

Best Climbs

Moab

Over 140 of the Best Routes in the Area

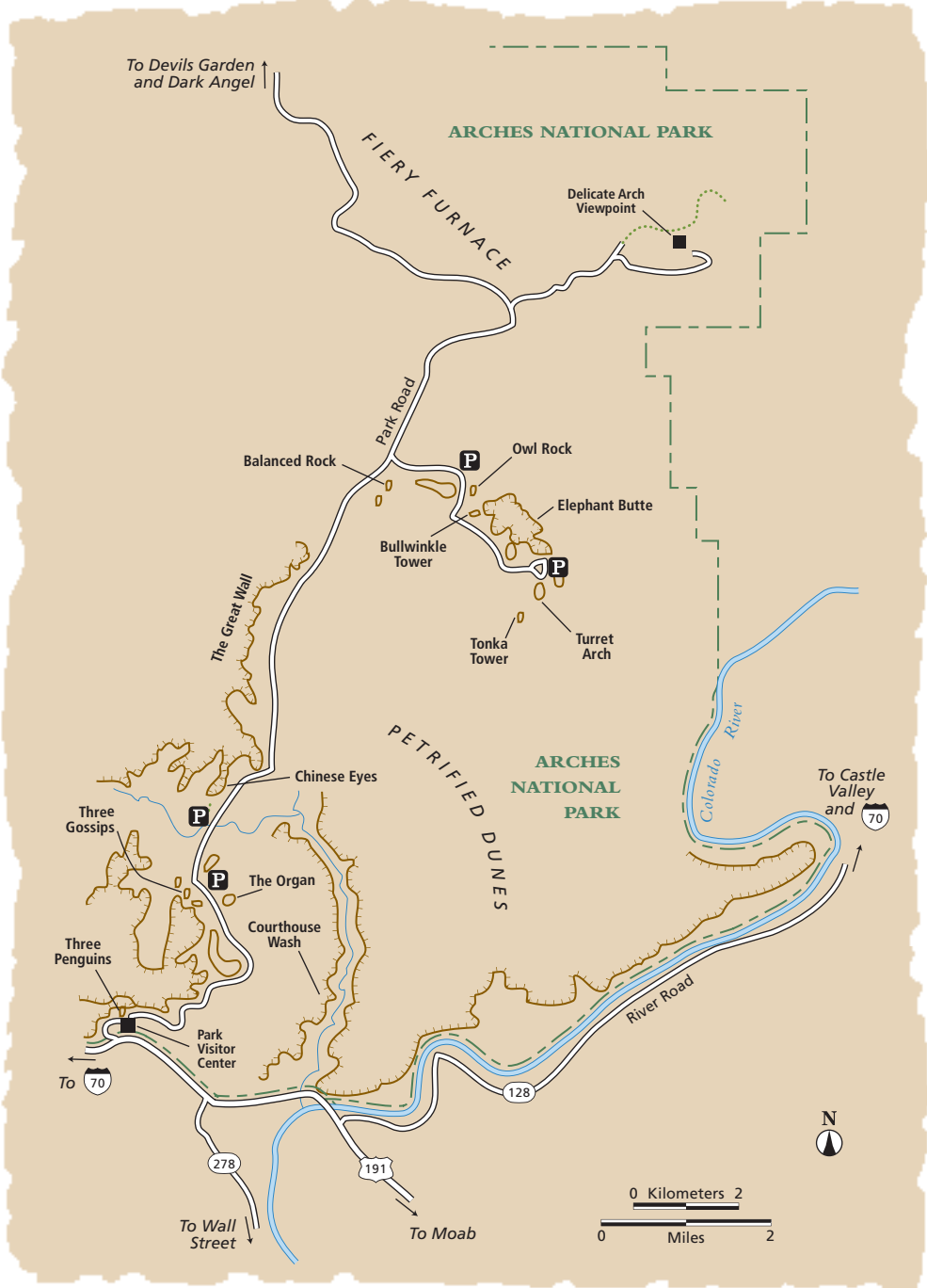
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Arches National Park



1.

