

Monument Valley

Monument Valley (Navajo: ***Tsé Bii' Ndzisgaii***, pronounced [tsʰépiːʔntsiskàː], meaning *valley of the rocks*) is a region of the Colorado Plateau characterized by a cluster of vast sandstone buttes, the largest reaching 1,000 ft (300 m) above the valley floor.^[1] It is located on the Arizona–Utah border (around 36°59′N 110°6′W﻿ / ﻿36.983°N 110.1°W﻿ / 36.983; -110.1), near the Four Corners area. The valley lies within the territory of the Navajo Nation Reservation and is accessible from U.S. Highway 163.

Monument Valley has been featured in many forms of media since the 1930s. Director John Ford used the location for a number of his best-known films and thus, in the words of critic Keith Phipps, "its five square miles [13 square kilometers] have defined what decades of moviegoers think of when they imagine the American West."^[2]

Contents

Geography and geology

Tourism

Climate

Gallery

- Panoramas
- Other images

Monument Valley in visual media

See also

References

Further reading

External links



West Mitten Butte, East Mitten Butte, and Merrick Butte



View of Monument Valley in Utah, looking south on U.S. Route 163 from 13 miles (21 km) north of the Arizona–Utah border

Geography and geology

The area is part of the Colorado Plateau. The elevation of the valley floor ranges from 5,000 to 6,000 feet (1,500 to 1,800 m) above sea level. The floor is largely siltstone of the Cutler Group, or sand derived from it, deposited by the meandering rivers that carved the valley. The valley's vivid red color comes from iron oxide exposed in the weathered siltstone. The darker, blue-gray rocks in the valley get their color from manganese oxide.

The buttes are clearly stratified, with three principal layers. The lowest layer is the Organ Rock Shale, the middle is de Chelly Sandstone, and the top layer is the Moenkopi Formation capped by Shinarump Conglomerate. The valley includes large stone structures including the famed "Eye of the Sun".

Between 1945 and 1967, the southern extent of the Monument Upwarp was mined for uranium, which occurs in scattered areas of the Shinarump Conglomerate; vanadium and copper are associated with uranium in some deposits.^[3]

Tourism

Monument Valley is officially a large area that includes much of the area surrounding **Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park**, a Navajo Nation equivalent to a national park. Oljato, for example, is also within the area designated as Monument Valley.



Location of Monument Valley in the United States.



Monument Valley, Apache scout

Visitors may pay an access fee and drive through the park on a 17-mile (27 km) dirt road (a 2-3 hour trip). Parts of Monument Valley, such as Mystery Valley and Hunts Mesa, are accessible only by guided tour.

Climate

Monument Valley experiences a desert climate with cold winters and hot summers. While the summers may be hot, the heat is tempered by the region's high altitude. Although the valley experiences an average of 54 days above 90 °F (32 °C) annually, summer highs rarely exceed 100 °F (38 °C). Summer nights are comfortably cool, and temperatures drop quickly after sunset. Winters are cold, but daytime highs are usually above freezing. Even in the winter, temperatures below 0 °F (−18 °C) are uncommon, though possible. Monument Valley receives an occasional light snowfall in the winter; however, it usually melts within a day or two.



Monument Valley from the valley floor

Climate data for Monument Valley, Arizona													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °F (°C)	60 (16)	69 (21)	77 (25)	90 (32)	99 (37)	101 (38)	107 (42)	100 (38)	97 (36)	86 (30)	73 (23)	62 (17)	107 (42)
Mean maximum °F (°C)	52.07 (11.15)	59.41 (15.23)	70.37 (21.32)	80.04 (26.69)	88.27 (31.26)	96.64 (35.91)	99.44 (37.47)	96.13 (35.63)	90.48 (32.49)	80.36 (26.87)	65.18 (18.43)	51.89 (11.05)	100.17 (37.87)
Average high °F (°C)	40.6 (4.8)	47.3 (8.5)	58.2 (14.6)	67.3 (19.6)	77.6 (25.3)	88.1 (31.2)	92.0 (33.3)	88.8 (31.6)	80.6 (27.0)	67.9 (19.9)	51.5 (10.8)	40.9 (4.9)	66.7 (19.3)
Average low °F (°C)	24.3 (−4.3)	28.2 (−2.1)	35.5 (1.9)	42.4 (5.8)	52.3 (11.3)	63.1 (17.3)	67.0 (19.4)	63.9 (17.7)	57.3 (14.1)	45.1 (7.3)	32.9 (0.5)	24.6 (−4.1)	44.7 (7.1)
Mean minimum °F (°C)	12.25 (−10.97)	15.25 (−9.31)	22.04 (−5.53)	28.69 (−1.84)	35.24 (1.80)	47.08 (8.38)	57.58 (14.21)	54.73 (12.63)	44.72 (7.07)	32.61 (0.34)	18.75 (−7.36)	12.78 (−10.68)	11.50 (−11.39)
Record low °F (°C)	−8 (−22)	−4 (−20)	9 (−13)	15 (−9)	20 (−7)	31 (−1)	49 (9)	38 (3)	33 (1)	22 (−6)	6 (−14)	−9 (−23)	−9 (−23)
Average precipitation inches (mm)	0.26 (6.6)	0.19 (4.8)	0.19 (4.8)	0.24 (6.1)	0.30 (7.6)	0.10 (2.5)	0.54 (14)	0.79 (20)	0.73 (19)	0.68 (17)	0.32 (8.1)	0.19 (4.8)	4.54 (115)
Source: The Western Regional Climate Center ^[4]													

Gallery

Panoramas



Panoramic view of Monument Valley from John Ford's Point



Panorama taken from the Visitor Center, showing the West and East Mitten Buttes and the road making a loop-tour through the Park



