

# VAMOOSE *Utah*

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## A GRAND ADVENTURE

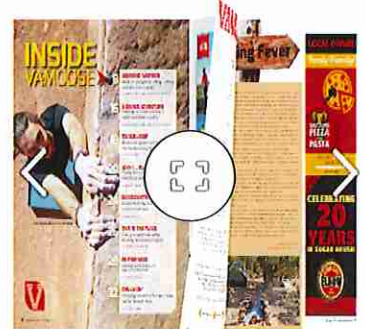
Cross over to Colorado's Grand Junction for a taste of wine and red-rock country.

BY GEOFF GRIFFIN & KATHLEEN CURRY | PHOTOS BY VISIT GRAND JUNCTION



Colorado National Monument's Rim Rock Drive

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## A Grand Adventure

📅 February 15, 2017 👤 Kathleen Curry 💬 0 Comment

### Cross over to Colorado's Grand Junction for a taste of wine and red-rock country.

Sometimes, a boundary or border is simply an arbitrary line drawn up by mapmakers. In other cases, it can be more symbolic. Crossing the border from Utah into Colorado along Interstate 70, however, the contrast couldn't be more distinct. It's as if Napa Valley were set down in the midst of the incredible Western Slope landscape this area is known for.

The Grand Valley area—which includes the towns of Grand Junction, Palisade and Fruita—is about a 90-minute drive from Moab and is home to not only outstanding recreation but also a burgeoning wine scene of more than 20 wineries.

When it comes to recreation, one of Grand Junction's best-known attractions is Colorado National Monument (1750 Rim Rock Drive, 970-858-3617, [NPS.gov/colm](http://NPS.gov/colm)) where red-rock monoliths soar above stunning cliffs and

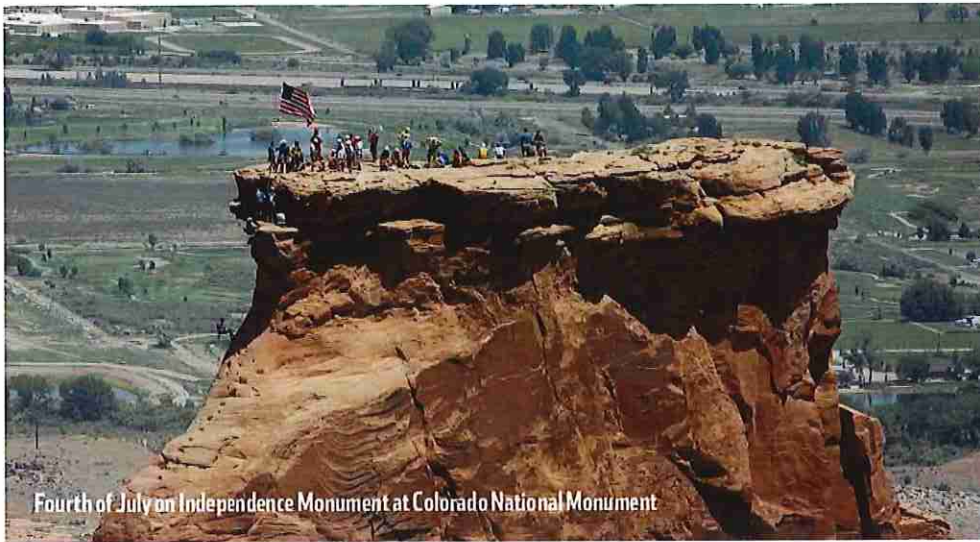
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canyons. Visitors can take in magnificent views while driving along 23-mile Rim Rock Drive, which is also a popular biking and marathon route. Numerous stops along the way offer trailheads and hikes.



Fourth of July on Independence Monument at Colorado National Monument

Another place to explore is Grand Mesa, the largest flat-top mountain in the world, at 11,000 feet in elevation. The 500-square-mile area offers more than 300 lakes to splash in as well as Powderhorn Mountain Resort (48338 Powderhorn Road, Mesa, 970-268-5700, Powderhorn.com).

