

# BLUFF FAMILY ADVENTURE KIT



LIFE  
**UTAH**  
ELEVATED

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## HELLO, FAMILIES!

Welcome to Bluff, Utah! We're thrilled to have your family join us in our beautiful town, where unforgettable adventures await around every corner. Whether you're exploring the stunning natural wonders, experiencing our vibrant cultural heritage, or the magic of our starry dark skies, Bluff offers a unique adventure for everyone.

We've put together this Adventure Kit to help you make the most of your time here. Here, you'll find tips and insights to ensure your visit is both fun and memorable. Remember to Visit With Respect so we can preserve Bluff's beauty and cultural heritage for future generations to enjoy.

We can't wait to see the amazing memories your family will create in Bluff!

*Pamela Yearous*

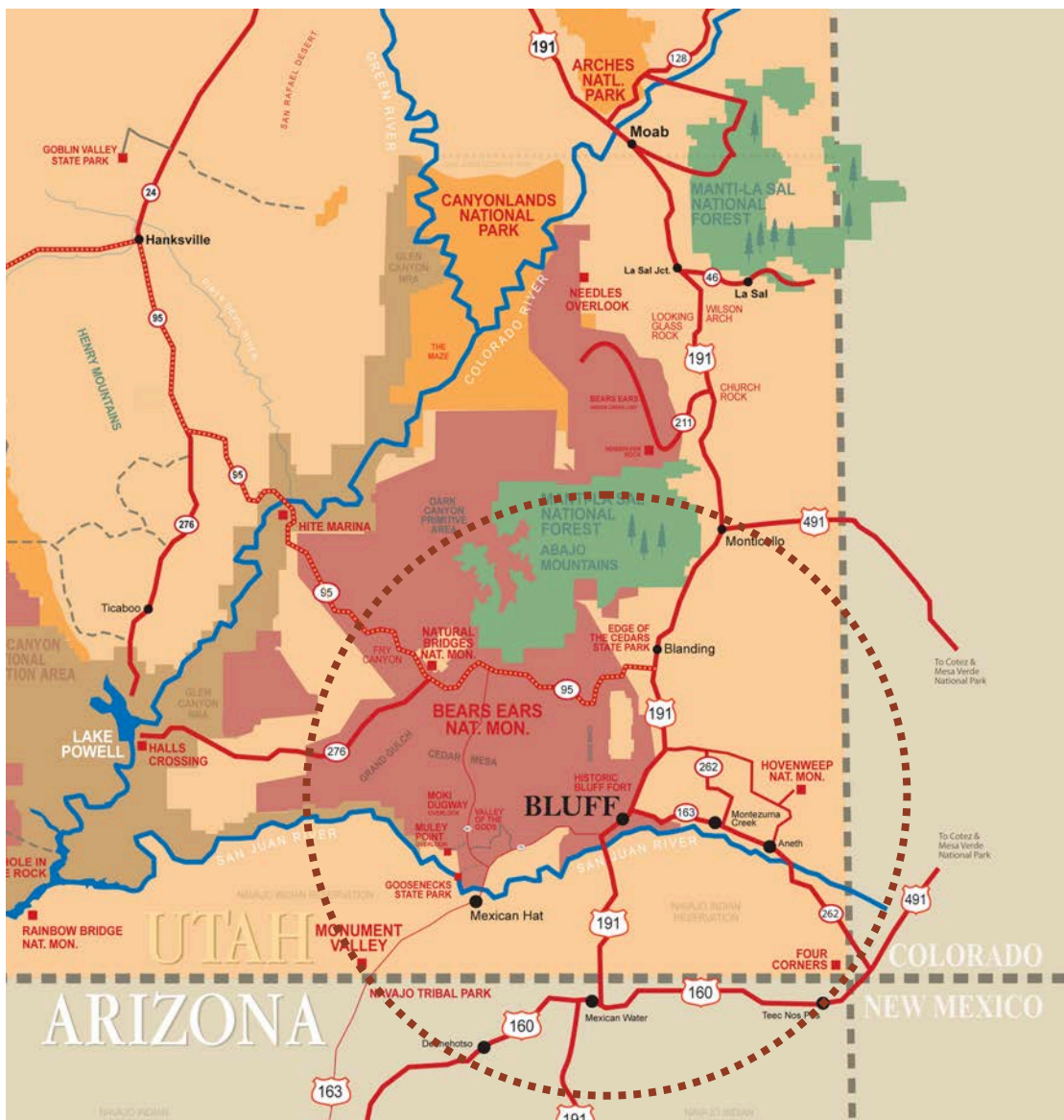
President, Business Owners of Bluff



# MAP OF OUR AREA

## GET READY FOR ONE WOW AFTER ANOTHER!

Bluff is the perfect base to explore the unforgettable adventures of southeastern Utah and Four Corners area. **The attractions in this guide (except Natural Bridges National Monument) are within a 1-hour drive from Bluff.** Click [here](#) to download maps.





# BEFORE YOU GO



## **SNAG A STYLISH STAY**

It's best to book lodging, campsite, or RV spot ahead. Bluff lodging is often sold out. See [Lodging](#).



## **DOWNLOAD MAPS/EBOOKS**

You may not always have internet access while traveling. [Learn more](#).



## **PACK SENSIBLY**

Pack hats, sunglasses, sunscreen, and water bottles for everyone. Dress in layers. Evenings are much cooler than the daytime here. Planning to stargaze? Bring chairs or a blanket for comfort. Don't forget flashlights or headlamps – Bluff is very dark at night!



## **RESERVE GUIDES/GET PERMITS**

If you want to use a [guide](#) for a river trip or a trip to the backcountry, reservations are also a good idea. If you float the San Juan on your own, you'll need a [permit](#).

