

The author at sunrise on Yant Flat © Charles Wood

Chapter 1

AROUND ST. GEORGE

*Bonsai Pond*

Snow Canyon

Located just a few miles north of St. George, Snow Canyon State Park has seen its visitation skyrocket in recent years due to an influx of population in the St. George area. It has also benefited from the popularity of running, cycling, and rock climbing, and—to a significant extent—the presence of several nearby spa resorts specializing in weight reduction. Despite its relatively small acreage, Snow Canyon packs a tremendous punch of interesting sights along its 4-mile long Scenic Road and numerous trails: intensely colorful sandstone cliffs ranging from white to deep red, lovely pink sand dunes, spectacular cross-bedding alternating with black lava fields, lava caves, and great views from several easily-reached promontories. All this results in excellent photographic opportunities.

Photo advice: The park's diverse colors are best seen in the early morning and from the middle of the afternoon on, but don't go too late or the southern part of the canyon will be in shadow. From the south entrance of the park, begin your visit with short and narrow Jenny's Canyon. Jenny's Canyon is an easy slot canyon, just across the road from the sand dunes. This is a good spot if you've never seen 'Swiss Cheese' style erosion of sandstone. The ½-mile round-trip trail begins at a car park on the east side of the road; just follow the markers on the ground. The trail is closed from March 15 to June 1.

Just across the car park, the sand dunes can be quite nice after a rain or a windy night. Sadly, they are covered by footprints most of the time, which makes taking anything other than detail shots difficult. Next, park just before the campground and hike the picturesque Hidden Pinyon Trail to the overlook, which offers a 360° panorama of the canyon with Red Mountain in the background. You can shoot superb grand scenics from here, or isolate nice perspective shots of the canyon north and south. This walk takes less than 1 hour round-trip.

At the Lava Flow Overlook parking area, about 1½ miles farther north, take the trail leading to the lava beds and tubes and ascend the West Canyon Overlook. From this easily-reached vantage point, you gain another great all-around view. There is some highly photogenic red sandstone cross-bedding all around this overlook. About ¼ mile on the way back to the parking lot, you can take a short side-trip on the White Rocks Trail to your left. Within a few minutes (about ¼ mile), you reach some red and white slickrock making a good foreground for a picture of the park, looking south.

If you are short of time and can do only one walk, my favorite spot in the park is the 1-mile Petrified Dunes Trail, ascending through amazing cross-bedding to ancient petrified dunes peppered with potholes. After a rain, these potholes form pools with nice cloud reflections,—especially scenic at sunrise when the west ridge of the canyon is basked in a warm glow. My favorite view is at 37°12'50" 113°38'45", a spot I like to call Bonsai Pond.

In September, you can observe an extensive *Datura* bloom along the park road, particularly abundant on the lava fields opposite the campground. Note that *Datura* are very poisonous.

After exiting the park through the north entrance, drive north for 0.5 mile on UT-18 to a trailhead; the 1-mile round-trip trail leads to an interesting white sandstone amphitheater.

As you drive back toward St. George on UT-18, look for a marked dirt road to the right, about a mile past the park's north entrance. This road leads to the Snow Canyon Overlook, which provides a great bird's eye view of the canyon.

*Late summer thunderstorm at sunset © Charles Wood*

Getting there: From I-15 northbound, take exit 6 and drive 3.7 miles north on Bluff Street to the intersection with Snow Canyon Parkway. Turn left and drive 4 miles, then turn right onto Snow Canyon Drive, which leads to the south entrance of the park.



Morning ground fog rolls into Snow Canyon after a heavy rain © Charles Wood

From I-15 southbound, take exit 10, turn right off the ramp then left at the light. Follow Red Hills Road for almost 6 miles to UT-18, continuing straight on Snow Canyon Parkway for about 4 miles, then turn right onto Snow Canyon Drive.

Time required: At least 4 hours to drive through the park and do the recommended hikes. There is a very nice campground inside the park for those preferring a starry night over one of the numerous and cheap St. George motels.

