BELOW THE PLATEAU
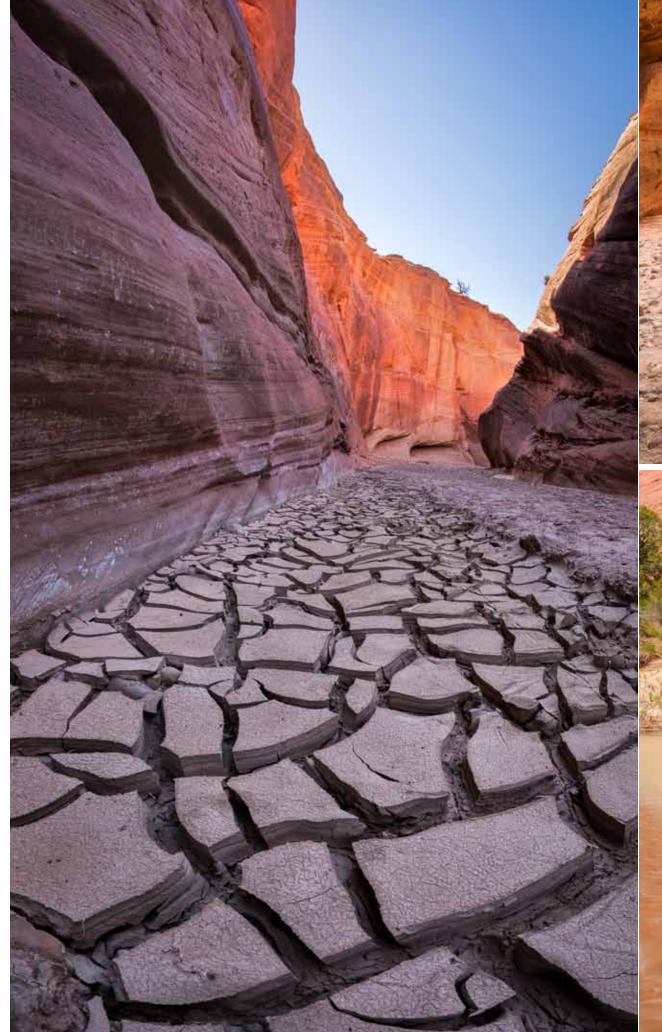## Exploring the Great
Paria River Canyon

PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS BY David Swindler

The Arizona Strip is a remote, arid region sandwiched between Utah's Grand Staircase Escalante and the Grand Canyon. The wide open desert and sweeping vistas in this wild country are home to many hidden gems that are well worth exploring. This deceiving landscape gives way to soaring red rock formations, incredible slot canyons, and some of the world's most magnificent geological wonders. Paria River Canyon can be found amidst this grandeur.

The Paria River Canyon is one of the best hikes in the American Southwest. Over millions of years, the river has carved a deep chasm through the Navajo sandstone. The towering canyon walls and narrow passages are impressive to say the least. This is one of those places that photos can't really do justice to the real thing; one must hike it to truly appreciate it.

