

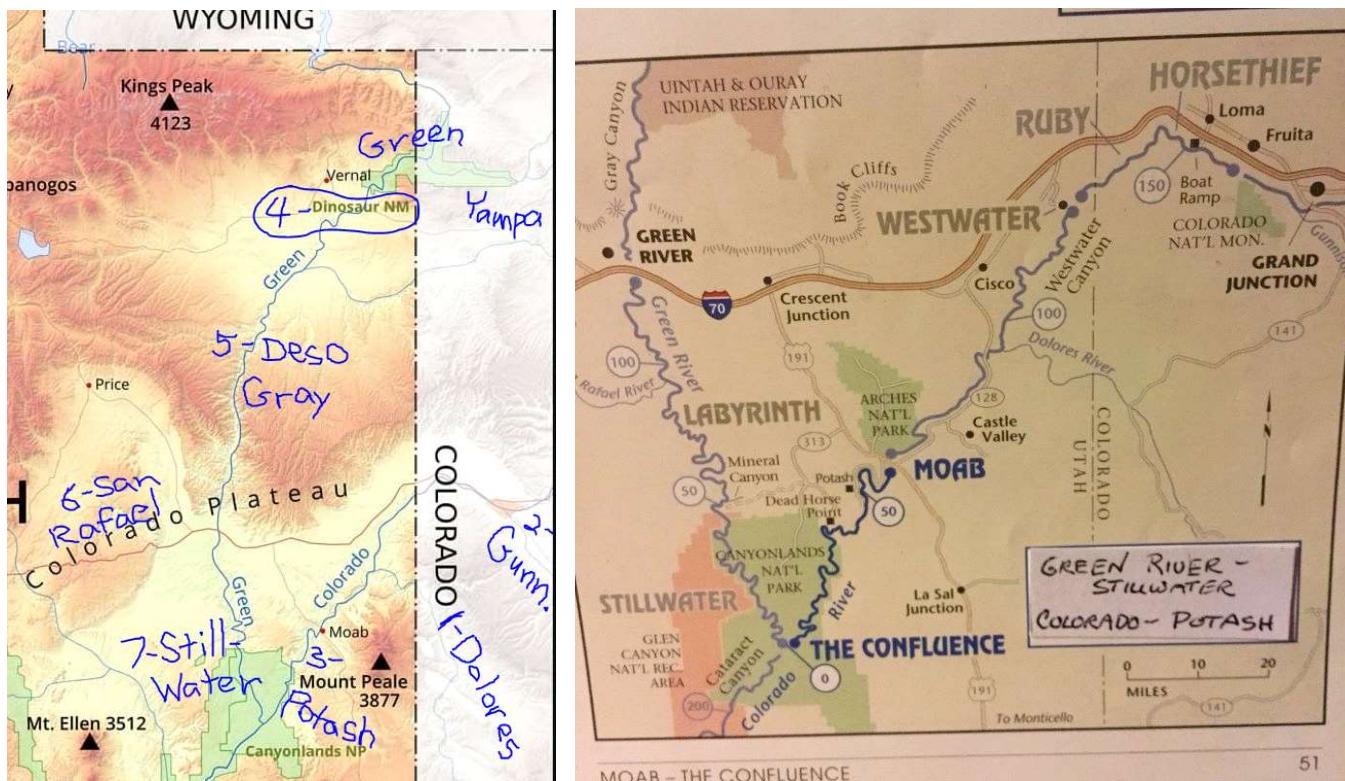
Colorado/Green Drainage - Rocks

Overview:

by Karen Amundson and Kathryn Mutz

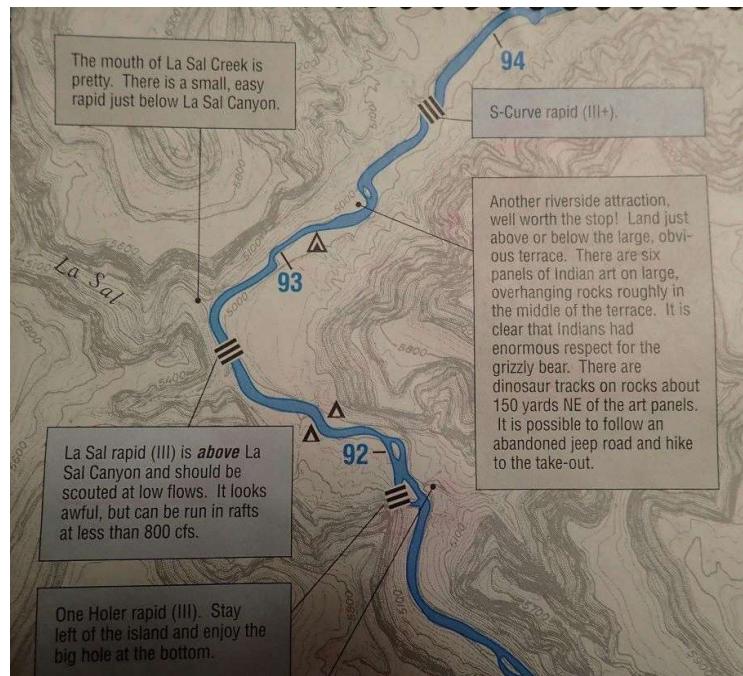
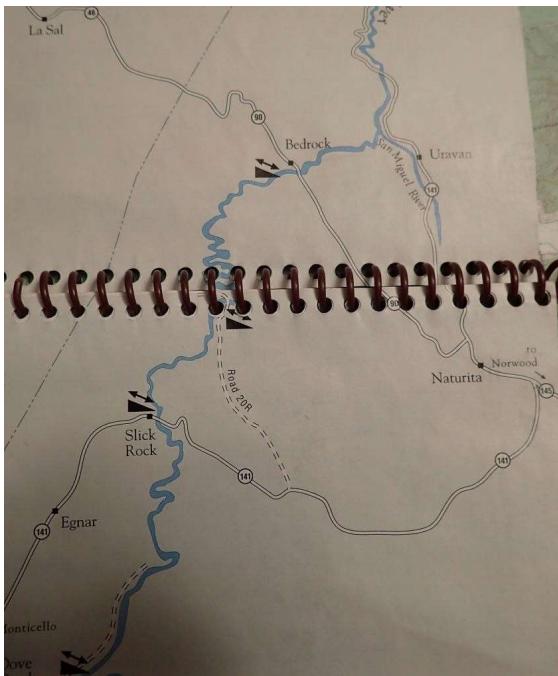
I was inspired to put together this report in preparation for a Zoom presentation to the RMCC and others in January, 2021. Kathryn Mutz was looking for someone to join her in this, and by the time I pulled together a selective 150+ photos for Indian ruins and rock art from river trips that I have done, I decided to break this into 2 parts based on geography.

So... this second report is focused on the Colorado and Green Rivers, from their confluence and going upstream on both of them to include all tributaries where we have photos of Indian rock art. So, the Dolores, Gunnison, Yampa, and San Rafael Rivers are included. And this time we have a good number of examples of dinosaur tracks, fossils, and petrified wood to add to the Indian ruins and rock art. We start with 2 overview maps, the first is an index of what river order we will do the report in; and the second shows the rivers better but leaves out the Dinosaur National Monument:



Dolores River, Slick Rock to Bedrock:

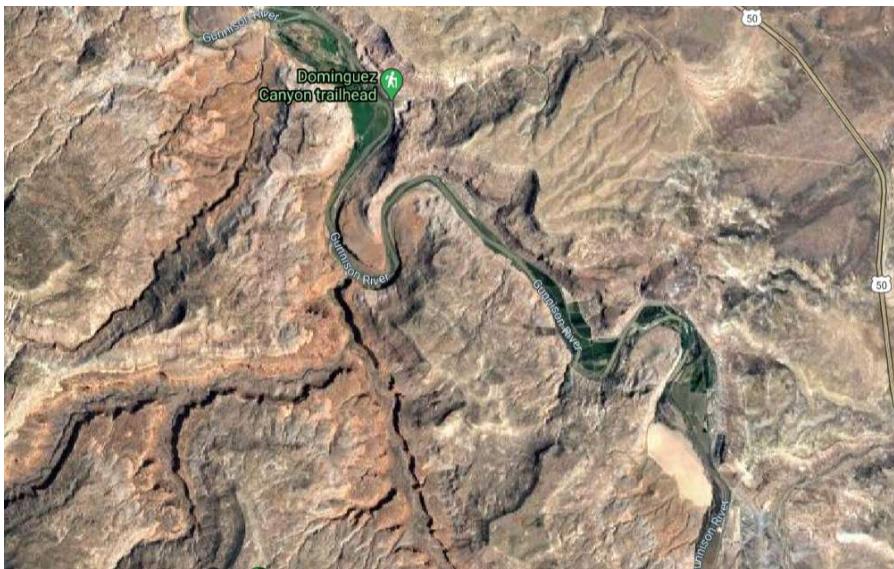
We will focus on the Slick Rock to Bedrock section of the Dolores, with the tracks and rock art occurring a few miles from the end. Both of these are between the 2nd and 3rd of the 3 class III's on that stretch of river. Note the bear claws in both petroglyph panels.

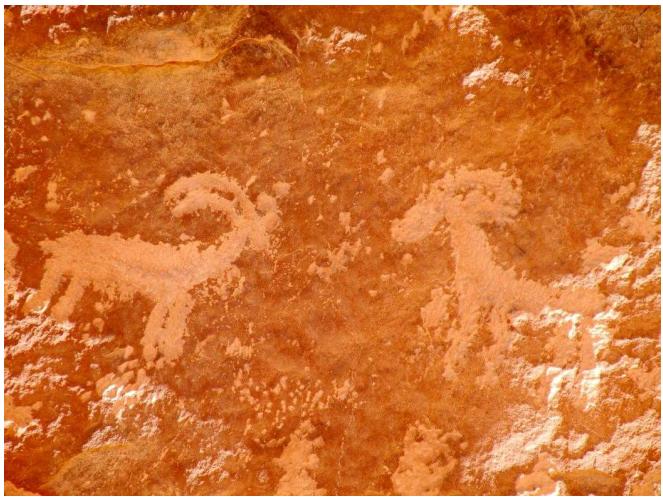




Gunnison River / Dominguez Canyon:

In the map, we paddle to the northwest, and Dominguez Canyon joins the river in the middle of the photo. From there, the Little Dominguez heads south and the Big Dominguez goes west for a while before splitting. The petroglyphs can be found on a couple of big boulder along the trail in the Big Dominguez more than a mile from the Gunnison River. The gorgeous lizard was posing near the rock art. You can see on the map where a road accesses the river and a walking bridge lets you cross about a mile from the Dominguez Canyon. You can camp along the river, but there are restrictions against camping on much of the Little Dominguez.