Nearby locations: If you think you've seen enough red rock, you may want to immerse yourself for a while in the radically different atmosphere of Pine Valley. There, you'll find a lovely little Mormon community and a pretty alpine valley surrounded by woods. It is a very pleasant location, visited by few other than residents of St. George and surrounding communities. Coming out from Snow Canyon's north entrance, follow UT-18 north for about 15 miles and turn east for another 10 miles until you find Pine Valley Recreation Area. You can also continue past the pretty Pine Valley Reservoir to the campground and hike on the local pack trails.

While in St. George, you are only 30 minutes away from the heart of the spectacular Virgin River Gorge. The gorge has beautiful narrows in its southern part as I-15 crosses the Beaver Dam Mountains southwest of St. George. There is a good rest area and campground about halfway through the gorge, which is the only point where you can take pictures.

Red Mountain

The Red Mountain Trail leads to an overlook with a fantastic bird's-eye view of Snow Canyon and Red Mountain. In many respects, this view is reminiscent of that experienced from Observation Point or the West Rim in Zion National Park and is well worth the moderate effort.

From the trailhead, the first 15-20 minutes are a mild uphill climb on an extremely rocky old Jeep road, fenced-in on both sides, until you reach the Red Mountain Wilderness Area marker. The trail becomes progressively smoother after that and another 15-20 minutes brings you to a junction. The Red Mountain Trail goes on straight ahead; instead, take the left fork with the marker pointing to the Snow Canyon Overlook. Another 10 minutes on this sandy trail brings you to the overlook, with an awesome view of the west arm of Snow Canyon 1400 feet below, and the Arizona Strip in the distance.

Other worthwhile views can also be had from further up on the Red Mountain Trail. Back at the intersection with the Red Mountain Trail, turn left and walk another 15 to 20 minutes (about 0.7 mile) to a series of good vantage points. Continuing south on Red Mountain Trail for another 1½ miles, you arrive at an area of white sandstone with good photographic potential. There is a small pond next to the rim that fills with water after a heavy rain and makes for an interesting photo. Just past the pond, you can climb to a vantage point with some pink slickrock (37°14'16" 113°40'17") overlooking Snow Canyon above West Canyon road.

Photo advice: The best time for photography is in early morning from dawn to sunrise at Snow Canyon Overlook. A wide angle adequately covers the view but makes the end of the canyon too distant; instead I suggest you shoot vertical frames for stitching with a moderate wide angle or a "normal" lens. The very first viewpoint you hit at the end of the trail is the best, but there are other viewpoints to the left you might want to try.



Snow Canyon Overlook, on the way to Red Mountain

For another good vantage point, walk back 150 feet from the rim and ascend the outcrop immediately to the west of the viewpoint (roughly from 37°15'08" 113°39'58"). There is some nicely colored slickrock here that would make a good foreground.

Getting there: From downtown St. George at the intersection of Bluff Blvd. and St. George Blvd., drive north on Bluff St. and set your odometer at the traffic light marking the beginning of UT-18. Drive 11 miles to the marker for the Red Mountain Trailhead. Turn left (west) onto the dirt road leading to the large equestrian car park. The trail starts near the posted map.

Time required: 2½ to 3 hours for the roughly 4.5-mile round-trip to Snow Canyon Overlook, including plenty of time for scouting and photography. Double that if you go as far as the vantage point above the pond.

The Santa Clara River Reserve

The Santa Clara River Reserve is a vast BLM-administered recreational area with an extensive network of well-maintained multiuse trails. At its northern end, the Reserve has a very interesting petroglyph site located at the edge of the Santa Clara Bench, just below the rim. It consists of a classic collection of glyphs: anthropomorphs, bighorn sheep, snakes, etc. carved on large black boulders strewn over about 200 yards. The site's location high above the Santa Clara River makes it even more attractive.

Getting there: From Bluff Street in St. George, turn left onto CR-8 (Sunset Blvd.) toward Santa Clara and drive 6.8 miles to the Anasazi Valley Trailhead signpost. Turn left at the gate and continue 0.3 mile to the trailhead. From here, the 1.2-mile Tempi'po'op trail leads gently to the western edge of the site. A number of social trails are clearly visible just below the rim. Pick an easy one and make your way among the dispersed lava boulders in search of photogenic petroglyphs.



Santa Clara petroglyphs

Time required: About 2 hours.

