



The scenery in this part of the world is incredible and no better way to explore the region than in our trusty camper.

MOAB “a far off place”

Words and Images by Lynne and Steve Dickinson

The name Moab comes from the Bible and means “far off place” and when driving to Moab, Utah, you can understand why the newly landed Mormon settlers named it just that; it is a long way from anywhere. It's sort of in the middle of nowhere, by Kiwi standards that is, but to the American's it's not too far from Denver. Hmmm.

If you drive to Moab from Denver it's a mountainous drive for around three hours through Colorado before hitting the desert like scenery of Utah. For two hours more we drove through brown, dusk like plains before we came to an oasis that is Moab where green grass and lush trees break through the otherwise dry canyon like setting.

Bordered by the Colorado River and two of the countries most beautiful National Parks Arches and Canyon Lands, Moab is the adventure capital of Utah, if not the whole of the States. Driving through the main road you notice that every second building or sign seems to be promoting some adventure you can take part in so there is no doubt when you arrive that this is a place where there's an adventure waiting.

The two national parks, Arches and Canyon Lands are on the main roads opposite one another and offer quite contrasting scenery. Nearly everyone will remember the final scene from the

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movie, Thelma and Louise, where they drive off the edge of the Grand Canyon. Well it turns out that scene was shot in Canyon Lands National Park instead and you can go stand at the edge where the car flies into the abyss. On the other side at Arches National Park, salmon coloured natural arches litter the park withered away over thousands of years by the erosive winds.

We parked our Roadbear campervan at one of the RV parks alongside the Colorado River and meandered into town to sign up for some thrills and spills the following day. There was everything from ziplining, four wheel driving, hummer trips, horse riding through to rafting and more. We signed up for rafting, and were given our lifejackets for the trip down the river. Unlike New Zealand, the river rules were not in any way 'strict', that little fear and trembling you get when you raft guides tell you all the stuff that could happen and how to deal with it, there was not of that, it was like get on we are going. Kiwi's it was pretty unsettling rafting without helmets, we have become such a safety conscious society that it was hard not to feel just a little nervous sitting in your shorts and t-shirt with little more than a lifejacket as protection.

The water was high flowing, due to the time of the year with the snow run off leaving the river a little cold, and the rapids just fast slowing waves quite different to the type of rafting we were used to at home where most of our NZ Rivers are fairly technical because of the large number of rocks. This was big dark water in a big river, quite a contrast.

Rafting the Colorado in this area you can choose between a grade 2-3 trip and a grade 4-5 depending on your level of thrill. Both offer similar experiences, it just depends how much of a ride you are after. But if choosing by kiwi standards go for the biggest or you will be bored.

Walking around the town of Moab itself you get a feel that the people who have chosen to live here so they can make the most out of the outdoor environment. Local groups built and maintained a dirt bike track on one side of the road while a slacklining park was set up on the other side of the road, it was pretty cool. It had a slightly bohemian feel, typical of places where they are in touch with the outdoors and what the world has to offer.

Moab is a hiking, biking paradise too, with trails set up alongside the main road and across the river allowing you to access areas without having to cross main roads. One night we were offered the chance to experience the Colorado River by night on a boat trip that drives up the calmer section of the river and as the sun sets floats back downstream to the tales of the history of the area as the canyon walls come alight in a dramatic show. It was quite a spectacular experience, although the group caters mainly for the older generation and could do with updating their stories to appeal to a wider audience. However, seeing the canyons alight at night was worth the somewhat corny stories.

We didn't have enough time on our travels to experience much more first-hand but were told by some locals that for those that want a real thrill you can't go past the hummer trip. After watching a promo video I can see why - the hummers climbed vertically up the canyon walls and left you wondering how they stayed attached to the canyon without tumbling down into the valleys below.

We had places to go and people to meet but Moab is definitely a place worth revisiting, next time we'll just have to stay a little longer.
Special thanks to Roadbear - check them out at roadbearrv.com





The canyon walls of the Colorado River lit up at night, impressive!



Hummer trips are one of the highlights



Arches National Park, Moab

10 FUN FACTS ABOUT MOAB, UTAH

1. The name "Moab" comes from an ancient Biblical kingdom. The name "Utah" comes from the Ute language, meaning "people of the mountains".
2. Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch gang got into many robberies and shootouts with Moab's lawmen. Their Robbers Roost hideout was in a wild maze of canyons east of town.
3. Moab hosted a uranium boom in the 1950's after prospector Charlie Steen hit it big.
4. Moab is a mountain biking mecca. Its Slickrock Bike Trail is one of the most technically challenging bike trails in the world.
5. The yearly average rainfall in the Moab area is 9 inches.
6. The Moab dirt is alive! A living crust called "biological soil crust" covers much of the surrounding area. Composed of algae, lichens and bacteria, this crust provides a secure foundation for desert plants.
7. Moab is home to the visually stunning Arches National Park and Canyonlands National Park. The Colorado River passes thru Moab.
8. Airplanes aren't allowed to fly over Arches National Park because the vibrations from the planes could potentially break its delicate features. The longest arch in Moab, Landscape Arch (306 feet), is almost gone. There are 2,000 arches and counting in Arches National Park. To be classified as an arch, the arch's opening must measure at least three feet across. New arches are constantly forming, while old ones occasionally collapse.
9. Edward Abbey was a seasonal ranger at Arches in the 1950s. His book Desert Solitaire is now classic desert literature.
10. The Green River and the Colorado River both flow through Canyonlands National Park. They have formed the Park's canyon mazes and plateaus, unbroken scarps, sandstone pillars. The two rivers divide the Park into districts: Island in the Sky, Needles, and Maze. The Green River merges with the Colorado in the heart of Canyonlands at the Confluence in Cataract Canyon, and from there, the Colorado continues its journey south.

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