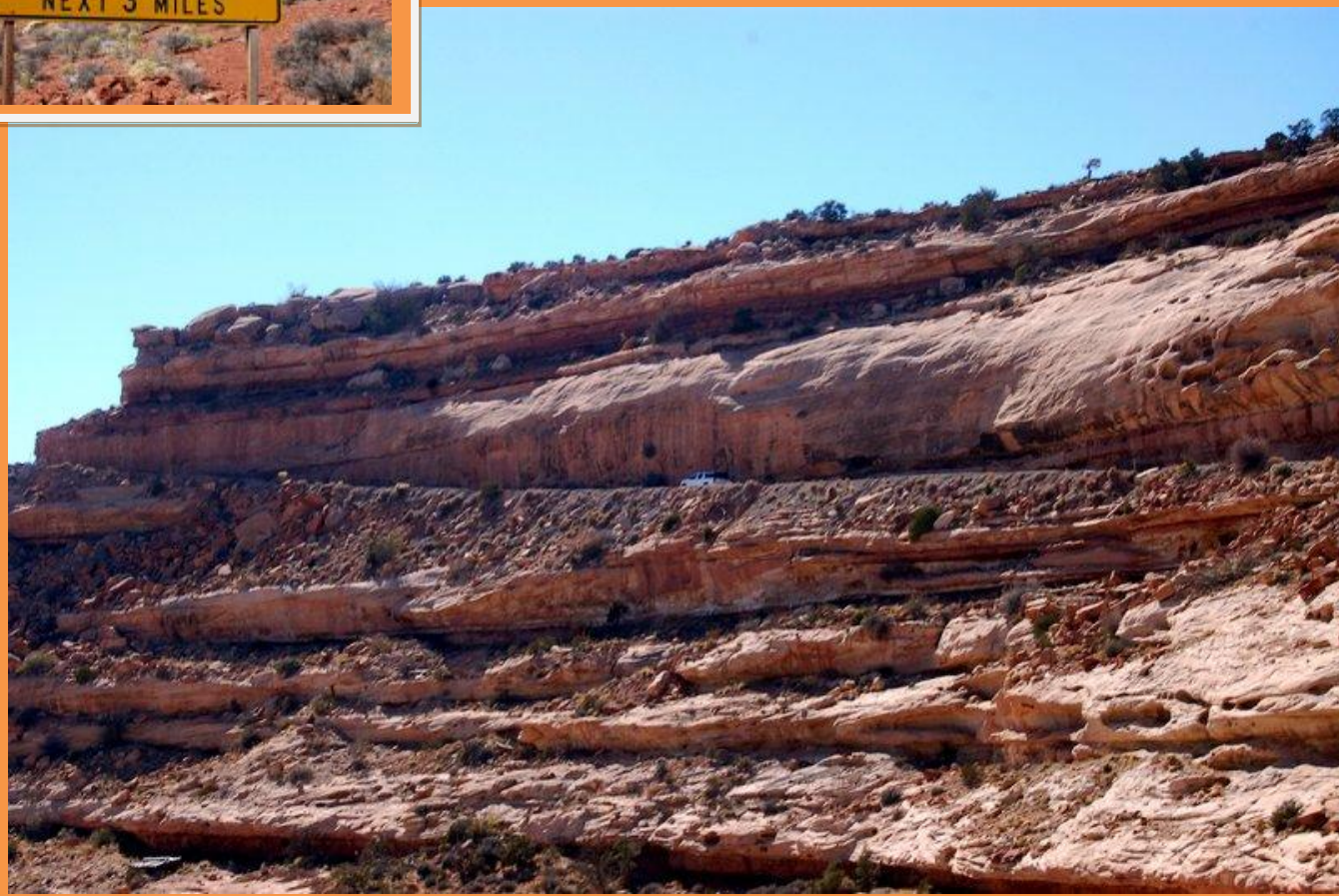


The view to my right at lunch time.

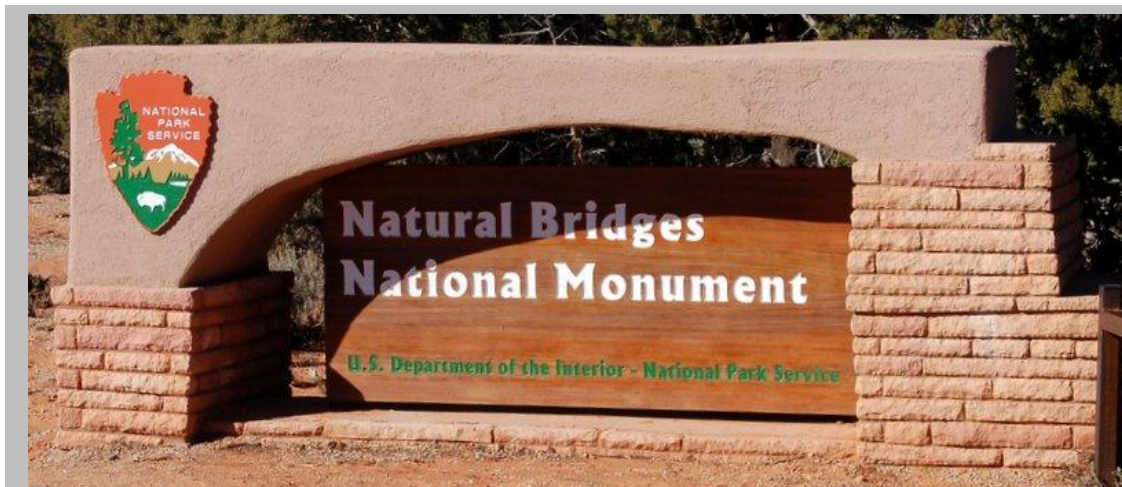


Did you notice the mesa in the photos above? The sign below is at the base of that mesa and it is referring to the road to the top.

Can you spot the white suburban in the photo below?



This was an amazing ride. As I kept getting closer and closer I said to myself, "Self? I don't see any road going up that bluff. I wonder where this road is taking me?" The hairpin turns are asphalt, the straights are gravel. I tried taking a panoramic photo with my cell phone. If it worked I will attach it to the newsletter. I also took one at lunch time, ditto. Now usually what goes up must come down. However, when I reached the top I found it really is a mesa, Cedar Mesa to be exact, 6500'elev. The road did not go down, it was flat.



My destination for tonight –

Natural
Bridges
National
Monument.



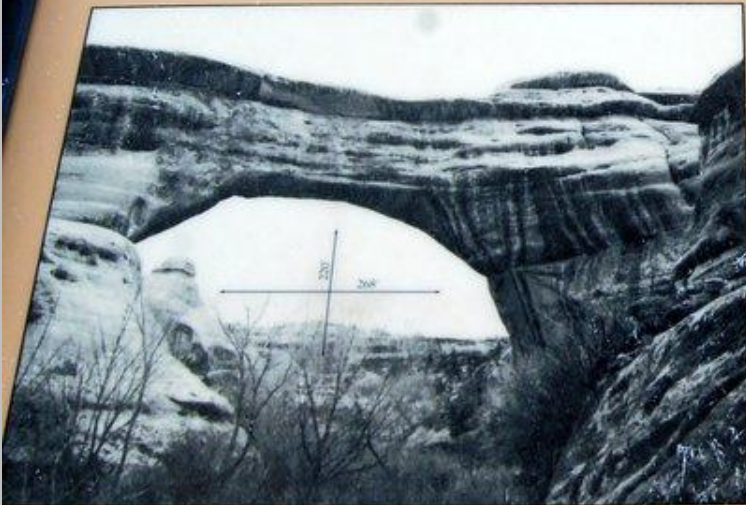
What a great campground. Each site is huge but there are only 13 of them. I am standing about 20 feet from the picnic table and it is another 35 feet or so from there to the camper. Each site has an asphalt pad and is surrounded by the Pinon Pine trees and a lot of sand. Temp reached 65 when I hit the road to inspect the park. The minus is no flush toilets and no electricity. Water and heated johns are at the Visitor Center though.