Rancho del Rio:

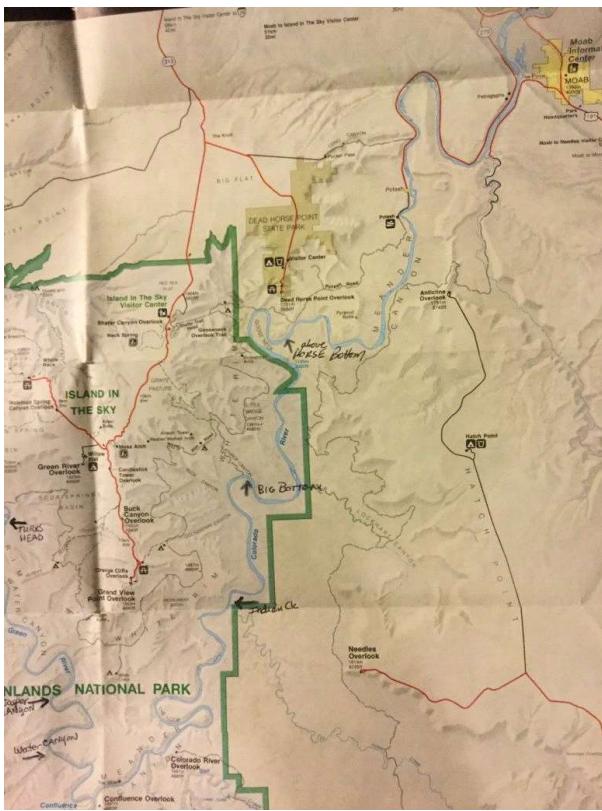
If you paddle the section of the Colorado River from Radium to Yarmont Bridge, you will do the strong class III+ Yarmont Rapid and then a mile or 2 of very flat water. Near the end of the flat as you are getting to the Rancho del Rio resort, you can land on the right bank, cross the railroad tracks and climb 200 yards or so until you come to a wall. Jeanne Willson is pointing at 1 of the large tracks on that wall.



Colorado River - Potash to Spanish Bottom:

About 250 miles downstream from Rancho del Rio, is the Potash boatramp (Mile 47 in the Belnap Canyonlands River Guide), the put-in for the Potash to Spanish Bottom section of the Colorado River. The run is a beautiful class I. Most canoeers put-in at Potash, paddle down for several days, and then catch a pre-arranged jet boat ride back up to Potash. Note that boaters going down the Green River from Mineral Bottom or Ruby Ranch or Green River, Utah to just below the confluence with the Colorado River can catch this same jet boat back up to Potash.

On your route to or from the boat ramp, stop at the well marked petroglyph panels along the Potash Road (Utah Highway 279) just a few miles southwest of Moab, about Mile 60. The largest panel, about 125 linear feet of rock art, is the site closest to Moab. It is pictured here looking north (upstream) from the interpretive sign across the highway. All of the photos below, except the bear panel photo, are from the large panel. The small bear panel, with a large bear (~2' x 3'), is about 200 yards down the road toward Potash. As described on the interpretive sign, the panels include both Archaic and Fremont rock art.



GENERAL INFO

Prehistoric Native American rock art is found along the Colorado River and its tributary rivers, streams, and side canyons. The rock art is depicted in either pictograph (painted) or petroglyph (pecked, incised, chiseled) images. Anthropomorphic (human characteristic) and Zoomorphic (animal characteristic) images are commonly found.

Archaeologists believe that most of the rock art was created during Archaic (6,000-1000 B.C.) and Fremont (450-1300 A.D.) cultural periods.

ARCHAIC ROCK ART

Archaic rock art consists of petroglyphs and pictographs depicting anthropomorphs and zoomorphs, curvilinear lines, zigzags, wavy lines, concentric circles, and abstract symbols.

FREMONT ROCK ART

Fremont Indian rock art often depicts trapezoidal anthro-pomorphs with horns, bighorn sheep, dogs, hunting scenes with weapons, and abstract objects.

Archaic and Fremont Indian petroglyphs can sometimes be found on the same rock art panel.

Native American groups ascribe religious functions to some of the rock art panels and consider them to be sacred sites. Rock art has also been interpreted as depicting concepts of migration routes, fertility, hunting magic, ceremonies, and cosmic events.

These petroglyphs and pictographs are fragile and easily marred. Rock art should not be touched for any reason. The oils in human skin add to the breakdown of the rock surfaces. Please help preserve them for the enjoyment of others. Please do your part by only looking and taking photographs.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

At the northern end of the panel: the round holes carved into the sandstone underneath the left side of the panel once held the roof poles of a structure which was excavated by archaeologists prior to road construction. The structure and rock art were easily accessible before the talus slopes were cleared away to make room for the road. Also look for the "paper doll like cut-outs" that are pictured in the middle of this sign. At the southern end of the panel: look for the large bear with hunters at its nose and over its back pictured in the top center of this sign.

PRESERVATION

How can you help preserve this rock art? Simple! This rock art has lasted on its own for hundreds and in some cases thousands of years. Most of the damage has come from vandalism in the last 100 years. We can stop this! *Don't touch it and please, NO GRAFFITI!*

MORE INFO

For more information on rock art in the area please visit the Moab Information Center at the corner of Center Street and Main Street in Moab. Thanks for visiting!

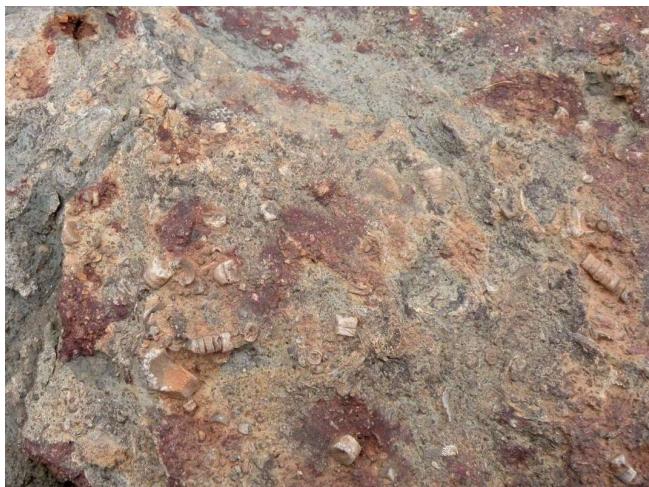
SAFETY

Highway 279 is very busy! PLEASE BE CAREFUL! GIVE VEHICLES THE RIGHT OF WAY!



Potash to S.B. - Horse Bottom:

About 10 miles downstream from the Potash put-in is an area of great petrified wood and fossils in the Cutler Group. To see the fossils pictured here, likely crinoids and perhaps brachiopods or bivalves, land at the diving board (river left). A September 2013 trip led by Candace camped here. The fossils are in the diving board formation. And there are additional petrified logs downstream and up the slope a bit. The view of the red bluff below was taken by Kathryn while at her (river left) petrified log area. She is looking upstream.



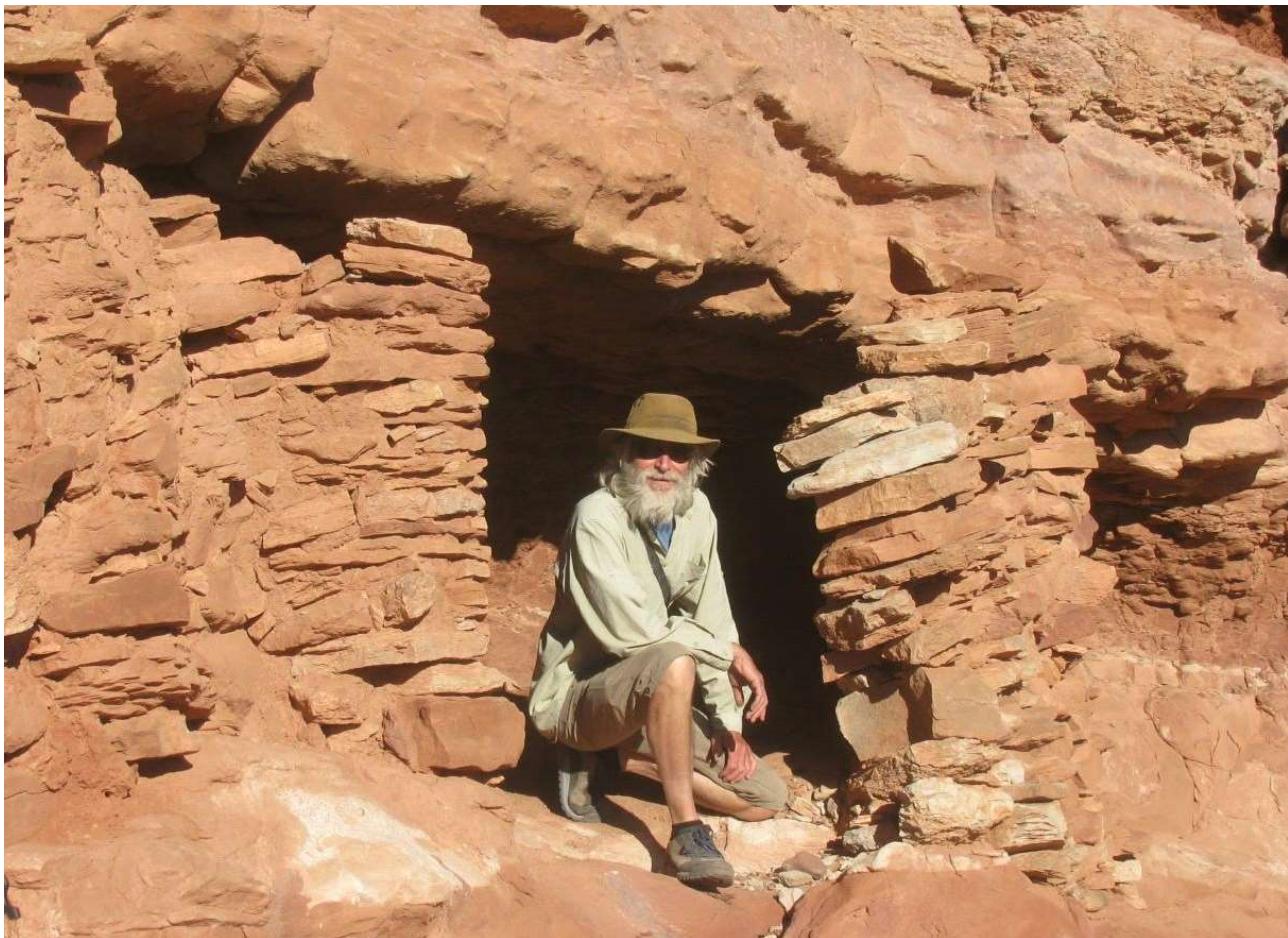


Karen's method for knowing when you are near the petrified wood is to keep an eye out for the diving board - demoed by Candace Winkle - on river left. At that point you should try to land on river right and the logs are fairly close to the river. The long log in the first photo is about 50' in length!