Panorama of Monument Valley in winter



The Totem Pole

Other images



Navajo Hogan



Elephant Butte



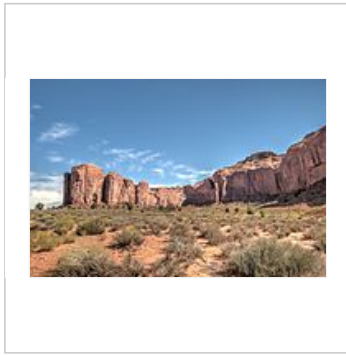
Three Sisters



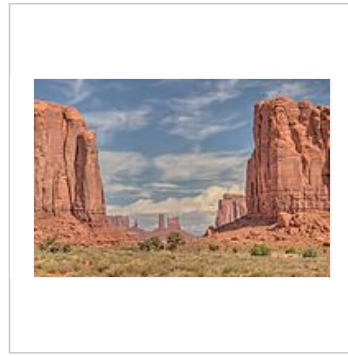
John Ford Point



Artist's Point



Spearhead Mesa



The North Window



North Window Overlook

Monument Valley in visual media

Monument Valley has been featured in numerous computer games, in print, and in motion pictures, including multiple Westerns directed by John Ford that influenced audiences' view of the American West, such as: *Stagecoach* (1939), *My Darling Clementine* (1946), *Fort Apache* (1948), and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949).^{[5][6][7][8]}

Many more recent movies, with other directors, were also filmed in Monument Valley, including Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (in 1967), the first spaghetti western to be filmed outside Europe, and Gore Verbinski's *The Lone Ranger*.^[9]

See also

- Valley of the Gods

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- Howze, William (September 2, 2011). "Ford's consistent use of popular imagery in Western and Non-Western films" (<https://cnx.org/contents/aHhly1gA@1/Ford-s-consistent-use-of-popular-imagery-in-Western-and-Non-Western-films>). *The Influence of Western Painting and Genre Painting on the Films of John Ford* (Revised ed.). "Ford is popularly regarded as a director of westerns, the director who made John Wayne a star and made Monument Valley the locus for the myth of the American West. It was a reputation he encouraged. 'My name's John Ford -I make westerns', he once said by way of introduction.¹ Among his most popular westerns are *Stagecoach* (1939), *My Darling Clementine* (1946), *Fort Apache* (1947), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *The Searchers* (1956), and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). "Western or non-western, Ford's films exhibit characteristics that transcend those categories. Critics have recognized Ford's preoccupation with the traditional values of home and country, whether the country is Ireland or the United States; they have characterized his heroes as loners, men disappointed with life in some way that is only implied; and they have enumerated the elements of a typical Ford film: Monument Valley, the Seventh Cavalry, a fight, a dance, a wedding, a funeral, and the members of the so-called John Ford Stock Company, actors who appeared again and again in his films: John Wayne, Victor McLaglen, Henry Fonda, Ward Bond, Olive Carey, Harry Carey, Jr., John Qualen, and Hank Worden among others.
- Punch, David A. (September 2, 2018). "Stagecoach: Defining the Western, How John Ford's 1939 western classic transformed the dying genre into the epitome of American cinema" (<https://medium.com/@DavidA.Punch/stagecoach-defining-the-western-1a330b451d19>). *Medium*. "Monument Valley resides on the Utah-Arizona border, within the territory of the Navajo Reservation. Encompassing approximately 30,000 acres, the land is noteworthy for its incredible sandstone buttes,

which reach as high as 1,000 ft. Realizing how magnificent the location would be for a western picture, resident Harry Goulding approached John Ford about shooting his next film there. After previewing the landscape through some pictures Goulding brought along with him, Ford was certain he wanted to film *Stagecoach* there. Some of the motivation for that was the remoteness of the location. Hundreds of miles away from any form of civilization, it certainly discouraged nosey producers from prying, though the natural beauty of the terrain was a deciding factor. It became his preferred location for shooting westerns; Ford favored its majesty over accuracy in films like *My Darling Clementine* (1946), set in Tombstone, Arizona, and *The Searchers*, which substitutes the location for practically everywhere the characters travel to. The expansive countryside embodied the untamed potential of the western frontier so vividly it has become the iconic image of the west. Ford's discovery of Monument Valley was crucial in piecing together his image of the frontier—a vision which has become the defining portrait of the American West."

8. Movshovitz, Howard (1984). "The Still Point: Women in the Westerns of John Ford". *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. University of Nebraska Press. 7 (3, Women on the Western Frontier): 68–72. doi:10.2307/3346245 (<https://doi.org/10.2307/3346245>). JSTOR 3346245 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3346245>).
9. "50 YEARS AGO, TWO ICONIC FILMS FEATURED MONUMENT VALLEY" (<https://www.arizonahighways.com/blog/50-years-ago-two-iconic-films-featured-monument-valley>). 2017-06-05.

Further reading

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External links

- "Monument Valley Tours & Tickets" (<https://www.monument-valley.com>). *Travel Guide*.
- "Complete Monument Valley Guide: Drive, Hotels, Camping, Seasons" (<https://www.whentobewhere.com/travel-listing/monument-valley>). *When To Go*. 2017-11-12.
- "List of movies and television shows with scenes in Monument Valley" (<https://www.imdb.com/search/title?locations=Monument%20Valley,%20Utah,%20USA>). *IMDb*.
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- "Photographs and documents of pre-automobile access Monument Valley from the Monument Highway Digital Collection" (<http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/monumental>). *Utah State University*.
- "Uranium mining in Monument Valley and its decommissioning" (https://web.archive.org/web/20031014093333/http://www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/nuclear/page/umtra/monument_valley_title1.html). *Energy Information Administration*.

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