



INSIDER'S GUIDE TO

HANKSVILLE, UTAH

Nearly an hours drive away from any other community in the area, the town of Hanksville is considered fairly remote. However, its location also makes the town more convenient for travelers hoping to reach most of the attractions further east of Capitol Reef National Park. Because it sits at a lower elevation, much of the surrounding area is filled with the rich sandstone and red rocks that people come to expect from Southern Utah. Many people who stay in Hanksville explore the areas of Goblin Valley State Park, the nearby mars-like terrain, the breathtaking peaks of the Henry Mountains, and the Dirty Devil River basin.

Access Hanksville by traveling east on Scenic Byway 24. To reach the town from this direction drivers must pass through Capitol Reef National Park. Access also from Green River on the north and from Lake Powell on the south.



Goblin Valley State Park

One of the most unique terrains in the world, Goblin Valley State Park features thousands of hoodoos, which are mushroom-shaped erosion-resistant rocks formed on top of softer sandstone rock, creating the look of a field of red “goblins.” The unique scenery viewed from three, distinct hiking trails through the park is a must-see stop for this area. See here for more information on the park itself.



Mars Desert Research Station

This station, also known as MDRS, is one of four simulated mars habitats in the world. While tourists aren’t invited to spend time in the “station” there are plenty of mars-like areas that are open for exploration for anyone who wants to experience what the surface of mars might be like. See here for more information on this intergalactic area.



Hanksville-Burpee Dinosaur Quarry

This dig-site is the location for hundreds of dinosaur bones, and is still used today. Much of what is found heads to the Burpee Museum of Natural History in Rockford, Illinois. See here for more information.



Mt. Ellen

The Henry Mountains sit just southwest of Hanksville. Their highest point, Mount Ellen, reaches well over 11,500 feet. Mount Ellen itself is known as an “ultra prominent peak,” meaning that it stands out considerably from the surrounding mountains and has been described as one of Utah’s best views. At its peak, set well above the tree line, the breathtaking spectacle includes views of the Thousand Lake Mountain, Boulder Mountain, The La Sal and Abajo Mountains, the Circle Cliffs and the Waterpocket Fold. This mountain can be accessed from at least two locations. A good loop is to go west from Hanksville on Hwy. 24 and then take Notom Road south from Highway 24. Drive south about 8 miles to the Sandy Ranch Road. This road will go east into the Henry Mountains. Follow signs to Bull Creek Pass and follow east across the mountain until you connect with Highway 95. Return north to Hanksville. The road is an easy-to-navigate dirt road for much of the way.



Swingarm City

Not actually a “city,” Swingarm City is located just west of Hanksville and is really a wide surface of bentonite clay that has been designated for OHV and ATV vehicles only. In recent years it has become a haven for thrillseeking riders of all levels as the terrainriding difficulty ranges from easy to extreme. This area has been used in making many motocross and ATV videos and is famous for its stunning views set behind smooth terrain that is free of plants and vegetation. Click [here](#) for information on how to reach the best trails and points of interest.



Robbers Roost

Robbers Roost is the original hideout of the famous outlaw Butch Cassidy and his gang, The Wild Bunch. Exploring this difficult terrain is like placing yourself in the shoes of one of the most interesting men to come out of the west. BLM employees warn that this area is fairly remote with little chance of encountering another person or receiving emergency help if needed. The area is unique and beautiful and historically exciting.



Overview of Closest Attractions to Hanksville:

Name	Distance from Hanksville	Time Spent	Level of Difficulty/Age
Goblin Valley State Park	Aprox. 50 min. drive	Half-day	All ages (young children will love the exploration)
Mars Terrain	15-30 min. depending on destination	1-2 hours	All ages
Hanksville-Burpee Dinosaur Quarry	15-30 min. (see BLM station in Hanksville)	Half-day	All ages
Mt. Ellen	1.5 hr scenic drive via HWY 24 and 95	6-7 hours including drive and hike	Hike is listed as "medium" difficulty
Swingarm City	7-10 miles east of Caineville (See link in description for directions)	Varies. Half-day to multiple days for riders.	Terrain available for beginning riders to experts
Robber's Roost	36 minute drive over difficult terrain	Half-day to full day	Difficult area

*Here are three recommended hikes for the area. See website for more details and other hikes.

Name of Trailhead	Distance	Difficulty Level
Horseshoe Canyon	2 miles	Easy
Leprechaun Trail	6-8 hours through slot canyon	Moderate/Hard
Blarney Trail	4 miles	Hard

Other Don't-Miss Attractions in the Nearby Area:

Name of Trailhead	Distance from Hanksville	Time Spent	Level of Difficulty/Age
Capitol Reef National Park	20-30 min. drive	Half day to multiple days	All ages. Trails and areas with all levels of difficulty.
Scenic Byway 24	Begins in Hanksville	1-2 hr. drive beginning in Hanksville	All ages
Fishing, Hiking, Hunting	Varies.	Half-day to Multiple days	All ages

A Brief History of the Area

Hanksville was first settled in 1882 and called “Grave’s Valley” after a member of the Powell expeditions. The settlement, which lies at an elevation of 4300 feet, was renamed Hanksville in 1885 for Mormon pioneer leader Ebenezer Hanks. Agriculture and mining were the primary roles of the community but outlaws such as Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch often came to Hanksville for supplies while hiding out in the nearby canyons.