# TRAVEL TIPS



## KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR GAS TANK

- Bluff has one gas station: **K & C Gas & Convenience Store**. Good news: Pumps operate after hours, restrooms available, and there's a deli!
- Other gas stations: White Mesa, Blanding, Mexican Hat, Montezuma Creek, Aneth, and Tees Nos Pos, Arizona.

## YOU MAY NOT HAVE CELL SERVICE

- Texting may be a good option if you can't get cell service.

## LEGEND *(Icons in this guide)*



Restrooms/  
Toilets



Unpaved  
Road



Fee/Permit  
Required



Steep  
Incline



Walk/  
Hike



# Visit with Respect<sup>TM</sup>

Bears Ears National Monument is of important cultural significance to Indigenous Tribes. Honor past and future generations by following Visiting With Respect guidelines.



Guide Children  
Through Sites



Don't Touch  
Rock Imagery  
or Make Your  
Own



Camp and Eat  
Away From  
Archeology



Dogs and  
Archeology  
Don't Mix



Stay on  
Designated  
Roads



Stay On  
Established  
Trails



Pack Out  
Your Poop



Steer Clear  
of Ancestral  
Walls

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# TIMELINE

Step into a Time Machine! Discover more about the people who've called this valley along the San Juan River home.

**~10,000 BC**

Hunter-gatherers hunted near the San Juan River, less than 15 miles from Bluff, where Clovis tools were discovered.

**1863-1866 AD**

U.S. Treaty signed. The Navajo returned to their homelands and established sovereign lands.

**~1,000 BC**

Glen Canyon petroglyphs at Sand Island Petroglyph Panel believed to be created

**1880 AD**

Mormon (Latter-Day Saints) pioneers arrive as the first Anglo settlers.

**~650 AD**

Ancestral Puebloans established the first permanent settlements. (Date noted in modern day Bluff town sign "Est 650".)

**1882 AD**

Co-op at Bluff Fort opens. Goods and supplies sold to Fort residents, other communities, and traded with Indigenous Tribes.

**~1300 AD**

Ancestral Puebloans vanish from the area.

**LATE 1880'S-  
1890'S AD**

Victorian, eclectic-style homes made of hand-hewn red rocks or wood built in Bluff.

**~1,500 AD**

The Navajo (Diné) were established in the San Juan region.

