

Arches National Park, UT

By Tibor Vari

In April of 2007, I lead a photo workshop to Arches National Park in Utah. After landing in Grand Junction, we drove a couple of hours to the Best Western in Moab (5 miles south of the park on Route 191). Arches NP is in the heart of red rock country where the warm light of sunrise/sunset make for some spectacular photography. Despite the long day traveling, we were able to catch sunset at the North Window followed by the added bonus of some silhouette images of Balanced Rock after the sun had gone down.



Arches NP has more than 2000 arches that range in size from the 3 foot minimum opening needed to be considered an arch, to the longest, Landscape Arch at 306 feet. What causes these arches is about 100 million years of erosion by the forces of water, ice, extreme temperatures, wind, and underground salt movement. This erosion has created the greatest density of natural arches in the world that has been protected since the formation of the park in 1971 (President Hoover established Arches as a national monument in 1929).



The weather turned out to be a challenge in that most mornings were cold, overcast and dreary. Certainly not the best conditions for photography! However, late on Sunday the weather did not look promising for a sunset as dark clouds rolled in. Despite the cold and drizzle, we setup our tripods just west of Balanced Rock (128 foot base balancing a 55 foot rock), and shivered while we waited. What gave us a glimmer of hope was a small opening in the clouds just over the horizon to the west. Our patience was rewarded when the sun broke through and the warm light that hit Balanced Rock was simply breath taking.

Though many mornings it was raining, we still headed out towards sunrise photo locations like Turret Arch, North Window, The Courthouse, and the Spectacles. One afternoon, a group of us took on the 1.5 mile hike (480 foot elevation gain), to Delicate Arch. Though the weather did not cooperate for a spectacular sunset, it was worth the hike just to see this iconic location that symbolizes not only Arches NP but the state of Utah (it's on their license plates).

Besides the great photo opportunities presented by Arches NP, it's proximity to other photo spots like Monument Valley, Capital Reef NP, Canyonlands NP, and Dead Horse Point SP can be reached easily from Moab. All in all, Arches NP is worth the photo opportunities!