Nearby location: Continuing 0.8 mile northwest on CR-8 past the Anasazi Trailhead turnoff, turn right into Kayenta Parkway and follow the signs for the Kayenta Art Village; it has a handful of high-end art galleries including the Earth & Light Photography Gallery whose proprietor, Charles Wood, is one of my main hiking and travel partners as well as a contributor to this book.

Gunlock Mesa

Gunlock Mesa isn't exactly headline material, being as it is in the shadow of Snow Canyon, but it's a little gem well-known to the locals for providing excellent hiking and photography within a dense but spectacular area of sandstone bluffs and canyons. If you are not pressed by time, or if you find Snow Canyon (or Zion) too crowded, you can spend a very nice and productive half-day at Gunlock.



The Vortex, with Camelback in the distance

The mesa is located northeast of Gunlock State Park, which is essentially a large reservoir popular with boaters. In springtime during snowmelt, you'll see waterfalls overflowing from the spillway west of Gunlock Road. In a wet year, these waterfalls can make for very interesting shots. You can park here and walk toward the bottom of the waterfalls or you can park a bit further at the official State Park's car park, pay your fee, and walk along the dam until you reach the spillway.

Heading north on Gunlock Road, take the gravel road to the right just before entering Gunlock. The road ascends steeply to the mesa, soon turning into clay; drive 2.8 miles, make a sharp right just after crossing a small channel and continue for about 0.1 miles to the second car park (use the first one in case it's full). You can see the canyon below and a large photogenic mass of striated sandstone just across it. Follow the trail down, crossing the wash and continuing on the other side. The trail ascends progressively, then more steeply on the sandstone following a photogenic channel. Leave a large mound of sandstone to the right and continue toward 37°16'12" 113°44'50". Find the easy way up and make your way up the ridge following a natural path. You'll encounter



Yant Flat at dawn, looking toward St. George

the Vortex—a peculiar depression thought to have been a sinkhole eons ago—at $37^{\circ}16'15''$ $113^{\circ}44'52''$. Continue past a second, much smaller sinkhole, and stop between the two humps of the Camel's Back for a glorious panoramic view.

Photo advice: Late afternoon is best. An extreme wide angle is needed to take in the entire Vortex. Stitching works but not without some difficulty as you are so close. I partially solved the problem by shooting two rows with a medium-wide focal length to avoid distortion that would have made it difficult to stitch.

Getting there: An alternative is to come from the east on the above-described road. From the north exit of Snow Canyon, continue 7 miles north on UT-18 past Dammeron Valley and turn left on the gravel road at the foot of Veyo Volcano. Drive a little over 5 miles and turn left just before the small channel to the car park.

Time required: About 2½ hours round-trip from the car park with time for enjoyment and photography.

Nearby location: There is an interesting petroglyph panel located at the edge of the Santa Clara Bench, along the road to Gunlock. It consists mainly of a number of anthropomorphs, densely carved on a large boulder perched just above the road. It's a very short walk. Coming from Santa Clara, drive about 3 miles past the junction of Gunlock Road CR-8 and Old Highway 91, aka Beaver Dam Road, and look for a small pullout on the right side, just before mile marker 3. Walk around the corner and look for an old jeep track ascending steeply on the

right side. There is more parking space further up on the left side. Walk up the old track for almost 300 yards, then angle steeply right walking back southwest in the direction of the road. You'll find the boulder on the edge of the cliff at $37^{\circ}13'05''$ $113^{\circ}46'35''$. Its close proximity to the edge of the cliff makes it a challenge to photograph.

Yant Flat

Yant Flat is one of the latest hot spots in the never-ending quest for new icons of the Southwest, and for good reason. It is a spectacular location, easily accessed, with lots of fantastic scenery to shoot.

The Yant Flat area is staggered over several levels. The “Flat” proper is actually the wooded plateau south of the forest road. The area that interests us is actually below the rim of this plateau. The first level down is a vast and incredibly scenic expanse of sandstone, which looks best at dawn and sunrise. The next level consists of sandstone cliffs with intricate patterns and beautiful colors that look best in late afternoon. The next level below is the Cottonwood Wash drainage which is not accessible from here. A day is not sufficient to enjoy Yant Flat thoroughly and photograph the entire site under the best conditions, so you'll have to either spend the night at or near the trailhead, or you'll need to return two or more times, perhaps in different seasons.