**1896 AD**

Utah becomes 45th state of the Union.

**1864 AD**

The Long Walk: The forced relocation of the Navajo to Fort Sumner, NM.





# AROUND TOWN

Kick off your great family vacation with a visit to one of our Visitors Centers.

## BEARS EARS EDUCATION CENTER



Start your visit to Bears Ears National Monument here. Indigenous people have inhabited these lands for thousands of years, and today consider the Bears Ears landscape sacred. Visit the Center to learn about this cultural landscape and how to explore it. It's called Visiting With Respect, and it's the way to go. Kids can even earn a Junior Ranger Badge. A great stop for curious minds of all ages. [Learn more.](#)

## BLUFF FORT



Step back in time at Bluff Fort to learn about the Mormon (Latter-Day Saints) pioneers who settled the area in 1880. Experience pioneer life, check out a log cabin replica, pan for gold, or rope a wooden steer. Discover the pioneers' arduous journey over the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail and the Fort they built. The replica Co-op Store/Visitor Center features interactive exhibits. [Learn more.](#)



# STAY IN STYLE

## LODGING OPTIONS FOR EVERY TASTE AND BUDGET

Choose a unique covered wagon, a tipi, a cozy cabin, a campsite, or a motel with a pool and homemade breakfast. You'll find lodging options from budget to outstanding resorts. [Learn more.](#)



Coral Sands RV Park



Desert Rose Resort & Cabins



Bluff Dwellings  
Resort & Spa



Bluff Gardens



Cottonwood RV



La Posada Pintada



Cadillac Ranch RV Park



# AROUND TOWN

## FLOAT THE SAN JUAN RIVER



No trip to Bluff is complete without rafting the San Juan River. Float through ancient sandstone canyons, relax, and enjoy the wildlife and scenery. Ideal for families, trips can be ½ day, 1 day or 5 days. Longer trips allow you to explore Ancestral Puebloan ruins along the riverbank. Book with one of Bluff's [river guides](#) or on your own ([reservations](#), permit required). [Learn more.](#)

## SAN JUAN PETROGLYPH PANEL



On the banks of the San Juan River, this panel displays rock imagery dating from 800 to over 2500 years ago. Archeologists believe this was once a gathering place and held special significance by the amount (over 100 yards) and the time span of the rock imagery. The panel is a place of ancestral importance to Indigenous peoples. Please Visit With Respect. The site is on the National Register of Historic Places. [Learn more.](#)



# AROUND TOWN

## DARK SKY VIEWING



Photo: Milky Way over Navajo Twin Rocks

Bluff is the perfect location to get a breathtaking view of the night sky. Our location in remote, southeastern Utah offers incredible, pristine dark skies. Bluff is also near three International Dark Sky Parks. Click [here](#) for our Family Stargazing Discovery Pack. With a little bit of planning, your family can have a great stargazing experience in Bluff. The guide has loads of tips and resources such as locations, phone apps and website with sky conditions.

## FOCUS ON YOUR SELFIE

Snap a selfie of your Bluff adventure. The Bluff Buick at Cow Canyon Trading Post, the Bluff Fort, or the Navajo Twin Rocks are all great spots.

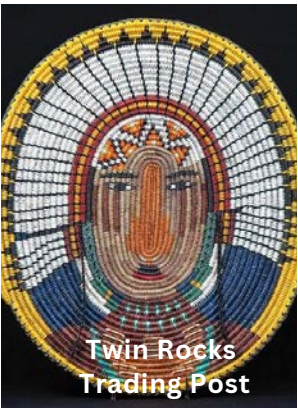




# AROUND TOWN

## SHOP AND DINE: FAMILY FINDS IN BLUFF

Explore a Bluff trading post for authentic Native American art. Enjoy a Navajo Taco for lunch. Picnic at Sand Island. For dinner, enjoy a gourmet burger, fresh salads and wraps, smoked BBQ, or casual upscale dining at a Bluff restaurant.



