

 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

» BONUS MAP INSIDE

SWISS BLISS

Local Picks: Prime Culture, Cuisine, and More

TRAVELER

ALL TRAVEL, ALL THE TIME | April 2010

A Taste of **Amalfi**

Top-Selling Author Elizabeth Berg Gets
Cooking on Italy's Culinary Coast **Page 48**

89 Hotels You'll Love

True Sense of Place: Best Stays
in Britain and Ireland **Page 68**

TWEET ME IN MIAMI

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN
TWITTER MEETS TRAVEL?
Page 58

3 ASIAN BEACHES

WHERE TO ESCAPE
THE CROWDS **Page 76**

PLUS:
HANOI TURNS 1,000
WILD RIDE IN TASMANIA
4 CITIES REINVENTED



\$4.99US \$6.99CAN



traveler.nationalgeographic.com



American West: Red sandstone mesas and buttes extend as far as the eye can see in Monument Valley.

ROAD TRIP

Southwest Beauty Squared

The Four Corners—where Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico meet—is a feast for the eyes. | **By JOHN ROSENTHAL**

THE NAME Four Corners is far too prosaic for the strikingly beautiful territory in the southwestern United States that respects no man-made boundaries. Long before surveyors drew perpendicular lines to create Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, the forces of time were busy carving and painting this desert into a geological pastiche of natural wonders. Attempt this 525-mile drive in a single day, and you'll miss the point. Take at least three days to appreciate it, stopping to walk through the numerous parks, preserves, monuments, and unnamed places.

START IN FLAGSTAFF From Flagstaff (<http://flagstaff.az.us>) take Interstate 40 to Winslow (a corner made famous by the Jackson Browne song "Take It Easy" and now commemorated with an annual festival)—then continue 51 miles until you cross into Petrified Forest National Park (www.nps.gov/pefo). This is more of a looking park than a hiking or biking park, but the exquisite colors of the Painted Desert are captivating from the various viewpoints

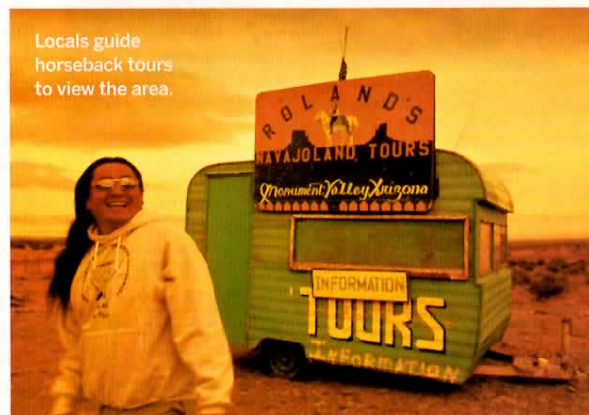
on the main park drive within a few miles of the Interstate. Drive deeper into the park to see the petroglyphs etched into Newspaper Rock or the eponymous petrified logs of Crystal Forest.

CANYON DE CHELLEY NATIONAL MONUMENT

Continue east on I-40 to U.S. 191 and head north to Canyon de Chelly National Monument (www.nps.gov/cach). This unit of the National Park Service—comprised entirely of Navajo Tribal Trust land—is rich in color and history. Indigenous peoples have lived among these 1,000-foot-high cliffs for nearly 5,000 years. Their ancestors have left behind cave paintings, pottery, kivas, and structures they added to the rock formations that first drew them here. The White House Ruins trail is the only one you can hike without a guide.

MONUMENT VALLEY Stay on U.S. 191 north to 59, a Navajo Nation road that takes you northwest toward Kayenta, the gateway to Monument Valley. Make a left onto U.S. 160 and a right onto U.S. 163, where the iconic mesas and buttes emerge from the landscape. Spend the night at the View hotel (www.monumentvalleyview.com), which opened in 2008 inside the Navajo Tribal Park. The hotel, owned and operated by the Towering House Clan of Navajo, features unobstructed views of Monument Valley's famed mitten-shaped buttes from each of its 95 guest rooms.

MEXICAN WATER Cross into Utah north on 163, then double back south into Arizona along U.S. 191 for 32 miles to Mexican Water. From there follow U.S.



Colorado cruising: Mesa Verde National Park protects 600 cliff dwellings, including Cliff Palace (below). From ski trails to summer festivals, Telluride (right) has become an all-season resort.



160 east to the intersection of four states and the heart of this drive. A payment of \$3 to see the Navajo Nation's Four Corners Monument also gets you a photo of yourself with a limb in each of the four states.

TRAIL OF THE ANCIENTS From the Colorado border to Cortez, 35 miles northeast along U.S. 160, follow the Trail of the Ancients (www.byways.org). This National Scenic Byway winds through territory where Puebloans lived for thousands of years before European settlement.

MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK The finest Puebloan cliff dwellings are located in Mesa Verde National Park (www.nps.gov/meve), ten miles east of Cortez off Route 160. This is a good place to stretch your legs as you climb ladders and crawl through tunnels on guided tours of the ancient cliff dwellings. More than 4,000 archaeological sites have been preserved here, including hundreds of homes (shaped from sandstone, mortar, and



wood beams) and villages that date to the 13th century.

CORTEZ TO DOLORES Return west on 160 to Cortez and pick up Colorado 145 north toward Dolores. As you climb out of the high desert, the pumpkin and russet-colored sandstone cliffs give way to leafy aspens, evergreen conifers, and cobalt rivers streaming down the slopes of silvery alpine peaks.

SAN JUAN SKYWAY For the last 75 miles of this trip follow another scenic byway: the San Juan Skyway. Paralleling the banks of the Dolores River, the road ascends through the imposing San Juan Mountains, the southernmost range in the Rockies. That's Mount Wilson on your left, just one of the 13 jagged summits that top 14,000 feet. A century ago, this was silver- and gold-mining country; today, the folks who dig this area are largely skiers, hikers, and soft adventurers.

TELLURIDE Route 145 dead-ends at the ski resort town of Telluride (www.telluride.com), nestled in a box canyon at 8,750 feet. Just 12 blocks

“**Attempt this 525-mile drive in a single day, and you'll miss the point. Spend at least three days and stop along the way.**”

long and six blocks wide, Telluride is no place for driving. You're encouraged to ditch your vehicle at the free parking lot known as Carhenge and get around town on foot. Butch Cassidy got his start here, making off with \$20,000 from the San Miguel Bank in 1889. Today, he'd find jewels worth more than that draped around the necks of vacationing shoppers. Yet Telluride retains an easygoing atmosphere. For every four-star restaurant or boutique, there's a down-at-the-heels pizzeria or candy store. Even at the height of summer, wisps of snow crown the jagged peaks that surround the town on three sides. You can drive up the mountain for a closer view, or take the free ski gondola, which operates 275 days a year. The glass-encased cab whisks you high up Telluride's northfacing slope, then drops into the next canyon over.

MOUNTAIN VILLAGE The sterile Mountain Village condo development at the base of this canyon lacks the charm and the Victorian-era history of Telluride, but the panorama that unfolds before you is worth the visit. Ringed by dozens of pinnacles ranging from 11,000 to 13,000 feet, the area is home to 30 miles of hiking and biking trails, so this would be a good place to get out of the car and exercise.



CHRISTIAN HEEB/LAIF/REXUS (UPPER LEFT), MICHAEL BRANDS (UPPER RIGHT), INTERNATIONAL MAPFING