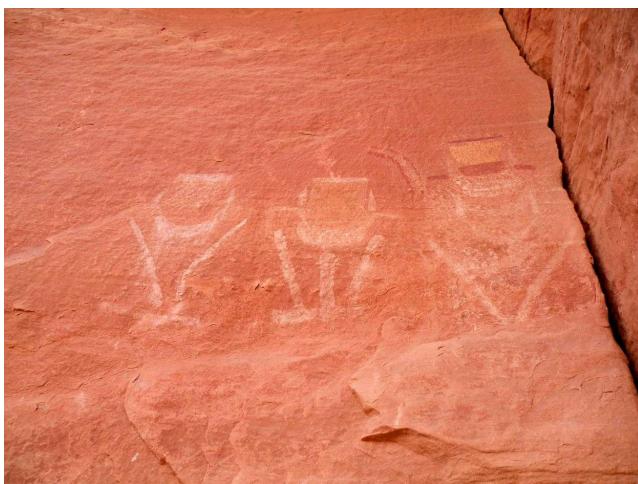


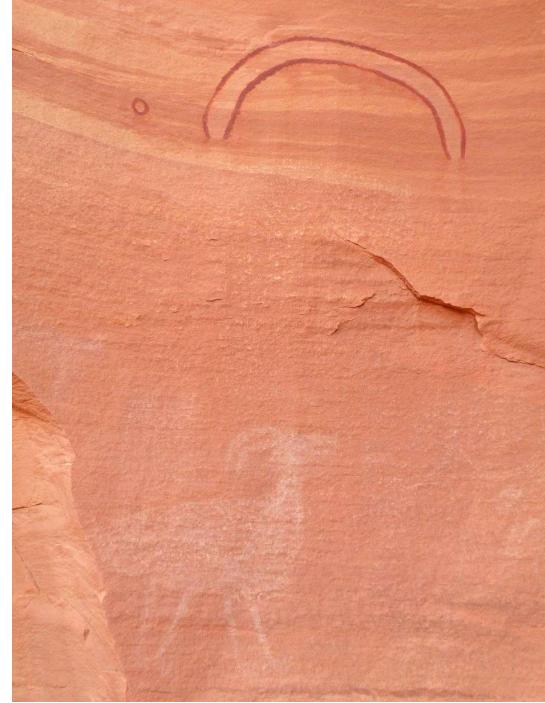
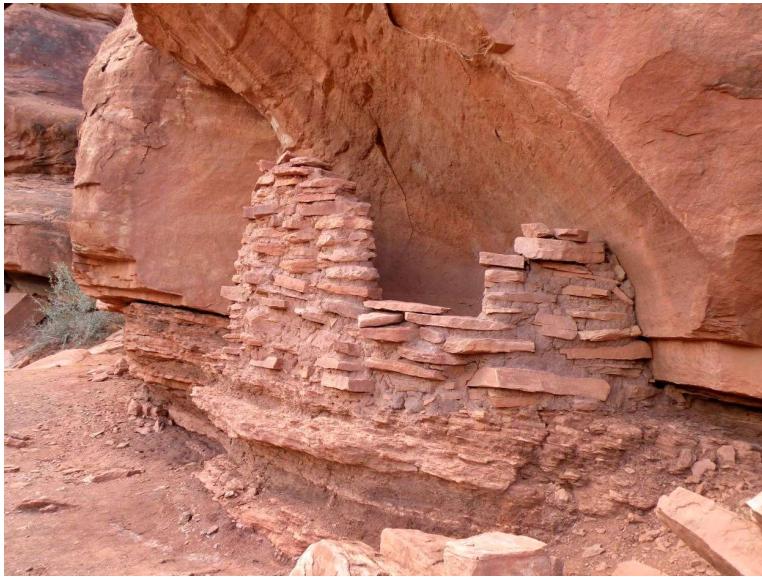
The ruin that frames Hugh O'Neill is taken on day 3 of a 5 day trip. It was a camp on river left, but Karen cannot remember which canyon it is in. The rest of the Potash to Spanish Bottom photos were all taken by Kathryn.



Potash to S.B. - Big Bottom:

The pictographs and ruin pictured here are on river left, across the river from Lathrop Canyon, about Mile 23.75. We had a great camp about 300 yards up river from Lathrop and visited the ruin the next morning. You hike through tamarisk to reach the site. We could see the pictographs about 10 minutes after we landed (telephoto), but were not up to them and the ruins for another 40 minutes.





Potash to S.B. - Indian Canyon:

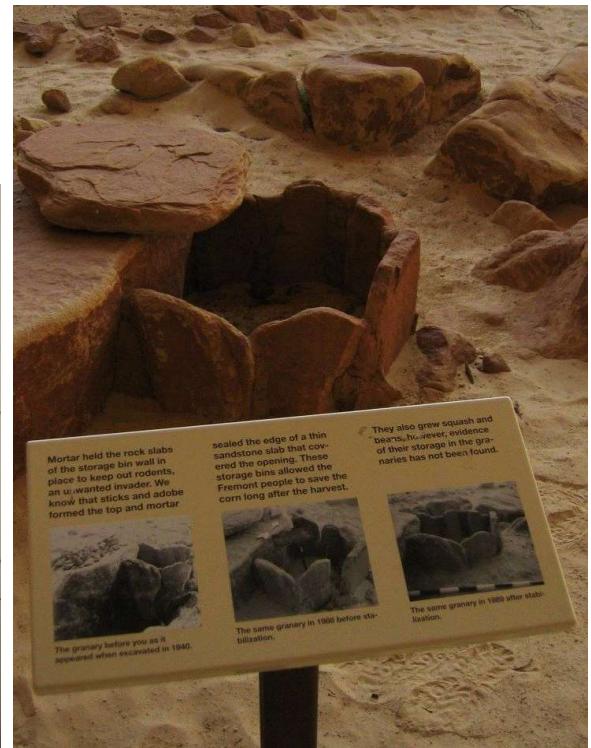
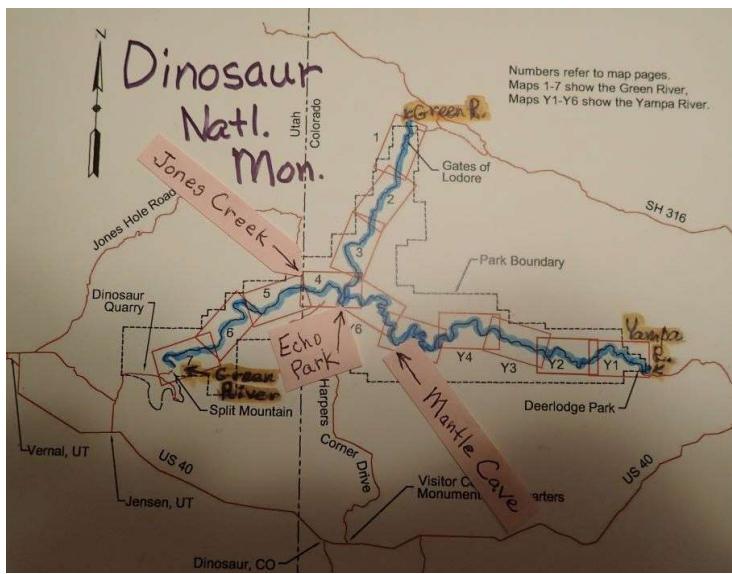
The ruin at Indian Creek can be seen from the river. It is on river left at about Mile 16.5, on the upstream side of Indian Creek. The large fossils, probably worm tunnel trace fossils, are up Indian Creek on fractured boulders. The hike is up the stream channel and into an oxbow off to the south of the creek.

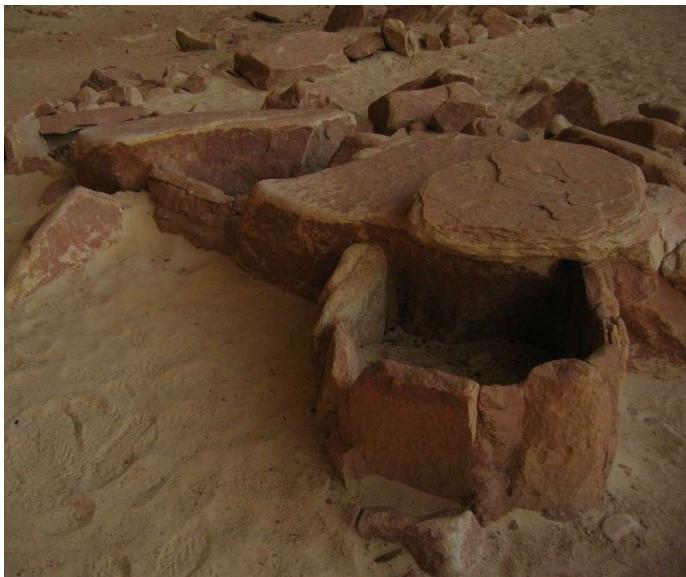




Yampa River:

We now move to the Green River tributaries, starting with the Yampa in Dinosaur National Monument. It includes the very large Mantle Cave on river left, so facing north. It was only used for food storage according to the archaeologists.

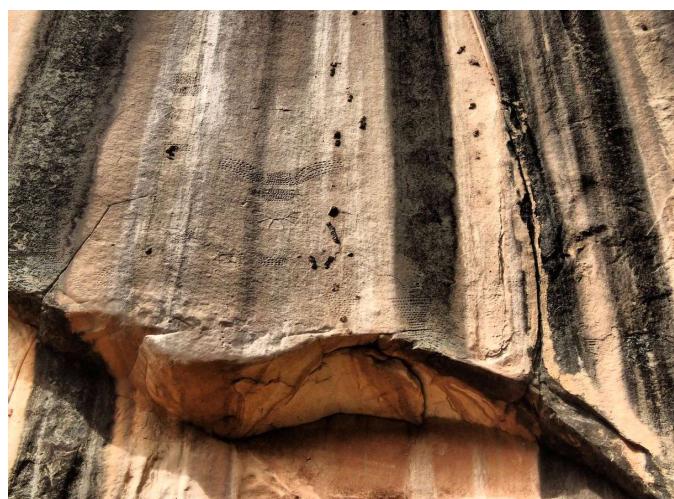




The alcove appears to have been used exclusively for storage by the Fremont people. No evidence of occupation has been found. Its northern aspect probably made the alcove too cold in winter. Then where did they live? Archeological sites such as those on the map can provide answers, but only if they are left undisturbed.

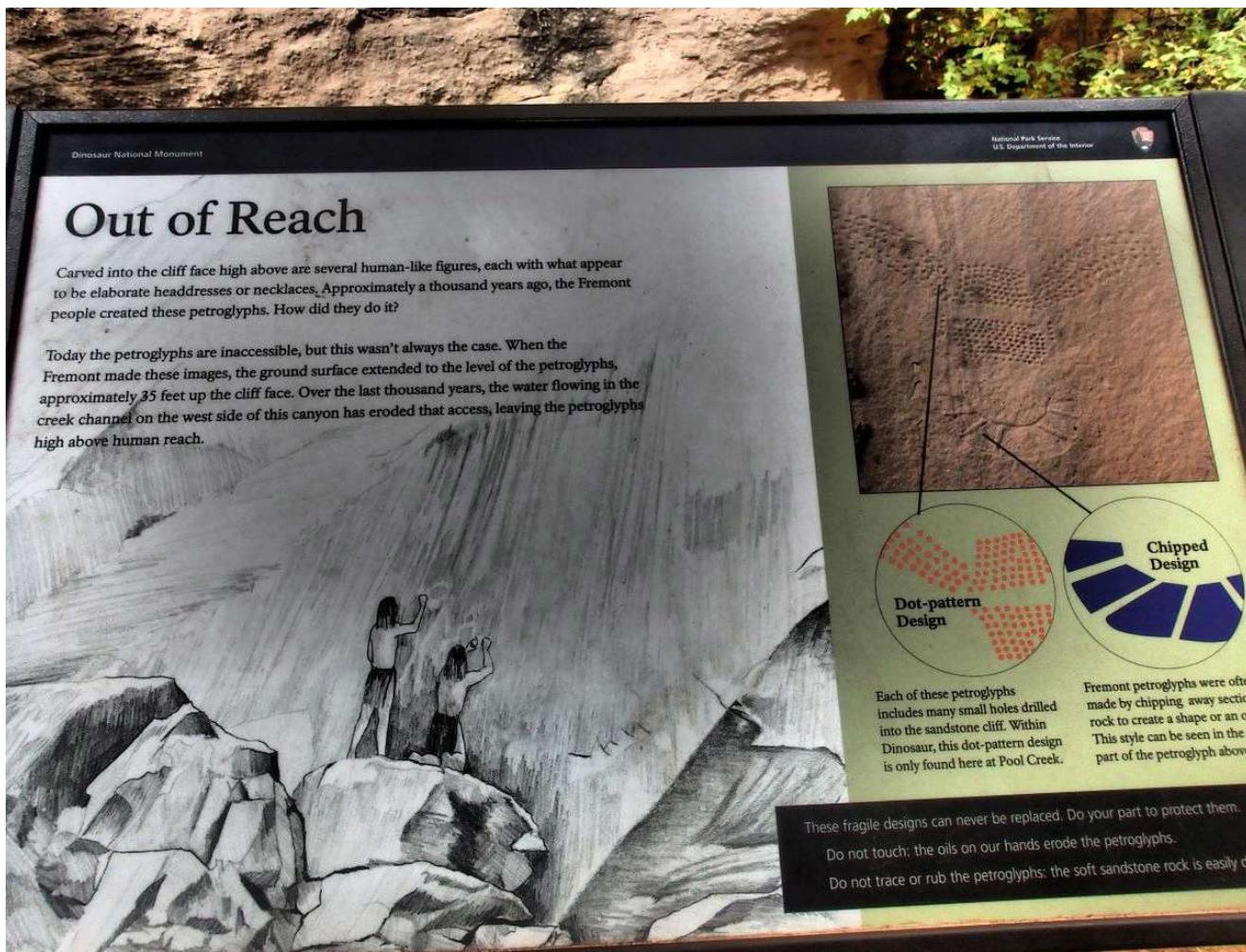
Burgh and Scoggin did find other cultural layers below the storage bins. Fremont people were not the first to use Mantle Cave. As is the case with most archeological sites, additional evaluation of Mantle Cave by

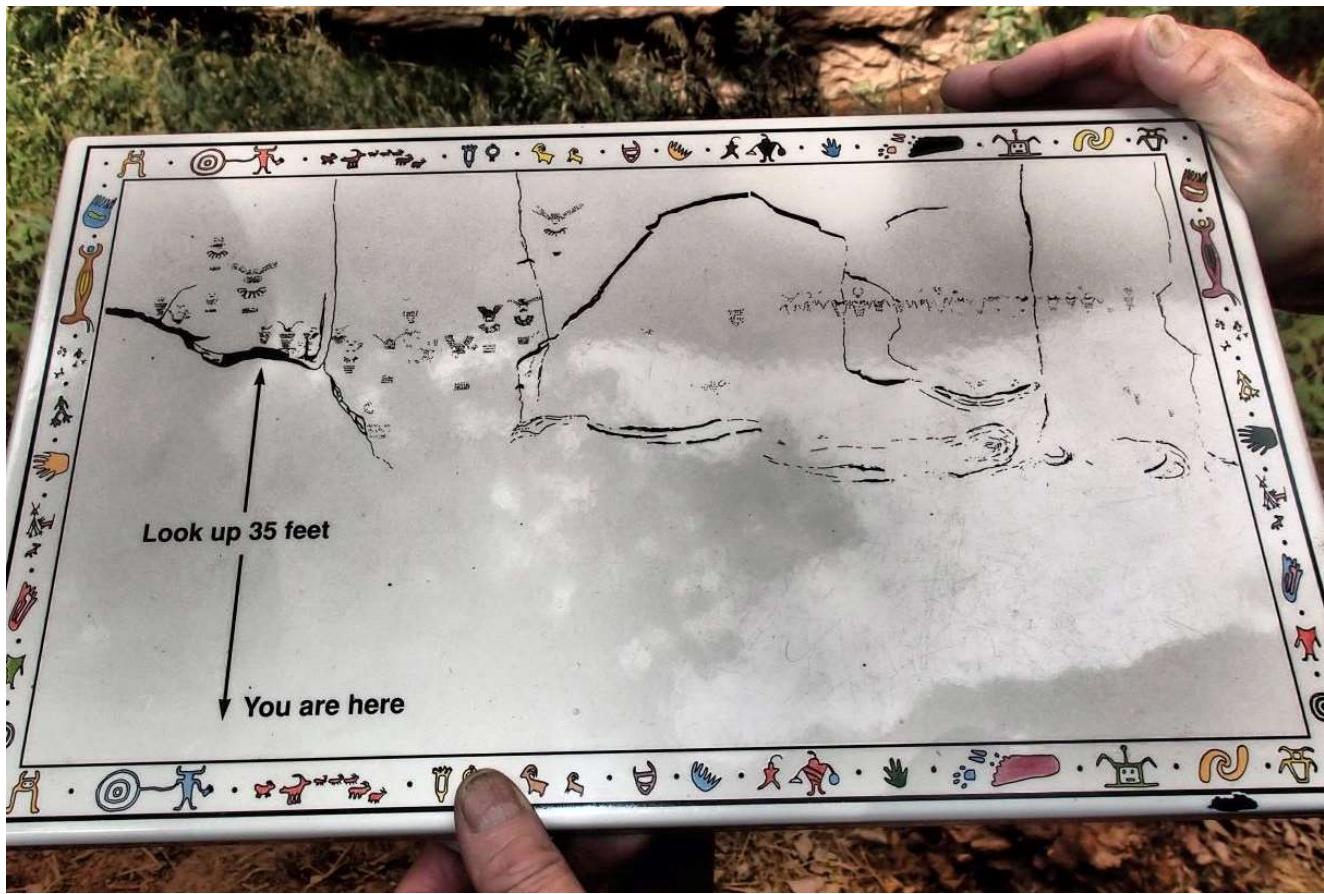
archeologists is needed. Excavated sites need continued protection from your impacts.



Green / Yampa at Echo Park:

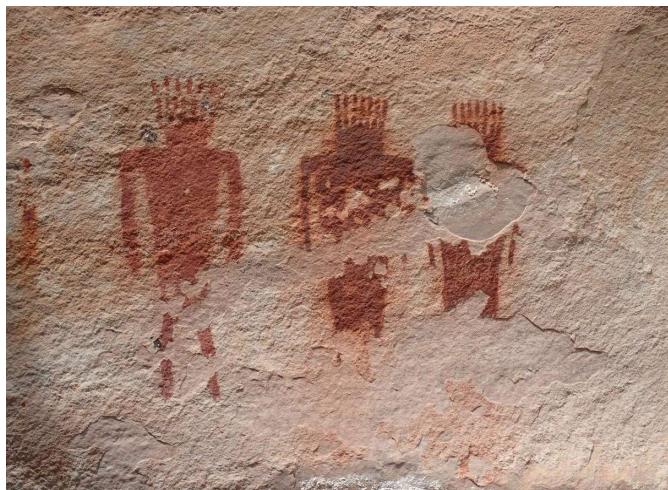
The last photo above is taken along a cliff in Echo Park, so very accessible to cars. If you look closely you will see numerous pecked dots in sort of a winged shape. The 2 signs below explain why they are so high above the ground and give a diagram of all of the petroglyphs on that cliff face.





Jones Creek near the Green:

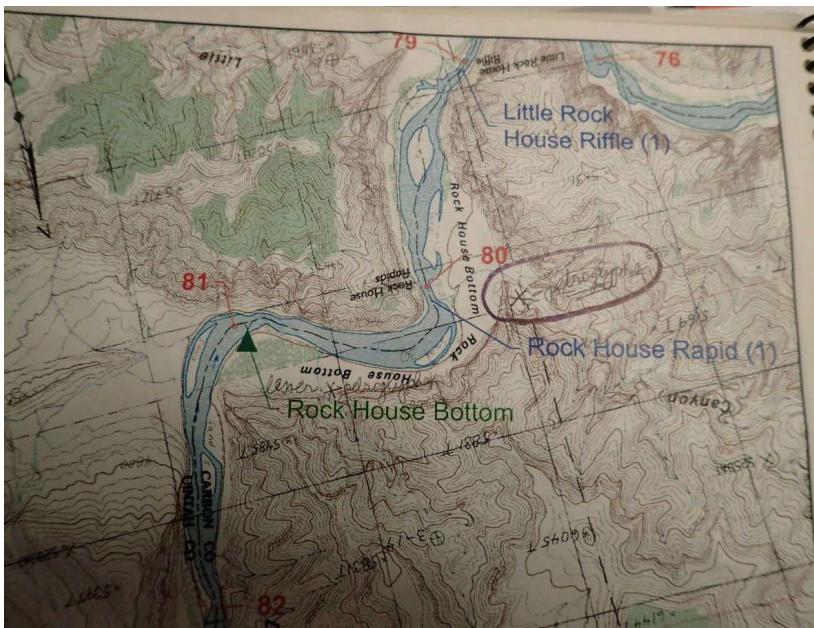
There are multiple rock art sites if you are willing to follow a few trails along and off of the beautiful Jones Creek. This creek comes out of a fish hatchery that you can drive to, so this could be explored without paddling the river if you wish. The rusty red pictographs are very bold. I am not sure what the image that looks like a net depicts.





Desolation and Gray Canyons - Green River Day 2 of 8:

On river right near mile 80 of the river map you will see a dry peninsula sticking out. Walk over to it and around the end and you will find these petroglyphs. This is day 2 of an 8 day trip. We did it in the heat of the summer with highs every day of 102 degrees or more. So when we skirted the right bank to leave room for the bear, it was happy to stay in the relatively cool water and watch us go by.

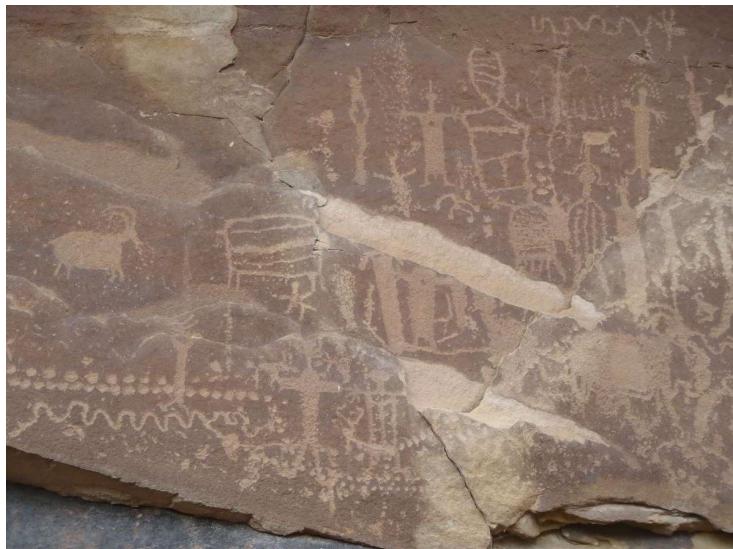
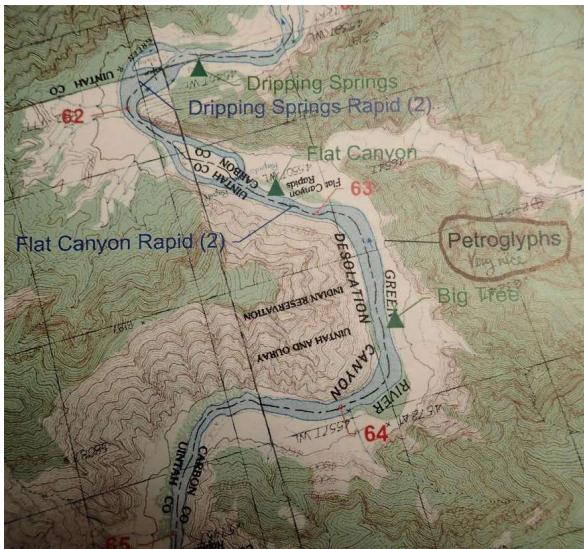






Deso Gray, Flat Canyon Panel, Day 3 of 8:

There is a very impressive petroglyph panel on river right at mile 63.3. We might have missed it except that people were there and so it drew our attention. Wes Hurcomb was taking a photo in the wide scene.

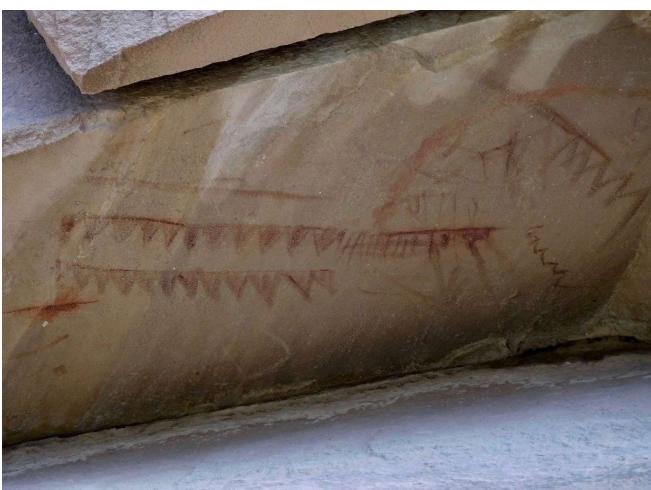
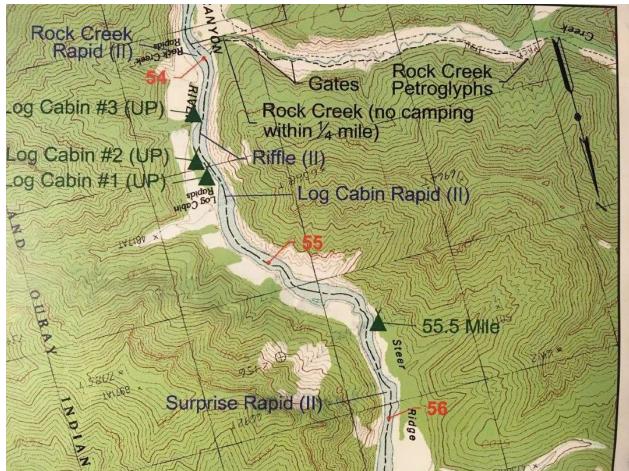




Deso Gray, Rock Creek Panel, Day 4 of 8:

This panel, on private property, is considered one of the finest petroglyph panels along the

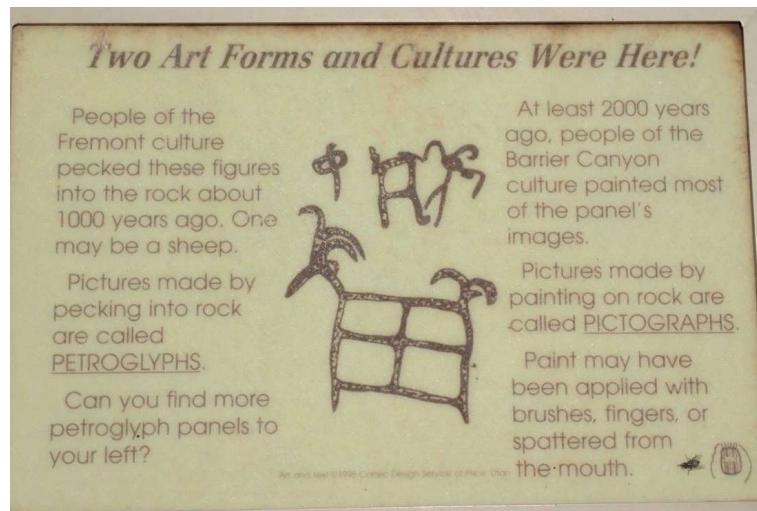
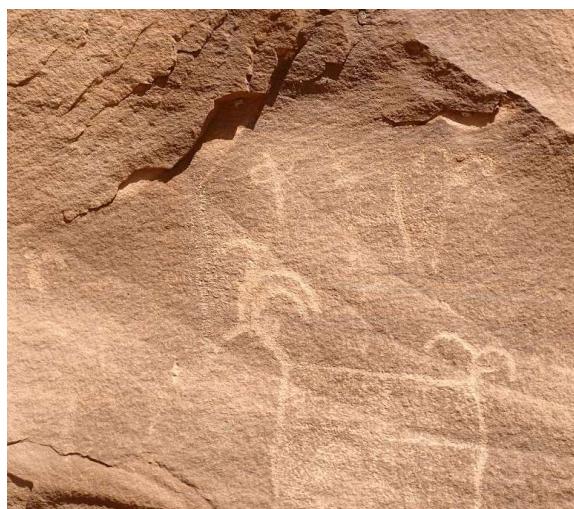
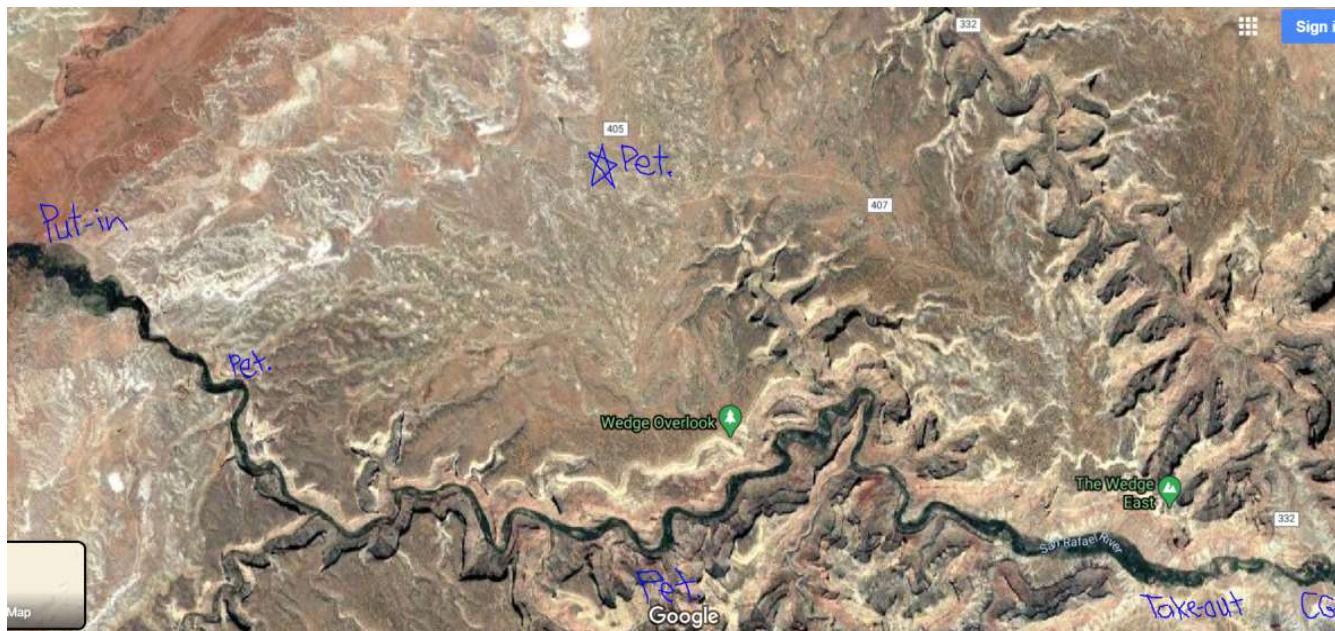
river corridor. It is 1.5 miles up Rock Creek from the river, past some historic ranch structures and a short distance downstream from where the canyon forks. Note the one set of red pictographs which is located on the underside of the slab with petroglyph rectangles with circles inside.

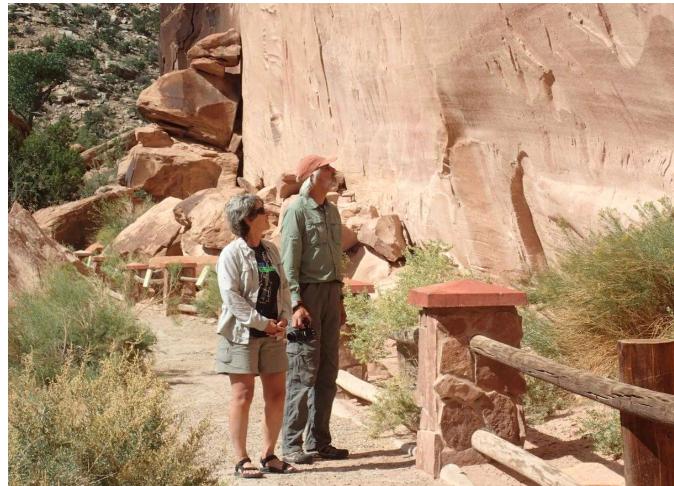
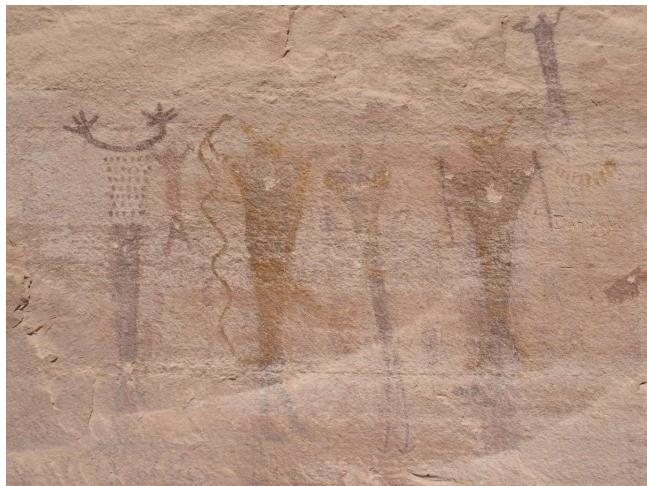


San Rafael River:

The GoogleMap pictured below shows our river takeout in the lower right corner. That is about 15 miles north of I-70 and almost 30 miles west of Green River, UT. For positioning purposes, know that the San Rafael joins the Green River at about 20 miles south of the town of Green River.

Our first attempt on this river was a backpack trip. Carol and Werner Duecker and I thought that we could cover 18 miles in 3 days, so we left 1 car at the downstream end and headed to the usual boating put-in. On the way - about 4 miles from the campground on the road that circles north of the river, there is a pullover for some truly remarkable pictographs. This is the Buckhorn Wash set of panels. See the first 11 photos here, and note that you can see multiple colors in the pictographs along with some wonderful style.







Some interesting information about the Buckhorn Wash panels..... Most of it is done in the Barrier Canyon Style which generally occurred 2000 to 8000 years ago, and these pictographs exhibit several paint colors. Black is from yellow ochre, pinyon gum, and sumac. Red is made from red ochre, roots of mountain mahogany, and about 15% blood. It is not known whether the blood is from humans or animals. And the yellow is created from rabbitbush. Binding agents include plant oils, animal fat, eggs, and blood. The Fremont Style of petroglyphs were added in later times.

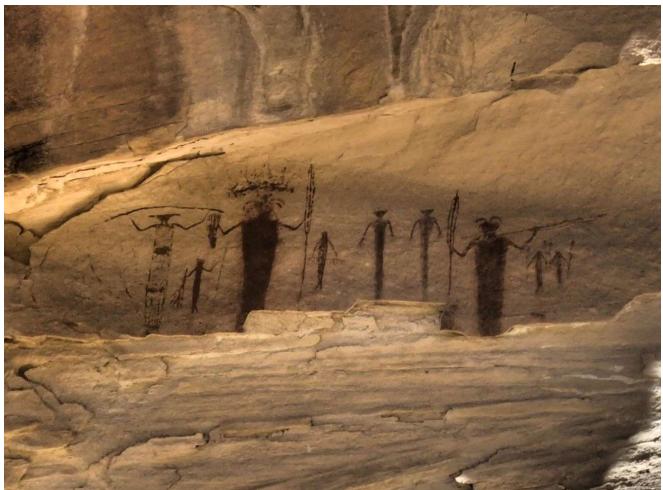
The Old Spanish Trail went from New Mexico to parts of California, and it passed through this area. For this and other reasons, there has been a lot of graffiti and vandalism of the Indian rock art. In 1996, Emery County and the State of Utah did a lot of work to restore the Buckhorn panels as much as they could.



The trick to doing a successful backpack would be to cross the trickle of a river and go 50 yards or further; then travel down the right side, looking for a distinct trail. You might be successful if you just get on that trail. We bushwhacked along the left side, crossing the trickle many times, but never getting off the river far enough to the right to catch that trail. After 4 miles of this, we gave up and found a nice camp spot with a spring. Cochineal bugs there dotted red dye on our shirts. We spent 2 nights at the same camp and did a day hike up to 1 major side canyon, finding the dark panel of rock art on the far left bank.

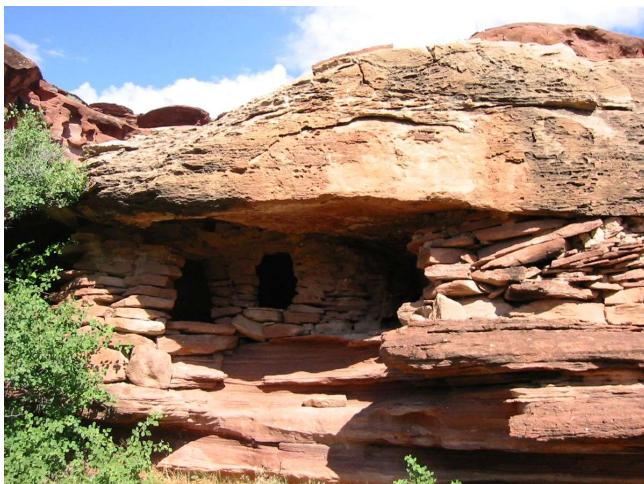


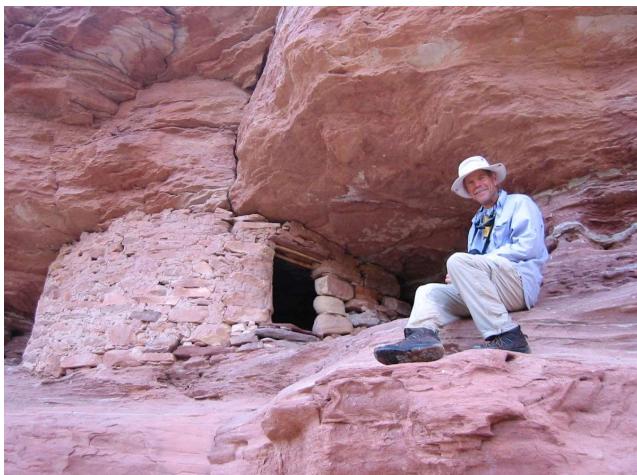
A year or 2 later, the Dueckers, Anne Fiore, Gary Cage and I paddled the river. The tall figures in these pictographs were found in the middle side canyon on river right. There are more rock art sites and at least 1 ruin to be found, but with a couple hundred people on the river you could not get picky about campsites or explore freely. I will do this again sometime, but try for midweek.