Twin Rocks Trading Post



Canyon Smokehouse



Cedar Shack



Duke's



Cow Canyon Trading Post



Twin Rocks Cafe'



Dairy Cafe'

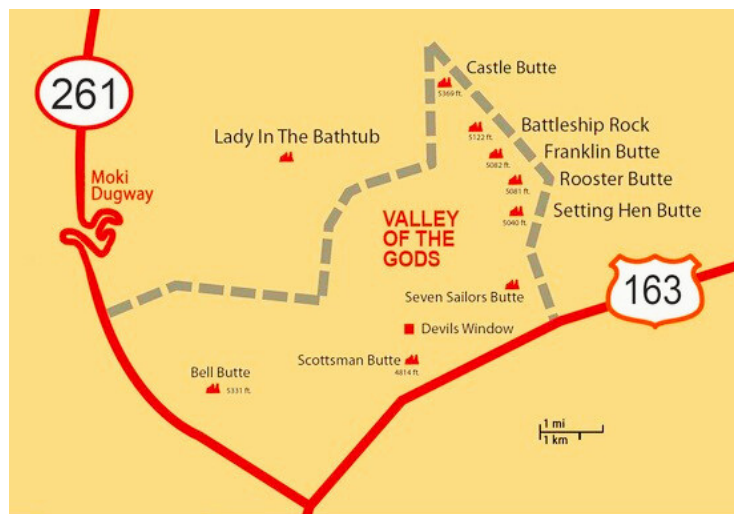




## VALLEY OF THE GODS (BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT)



Valley of the Gods is a scenic, sandstone valley with absolutely stunning geologic formations. Take the 17-mile loop through the valley for an up close look. If there has been a recent heavy rain, it may be best to wait another day. Locals have given the rock formations names such as Rooster Butte, Setting Hen Butte, and Balanced Rock/Lady in a Tub. What names would your family give these formations? [Learn more.](#)



### STAY ON DESIGNATED ROADS

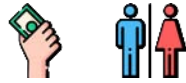


Use existing roads approved for use by land managers. Driving off-road can damage fragile archaeology and ecosystems.

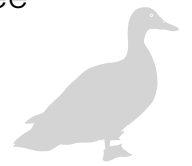


# NEAR BLUFF

## GOOSENECKS STATE PARK



See how the San Juan River, now 1,000 feet below, has sliced deep, winding canyons into rock layers millions of years old. Over a distance of 1.5 miles “as the crow flies”, the river flows 6 miles through the Goosenecks. Geologists call these a textbook example of entrenched meanders. Can your family see how the river’s curves look like the long, curved neck of a goose. [Learn more.](#)



## MOKI DUGWAY

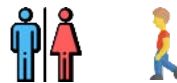


Breathtaking views of Valley of the Gods and distant Monument Valley open at every turn of the Moki Dugway. Passenger cars can access the 3-mile, unpaved dugway. However, the State of Utah recommends it only for vehicles less than 28 ft. and 10,000 lbs. The word “moki” comes from the Spanish word “moqui”, a term explorers used to describe the Ancestral Puebloan culture. Dugway describes a roadway carved from a hillside. The dugway was constructed in the 1950’s to haul uranium ore from a mine to a mill near Mexican Hat. [Learn more.](#)



# NEAR BLUFF

## NATURAL BRIDGES NATIONAL MONUMENT



Designated in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt, the Monument preserves three, splendid, naturally occurring, stone bridges. Stop at the Visitor's Center for information before driving the 9-mile paved loop. The bridges bear the Hopi names of Sipapu, Kachina, and Owachomo. The Hopi are descendants of the Ancestral Puebloans who once lived in these canyons. Owachomo, meaning rock mound, is the smallest, offers easy access, and is the most photographed. The bridge viewpoint is a 10-minute hike along a paved sidewalk. Natural Bridges was the first International Dark Sky Park and offers amazing celestial views at night. [Learn more.](#)

### In Case of Emergency

- San Juan County Sheriff, Monticello, Utah. 435-587-2237
- Blue Mountain Hospital, Blanding, Utah. 435-678-3993
- Kane Gulch Ranger Station, Highway 261, 4 miles south of Highway 95. 435-587-1500
- Montella's Towing and Repair, Blanding, Utah. 435-678-2419