Overleaf: Yant Flat at dawn, looking toward Hurricane





Sunset on Yant Flat

From the trailhead, follow the old Jeep road to the south. Somewhere near $37^{\circ}13'15''$ $113^{\circ}28'21''$ look for a faint path to the left—this may become a trail by the time you read this. From here, make a beeline to a good entry point to the first level down at $37^{\circ}13'05''$ $113^{\circ}28'08''$ or another close by at $37^{\circ}13'06''$ $113^{\circ}28'05''$. Despite the rather thick vegetation, you'll have no problem going in the general direction of these points, and as I said it may have turned into an obvious path. It should take you about 50 minutes (perhaps a little more on a first visit) to cover the roughly 1.5 miles to the rim. You can now contemplate the great potential of the first level and choose where you want to start. Cautiously negotiate the descent on slippery sandy ground and enjoy. For the best light, I recommend that you arrive here at least 35 minutes before sunrise so you can scout a little and be there for the fleeting alpenglow.

For the second level down and the colorful swirls and cliffs—sometimes called Candy Cliffs—just walk down the obvious incline to the southwest, and descend the short narrow crack in front of the big sandstone mound at $37^{\circ}12'55''$ $113^{\circ}28'07''$. Walk a short distance south past some dinosaursque concretions and follow another crack to a high point where you'll gain a great view westward with lots of beautiful cross-bedding. This view works equally well near sunset. After that, continue less than ten minutes in an easterly direction to a large sandstone mound with yellow and pink swirls. You can circumnavigate the big mound by ascending the sandstone incline from around $37^{\circ}13'01''$ $113^{\circ}27'45''$ to find interesting shots.

To reach the Rainbow Ridge, continue down-canyon about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile; the canyon narrows down at a steep angle and you'll have to fend off thick vegetation and possibly some water holes. When you reach the big incline in front of you, continue right for 0.1 mile then ascend steeply to an incredible area of colorful cross-bedding, swirls, domes, and distant views of Zion. Continue until about $37^{\circ}13'04''$ $113^{\circ}27'22''$ which is as far as you can go, then retrace your steps, looking for more photographic opportunities until sundown in the other direction.

Time permitting or on a future visit, you might also explore the western part of Yant Flat, an area below the rim, south of the end of the Jeep Road. Aim for $37^{\circ}13'07''$ $113^{\circ}28'24''$ and immediate vicinity. Although less open and not quite as photogenic as a whole, it has some extensive and spectacular cross-bedding and it's a great place to shoot abstracts.

Photo advice: You'll be using many focal lengths, from ultrawide to medium telephoto. The top level is vast and lends itself well to shooting verticals for stitching in post-processing. The downside is that you will not be able to use your polarizer, so take single shots too and see later which images you prefer. A polarizer is a must to bring out the color on anything else. Don't forget your headlamp if you go pre-sunrise or return post-sunset.

Getting there: From I-15 northbound, take exit 22. Cross the little town of Leeds for 1.5 miles and turn left under the freeway onto Silver Reef Road just before Exit 23 (reset your odometer). If you're coming from I-15 southbound, take exit 23 and turn right onto Silver Reef Road. Note that exit 23 exists only on the southbound side, so if you're coming from St. George, you must take exit 22 and drive through Leeds. Soon, Silver Reef Road becomes Oak Creek Road. Proceed on Oak Creek Road and at 3.1 miles, bear left onto the Dixie National Forest road toward St. George. Continue on this road until you find the trailhead on the left at about 10.5 miles,



Spectacular cross-bedding in east Yant Flat



The Candy Cliffs in east Yant Flat



The Hurricane Cliffs

Nearby locations: At the base of the Hurricane Cliffs lies a massive display of geologic stratification known as the Hurricane Fault. It is so vast it can only be done justice from the air. Bring out the drone!

