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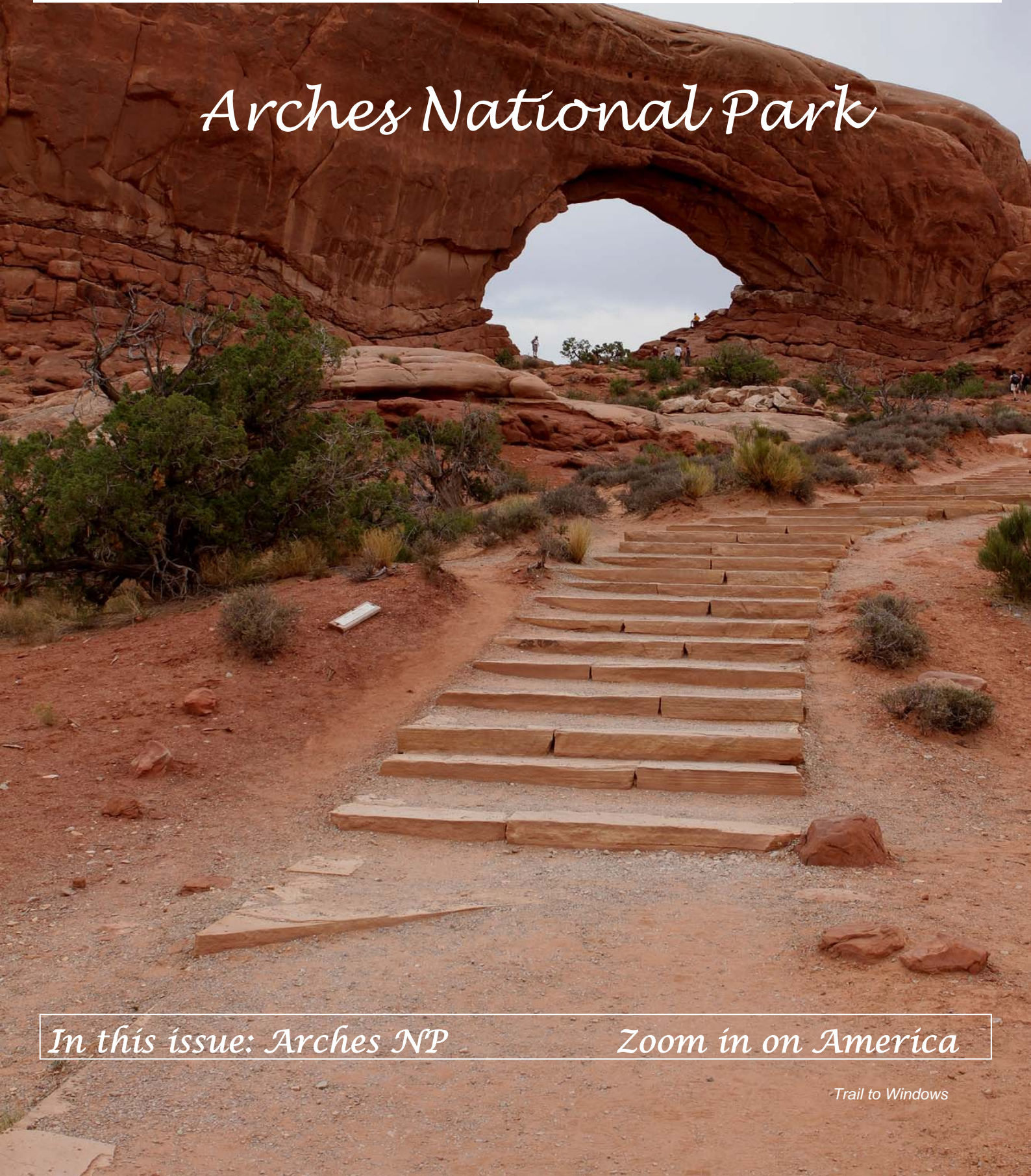
ZOOM