Arches National Park

Arches National Park, a 73,234-acre wonderland of sandstone fins, towers, ribs, gargoyles, hoodoos, balanced rocks, and arches northwest of Moab, protects the largest collection of arches in the world. Over 2,000 arches with at least one side 3 or more feet wide have been cataloged by explorers, including 306-foot-long Landscape Arch and Delicate Arch, Utah's state symbol.

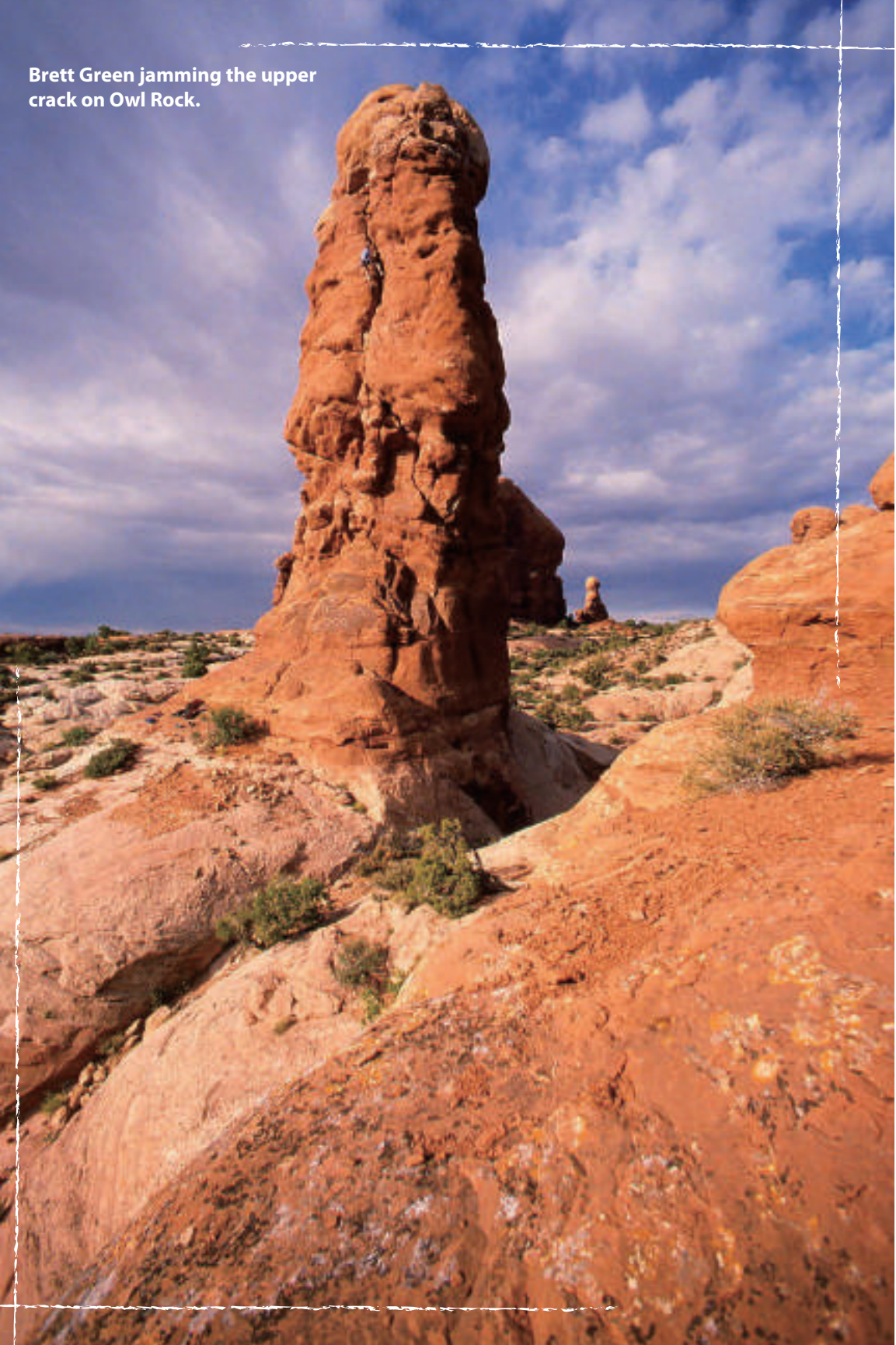
While visitors come from around the world to view the arches and scenery, climbers also visit to ascend the park's towers and cliffs. Over a dozen spires up to 300 feet high rise within a ten-minute hike from the park road. The arches and towers are composed of Entrada sandstone, a soft rock deposited as sand dunes during Jurassic times over 160 million years ago. The sandstone at Arches is notoriously sandy, especially after rain or snow. Most routes follow crack systems with only occasional face moves.