Red Cliffs

If you are in the vicinity of St. George and have a couple of hours to spare, consider paying a brief visit to the Red Cliffs Recreation Area. The Red Cliffs are located close to I-15, a few miles northeast of St. George. This small site is heavily patronized by locals on week-ends during spring and fall, due in part to its good campground. It is thus preferable to come during the week so you won't be turned away for lack of available parking (only 33 spots). It will also be easier and more enjoyable to take pictures without the week-end crowds. A 15-minute walk on the Nature Trail leads to a lovely narrow canyon with red slickrock walls and to a small waterfall with some pools and even a swimming hole, depending on water conditions. This particularly photogenic spot has good light without too much contrast from mid-afternoon on. You can easily circumvent



Moki steps © Philippe Schuler

where you can see a dirt road branching to your right, opposite the parking spot. A passenger car will get you there if driven cautiously, although a high clearance vehicle is preferred. The road has steep drop-offs and the last couple of miles are mostly clay, making it impassable after a rain. There are also a couple of sections with sharp stones that could cause some damage to street tires.

I have also used the forest road continuing past the trailhead to St. George. It's in poor condition, making it passable only by high-clearance vehicles or 4WD; it also takes quite a bit longer to drive than the road from Leeds, so don't even bother using this approach.

Time required: A minimum of 3 hours, but you'll likely want to stay 4 to 5 hours or return several times.

the main pool and the waterfall by using the moki steps conveniently carved on the right flank of the canyon; the angle isn't too vertical and a rope is also present to assist you anyway. You can then continue inside the pleasant canyon for a few hundred yards before encountering a dryfall that is too difficult to climb.

Getting there: From St. George and I-15 northbound, take exit 22. At the end of the freeway off-ramp, turn right onto the Old 91 frontage road, travel south 2 miles and turn right after passing the sign for the Red Cliffs R.A. Drive past the two narrow tunnels under I-15 and follow the paved road for 1.3 miles to the campground. If you're coming from I-15 southbound, take exit 23 and turn left onto Silver Reef Road, then right onto Main Street. Travel south for 3.5 miles on Main Street (which turns into Old 91) until the sign for the Red Cliffs R.A.

Time required: 1½ hours with plenty of time for photography.

Kanarra Creek

The hike through the Kanarra Creek Narrows is a fun, easy, and highly rewarding way to experience the typical feeling of a slot canyon with tall red walls, lots of shallow water crossings, nice waterfalls, and lovely reflected light. It can be challenging for some people, however, as they will find two difficult passages with slippery ladders.

The hike follows the gated dirt road for about a mile from the car park, before joining the creek. From here on, you walk alternatively on the banks and in the stream bed, crossing the creek multiple times before encountering the narrows after about ¾ of a mile. After a short section of narrows you'll come to the first of the lower falls (actually a rock jam) which presents the first obstacle. As of this writing, a new ladder is conveniently wedged on the right side of the falls, with steps for you to climb on and a rope to hang on to. Although there is no guarantee that this ladder will still be there by the time you read this, chances are there will be something in place to help you negotiate the 15-foot drop. This hike is extremely popular with the locals, especially on week-ends and in summer, so you may have to wait in line to climb the ladder. In any case, it's bound to be wet and slippery, so watch your step when climbing up and back down. After passing this obstacle, you'll find the second of the lower falls almost immediately.



The lower falls

These falls are photogenic and you'll want to spend some time here trying vari-

ous composition/exposure combinations. You can bypass this second set of lower falls by scrambling up on the right side without too much difficulty. However, I found a large pool with chest-deep water during a recent visit. You can continue above for another ¼ mile or so to the photogenic upper falls. In a rainy year, this section may require you to walk in thigh-high, possibly very cold water. It is generally possible to continue past the upper falls, using a ladder that could be in various stages of disrepair, gone altogether after a strong flash flood, or else replaced by some other contraption. Beyond the upper falls, the canyon becomes progressively wider and more verdant, but less rewarding photographically.

Photo advice: At the second lower falls, turn around and in late afternoon, you may catch some nice red light on the wall of the slot just below the falls. At the upper falls, step back to include a small cascade and/or nicely polished round rocks in your shot, depending on the creek's level at the time.



Upper falls © Synnatschke Photography

Things can get very wet here, for a variety of reasons. If you carry expensive equipment, I recommend using a dry bag.

