

Land of the Goblins—Goblin Valley State Park

Goblin Valley is a place like no other, a gathering of red rock formations that resemble creatures tucked away in the vast open lands of southern Utah. As you enter this phenomenal state park, the first thing you see in the distance is an enormous rock formation the size of a city block, that seems to thrust up from the surrounding flat plains, created by the process of erosion. As you approach this impressive fortification, you are greeted by three goblins. (See [three-goblin photo on page 7](#).) It seems that Utah State Parks deliberately placed them near the entrance as greeters. The campground is nestled up against the sandstone cathedral, laid out along the footings of the buttresses, with ramadas for shade and a few tent sites hidden behind the flanks of stone for those who want total privacy and an immersion in this world apart.

Wandering deep into this seeming monolith, the entire formation is like a child's sand-dribble castle at the beach. The sandstone is literally dripping away as it erodes. What seems like a huge fortress from a distance is actually delicate to the touch, sounding hollow when tapped and breaking off in your hand if you are too forceful.

Taking the mile-long Entrada hiking trail from the campground into the valley, you weave through a maze of sandstone. When the path opens, the basin is filled with funny-shaped, red rock formations, each standing 10 to 15 feet tall. Scanning the valley floor, nature's whimsy is apparent. There are mushrooms, spaceships, birds, sea turtles and a myriad of other things. As we stood amid these crazy creatures, we felt we could have been on another planet. It is fantastic that the park allows visitors to climb on the formations and even encourages it.

Goblin Valley is near a gorgeous slot canyon, and we took the nine-mile hike through Little Wild Horse Canyon/Bell Canyon Loop. For an hour, we hiked between narrow walls that stretched a hundred feet to the sky above. In places, the gravel track was only one sneaker wide. It sounds like it might be scary, but the walls rarely close in around you completely. We encountered hikers traveling in the opposite direction, but we were glad of our choice to go through Little Wild Horse Canyon first, as it is the more dramatic of the two, and it is narrower and cooler.

We visited Goblin Valley at a perfect time of year, a few weeks before Halloween. If you visit Goblin Valley, take your time. It is a place to be savored. Before you go, stock up on food, as there is nothing for miles around. All you'll find are little stores. The campground has water and showers, although it is the desert and they ask you to use the water sparingly. There is an RV dump station but no hookups. There is a good place to boondock for any size rig if you take a right turn just before you enter the park. If you require hookups, there are commercial RV parks in Green River on I-70, about 20 miles to the northeast. Take your camera, have a blast and bring your imagination along with you.

Mark and Emily Fagan #99408



Photo by Mark Fagan #99408.

Emily Fagan #99408 hikes a slot canyon in Utah State Park.



Photo by Emily Fagan #99408.

Goblin Valley is home to eroded rock formations that resemble a myriad of imaginative creatures.