Arches National Park has several important climbing regulations to protect the area's unique geological resources. The use of white chalk is banned in the park. Go without chalk or use an earth-tone chalk that matches the sandstone's color. Only rust-colored slings should be used at

belay and rappel anchors to minimize visual impact. The use of power drills is prohibited, and no new bolts can be placed without prior permission. Do not climb on or near any arches to avoid damage. Dogs must be leashed at all times and are not allowed on any trails. Dog kennels in Moab can care for your dog while you're climbing. Follow existing paths to the cliffs whenever possible to avoid damaging

Entrada sandstone forms the arches and towers at Arches National Park. The Entrada divides into three separate layers—Dewey Bridge, Slick Rock, and Moab Tongue. Severe wrinkling characterizes the Dewey Bridge layer. It composes Owl Rock, Elephant Butte, Tonka Tower, and the Windows area. The Slick Rock member forms vertical cliffs in the Courthouse Towers area, including the Three Gossips, The Organ, and Three Penguins, as well as Devil's Garden and Fiery Furnace. The Moab Tongue is a thin white caprock atop the Slick Rock member.

Brett Green jamming the upper crack on Owl Rock.



Cryptobiotic soil, composed of a living microscopic organism called *cynaobacteria*, forms a black crust on the ground in the canyon country. Cryptobiotic soil is a valuable part of the ecosystem since it prevents soil erosion by wind and water and retains moisture. This delicate soil is crushed if you step on it. To avoid damaging the crust, follow these guidelines—stay on existing paths, walk single-file, step on durable surfaces like rock or follow washes, and don't camp on it.

fragile cryptobiotic soil. If you have to walk cross-country, avoid the soil and hike on durable rock surfaces or in washes.

Getting there: The main entrance to Arches National Park is 5 miles northwest of Moab on US 191. The paved 24-mile-long park road travels from the visitor center at the entrance to Devil's Garden and the fifty-two-site park campground. All the described climbs begin from this road. Arches National Park is a fee area.

The great American writer Edward Abbey (1927–1989) spent two years as a seasonal ranger in Arches National Monument in the 1950s. *Desert Solitaire*, a memoir detailing his first summer in 1956, burst on the scene in 1968, not only popularizing the canyon country but also changing lives. Ed summarizes his season in the wilderness in the last chapter: “The finest quality of this stone, these plants and animals, this desert landscape is the indifference to our presence, our absence, our coming, our staying or our going. Whether we live or die is a matter of absolutely no concern whatsoever to the desert.”

The Three Penguins



The Three Penguins

The 140-foot-high Three Penguins tower above the park road as it loops up Headquarters Hill just past the visitor center. The *Right Chimney* route is one of Arches' best climbs with good stone and superb jamming.

Approach: From the park visitor center, drive up the road to a pull-out at 0.9 mile (GPS N 38.37.177 / W 109.36.917). Park and scramble up a loose mudstone gully to a horizontal ledge system that the Penguins sit on. Follow the ledge to the base of the east face above the road.