Getting there: From Main St. in Kanarrville, turn east on E100 N St. and drive three blocks to the large official parking lot on the left, just below the gated dirt road. There is a \$10 parking fee. On hot summer days, the parking could be full and you'd have to use the overflow parking at the town hall (it's free but it adds another mile round-trip to the hike). Don't park anywhere else in town, or you could be ticketed! As of this writing, a small entrance fee is in effect in summer in addition to the parking fee, and the site closes at 7 p.m.

Time required: Allow 4 to 5 hours for the upper falls round-trip, with plenty of time for photography.

Parowan Gap Petroglyphs

The Parowan Gap is a rather short fault of volcanic origin running across a long sandstone ridge rising out of the desert bed, northwest of the Parowan township. Geologic curiosity aside, it's the large number of petroglyphs lining both walls of the fault that make it attractive to photographers. The Ancestral Puebloans had used the Gap as a form of solar calendar, by noting the position of the sun through the Gap to establish markings of repeated solar and lunar events—a practice that can be observed on several rock art panels throughout the Colorado Plateau. The discovery and established scientific proof of this practice is relatively

recent (early 1980s to 1990s) and originated at the Rochester Panel (see *Along I-70* chapter). A pole planted in front of a sandstone face allowed artists and/or shamans to carve the angle of the sun during observable solar events. Such a solar marker also exists at Parowan Gap along with lunar events calendars, but the most striking artwork is the so-called Zipper Glyph, located next to the car park and illustrated in my photograph, which shows 180 tick marks arranged on a V-shaped baseline representing the angle of traverse of the sun between the summer and winter solstices.



The Zipper panel

Photo advice: Shoot the Zipper glyph whenever the panel is either totally illuminated or in shade. Mid-day should guarantee the former. A polarizing filter will help remove glare and bring out the texture of the glyphs.

Getting there: From Main street in Parowan (accessed from Exit 75 on I-15), turn west onto W400 North St., which turns into Gap Rd. after passing under the freeway. Continue on this road for almost 10 miles to reach the Gap.

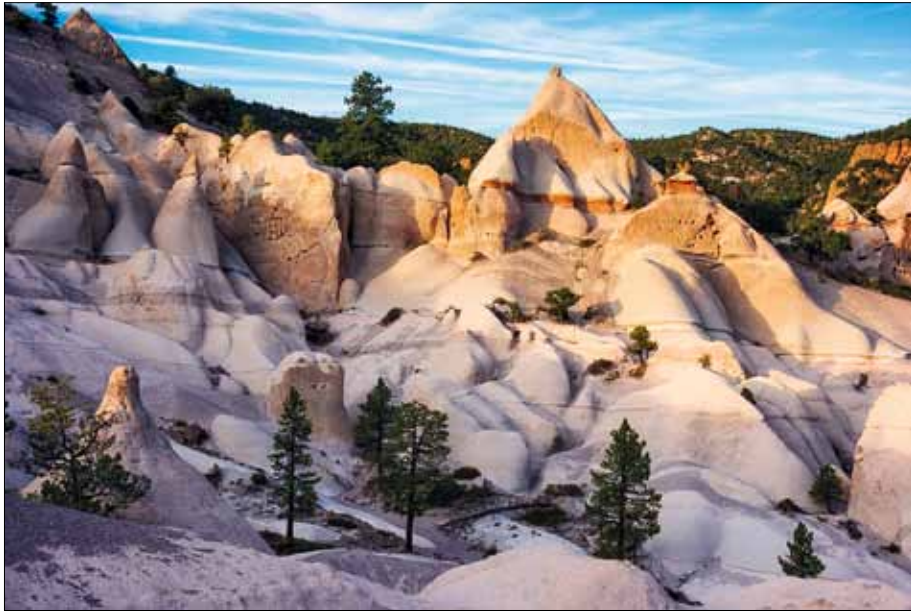
Time required: 2 hours round-trip from Parowan should suffice to shoot the Zipper Glyph and a few other panels.

Pine Park

Pine Park is a highly photogenic site tucked in a remote part of Utah, close to the Nevada state line. The best way to describe this site is through analogies to similar looking locations. Think Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument in New Mexico, or Wheeler Geologic Area in Colorado (see *Photographing the Southwest - Vol. 3* for both).