in on america

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Arches National Park



In this issue: Arches NP

Zoom in on America

Trail to Windows

In the Kingdom of Arches

Moab is a small town of about 5,000 inhabitants in Grand County, eastern Utah, which is the base for tourists visiting the famous national parks of Arches and Canyonlands. You might feel anxious when you arrive and see nothing but brick-red arid land on both sides of the road for miles on end. Where are the wonders you have read about in the guidebooks, you might ask. You arrive in town and your eyes discover nothing of much interest beyond a wide road cutting through it and heaps of red rock that surround it. Do not fear. You did not travel these 355 miles (if you were coming from Denver) or 243 miles (if you were driving from Salt Lake City) for nothing. And make sure you reserve a hotel or a campground site for a minimum of two nights. It would be a pity to miss any of the great sights once you are in the area.

Kingdom of Sandstone Arches

Just 5 miles (8 km) north of Moab is the entrance to Arches National Park, which contains the world's largest concentration of natural sandstone arches – about 2000! But before you hit the road again on a rather steep and twisting ascent, stop at the visitor center where you can get information on current activities such as ranger-guided tours, see interactive exhibits, and visit a bookstore. Plenty of parking lots offer tourists a chance to park their car safely and admire the spectacular views from hiking trails. Information

boards provide the name and length of the hiking trail as well as its level of difficulty; from easy to moderate and strenuous ones.

Before tourists reach the first of the famous arches they encounter a wide panorama of the park with stunning rock formations whose shapes earned them such names as Courthouse Towers (a collection of stone columns), Three Gossips, Sheep Rock, Tower of Babel, The Great Wall, Petrified Dunes, and Balanced Rock.



Arches National Park. View from above the Tourist Center

Balanced Rock

There is a half kilometer loop trail at the base of Balanced Rock, but the formation is visible from the road as well. It is 128 feet (39 m) high, with the balancing rock rising 55 feet (16.75 m) above its base. A similar but a much smaller balanced rock named "Chip Off The Old Block", stood nearby but it fell during the winter of 1975/1976.

Ageless but Fragile

The magnitude of this park and the seeming agelessness of its amazingly shaped rocks and arches is a contrast with the fragility of the formations. A description on a board mounted at "Landscape Arch" reads:

September 1, 1991 - Hikers thought they heard cracks of thunder from distant clouds. Visitors resting under Landscape Arch noticed loud

cracking and popping noises overhead. They fled as small rocks tumbled from a slender 306-foot-long span. Moments later, a 60-foot-long rock slab peeled away from the arch's right side. When the dust settled, 180 tons of fresh rock debris lay scattered on the ground.

Human Traces

Although the human history of this territory seems rather insignificant in comparison with the workings of natural forces, there were periods when humans did stay in the area. About 10,000 years ago, at the end of an Ice Age, ancient hunter-gatherers migrated there in search of microcrystalline quartz which they used for making stone tools. The nomadic tribes of ancestral Puebloans, which cultivated maize, beans and squash some two thousand years ago and built their homes in the nearby Mesa Verde, Colorado, must have frequented the territory of Arches National Park too.



Balanced Rock



Turret Arch

They left few traces of their presence in Arches except for petroglyphs, rock drawings which are invariably puzzling for us today. What was their meaning? What was the life of the people who made them like? When the ancestral Puebloans left the area for an unknown reason some 700 years ago, another nomadic peoples - the Ute and Paiute - started coming. Then in 1776 the first Europeans appeared in the area.

World Famous Delicate Arch

Delicate Arch measures 65 feet (20 m) in height and is the most recognizable landmark not only of Arches National Park but of the state of Utah. It is depicted on Utah license plates and on a postage stamp which com-

memorated Utah's centennial anniversary of statehood in 1996. Before the Winter Olympic Games in 2002, the Olympic torch relay passed through the Arch. Delicate Arch can be seen from Delicate Arch Viewpoint. A short 90- meter round trip leads to it from the road. Another hiking trail ends at the rim of a steep canyon offering a view of the arch from a distance. The most popular trail, however, starts at the Wolf Ranch parking area. It is a 3-mile round trip requiring about 2 hours to hike. The trail, which climbs 146 meters along open slickrock and a rock ledge, takes tourists to Delicate Arch itself.