Sipapu Bridge

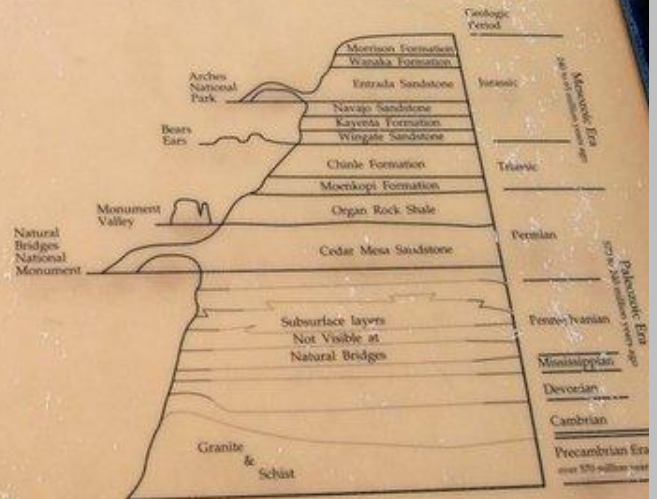
Several names have been given to the bridges over the years. Sipapu (See-pa-pu) has had at least two other names — President and Augusta — but these were later changed. Cliff dwellings and rock art in the area reminded William Douglass, the leader of the 1908 government survey of the Hopi culture he had studied extensively in Arizona. Charged with finding "appropriate Indian names" for the bridges, he chose Sipapu, meaning "place of emergence."

Cedar Mesa, a million acre plateau encompassing the monument and surrounding area, is composed of nearly horizontal sedimentary rock layers. During the Permian Period, wind blown sands from the north and west were deposited here as dunes. Later sediments buried these dunes and with time, pressure and moisture, they became "petrified" sand, or sandstone. Today geologists label this layer the Cedar Mesa Sandstone.

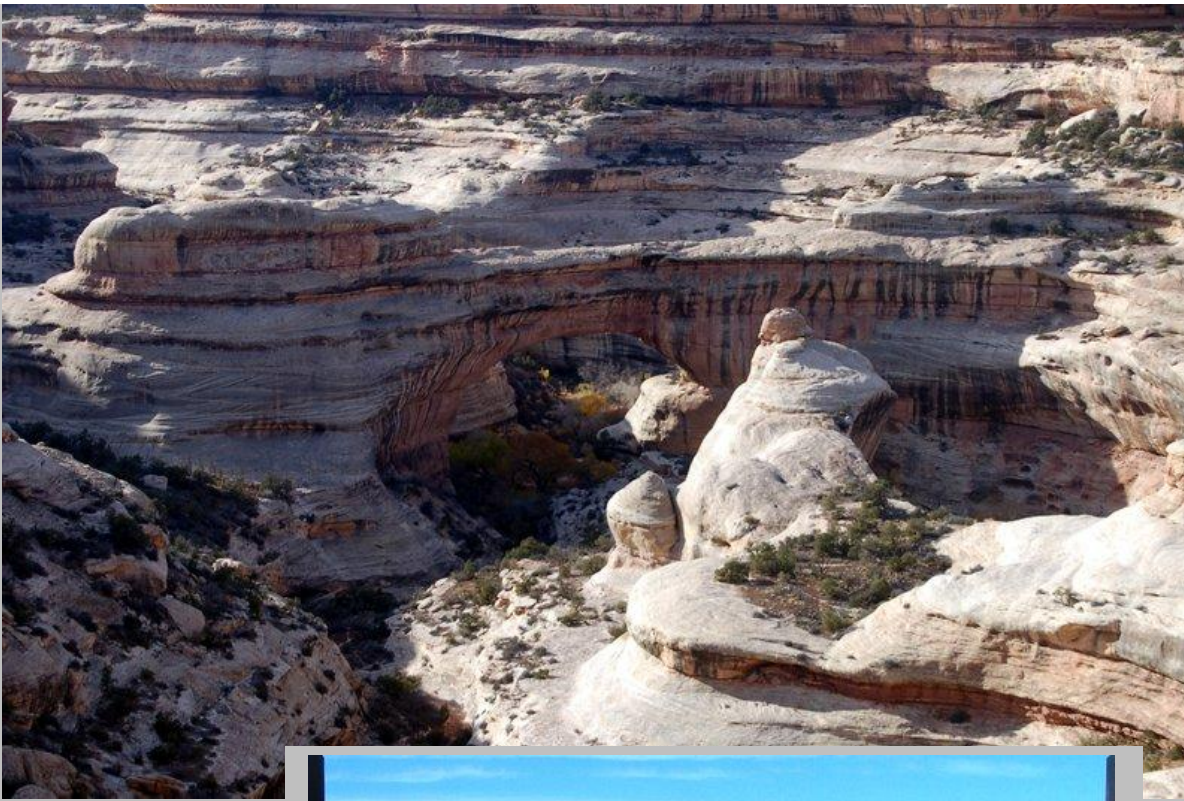
Buried, then tilted and uplifted, the sandstone was slowly exposed by meandering streams which carried away the overlying sediments. These streams helped carve Sipapu and the other bridges.



Sipapu is one of the largest natural bridges in the world.



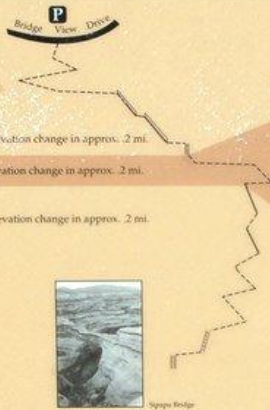
Believe you me, the pictures do not do justice to the depth of the actual sight.



Sipapu Bridge Trailhead

Trail to bridge: .6 mile (.97 km) — 500 foot (152 m) elevation change.

A strenuous hike rewards the adventurous with a closer view of Sipapu Bridge. The trail leads to either a viewpoint part way down the canyon wall or to the canyon bottom where you can stand beneath one of the world's largest natural bridges.



This section of trail contains two flights of stairs and one ladder.

Here the slope flattens. By hiking along a ledge you can get an excellent view of Sipapu Bridge without continuing to the canyon bottom.

This section contains steep switchbacks, exposed bare rock, handrails and two ladders.

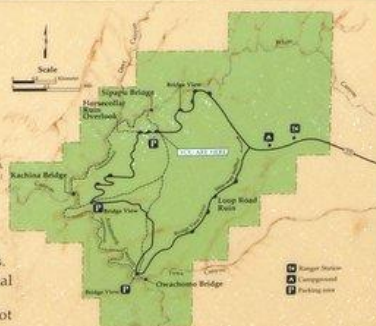
At the base of the bridge an unmaintained trail continues down White Canyon past Horsecollar Ruin to Kachina Bridge.

PLEASE...

- Stay on trails.
- Keep bikes on roads.
- They are considered vehicles.
- Keep pets on a leash in parking areas or in your vehicle.
- Camp only in campground.

REMEMBER...

- Always carry water.
- No climbing on the bridges.
- Watch for lightning and flash floods.
- Observe natural and cultural material in place and do not collect artifacts. Remain outside structures and do not walk on or near fragile walls.