The whitish geologic formations are spread out over several areas and I have not bothered exploring those that were far from the road. Apart from the area near the campground, which I found of little interest, there are two sections that are close to the road and offer great photographic potential.

Photo advice: I suggest you adopt the following strategy for your visit. First off, you should be at the site in mid to late afternoon. Drive all the way to the campground, stopping briefly along the way to observe the different groups of formations and get a feel for the place. The campground is primitive, with a single



Pine Park sunset

table and no restrooms, but it is pleasant, shaded by pine trees. At this point you can decide whether to stay the night or go elsewhere.

Drive back from the campground—passing the first spectacular site on your right for now—and park off the road at the second site located at 37°31'39" 114°01'51". This site has some interesting “tents” bordering the road, looking like they’ve been chiseled into a multitude of facets. The main attraction of this site, however, is that you can shoot very interesting abstracts. This can be accomplished by walking around the southern tip of the formations, then locating an obvious channel/ramp beginning about 80 feet east from your car and leading north to a platform. From here, you can shoot the formations shown in the pic-



Pine Park formations

ture to the left in a north-westerly direction.

No less than thirty minutes before sunset, drive back to the first site and park at the pullout at 37°31'29" 114°01'42" to photograph the domes to the northwest, basking in a warm sunset light.

Getting there: From St. George, take UT-18 for 40 miles to Enterprise, or if

coming from Cedar City, take UT-56 for 35 miles, then turn south (left) on UT-18 and drive 11 miles to Enterprise. From Center St. in Enterprise, head west on UT-219 for 15.6 miles. For the last 4.6 miles, UT-219 turns into Crestline Road, becoming a wide, well-graded gravel road. Turn left on the dirt road named Enterprise Road. Drive 0.8 mile, leaving Enterprise Road to the right and drive straight ahead at the sign for Pine Park. Continue on this good dirt road for 9 miles to its dead end at the tiny campsite.

Time required: About a couple of hours on site, not including driving time.

Cathedral Gorge

From St. George, it is easy to make a short foray to this spectacular Nevada State Park located close to the state line. The so-called “gorge” is actually a long, narrow depression flanked by tall eroded spires forming majestic stone cathedrals. The park has two entrances along the highway.

The south entrance, closest to town, provides access to the alluvial floodplain at the bottom end of the gorge. This part of the gorge puts you at eye level with the formations, with several interesting groups along the park road, past the fee station.

Narrow slot canyons carved by erosion twist and turn between the spires, leading deep inside the flanks of the gorge, inviting exploration. All these natural pathways eventually end up in impassable cul-de-sacs, so there is no risk of getting lost. It is great fun—as well as a welcome relief from the brutal sun—to explore these mysterious, shaded corridors. Beware the surprising hardness of the material, however, as it is easy to cut yourself on jagged edges as you scramble around. Parents should also watch their young children, as there are plenty of rises and depressions that could trigger a fall.

The north entrance leads to Miller Point, at the end of a small mesa. The viewpoint provides a birds eye view of the highly eroded beginning of the gorge. From here you can go down the Miller Point Trail to explore some of the narrow canyons bordering the wash and continue 1 mile to the picnic area.

Photo advice: I recommend the vicinity of the picnic area for most of your photography, both inside and outside the eroded canyons.

For the outside of the formations on the east side, late afternoon is the best time,



Cathedral Gorge spires

although sunrise works well too for formations located on the west flank. Brutal mid-day light should be avoided at all cost. The jagged stone cathedrals tend to look more impressive with some compression, using a standard lens or telephoto. To photograph the slots on the inside, use a very wide angle lens. Detail extractions work well in the shade if you avoid including the sky. Mid-morning and mid-afternoon light is best, but even midday light is acceptable.



Cathedral slot canyon

Getting there: Follow the instructions to Pine Park (see previous section), staying on Crestline Road into Nevada until it joins UT-319. Continue to Panaca, then turn north on US-93. The south entrance is 0.9 mile from US-93 junction. The north entrance is 2.1 miles further.

Nearby location: A bit further north, the old mining town of Pioche has some interesting history and is well worth a stop.