1. Right Chimney (5.10c) Excellent route up an obvious right-facing dihedral. **Pitch 1:** Jam a perfect crack that widens from hands to fists (5.10c) to a 3-bolt ledge belay. 80 feet. **Pitch 2:** Continue up the steep crack—hands to fists to off-width (5.10a). Above, face climb to the summit of the center Penguin. **Descent:** Double-rope, 140-foot rappel from a 3-bolt anchor down the route. **Rack:** Two sets of Friends with extra #2.5s to #4s, one #4 Camelot, and large Stoppers for the start.

The Three Gossips

The Three Gossips, one of the most impressive formations in the park's Courthouse Towers section, is a spectacular trio of blocky summits towering 300 feet above a rounded slickrock base. The Gossips rise south of the park road and west of the Park

California climbers Steve Roper and Allen Steck made the first ascent of The Three Gossips in October 1970. Roper, who made the 1963 third ascent of Castleton, let Steck, a sandstone virgin, do the first pitch up the *West Face* route. "He pounded pins up the long initial crack for hours, it seemed," Roper later wrote. "Once in a while he would yell down: 'I wonder if this one's any good?' I would yell back: 'It's up to you, man, but, hell, didn't you hear it ring?' Meanwhile I braced myself to catch a fall, for sandstone was not granite, and a ring in the one was not the same as a ring in the other." When Roper cleaned the pitch, none of the pitons pulled out although they "shifted and creaked." At the top, Steck led the final pitch, which Roper noted was "a bold end to our insignificant first ascent."

Avenue trail. The *West Face*, the formation's best climb, ascends the west face of the Gossips opposite the road.

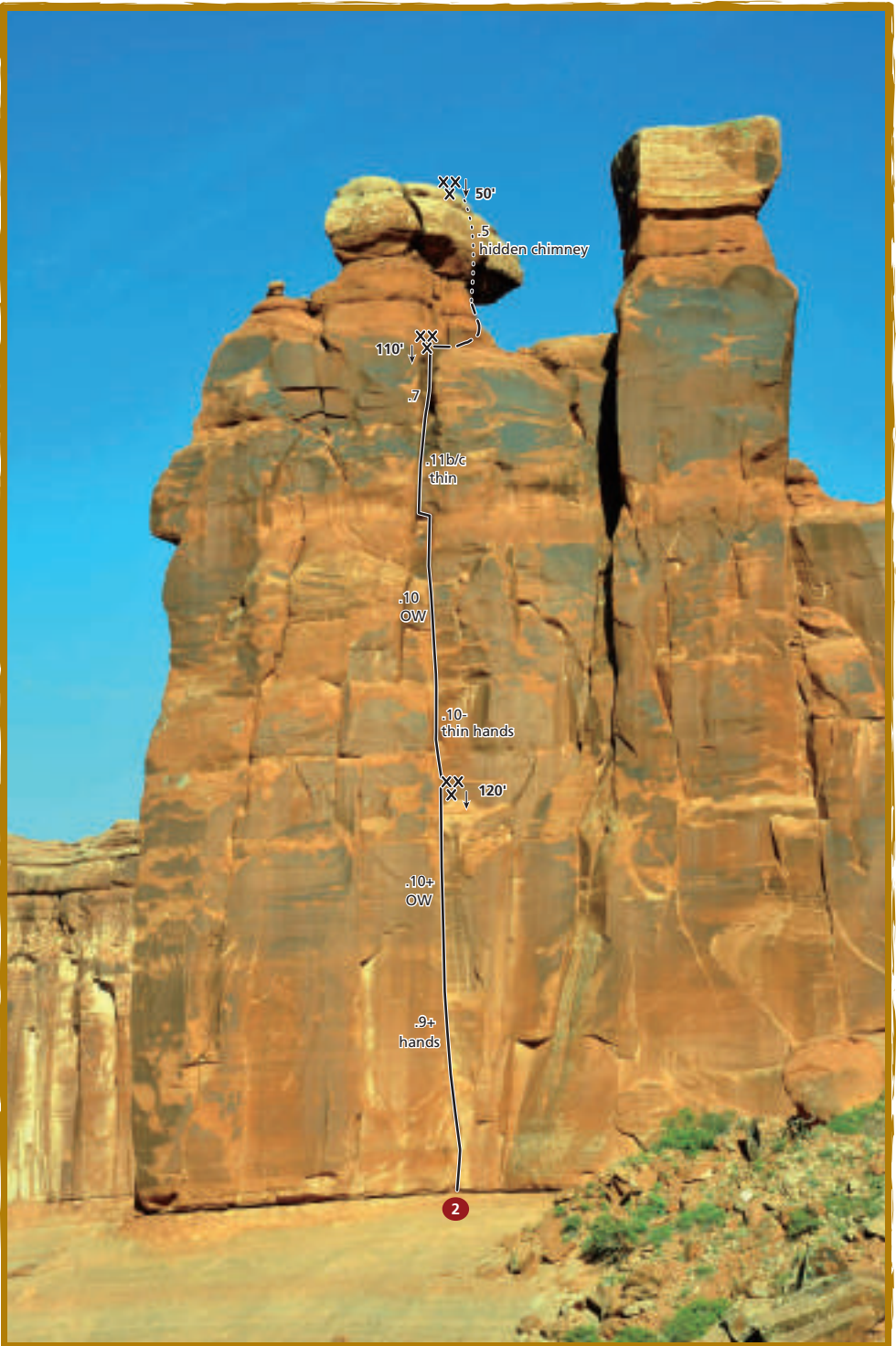
Approach: Reach the Three Gossips by driving 3.5 miles from the park entrance to the Courthouse Towers/ Park Avenue parking area west of The Organ on the north side of the road