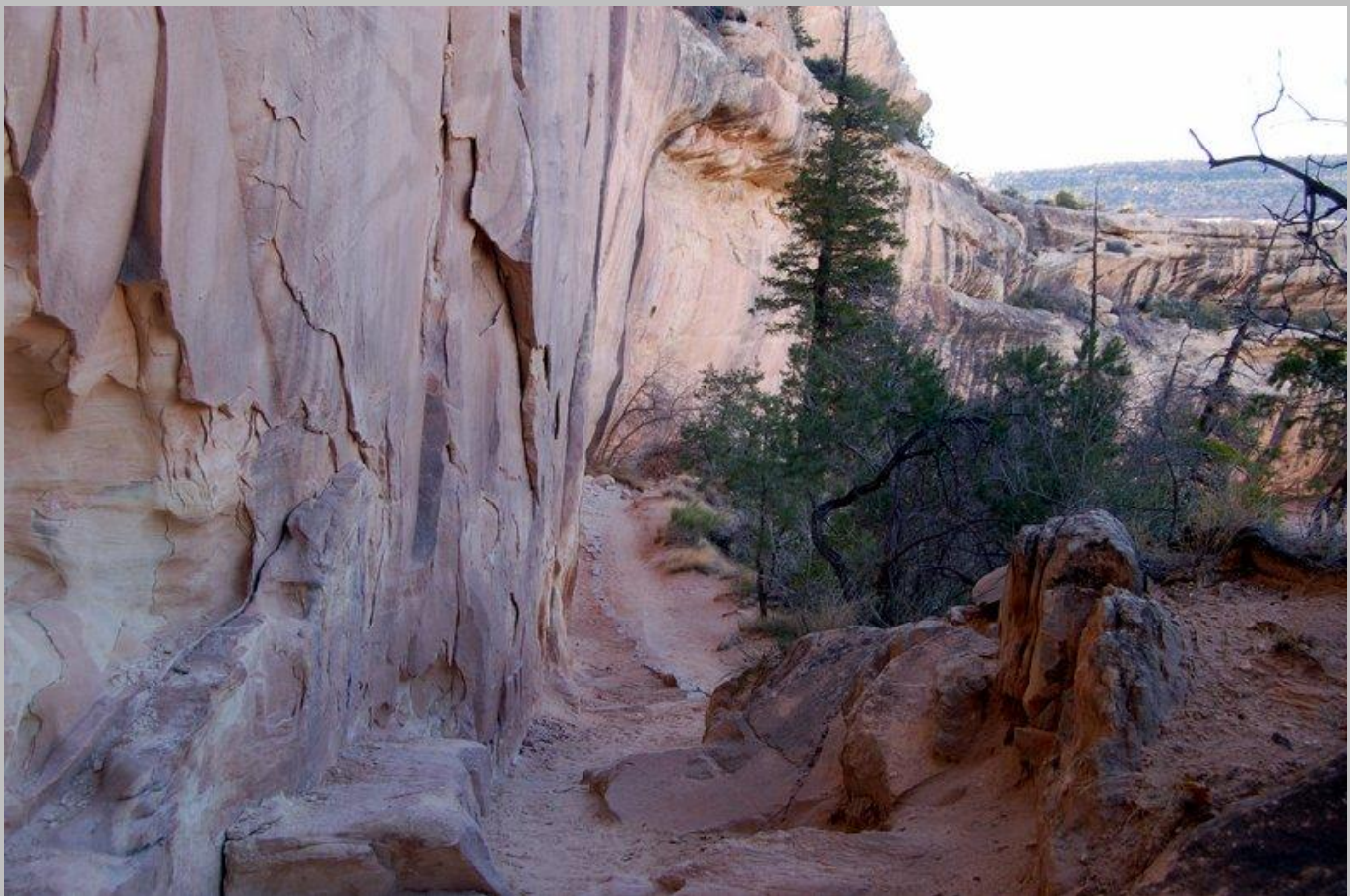


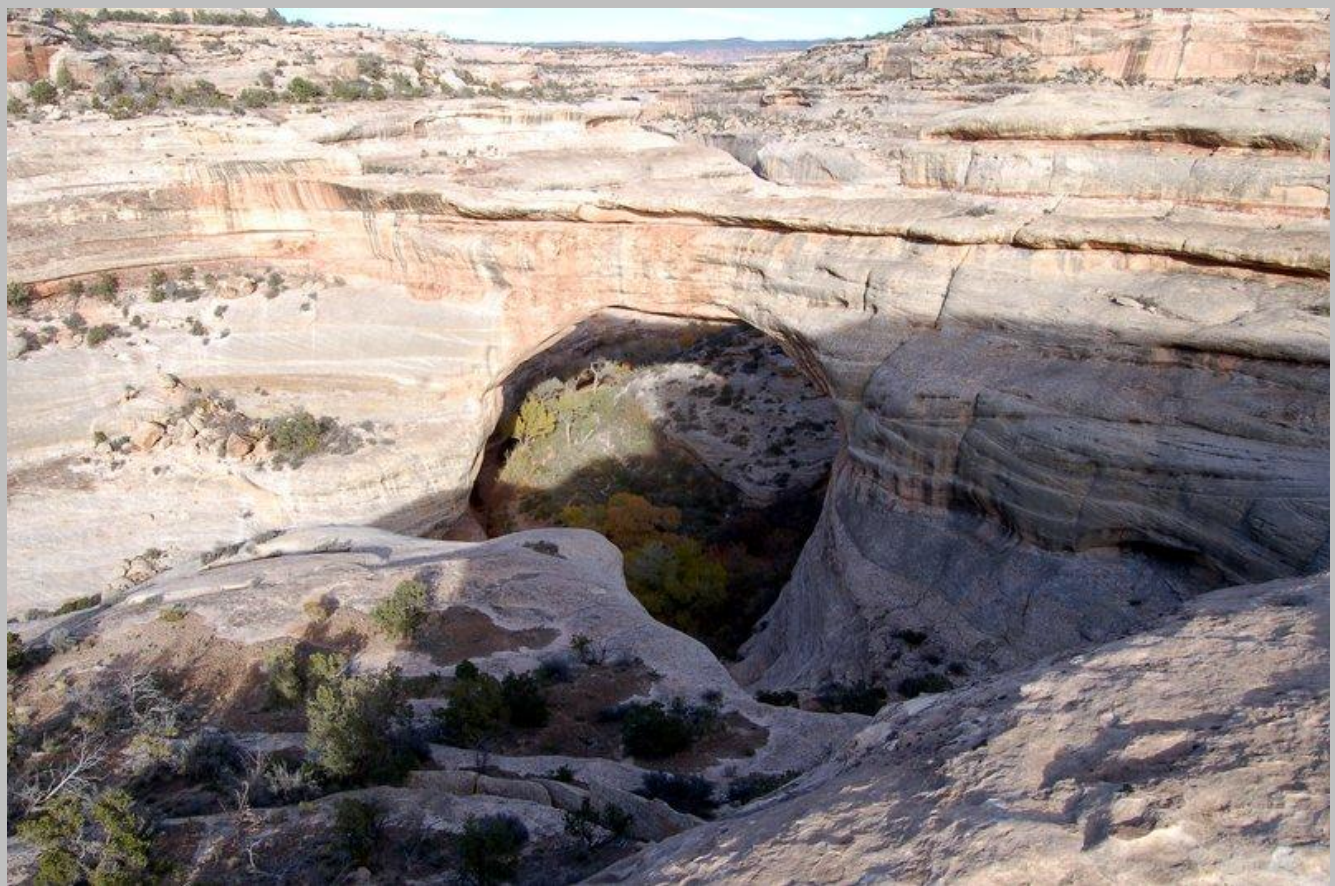
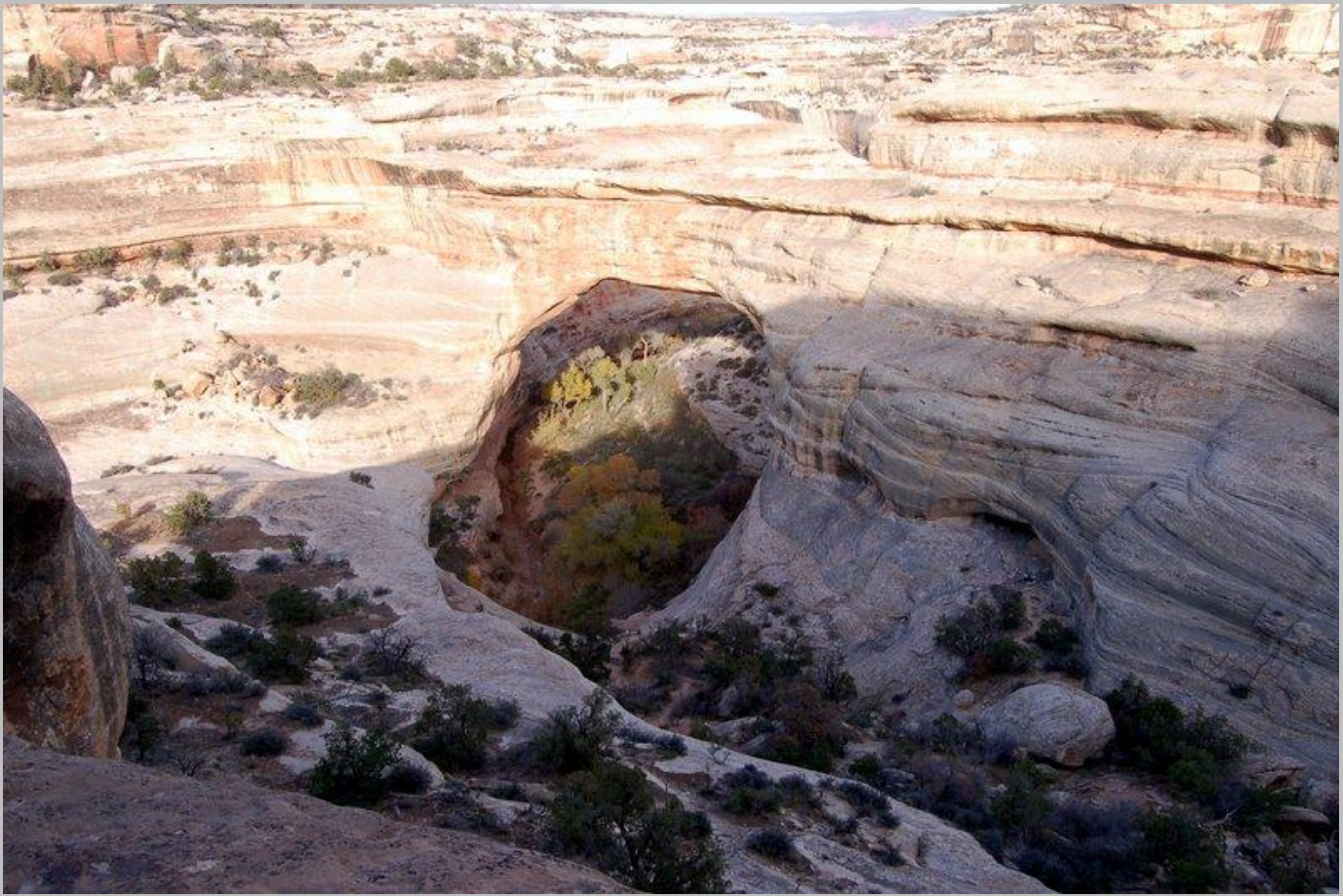
FOR YOUR SAFETY THIS TRAIL MAY