Devil's Garden

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Overview

Devil's Garden does not cover a very large area and is less of a hike and more of an area to wander around or use as a playground. The many ramps, alcoves and nooks make excellent substrate for playful children and adults. Photographers also frequent this area, it contains the often photographed metate arch among other unique and shapely features. This is a particularly excellent place to go for sunset with good views to the west. Its family friendly, with picnic tables and a vault toilet.

Driving directions

Accessed by a dirt road – check with the visitor center for road conditions
No high clearance or four-wheel drive necessary
5 miles east from downtown Escalante, turn south/right onto Hole in the Rock Road and another 12 miles to the turnoff for Devil's Garden, signed. From here its only another 1/4 mile to the end of the road. Likely, this stretch of Hole in the Rock Road will become impassable only with rain events 2 or more days long, as long as it has dried out somewhat.

Hiking route

There is no particular trail and one can circumnavigate the area in 0.5 miles. Take your time, wander through and get on top of different features. Examine the plants and find some bugs. Notice the patterns in the sand and the sandstone.

Hazards

Heat

There is some shade provided by the rock formations but other than that it is very exposed. There are no tall trees or water here.

Regulations and considerations

Human waste disposal

One is never far from the vault toilet at the parking lot. This is a high use area, do not cat hole. Dogs should be on a leash, and make sure to pick up after them!

Along the trail

There are no trash facilities here so please pack it out. No collecting of any object other than trash is allowed. Bikes are not allowed off road in GSENM. Be considerate of the biological soil crust.

Camping and fires

Camping is not permitted within 1/4 mile of the trailhead, which means no where along the spur road to Devil's Garden. Backcountry permits can be filled out at the trail register but consider that this is a high use area and the additional impact camping or having a fire in the Garden would have.

Amenities

There are bathrooms here! There is no drinking water or trash facilities at the trailhead. Escalante has a small grocery store (closed Sundays) and Boulder only has a nice convenience store. For medical issues Escalante has a clinic (Kazan Memorial Clinic, open M 9a-8p, Tu-F 9a-5p, closed Sat-Sun) and the nearest hospital is in Panquitch (Garfield Memorial Hospital, 200 N 400 E). For search and rescue and non-emergency evacuations call the Garfield County Sheriff's Office: 435-676-2678. For emergencies call 911 or hit the SOS button on your inReach.

Geology

These unique features are formed along the contact of the Gunsight Butte and Cannonville Members of the Entrada Sandstone. The Gunsight Butte Member is silty sandstone, displays eolian (wind formed) crossbedding, suggesting this was formed by sand dunes. Thin lenses of mudstone exist within this member that is 150 to 450 feet thick. At the upper contact with the Cannonville Member it changes from resistant bare-rock outcrops to bedded, earthy-weathering, slope-forming sandstone. The hoodoos and goblins of Devil's Garden are formed in this section. The Cannonville Member forms steep slopes and has attractive banding (like the cliffs above Cannonville, UT). It is interbedded sandstone and siltstone with some pebbles.

Cross bedding

This is the angled lines in the sandstone and was created when the sandstone was still a giant sand dune field. These lines show how the dunes were formed.

Flora

Salt desert scrub and pinyon-juniper woodland

Here you'll find a high desert community of plants capable of withstanding the fierce baking sun of the summer as well as freezing temperatures in winter. This region gets about 11 inches of rain per year, and supports pinyon and juniper trees as well as big sage and sand sage, all woody plants. Prickly pear (a group of species that all look similar) and claret cup are the most common cacti found here. Narrow leaf yucca, another succulent, is related to agave. Common grasses include needle and thread grass, Indian rice grass, cheat grass and blue grama. In this high desert, flowers typically bloom from April to June, potentially with a second showing following monsoons. Some common flowers are globe mallow, penstemon, evening primrose and hoary aster.

Fauna

Mammals, fish, reptiles, birds and even amphibians all make their home in the desert and the streams that course through it. There are many species of birds in GSENM, some of the more notable ones include turkey vultures, ravens and pinyon jays. Mammals that roam these parts include coyotes, foxes, bob cats, mountain lions, badgers, mule deer, bighorn sheep and many

species of mice. Some insects you may encounter are the creepy Jerusalem crickets and sand trap building antlions. Likely you will see collared lizards, with a black band around their neck and you may see whiptail lizards with tails up to 2.5 times as long as its body. Some poisonous animals to watch out for are rattlesnakes, scorpions, black widows, and velvet ants.
Rattlesnakes are not common and not aggressive but they will stand their ground. If they are rattling they're agitated and if they're also coiled up they're ready to strike. They can strike a distance 2/3 the length of their body. If someone is bit, request a medical helicopter evacuation immediately.
Scorpions hide under rocks during the day and come out mostly at night. Their sting is painful similar to a bee sting. No medical attention is necessary, but if it's the first time someone has been stung, watch out for anaphylaxis. Just like with bee stings some people have severe allergic reactions. If their throat starts to swell administer Benadryl and, if possible, find an EpiPen in case its necessary. Get to a clinic unless the situation resolves itself.
Female black widow spiders have a distinct red hourglass shape on the back of their black body. They are not aggressive and build very sticky webs in nook of canyon walls. Their bite may require medical attention, drive to the nearest medical facility.
Velvet ants look like fast moving ants with a brightly colored patch of hair, however these are not ants. They are wasps and should be treated as such because they do have a powerful sting.
Ravens look very similar to crows but ravens are significantly larger. Their distributions overlap but crows are very rare in GSENM. Ravens often hang out in pairs and they are scavengers so don't leave your snacks unattended!
Turkey vultures have a wingspan of up to 6 feet and do not flap their wings very much. They are expert at finding rising warm air currents and gliding in circles all day as they look for carrion.
Pinyon jays, related to blue jays, like to hang in large flocks in pinyon/juniper forests. This species of jay is endemic to the Colorado Plateau, it doesn't exist anywhere else!
Flickers are related to woodpeckers
Mountain lions, like all large predators, were hunted and poisoned almost to extinction. Today, the best place to see one is in the desert southwest; however, you will be very lucky if you do. Mountain lions range far to find prey, mostly mule deer, and kill efficiently with a bite to the back of the neck. If you do encounter a mountain lion, make sure you don't have it cornered. Make loud noises and raise your arms, fight back if necessary, and do not run away!
Bighorn sheep make their home in rugged rocky areas it would seem were impossible to navigate. They are excellent climbers and use this to their advantage to avoid predators. The males have very large horns which grow longer every year. They use these to establish dominance over other males during mating season. They charge each other at over 20 mph, the loud crack can be heard for miles. One nearly wiped out, bighorn are making a comeback.

Nearby attractions
Zebra provides an easy 5 mile hike to a beautiful slot canyon that is difficult but fun to access.
Bighorn is a nearby canyon that gives a slot canyon like feel without the difficult maneuvering.
Escalante River Trailhead is a great place to go if you're looking for some water to play in or some shade to hike under.

BLM Map: https://www.blm.gov/visit/devils-garden
Other Map:

