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PRESS RELEASE

Nature's Classroom

Moab, Utah, nestled along the banks of the Colorado River between towering red sandstone cliffs, offers an amazing hands-on educational experience in Geology, Ecology, Biology and History for young and old alike. Imagine magnificent canyon walls, sandstone arches, and a clear desert sky creating your classroom as you study the area's unique geology, Indian cultures and the prehistoric era of dinosaurs. Add to this an amazing outdoor playground, offering adventures in hiking, backpacking, photography, four wheel driving, rock climbing, rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and horseback riding, and Moab is a perfect education/vacation destination.

Study geology in the National Parks – Gracing 76,518 acres, Arches National Park has the world's largest concentration of natural stone arches, including the State's signature arch, Delicate Arch. In addition to over 2,000 arches, the park also contains an astounding variety of other geological formations. Colossal sandstone fins, massive balanced rocks, soaring pinnacles and spires dwarf visitors as they explore the park's viewpoints and hiking trails. Geologic faulting has exposed millions of years of geologic history within the park.

The mysterious worlds of ecology and biology unfold as students learn of the living organisms found in the biological soil that covers 75% of the 130,000 square miles of the Colorado Plateau. More commonly known as "cryptobiotic soil", these living soil crusts are dominated by cyanobacteria, and also include soil lichens, mosses, green algae, micro fungi and bacteria. These crusts play an important role in the ecosystems in which they occur. Micro organisms are also found and studied in "pot holes" which are abundant throughout the Moab area.

Canyonlands National Park is the largest national park in the state, and its diversity staggers the imagination. Thousand foot views down into river canyons, or up, to red rock pinnacles, cliffs and spires are truly awe-inspiring. The park's geological characteristics have naturally sectioned it into three areas called: Island in the Sky, the Needles and the Maze. Named for their most prominent geologic characteristics, these districts are quite varied in their geological features. *Island in the Sky* sits atop a massive 1500 foot mesa from which you can see nearly 100 miles in any given direction, while the *Needles* section offers beautiful sandstone spires that jut out of the ground creating an unforgettable spectacle. The *Maze*, considered the wildest district in Canyonlands National Park, is a perplexing jumble of canyons that has been described as a "30 square mile puzzle in sandstone".

Indian cultures can be explored through the stories found on the many rock art sites on cliffs and boulders. People, whose livelihood was based on the harvesting of wild resources, and later on of agriculture, populated this region. Petroglyphs and pictographs left behind help to tell their stories. Petroglyphs, are graphics pecked or abraded into the rock. Pictographs are representations painted on the rocks in one or more colors made from mineral pigments or plant dyes. Panels of both types, and panels which exhibit both styles, are found in the area, and plenty are accessible to passenger vehicles or very short hikes. The area around Moab also has many stone structures such as dwellings, granaries (storage units) and kivas (ceremonial and community structures.)

Evidence of earlier use patterns consists of temporary campsites, broken stone tools, potshards and other implements. Some of these implements can be seen at the Dan O'Laurie Museum in downtown Moab. Information on the sites around Moab can be found in the Moab Area Rock Art Auto Tour brochure available at the Travel Council or Moab Information Center.

Going way back in history, there are several sites around the area that confirm the presence of prehistoric animals. Dinosaurs left skeletons and an equally intriguing reminder, their footprints, in what was once swampy mud, and now is sandstone. Although the tracks may be hard to spot, once you find them they provide the impetus for plenty of imaginative speculation. A Sauropod Dinosaur Track Site located 23 miles north of Moab is the first sauropod (five-toed herbivore) tracks ever reported in Utah.

Moab's clear dark skies are considered one of the top spots for star gazing and perfect for astronomy lessons. With no big cities nearby, you can see thousands of glimmering stars as the Milky Way creates a luminous streak across the sky. A sunset hike to Delicate Arch, especially during a full moon, provides an amazing view of the night sky.

Combine the study of nature with a lesson on preservation and restoration by arranging a volunteer project with the local recycling group of Moab. The group promotes the respect, rethink, reduce, reuse, and recycle lifestyle through a variety of hands-on projects anyone can help with. They remove trash and recycling from the streams, along the highways and byways, and on the trails, all over this gorgeous region. They coordinate the Friends of the Parkway program for the City of Moab, are the creators of Common Thread, a project aimed at getting diverse user groups to prevent damage and keep areas clean during large off-road events, as well as a variety of other projects. If you or your group would like to devote part of the time you spend in Moab on a project designed to enhance the beauty of the region, please give the Solutions a call at 435-259-8640. They will be happy to custom design a project that will work for your group.

Moab restaurants offer a wide variety of cuisine from fast-food to fine dining on the banks of the Colorado River. Great evening entertainment for large groups can be found as well with old west fun at Bar-M Chuckwagon (featuring the Bar M Wranglers), with an authentic, high-energy western dinner show full of folklore, humor and audience participation in a western village setting. For a night to remember, enjoy a cowboy style chuckwagon dinner and a slow moving evening boat ride on the Colorado River. Canyonlands by Night offers one of the most unique sound and light shows in the world and is one of only two such shows that are performed on the water.

The natural wonders found in Canyon Country, create a fun, yet educational atmosphere for student tours and full of history for adult groups as well. Whether your group longs for a major adrenaline rush, just a little heart pounding, or something that soothes the soul, there are activities for every age and fitness level.

The following **4 day tour** that is excellent in itself as a long weekend tour, or as an add-on to another tour that your clients may already be taking.

Day 1- MOAB

- Arrive in Moab late morning/early afternoon
- Lunch at one of the downtown area restaurants
- Afternoon tour of the downtown shops, museums, galleries and the information center
- Dinner in Moab (Fine dining, chuck wagon, river cruise)
- Overnight in Moab.

Day 2- MOAB

- Morning tour of Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point (hike to Upheaval Dome and/or Mesa Arch)
- Lunch at one of the downtown area restaurants
- Afternoon tour of Arches National Park. (hike Fiery Furnace or tour entire park)
- Dinner in Moab (or pack picnic) return to Arches for a sunset hike to Delicate Arch.
- Overnight in Moab

Day 3- MOAB

- Tour of Rock Art and Dinosaur track sites.
- Lunch at one of the downtown area restaurants.
- Afternoon rafting, jeep/jet boat tour, horseback ride or other activity
- Dinner in Moab (Fine dining, chuckwagon, river cruise)
- Overnight in Moab

Day 4- MOAB

- Tour Scenic Byway 279 with a hike to Corona Arch.
- Depart Moab

Moab also has unique educational tours available through numerous tour companies with professional and knowledgeable guides specifically geared toward outdoor education and walk-on guides are also available. Detailed information on group friendly restaurants, meeting spaces, as well as additional itineraries, can be found at www.moabutah.info or by contacting the Moab Area Travel Council at 1-800-635-6622. For more information on the National Parks and other activities visit our tourist information website www.discovermoab.com.