BE CLOSED DURING THE WINTER MONTHS DUE TO ICE AND SNOW

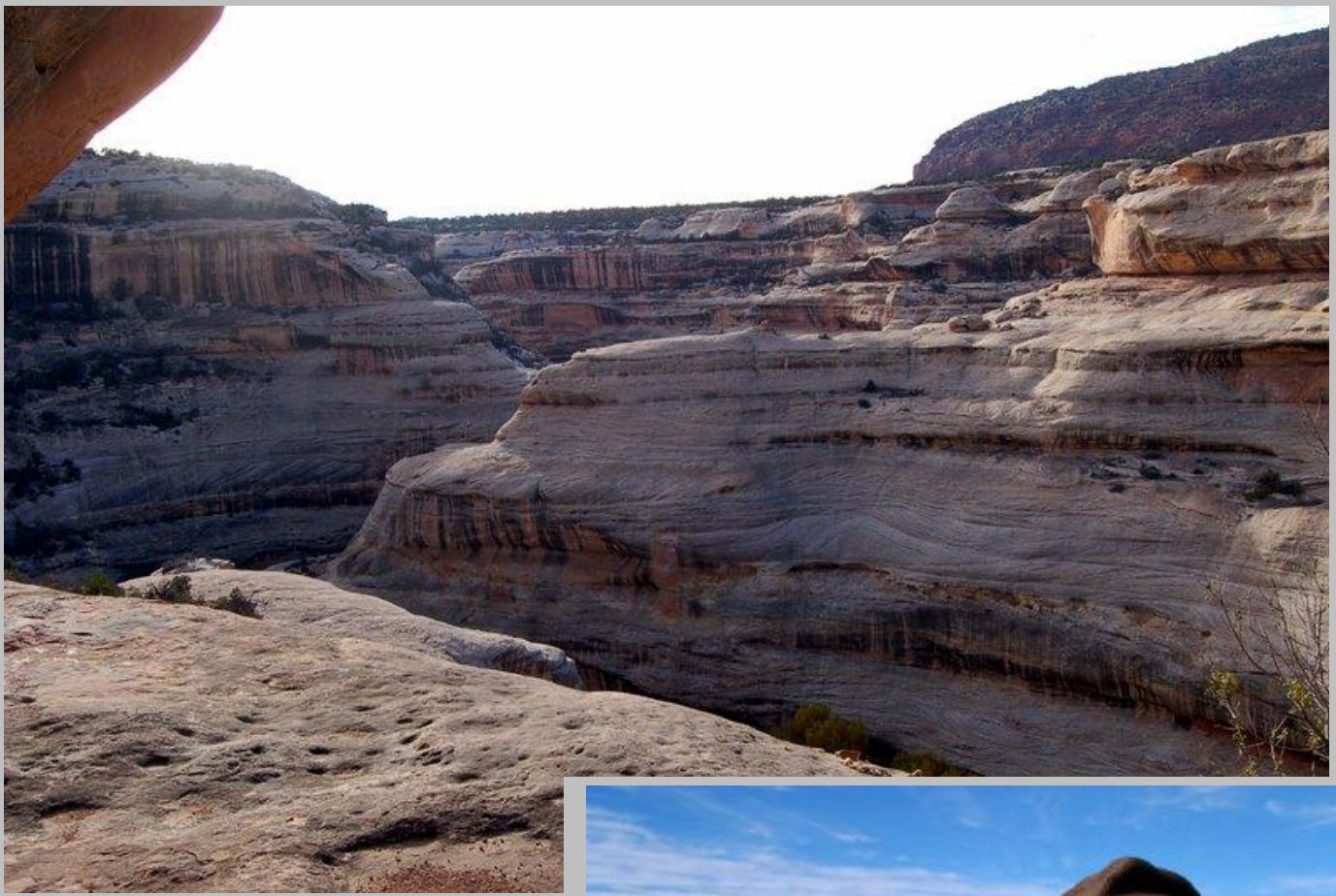


Above: I was trying to show how far back the valley goes.