David Swindler is a photographer. He is also an outdoor enthusiast who has experienced some of the southwest's most elusive locations. The Paria River Canyon is one of those places and one of his favorite hikes. Swindler relocated to southern Utah to make places like the Paria not just an adventure, but a lifestyle. Here, Swindler shares his images from one of his excursions through the Paria River Canyon, offering a vibrant visual of this spectacular canyon.
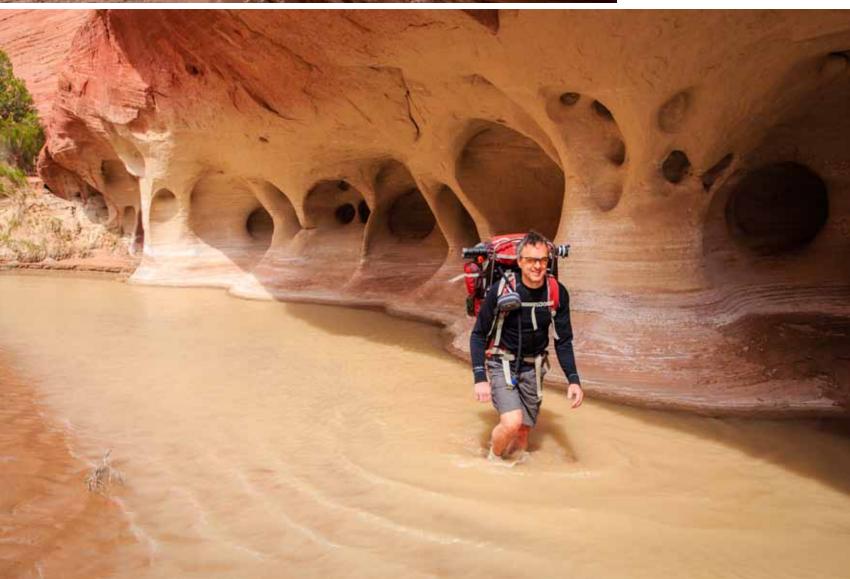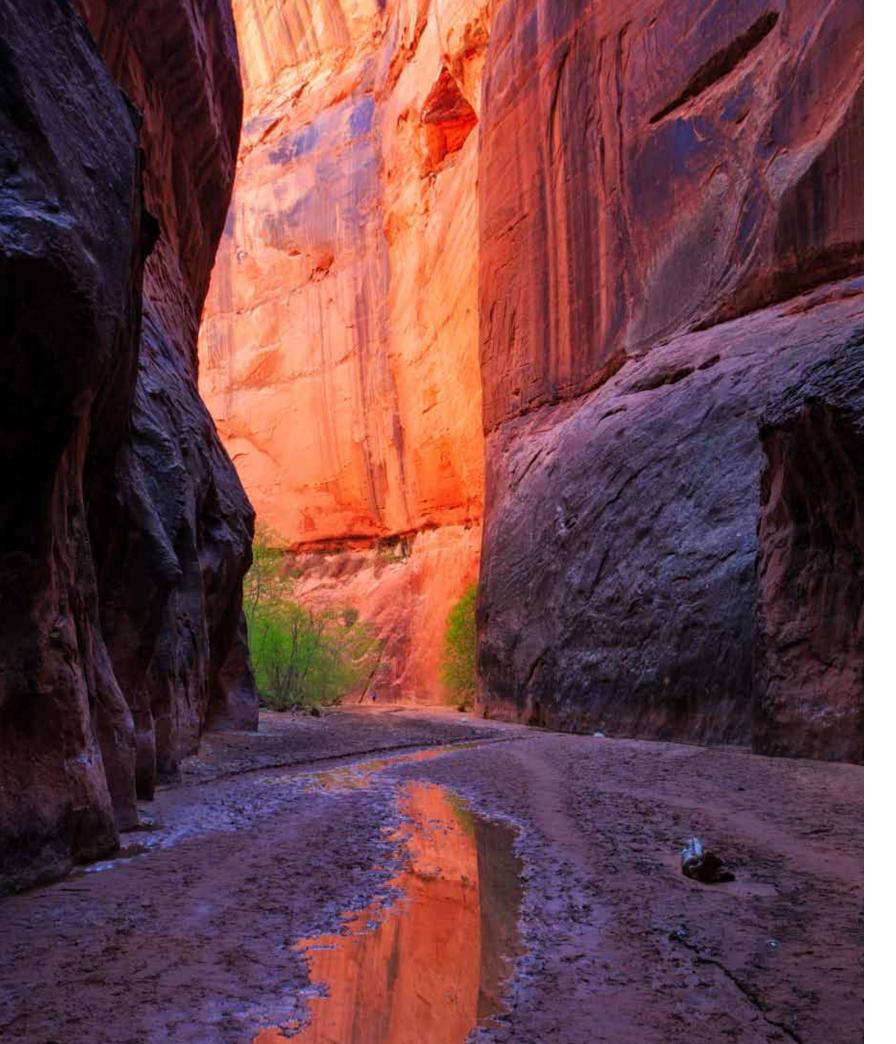
LEFT
Some of the more interesting sandstone textures in the Paria River Canyon are these erosion holes. This is one of my favorite places to stop for a photo. When looking for spots to photograph in the canyon, I'm after reflected light since it's much more subdued and has lower contrast as it reflects off one wall onto another. You can see the reflected light in the background here.
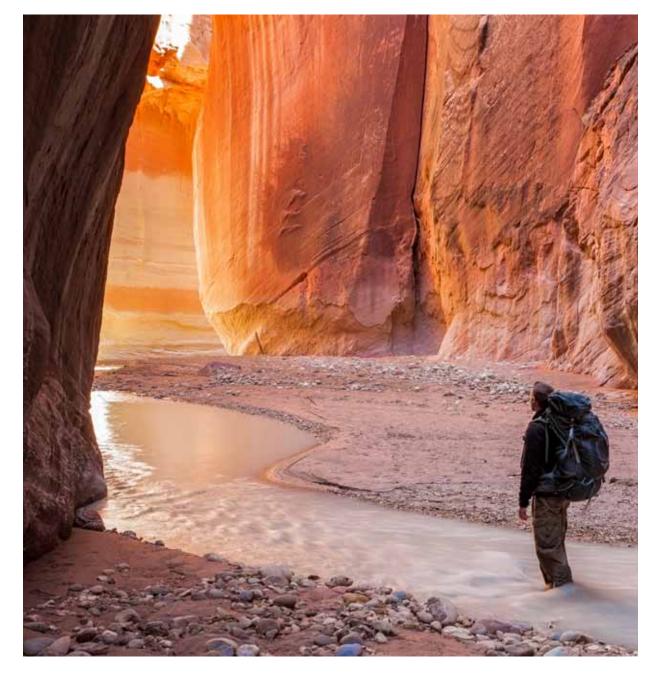
BELOW
Shortly after beginning the hike at White House Trailhead, you may be forced to get your feet wet. We actually hiked in the river for the first couple days. It takes several miles before the canyon starts to deepen and narrow. Along the way, there are some neat sandstone "windows" and other erosion patterns.