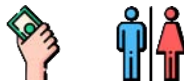




# NEAR BLUFF

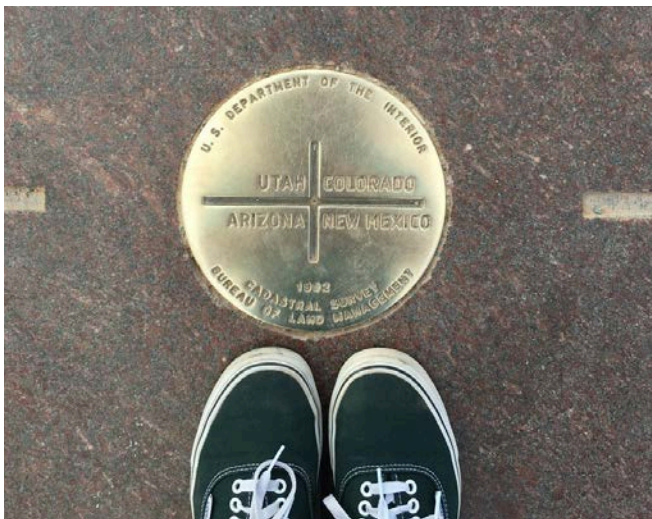


## FOUR CORNERS MONUMENT



This Navajo Nation Tribal Park is the only point in the United States shared by four states: Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Four Corners Monument is a popular family stop. Where else can you check off visiting four states at one time? Fees are \$8 per person. Hours change in off season. [Learn more.](#)

**Directions:** From Bluff, travel east on Highway 162-E (Mission Road). Continue through the towns of Montezuma Creek and Aneth. Highway becomes CO-41. Turn right on Highway 160. Turn right on NM-597.





# NEAR BLUFF

## MONUMENT VALLEY



Just an hour from Bluff, Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park is an iconic symbol of the American West known for its towering Mitten butte formations. Rich in Navajo culture and history, this iconic landscape offers families an unforgettable experience. Take a guided Jeep tour, or explore on horseback with a Navajo guide, or drive your own car through the unpaved valley loop. Perfect for a day trip. Fees are \$8 per person. Hours change in off season. [Learn more.](#)

**Directions:** From Bluff, travel south on Highway 191. Continue straight as the highway becomes Highway 163 for about 45 miles. Park entrance is on left.



**Mile Marker 13/Forrest Gump Point:** On your way, you'll pass the famous Forrest Gump Point (where Forrest Gump decided he was done with running). If you stop for a selfie, be sure to pull all the way off the highway and, take extra care to watch the little ones and highway traffic.



# NEAR BLUFF

## VISIT AN ANCESTRAL PUEBLOAN SITE IN BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Three, relatively easy-to-access Ancestral Puebloan sites are in the same area of Bears Ears National Monument. The sites are located off Highway 95, about halfway between Blanding, Utah and Natural Bridges National Monument. [Learn more.](#)

- Mule Canyon Interpretive Site: around mile marker 101.
- House on Fire Site: around mile marker 102. This is not a roadside site, but is reached by about a 1 mile hike. See further directions below.
- Butler Wash Interpretive Site: around mile marker 111.



## Visit with Respect

### MULE CANYON INTERPRETIVE SITE



Mule Canyon Interpretive Site is easily accessible and perfect for families to explore Ancestral Puebloan history. The site dates to 1000 – 1150 AD and features remains of a 12-room block, a two-story tower, and an underground kiva. Educational signs offer insights into daily life and culture, helping to make history come alive. A short walkway connects the structures, making it suitable for all ages. [Learn more.](#)



# NEAR BLUFF

## BUTLER WASH OVERLOOK



See a fine example of an Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwelling tucked in an alcove high above the canyon floor. A short, 0.5 mile hike leads to a fenced viewpoint with interpretive signage. Built in the 1200's AD, the people who lived here likely farmed the wash below and lands above. Cliff dwellings like these were built for defensive purposes and were quite secure with easily defended approaches. [Learn more.](#)