Stillwater Canyon on the Green River:

The map shows the Stillwater Canyon going south from Mineral Bottom to the confluence with the Colorado River at Spanish Bottom. Only the first 4 photos are Karen's, with locations unknown on the first 2, Lyn Berry at a Jasper Canyon ruin, and the granary up in the Dollhouse area at the very end. The picture with 3 kinds of dwellings is actually a series of sculptures that someone put together, and each of them is about 8" wide. It was quite interesting and imaginative. I was only able to place the photo with Lyn Berry because Kathryn had a few photos of that ruin tagged as being in Jasper Canyon.





Kathryn's description of the Labyrinth and Stillwater Canyons on the Green River:

Labyrinth and Stillwater Canyons are the last Class I sections of the Green River before its confluence with the Colorado River and the beginning of Cataract Canyon, which includes a series of 69 rapids (29 named rapids) on its way to Lake Powell. The put-ins for these canyons are at Green River, UT, Ruby Ranch, and Mineral Bottom. Ruby Ranch (Mile 97) is on the east bank of the Green at its confluence with the San Rafael. The map shows the canyons going south from Mineral Bottom (Mile 52) to the confluence with the Colorado River (Mile 0) and about 3 miles further to Spanish Bottom and the location of the Doll House. Boaters not interested in continuing through Cataract generally contract for a jet boat to transport them back up the Colorado River to the Potash boatramp near Moab.

Stillwater - Ft. Bottom Ruin and Cabin:

Fort Bottom, at Mile 40.5, is about 12 miles below the put-in at Mineral Bottom. Camping

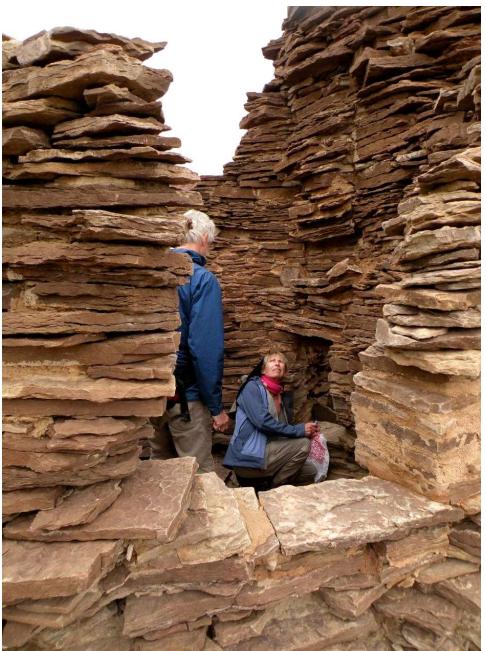
is available on river left, the side with the ruin and cabin pictured below. The landing and camp is near the head of the island where the river splits. There is a challenging low water tamarisk camp on river right further down this left channel. The area is also accessible by hiking trail from the Island in the Sky section of Canyonlands and the White Rim trail.

The historic cabin, built in the early 1900s by Mark Walker, one of the first cattlemen in the area, is thought to have been used by Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch. A trail from the cabin area leads up to the ruin. Described by Muschler in 1969:

The ruin consists of two, two-story, interconnected, crudely circular towers, and a third separate, completely collapsed tower, built on the summit of the bluff with a commanding view downriver and of Fort Bottom. Other collapsed structures are present on the summit, and a slab-lined cist is present beneath the Moss Back ledge west of the towers. The ruin was built of dry laid masonry and most of the mud plaster on the inside has been washed away, leaving the structure in danger of imminent collapse. Please do not climb the walls!

Plan on at least a couple hours to hike to the ruin. There is only one dicey section of the trail, but incredible views for the entire hike.

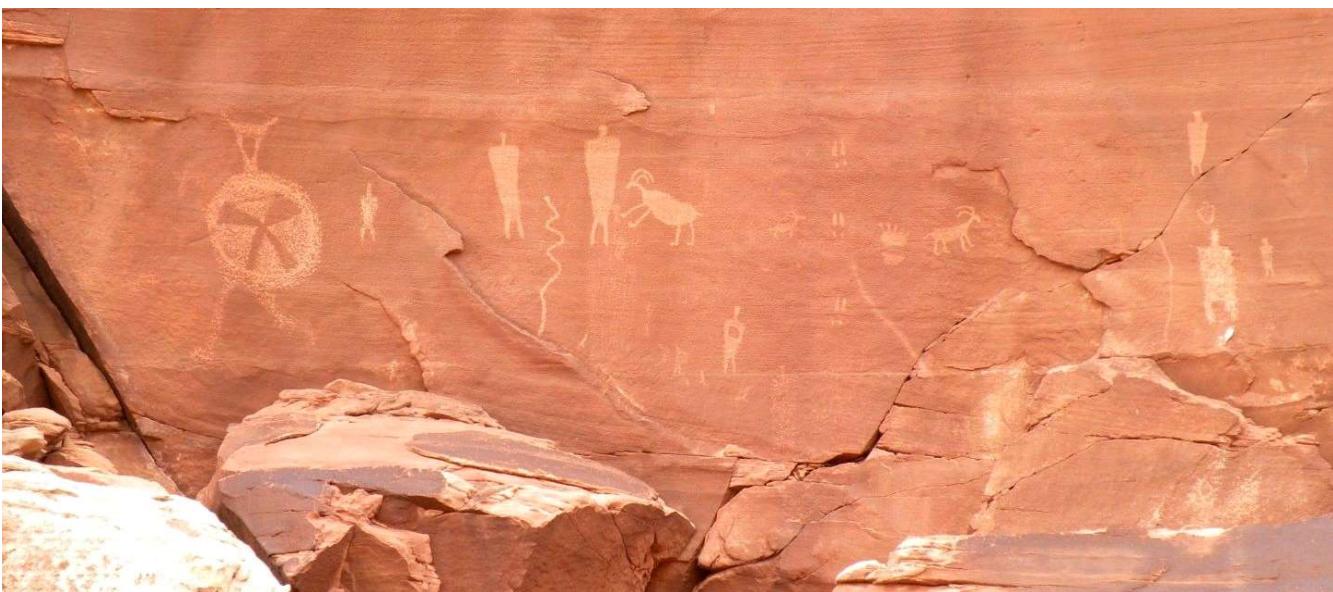


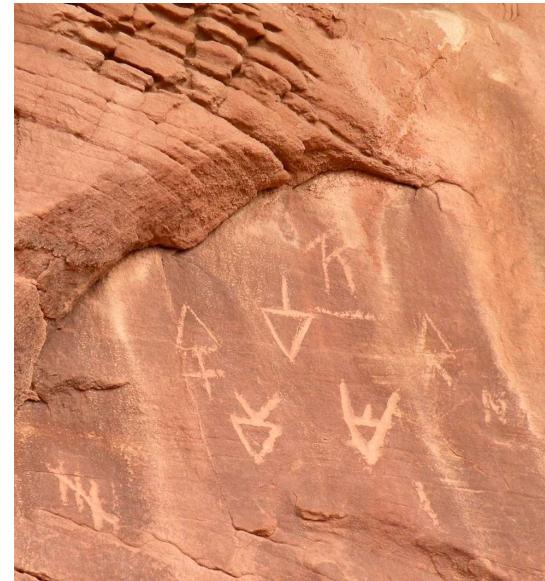


Stillwater - Anderson Bottom:

Soon after passing into Stillwater Canyon at Millard Canyon (river right at Mile 34), you reach Anderson Bottom, a large open area, at Mile 31 on the right. The first set of petroglyphs are on the Rincon – the rock formation surrounded by about 2 miles of oxbow. The more angular cowboy etchings, thought to be cattle brands, are about 200 yards up the canyon on the west side of the bottom enroute to a slot canyon and swimming hole.

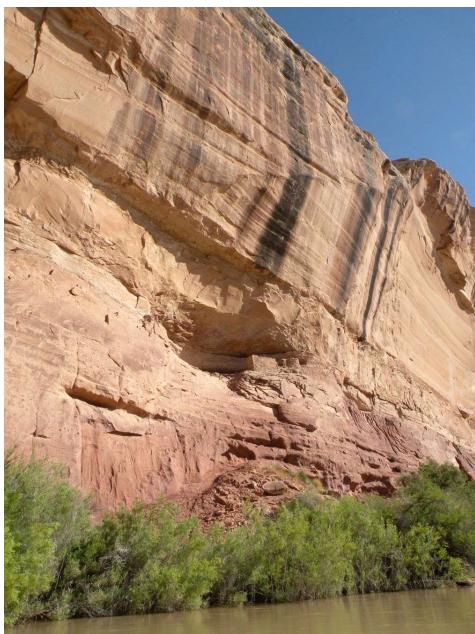
The petroglyphs and fragments of pottery indicate ancestral use of the bottom. Then in the early 1900s, Anderson grew sugar cane and vegetables and ran cattle and sheep in the area. Part of the bottom was used as a landing strip and a dance hall for Friendship Cruises on the river in the late 1950s.

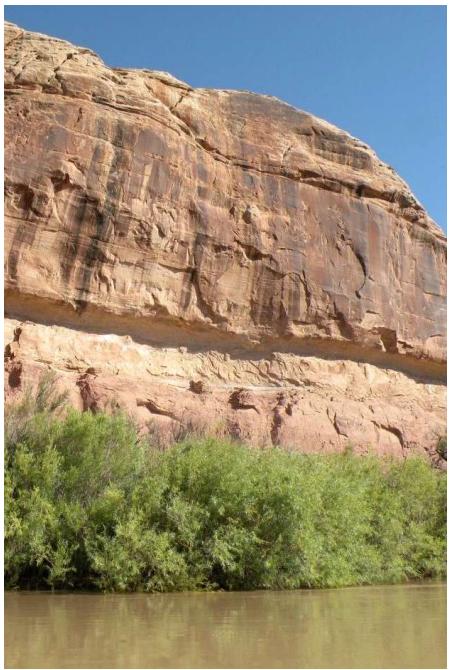




Stillwater - Above Holeman Canyon:

A couple of miles downstream from Anderson Bottom a set of cliff dwellings are visible from the river on river left (Mile 28.75). The ruins are about 1/3 of the way up the cliff below the sheer cliff face.