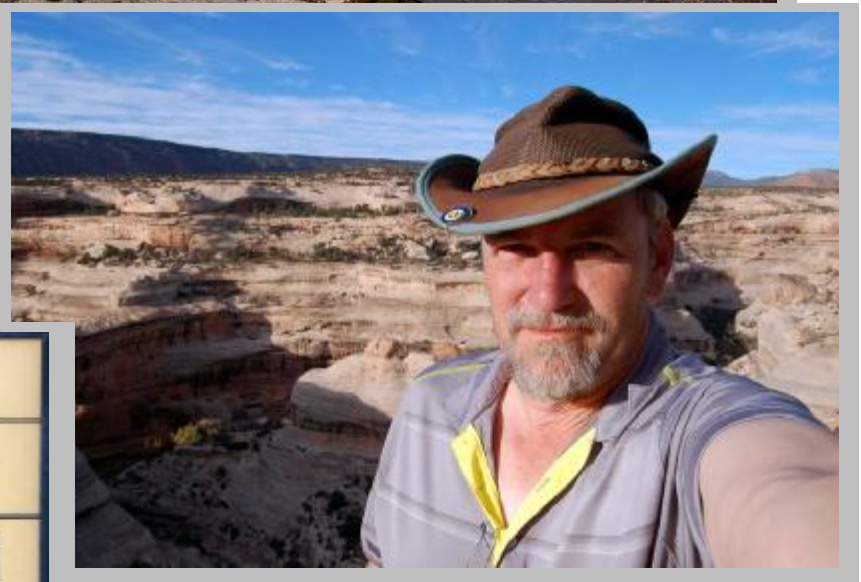
Below: This is the trail I was following.







Just to prove I really am here and not just sending you pictures found on the internet



Horseshollar Ruin Overlook Trail

Trail to overlook: 3 mile (4.8 km) — little elevation change.
Horseshollar Ruin is an outstanding cliff dwelling though you cannot reach the ruin from this overlook.

An unimproved trail follows the cliff edge with railings provided in some areas. Watch over children and wear good walking shoes. Take horse shoes if you have them.

The structure occupied the Tennessean bridge is estimated approximately 20,000 to 25,000 years old. Horseshollar Ruin lies to the east of many other cliff dwellings which the Horseshollar trail is not intended to visit.

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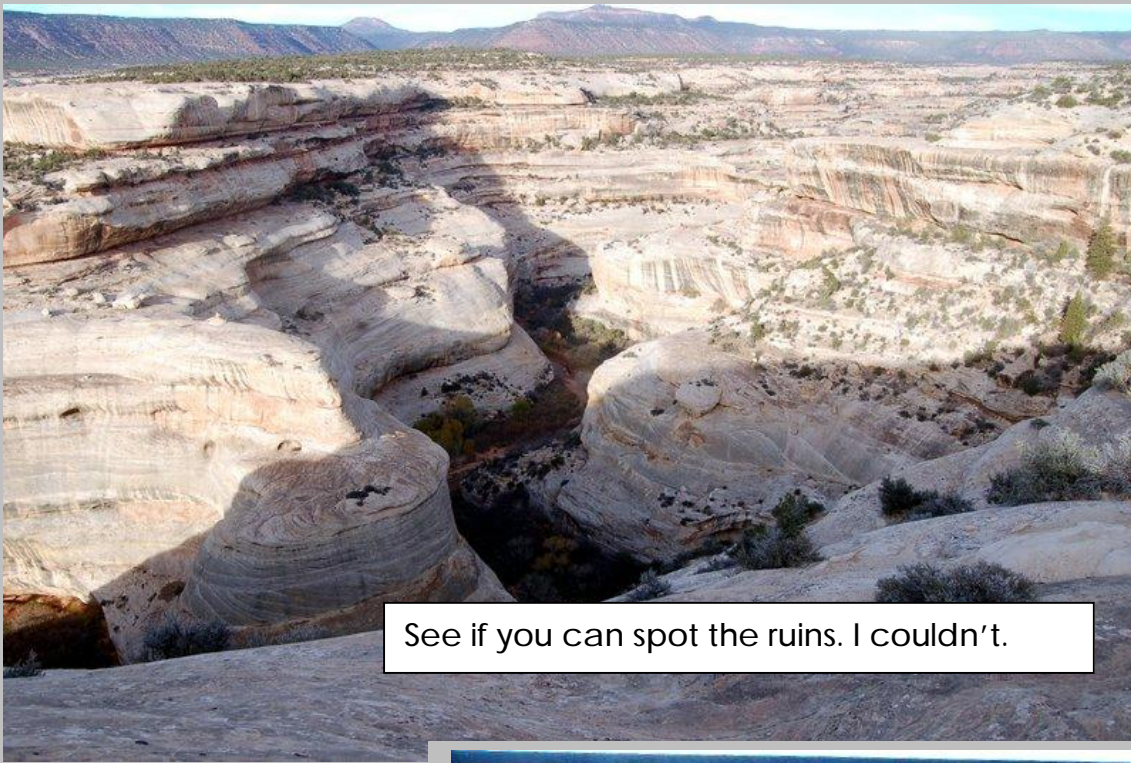
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FOR YOUR SAFETY THIS TRAIL MAY BE CLOSED DURING

This overlook was a little goofy. It was a short hike to the top of the cliff. There was a sign there that told everyone not to stand on the cliff top during a thunderstorm, but there was no sign telling you where to look for the ruins. The whole valley was stretched out below you, cliffs everywhere, and no idea where the ruins are.



See if you can spot the ruins. I couldn't.

Kachina Bridge

Paved trail to overlook: 600 feet (183m) — 60 foot (18m) elevation change.
 Trail to bridge: .75 mile (1.21 km) — 400 foot (122 m) elevation change.

A strenuous hike down to the canyon bottom offers a spectacular view of the bridge and a closer look at the Anasazi culture.

A This section of trail contains switchbacks and uneven stone steps. At the end of this section you can continue to the right to the base of Kachina Bridge or turn left and head up Armstrong Canyon to hike to Owachomo Bridge.

B Here there are long slickrock sections, handrails, and steep steps cut into bare rock.

C At the base of the bridge an unmaintained trail continues up White Canyon past Horsecollar Ruin to Sipapu Bridge.

After leaving Kachina Bridge be sure to retrace your steps and avoid heading down White Canyon and out of the monument.