Cracked mud patterns are common throughout the Paria River Canyon. The water levels vary widely throughout the year. As the summer progresses, the river can almost completely dry up. If it's been raining or with snow melt, it can be quite a bit deeper.

ABOVE
The light is best in the canyon at midday. Look for reflected light bouncing off the canyon walls and creating the brilliant golden glow. The eye is naturally drawn to the brightest part of an image. Thus, I framed this shot such that the bright highlights are far back in the canyon, allowing the eye to travel through the entire scene.

LEFT
Near the confluence of Buckskin Gulch and the Paria. A small spring runs all year round through this spot and provides some nice reflections of the canyon glow. The Buckskin Confluence is 7 miles from the White House Trailhead. If coming from Wire Pass, it's 13 miles. If you are not planning to include a side trip through Buckskin, I highly recommend dropping your packs and at least hiking up Buckskin for a mile. You'll get a good feel for this remarkable slot canyon - it contains truly some of the very best scenery.

ABOVE
As you continue downstream, there are lots of petroglyph panels you can look for. At around mile 20, there's a nice side-hike up to the massive Wrather Arch. There are also spots where you can hike up out of the canyon for huge top-down views. Some of the routes even have old moki steps that were created by the Anasazi.

RIGHT
This old truck is near Lonely Dell Ranch. A storm was starting to abate and beams of light were hitting the background cliffs. Gorgeous.

OPPOSITE
As you get into the lower part of Paria Canyon, the canyon really opens up and you'll be mostly hiking along a trail. Keep on the lookout for neat formations like these sand ripples.

To see more of David's work go to www.ActionPhotoTours.com