



UTAH  
LIFE ELEVATED

“THE WORLD’S GREATEST OUTDOOR MUSEUM”

## MONTICELLO

### 1. Discover the Colorado Plateau at Canyon Country Discovery Center

Canyon Country Discovery Center is a science and nature center, with indoor and outdoor learning stations. Developed for culturally diverse audiences, the facility allows children and adults to explore and discover the natural history and landscapes, people and places, land use and energy, astronomy, water, and climate of the Colorado Plateau. The center also houses a rock-climbing wall, nature playscape out front, and numerous walking trails on the campus grounds.

Canyon Country Discovery Center: 1117 N Main, Monticello, UT, 800-525-4456

### 2. Kid-Friendly Hikes in the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park

**CAVE SPRING:** At only .6 miles, this short loop trail is a great hike for kids. The trail first takes you past an old cowboy camp nestled in an alcove with tables, dishes, a cookstove, and many other items still in place. As you continue down the trail you'll come to Cave Spring, which is one of the few year-round water sources in the area. If you look closely, a smoke blackened ceiling and pictographs confirm that this area was used by the Ancestral Puebloans long before the cowboys came along. After passing Cave Spring, two ladders take you up onto the slickrock above and provide you with amazing panoramic views of the Needles Rock formations, North and South Six-Shooter Peaks in Indian Creek, and the Abajo and La Sal Mountains. This hike provides a great opportunity for kids to learn first-hand about the history of Canyonlands.

**POTHOLE POINT:** Pothole Point is another great hike for kids in the Needles District of Canyonlands. Again, at only .6 miles, there's no time for kids to get bored on this hike, especially if you go after an early spring or late summer rain when the potholes are full of water and creatures such as Fairy Shrimp, Beetle larvae, Tadpoles, Snails, and Tadpole Shrimp. Since water never lasts long around here, the potholes provide a great opportunity for learning about the lifecycle and adaptations of these desert dwelling organisms.

For children ages 5 and up, there's also the Junior Ranger Program that they can complete to earn a special Junior Ranger Badge! Just pick up a booklet at the Visitor Center when you arrive!

(Located 1.5 hrs southwest of Moab, and 1 hr northwest of Monticello)

## BLANDING

### 3. Learn about the Cultures of Southeastern Utah at Nations of the Four Corners

Nations of the Four Corners is a network of trails and an interpretive cultural area made up of sites representing the different groups that contributed to the history of this area; Ute, Navajo, Hispanic, and Pioneer. It sits right on the west edge of Blanding making it very convenient to visit as you're just passing through, or even as an evening outing if you're spending the night in town. In addition to the structures, there are a couple of archaeological sites along the trails, as well as an arch (Prayer Arch) and a natural bridge! (Nations Natural Bridge)

Since it's a network of trails, you can make your outing any length you want, from just a quick 10-15 minute stop, all the way up to a 5-6 mile roundtrip hike if you hike all the way out to Nations Natural Bridge and Five Kiva Pueblo. (You can also access these sites by vehicle from the south end of town) As you visit the structures representing each of the groups, it offers a great opportunity for kids to learn about the diverse cultural history of southeast Utah. And be sure to visit the observation tower in the center of the site for spectacular views on the surrounding countryside!

Nations of the Four Corners: 461 W 500 S, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-4000



[www.visitmonticello.org](http://www.visitmonticello.org)



[www.gouldings.com](http://www.gouldings.com)

UtahsCanyonCountry.com  
800-574-4386



[www.stateparks.utah.gov](http://www.stateparks.utah.gov)



[www.blandingutah.org](http://www.blandingutah.org)



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## BLANDING continued

### 4. Get Prehistoric at The Dinosaur Museum in Blanding!

Open mid-April through mid-October each year, The Dinosaur Museum features exhibits including ; skeletons, fossilized skin, eggs, footprints, and sculptures of dinosaurs from the Four Corners region and throughout the world. The highlight of the museum is the 14 ft tall Therizinosaurus, a towering feathered dinosaur with a 20 foot wingspan, that dominates the special exhibits room. One of my favorite parts of the museum, which seems very unexpected in a small town in southeast Utah, is their huge collection of dinosaur movie posters from around the world. (Makes sense once you learn that the owners of the museum got their start sculpting dinosaurs for the motion picture industry!) The Dinosaur Museum in Blanding is a true hidden gem, and is sure to capture the attention and imagination of dinosaur lovers of all ages!

The Dinosaur Museum: 754 South 200 West, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-3454



### 5. Discover the Past at Edge of the Cedars State Park

Another must-see in Blanding, for both kids and adults, is Edge of the Cedars State Park. This park is made up of three parts; a world-class museum that houses the largest collection of Ancestral Puebloan Artifacts in the Four Corners area, a one-thousand year old Puebloan Village site located behind the museum, and the facility is also a federal repository housing artifacts from the area, as well as other parts of the country.

Kids will love climbing the ladder down into the kiva located behind the museum, as well as exploring the children's area- a large room full of books, puzzles, drawers with various activities, and hands-on play areas including a Puebloan dwelling where they can stack 'stones' to build their own walls.

Edge of the Cedars State Park: 660 W 400 N, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-2238

### 6. Natural Bridges National Monument

Geared toward kids ages 4 yrs and up, the Jr. Ranger booklet at Natural Bridges National Monument is one of the best in Utah! (trust me- I've done a lot of these booklets around the state with my son!) And your kids will have no problem completing it in this small 7,636 acre monument.

With a short 8 mile loop road taking you through the heart of the monument, it's easy to get up close and personal with all 3 bridges- Owachomo, Kachina, and Sipapu. Whether you check out the bridges from the overlooks, or take the short hikes down to each, Natural Bridges may very well be the highlight of your family's trip to Utah's Canyon Country!

(Located 50 minutes west of Blanding)



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## BLUFF

### 7. Go Back in Time at the Bluff Fort

No trip to Bluff is complete without a visit to the Bluff Fort, where kids can don period clothing and try their hand at roping wooden cows, pulling handcarts, and panning for gold. Stroll the grounds and visit each cabin to hear stories of the families who were part of the Hole in the Rock expedition, and who settled in Bluff in the late 1800s. Enjoy some soft-serve ice cream in the Co-op Store, or buy some fresh baked cookies and Bluff Fort Root Beer to take with you on your way to your next adventure!

Bluff Fort: 550 Black Locust Ave, Bluff, UT 84512, 435-672-9995

## MEXICAN HAT

### 8. Goosenecks State Park

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## MONUMENT VALLEY

### 9. Take a Tour of Monument Valley

Monument Valley, spread across the Utah/Arizona border at the southern edge of San Juan County, is one of the most photographed places on earth! It's been featured in films, as the eye-catcher for ads, and on television, and the best way to see it in person is on a guided tour with one of the many tour companies in the valley, where guides will teach you about the Navajo history & culture of the area, as well as the Hollywood film history. Open air vehicle tours, horseback riding tours, ATV tours, take your pick- just make sure to go with a guide to get the most out of your visit! While in Monument Valley, be sure to stop by the Stagecoach Restaurant at Goulding's Lodge for one of their delicious Navajo Tacos- THE BEST Navajo Tacos around!

Goulding's Lodge & Stagecoach Restaurant: 1000 Main St, Monument Valley, UT 84536, 435-727-3231



This list could go on and on, but these are my top 9 picks for the best family-friendly activities south of Moab in the southeast corner of the state. For more family-friendly & off-the-beaten-path activities in San Juan County, visit Utah's Canyon Country

Blog: [utahscanyoncountry.wordpress.com](http://utahscanyoncountry.wordpress.com)



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