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FOR YOUR SAFETY THIS TRAIL MAY BE CLOSED DURING WINTER MONTHS DUE TO ICE AND SNOW

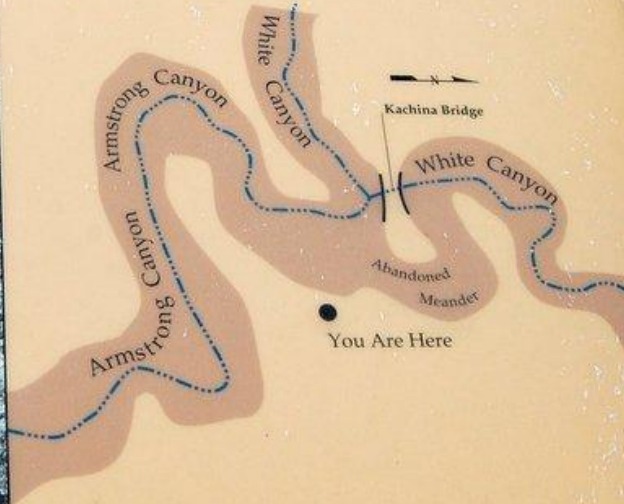
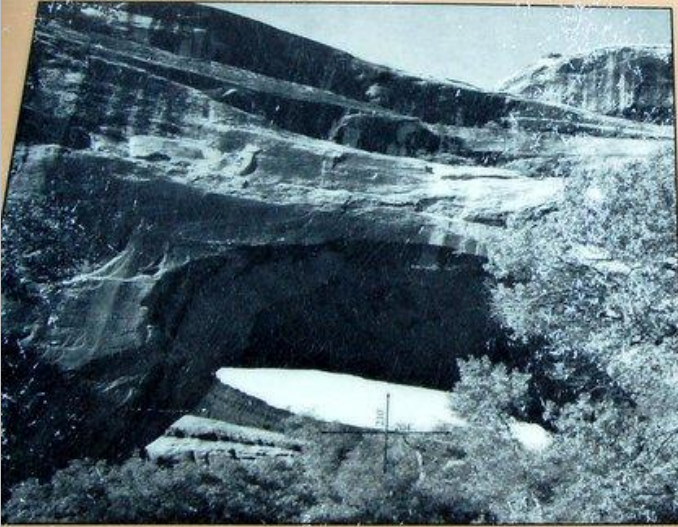
Kachina Bridge

Kachina (Ka-chee-na) Bridge was named for the Hopi kachina spirit, which frequently displayed lightning snake symbols on their bodies. Similar snake patterns were carved by prehistoric people on the base of Kachina Bridge.

Kachina Bridge is the best place in the monogmet to observe the making of a natural bridge. Here meandering streams cut downward into the Cedar Mesa Sandstone, leaving a thin wall of rock. The streams attacked the wall from both sides,

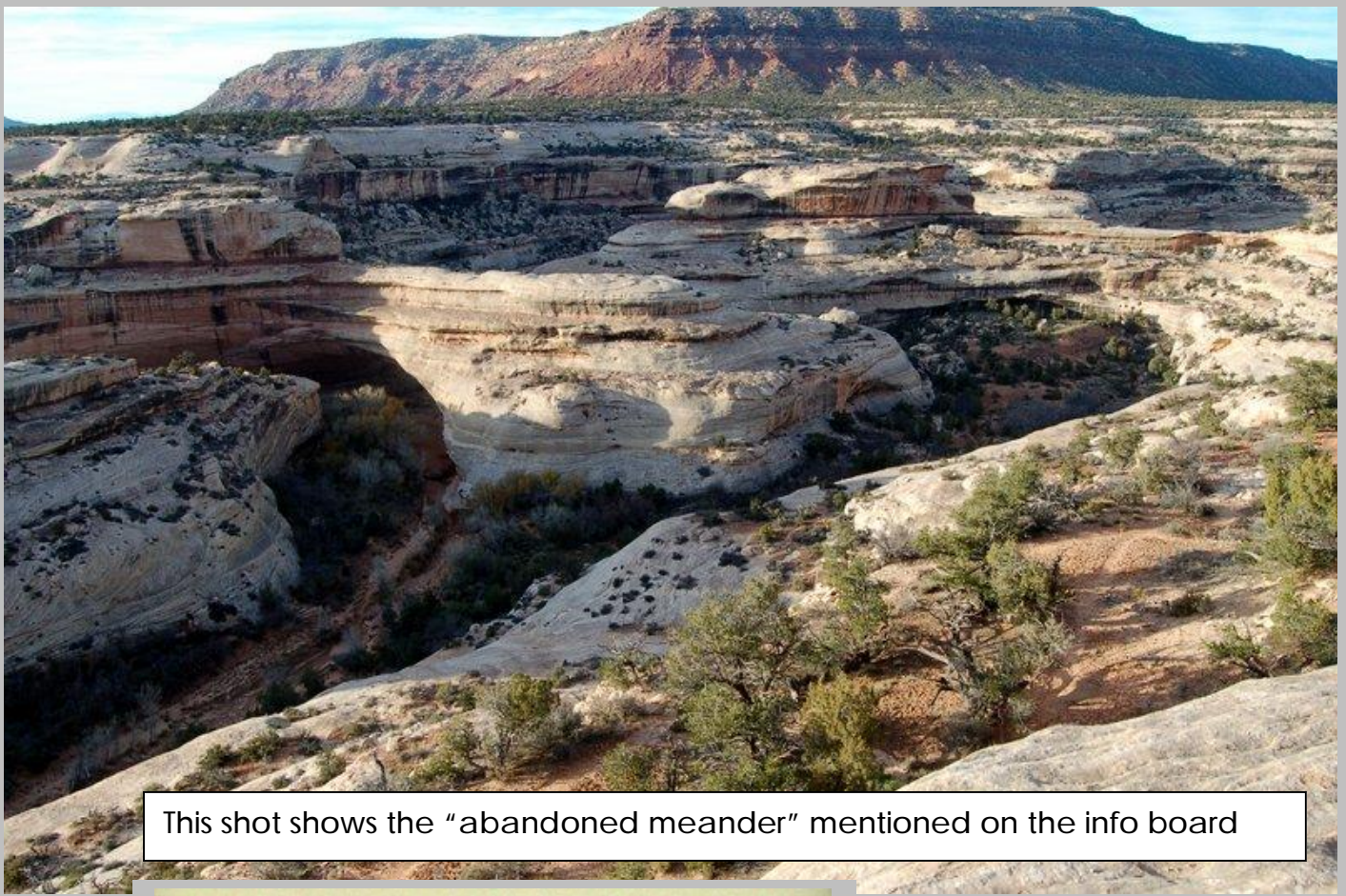
eroding the weaker areas. Eventually, the streams broke through the wall, creating a natural bridge.

Kachina Bridge is still being enlarged by the streams. Flash floods wear away at the abutments and gravity pulls at loose rocks.



This bridge is a little hard to see.





This shot shows the "abandoned meander" mentioned on the info board

Owachomo Bridge

**Paved trail to overlook: 220 feet (67m) — little elevation change.
Trail to bridge: .2 mile (.32 km) — 180 foot (55 m) elevation change.**

Owachomo is the easiest of the three bridges to view from underneath.
The unpaved trail to Owachomo Bridge is moderately difficult with sections of bare rock and uneven steps.

At the base of the bridge an unmaintained trail continues down Armstrong Canyon leading to Kachina Bridge.