## HOUSE ON FIRE



This Ancestral Puebloan site features five granaries built into a large rock overhang. Around 10 – 11 a.m., sunlight reflects off the canyon walls, creating an illusion of flames on the rock overhang. By noon, sunlight washes out the illusion. Site is reached via a 2-mile, roundtrip hike on an unpaved trail which crosses slickrock and shallow streams. [Learn more.](#)

**Directions:** Take Highway 95 to mile marker 102, located about halfway between Blanding and Natural Bridges National Monument. Turn north onto County Road 263/Texas Flat Road (marked as Arch Cyn on Google Maps). Stop at the BLM kiosk to pay your fee. Drive 0.5 miles north, park along the road, and look for the vertical brown posts marking the trailhead. Fees can also be prepaid on [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).



# DEFINITIONS

**Ancestors:** People in your family that lived in the past.

**Ancestral Puebloans:** A group of prehistoric Indigenous peoples of the Four Corners area. They focused on farming, built small pit houses at first, then multi-story structures. Some of their dwellings were built high into rock formations giving them the name, Cliff Dwellers. By 1300 A.D., they had vanished from the Four Corners area and went south and east. Their descendants are the modern-day Pueblo Native Americans of northern Arizona and New Mexico.

**Archaeology:** The study of things people made, used, and left behind. Archeology helps to learn about how people in the past lived and what they were like. Scientists who study these things are called archaeologists.

**Bears Ears National Monument:** Named after two tall buttes resembling a bear's head, this Monument is sacred to many Native American Tribes and Pueblos, who consider it their ancestral homeland. It includes cultural and archaeological sites like cliff dwellings and petroglyphs. National Monuments protect important places, preserving history, nature, and diverse cultures for visitors to learn from and enjoy.

**Butte:** A tall hill with steep sides and a flat top standing apart from other landforms. It's similar to a mesa, but more narrow. Buttes are formed by erosion. They are taller than they are wide.

**Culture:** Traditions, beliefs, arts, and way of life that make a group of people different or special.

**Diné:** ("dee-nay") A Navajo word meaning "the people."

**Entrenched Meander:** A meander is when water flows in a curvy, bendy path like a snake. When a meander cuts into bedrock (rock beneath soil) it is called an incised meander. An entrenched meander also cuts down into bedrock, but the walls of entrenched meanders are near vertical (up and down), and about the same on both sides (symmetrical) with little side to side growth. The Goosenecks of the San Juan are a textbook example of Entrenched Meanders.



# DEFINITIONS

**Erosion:** A process where water, wind, and other natural forces cause rocks and Earth to wear away. These forces also move bits of rock and Earth to new places, changing the shape of the land.

**Hole-in-the-Rock Trail:** Trail used by Pioneers to travel to southeastern Utah and Bluff. The most challenging part of the trail involved blasting and chiseling a route down a steep, narrow crevice in the sandstone cliffs, known as the "Hole in the Rock" in present day Lake Powell. The journey was extremely difficult, requiring the Pioneers to lower wagons and livestock down the cliff using ropes and other makeshift methods.

**Indigenous:** People who were the original, earliest known inhabitants of a region or are their descendants.

**Mesa:** A flat-topped hill with steep sides all around. The word 'mesa' comes from a Latin word which means 'table'. Formed by erosion, mesas are wider than they are tall.

**Monolith:** A large, single block of stone. Monoliths or spires were once buttes, but have been narrowed due to erosion. They are much taller than they are wide.

**Native Americans:** Indigenous people and cultures of the United States. These people are sometimes referred to as American Indians.

**Petroglyphs:** Designs carved into rocks by prehistoric people. Petroglyphs show symbols or figures that tell stories about their culture and beliefs. Others show who visited the area and where they went.

**Prehistoric:** The time before written history.

**Visit With Respect:** Tips for being careful and protecting the special places and things in the region so that visitors can enjoy it in the future.

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