Spectacular Sunsets

Three arches known as North and South Windows and Turret Arch are dream spots



Double Arch

for observing and photographing sunsets (in addition to Delicate Arch, needless to say.) The equally photogenic Double Arch, which consists of two giant arch spans joined at one end, is best to photograph in the morning. What makes Arches a paradise for both professional and amateur photographers is the lighting. Red rock changes its color depending on the angle of sun rays. Rain and stormy sky reveal hues not seen during the sunny weather. The natural framing provided by arches and other rock formations opens endless possibilities for a creative photographer. Winter offers yet other possibilities when light snow underlines the red-rock vistas.

Driving and Parking

It is no wonder then that the number of visitors to the park is high and grows every year. Each millionth visitor a year receives a little souvenir. The busy season is naturally the summer. Parking lots overflow with

cars. To avoid congestion during the busy season, the park is evaluating the use of a shuttle system like it's done in parks such as Yosemite, Sequoia or Bryce Canyon.

Other Places of Interest

Driving on to Devils Garden and Klondike Bluffs at the end of the Park, tourists may depart on other trails. The longest of the trails is Devils Garden, which is a 7.2 mile (11.6 km) round trip. The trail leads to eight arches of singular beauty (Pine Tree, Tunnel, Wall, Private, Navajo, Partition, Landscape and Double O Arch). The area called Fiery Furnace, which is a labyrinth of narrow sandstone canyons, is accessible on ranger-guided hikes or on a hiking permit that can be obtained at the visitor center.

Text by Krakow AIRC

All photos in this issue © Bozena Pilat



Landscape Arch



Wide panorama of Arches NP



Arches NP in the afternoon sun

Activity Page

EXERCISE 1: READING COMPREHENSION

Read the text below, which comes from the website of the National Park Service, and then complete the questions:

The forces of nature have acted in concert to create the landscape of Arches, which contains the greatest density of natural arches in the world. Throughout the park, rock layers reveal millions of years of deposition, erosion and other geologic events. These layers continue to shape life in Arches today, as their erosion influences elemental features like soil chemistry and where water flows when it rains.

Arches is located in a "high desert," with elevations ranging from 4,085 to 5,653 feet above sea level. The climate is one of very hot summers, cold winters and very little rainfall. Even on a daily basis, temperatures may fluctuate as much as 50 degrees.

The plants and animals in Arches have many adaptations that enable them to survive these conditions. Some species are found only in this area. The diversity of organisms reflects the variety of available habitat, which includes lush riparian areas, ephemeral pools, dry arroyos, mixed grasslands and large expanses of bare rock.

Now fill in the missing text to complete the questions:

1. What forces the landscape of Arches?
2. What ... rock layers over millions of years?
3. ... the highest elevation?
4. ... the climate in Arches ...?

EXERCISE 2: DISCUSSION & PRESENTATION

Work in a small group of 3-4 students. Look at the picture on the right of the most famous landmark of the park - Delicate Arch. Share your opinions on natural wonders which have become famous all over the world. Describe one or two that you know without giving its name. Then ask other students if they know which natural wonder you have described.



Win a Prize!
FEBRUARY CONTEST
What is the name of the most famous arch in Arches National Park?
Send the answer (with your home address) to: zoom@usinfo.pl
Deadline: March 10

Win a Prize!
The answer to the December contest was:
Yosemite
Thank you for participating
The winners are:
Michał from Wrocław,
Magdalena from Irządze
and Iwona from Wieliczka
CONGRATULATIONS
The prizes will be sent to you by mail.



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Contact us at zoom@usinfo.pl
American Information Resource Center
Krakow
Konsulat Generalny USA
ul. Stolarska 9,
31-043 Krakow
KrakowAIRC@state.gov