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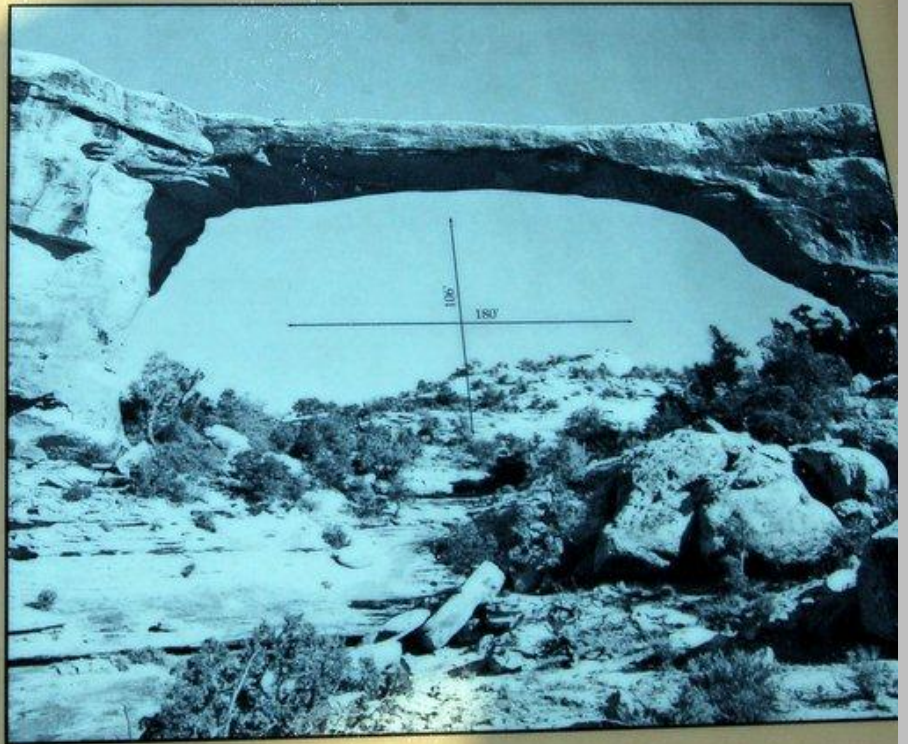
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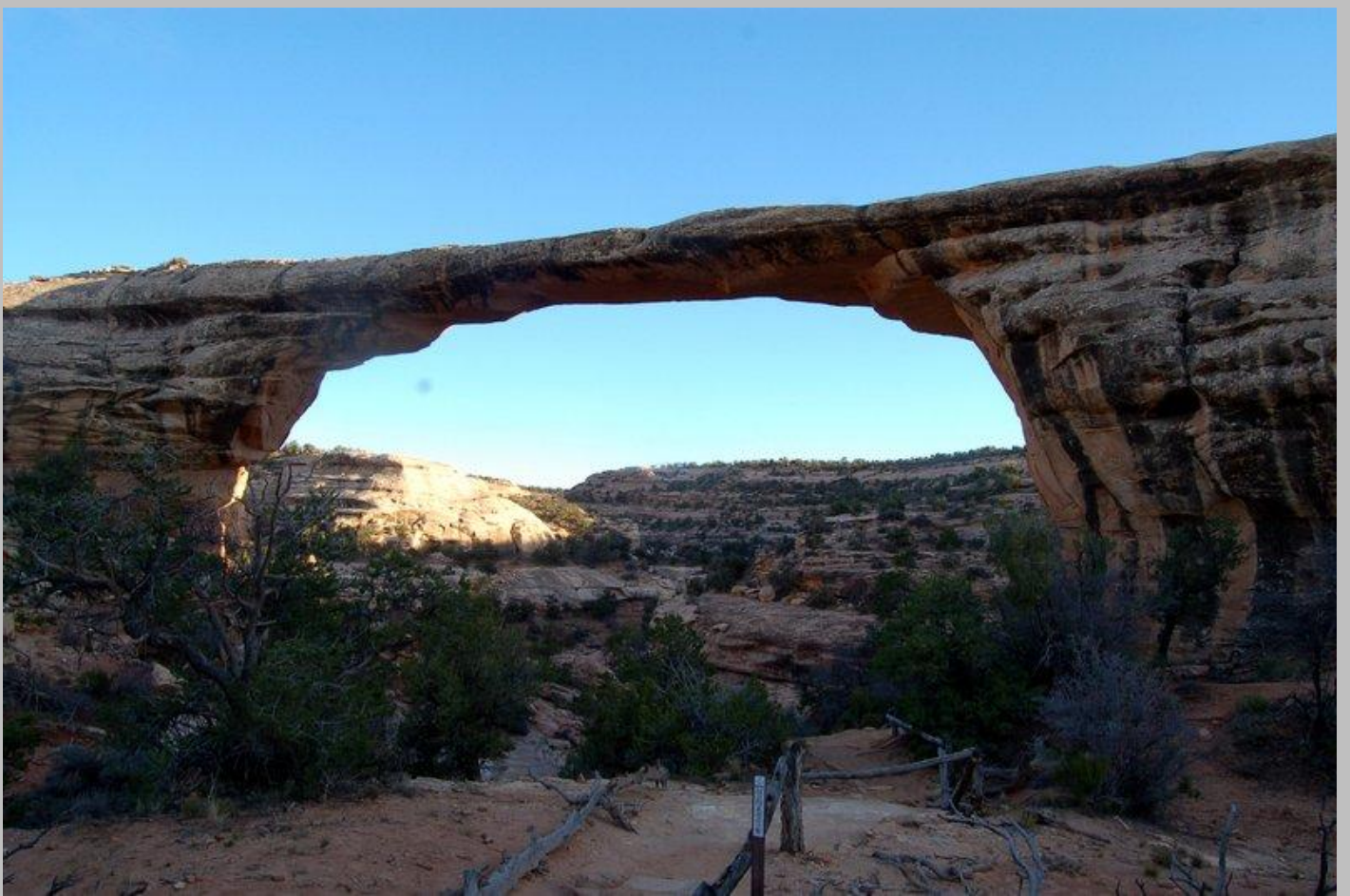
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Owachomo Bridge

Owachomo (O-wá-cho-mo) is a Hopi Indian word for rock mound. On the upper left side of the bridge is a rock outcrop which suggested the name for the bridge.