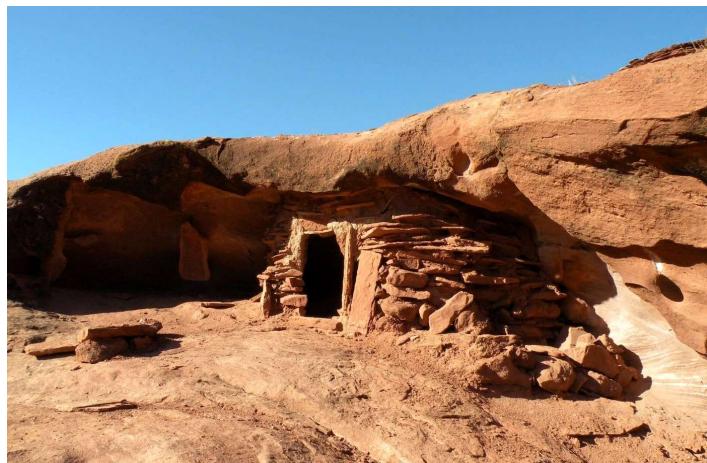
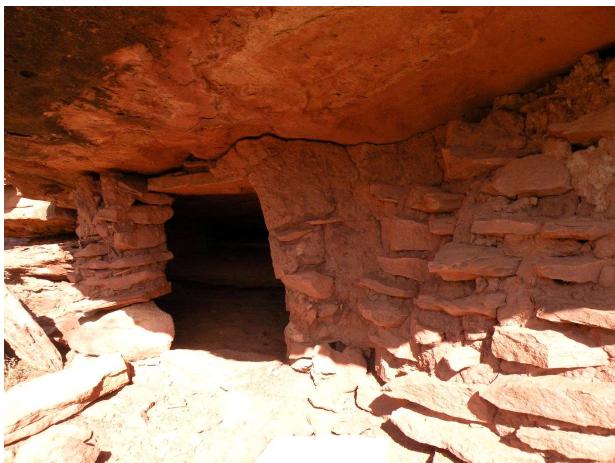


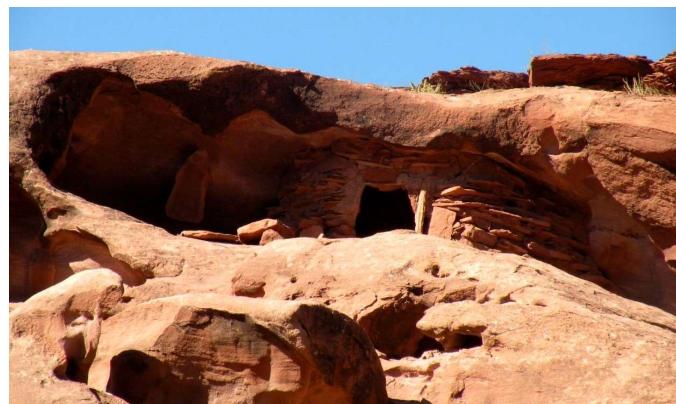
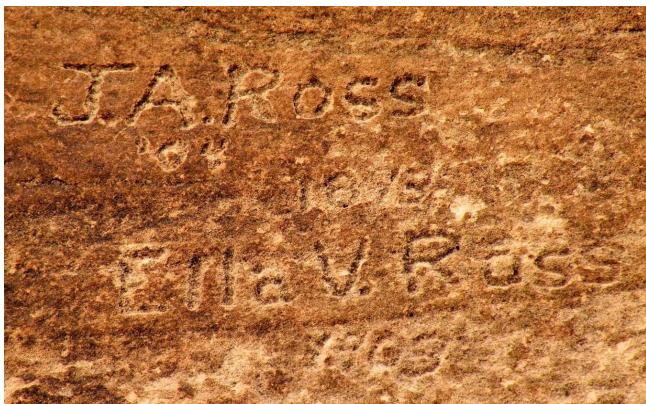


Stillwater - Across River and at Turk's Head:

A few miles downstream, you get your first up-close view of Turk's Head. We camped around the bend on river left at Mile 21 – across the river from Turk's Head. The ruins we visited are on the northeast side of the formation. While they are at a couple of different levels, their general location is indicated by the photo of gawking photographers. The inscriptions shown here were at about river bottom level. Apparently there are a lot of flint chips in the area as well.

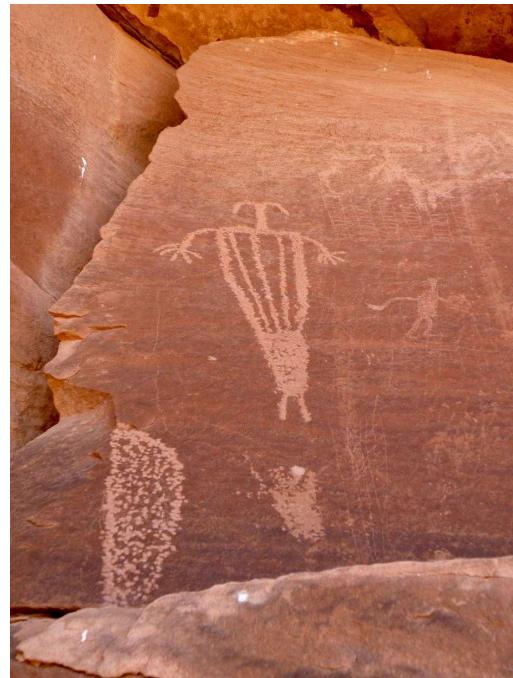






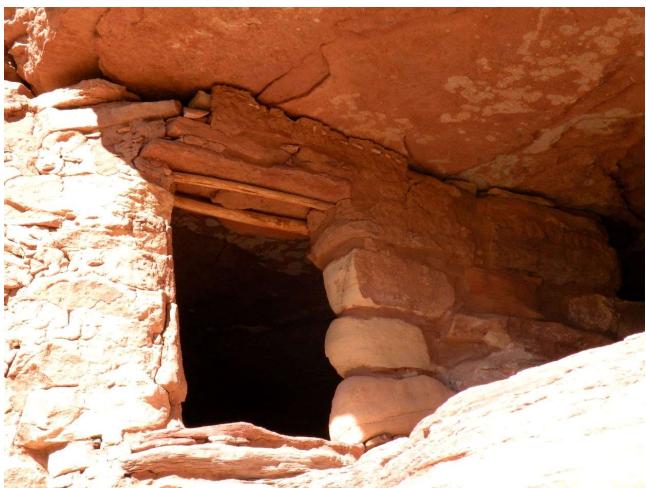
Stillwater - Deadhorse Canyon:

Deadhorse Canyon is at about Mile 19.75 on river right. About 300-400 yards up the canyon is a panel with figures walking in a line about 10 feet above the path. About 30 minutes more up canyon is the other set of petroglyphs.



Stillwater - Jasper Canyon:

The main ruin at Jasper Canyon is just below the mouth of the canyon on the first level above the river. There is another structure (not pictured) on the top of the first bench above the river upstream of the canyon mouth. At high water (about 24,000cfs) we paddled up the canyon and camped on narrow ledges. At lower water (6000cfs) we camped downstream of the canyon with our kitchen at river level and our tents above.



Stillwater - Water Canyon Fossils:

Water Canyon is a great place to hike. Part of our party (Carol and Candace) hiked over 11 miles one lovely day in early October, 2014. Others of us hiked to a pool, took waterfall showers, and admired the fossils (mostly crinoids and, perhaps, brachiopods or bivalves) – for hours.

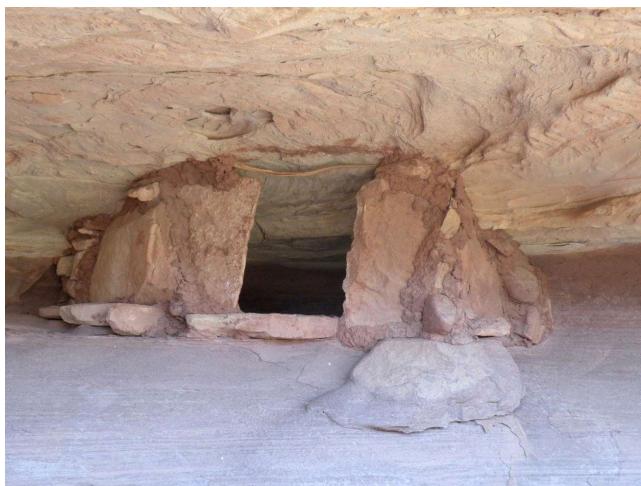




Spanish Bottom / Dollhouse:

Spanish Bottom is river right on the Colorado River about 3.5 miles below the confluence with the Green. The bottom has a few areas for camping with the most appealing on a small ledge under cottonwoods at the lower end of the bottom. The Spanish Trail leads from there to the Dollhouse, an area of hoodoos and rock slots in the Maze District of Canyonlands National Park. It may be called the “Spanish Trail” because it was thought to be a southern variant (called the Bears Ears Trails) of the Old Spanish Trail which is closer to Moab and Green River. The hike is 4-5 miles round trip with about .5 miles of steep to get up to the Dollhouse. The fossils pictured (crinoids?) are along the Spanish Trail, and the granary is in the Dollhouse area.





Summary:

In this report we have seen a few signs of Indian habitation along the Dolores River, the Dominguez Canyon near the Gunnison, and in Dinosaur National Monument along the Yampa and Green Rivers. But the really dense rock art and ruins are located in Utah. They are found on the Colorado River from Potash to the confluence, on the Green River in Deso-Gray and Stillwater, and in and around the San Rafael River. We are able to access many of these sites with canoes and some hiking. Some of these would be hard to get to by car and/or on foot. While we can only speculate as to the reasons why the rock art were created, it is important to keep them intact so that we and generations to come can enjoy these examples created by our indigenous cultures.

All photos are by Kathryn Mutz and Karen Amundson; approximately half and half.

Resources:

- Utah Rock Art Research Association (URARA); go to urara.wildapricot.org ;
- Karen's pick of Buckhorn Wash web sites:
 - Best photos and links to many articles of interest regarding all Barrier Canyon Style rock art in Utah: bcsproject.org
 - Maps of sites around the Buckhorn Panel, including the dinosaur track: <https://www.roadtripryan.com/go/t/utah/san-rafael-swell/buckhornwash>
 - The official BLM site has an Emery Country Travel video to watch as well as 5 links to check out: <https://www.blm.gov/visit/buckhorn-panel>
 - And others are easy to find with a Google search