(GPS N 38.38.214 / W 109.36.006). Park and walk a quarter mile west on the road shoulder to a dry wash on the left. Follow the wash south to sandy slopes below the formation. Continue up a climber's path to the slickrock slabs below the west face. Avoid walking on and damaging the fragile cryptobiotic soil by staying in the wash and following existing trails.

2. West Face (II 5.11c or 5.9 C1) Excellent and continuous route up a crack system on the left side of the face to the shoulder right of the North Gossip. The hard parts are easily clean-aided. **Pitch 1:** Do an awkward mantle (5.9) onto a shelf. Jam a thin hand and hand crack (5.9+) up a flared dihedral until it widens. Continue up the off-width crack (5.10+) over a roof to a good belay ledge with 3 bolts. **Pitch 2:** Jam a thin hand crack (5.10-) past a block on the right. Continue up an

off-width crack (5.10) for another 50 feet. Stem left to a parallel crack system and begin the route's crux. Jam and stem up the thin finger crack and seam into a tight corner (5.11b/c). Finish up a squeeze chimney (5.7). Belay from a 3-bolt anchor on a ledge below the summit block. **Pitch 3:** Climb a sandy slab (5.7) up right to a hidden 4-foot-wide chimney (5.5) that splits the summit block. Climb the unprotected chimney (5.5) to the summit. **Descent:** Three rappels down the route. **Rappel 1:** Summit to anchors on the saddle atop pitch 2 (50 feet). **Rappel 2:** 110-foot rappel (two ropes) to pitch 1's anchors. **Rappel 3:** 120-foot rappel to the base. Be careful pulling ropes—they can jam. **Rack:** Sets of Stoppers and TCUs, two sets of cams, a couple larger pieces, and two ropes. If you aid, bring extra 2- to 3-inch pieces.