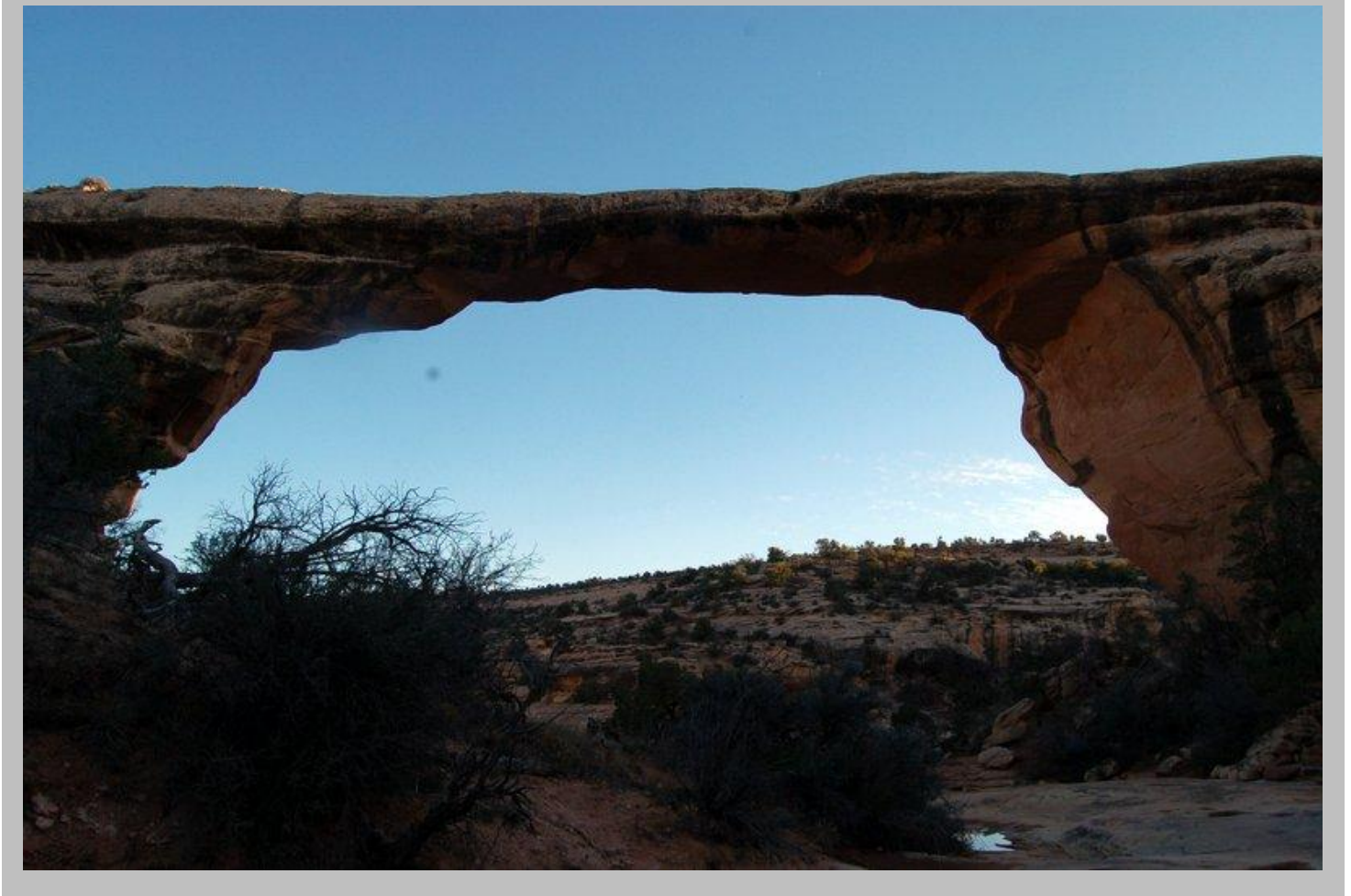
Owachomo Bridge looks different from either Sipapu or Kachina Bridge. Because Owachomo no longer straddles all the streams which carved it, it appears to be an arch. Flowing water is required to carve a hole through a rock wall to form a bridge, while an arch is freestanding and does not span a water course. Natural Bridges is famous for its three spectacular bridges, but the monument also contains smaller and less noticeable arches.





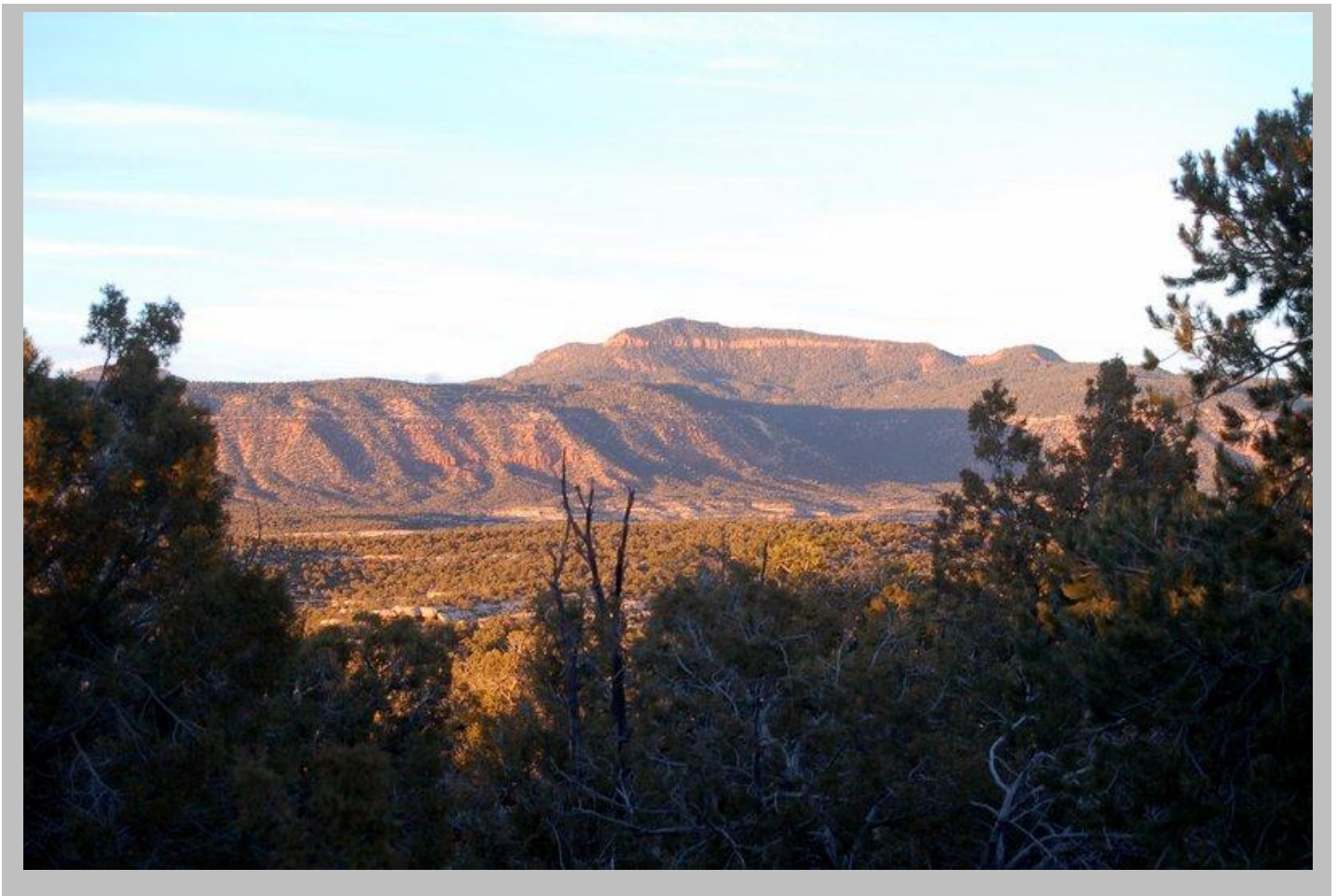


I asked the Ranger what was best for a photo, sunrise or sunset? He informed me there were opinions on both. Since it was near sunset when I arrived at Owachomo Bridge I was hoping for a good pic. Seems to me the best sunset photos are probably during the summer when the sun is setting directly down the valley. This time of year the sun is setting over the mesa and does not offer much in the way of a great shot.



The photo below is the view from my campsite. Awesome! This was the best day and night of my entire trip. After a little dreariness for the short time I was in Arizona, when I hit Utah? The scenery is...Wow! Everywhere you turn there is something to see, something I wanted to take a picture of and share with everyone back home. At 10 p.m. the temp was still 51 degrees and the wind was virtually non-existent. I was actually able to sit by the fire and enjoy it. The pie iron taco cooked in a normal 2 minutes instead of 6. I stared at the fire for awhile, worked on the newsletter, sat by the fire again, made a cup of hot chocolate and stared at the stars.

I tried every setting on the camera that I know of to try and get some star pics. No luck. Then I tried the cell phone camera. I have yet to check but I don't think the flash helped with stars millions of light years away. I did not turn on the heater until I was going to bed, and I actually woke up during the night and turned it off for a couple hours. Just a great day!



Tomorrow I move camp to Goosenecks State Park on the San Juan River. It is my last night in the camper until Saturday. If I don't get thrown by my horse and break something, I will keep the newsletters coming.

Mark/Dad