The Bookcliffs Range beautifully frames the north end of the Grand Valley and is also home to the Bookcliffs Wild Horse Area, with over 30,000 acres set aside to protect wild horse that roam in the area. (Find more information at BLM.gov/com or VisitGrandJunction.com.)

If you'd rather stick to a lower altitude and enjoy a bike ride, head to Palisade and stop by Rapid Creek Cycles (237 S. Main, Palisade, 970-464-9266, RapidCreekCycles.com) to rent an e-bike, which provides all the fun of a bike with less of an effort. They'll provide a map for one of the more popular bike routes, one that visits some of the area's wineries.



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Not only do the wineries produce classic reds and whites, but since the area has long been a center for growing pitted fruits—especially peaches, fruit wines also abound. For example, **Carlson Vineyards** (461 35 Road, Palisade, 970-464-5554, CarlsonVineyards.com) makes a delicious dessert wine from sweet-tart pie cherries. The winery recommends taking a piece of chocolate made by local **Enstrom Candies** (701 Colorado Ave., Grand Junction, 1-800-367-8766, Enstrom.com) and melting it, and then dipping the rim of a wine glass into it for a dessert treat.

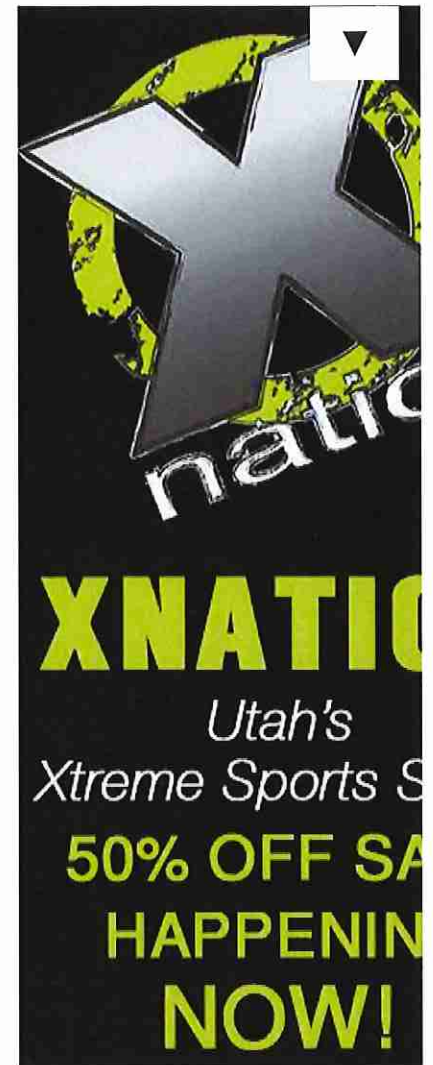
Another unique option is **Meadery of the Rockies** (3701 G Road, 877-858-6330, TalonWineBrands.com), which makes 12 different types of honey-based wines, some combined with local fruits, such as the strawberry honey wine.

Any time there is good wine around, there are usually chefs nearby who create great dishes to pair with them, and Grand Junction abounds in fine-dining offerings. **626 on Rood** (626 Rood, Grand Junction, 970-257-7663, 626onRood.com) offers wine flights featuring locally produced wines paired with locally grown foods, such as the fresh peaches used in the grilled peach caprese salad.

Two popular times to visit to celebrate the region's food and wine offerings are the **Palisade Peach Festival** (Aug. 18-19, 2017, PalisadePeachFest.com), when the town celebrates its history with food and fun, and the **Colorado Mountain Winefest** (Sept. 14-17, 2017, ColoradoWinefest.com), when more than 50 wineries from throughout Colorado come together.

Grand Junction offers the unique combination of beautiful recreation sitting side-by-side with gorgeous vineyards, and is an easy drive of just over four hours from Salt Lake City.

Follow Kathleen Curry & Geoff Griffin on Twitter @TravelBrigade and check out their weekly travel podcasts at TravelBrigade.com.



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