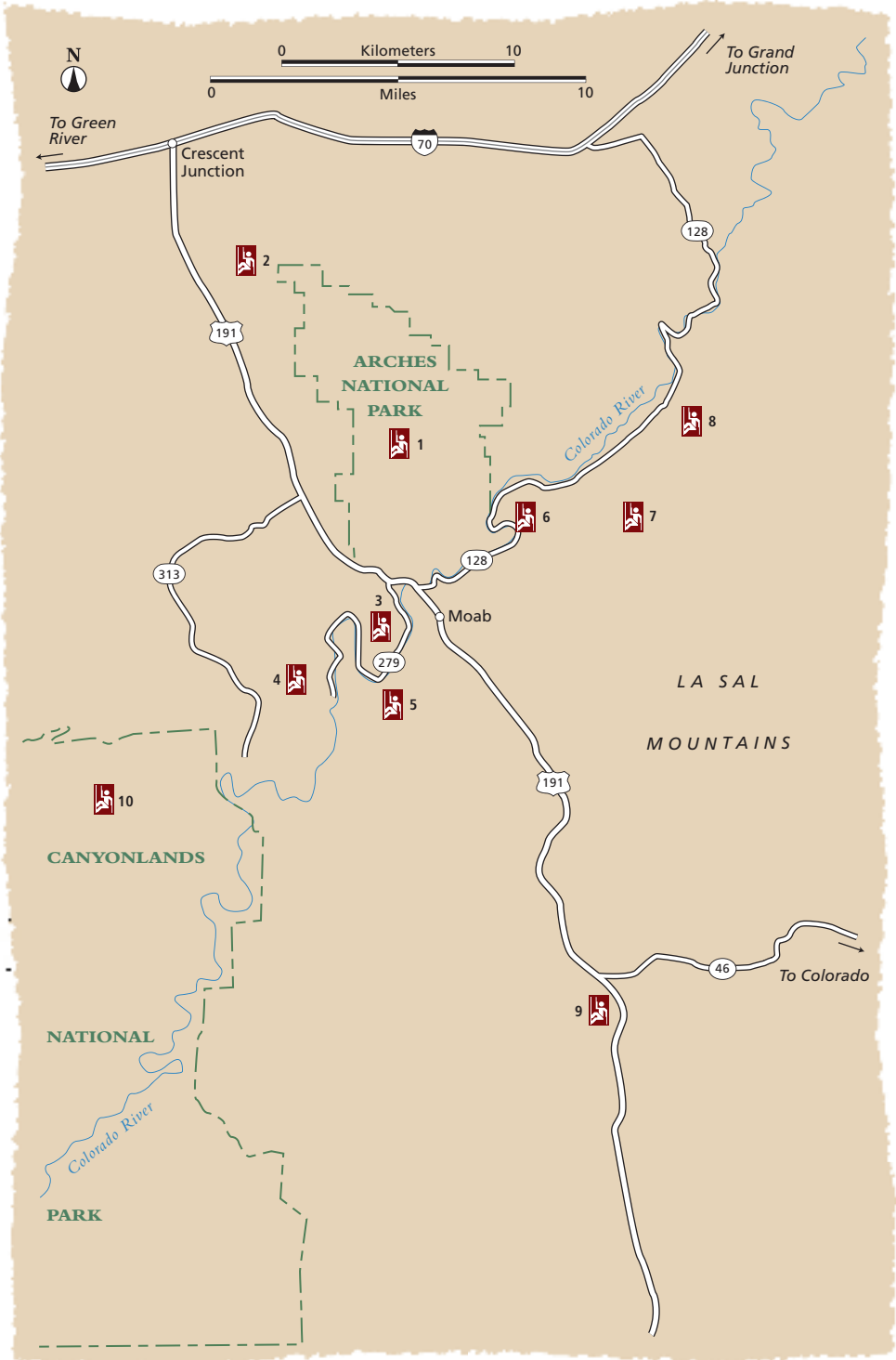
The Three Gossips























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Moab Overview



Map Legend

	Interstate		Climbing Area
	US Highway		Crag/Boulder
	State Highway		Cliff Edge
	Gravel Road	x	Elevation
	Unimproved Road		Parking
	Trail		Restroom
	Waterway		Building
	Lake/Reservoir		Camping
	Town		Gate
	City		Point of Interest
			National Forest/ State Park Boundary

Topo Legend

○	Natural gear belay stance
x	Single piece of fixed protection (bolt or piton)
xx	Fixed belay station

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