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Stone Canyons Of The Colorado Plateau



Synopsis

The red-rock, high-desert country of the south-west of the United States is among the most stark and beautiful natural wildernesses remaining in North America. For this book, Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Jack W. Dykinga and author Charles Bowden travelled to the Escalante River system and Paria Canyon on the borders of Utah and Arizona to reveal a land endowed with historic and natural gifts, and yet relatively unknown. Hiking through precipitous and parched slick-rock canyons, Dykinga captured brief, brilliant springtime flowerings, rich autumn colour changes, simmering midsummer heat pulsing off variegated canyon walls, and the extraordinary contrasts of early winter snow on deep, red rock. Bowden's narrative recalls wading through icy streams that seasonally slice through narrow clefts, and nights under the stars watching bats wheel overhead. He writes of long-ago Spanish mission fathers, and of Mormon settlers who struggled through the treacherous "hole in the rock" en route to new homesteads south of the Great Salt Lake.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Straddling the Utah/Arizona border, the Escalante River system and Paria Canyon were among the last areas of the continental United States to be mapped. Dykinga and Bowden, who have teamed up before (The Sonoran Desert, LJ 10/15/92), work well together. Both are residents of Tucson and share a love of the desert Southwest. Dykinga's spectacular color photographs and Bowden's overview of the natural history of the remote and rugged area make for a stunning coffee-table book on a little-known area. Also included is a brief but very beneficial annotated bibliography, most welcome because there is such a dearth of information on the region. Highly recommended for all

regional collections. Tim J. Markus, Evergreen State Coll. Lib., Olympia, Wash. Copyright 1996
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Jack W. Dykinga's photographs have been published in major magazines, and Charles Bowden is the author of numerous non-fiction books. They collaborated on the Abeams' title, *The Sonoran Desert* (0 8109 2669 5) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

STONE CANYONS OF THE COLORADO PLATEAU contains 81 color photographs. Each of the photos occupies from 50-80% of the page. The book is large, 10 1/2 by 11 1/2 inches. Most of the photographs are from Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness, a little known park overlooked by most publications dealing with the American Southwest. Vermilion Cliffs encompasses Paria Canyon, Coyote Buttes, and a stone formation called "The Wave." The stone formation called The Wave seems to be in an area about a quarter the size of a city block. Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness is noted for its conical, haystack-like stone formations. The book contains plenty of photos of artistic merit. Page 5 shows a few cones at close range and a dozen cones in the distance. Where the desert floor is made of stone, the stone is striped like a candy cane. FIVE STARS for this photograph. Page 9 shows Bryce Canyon, with snow-covered cliffs in the distance, and dark clouds overhead. FIVE STARS for this dramatic photo. Page 20 shows snow-covered buckwheat and a dead juniper. FOUR STARS for this depiction of the texture of the snow residing on top of the buckwheat. Page 26 shows a hoodoo in the sun. The hoodoo consists of a dark pancake of stone supported by an orange, funnel-shaped pedestal. Half of the photograph is in deep shadow, a sloping hill of stone. Page 35 shows an arch with a garden of cottonwoods beyond. FIVE STARS for this rare image of pastoral beauty. Page 45 shows a close-up of two cones at Paria Canyon. One of the cones looks like a little house. Page 45 shows an angled stone formation in a canyon wall at Paria Canyon. The crazy angles resemble those of a Kandinsky painting. Page 67 (also seen as the cover photo) shows a pond at The Wave. This is one of the greatest landscape photographs ever taken in the history of photography. FIVE STARS. Page 69 shows a crazy, bizarre stone formation at Paria Canyon. What we see is a pancake consisting of a cluster of thin stone sheets, where the pancake is supported by two pedestals. This is one of the most bizarre landscape photographs taken in the history of photography. FIVE STARS. Page 70 shows an excellent arrangement of cones in the distance, with swirling stone spirals, and a dead juniper in the foreground. The juniper has a spiraling grain. FIVE STARS. Page 99 shows a slot canyon, where there are various qualities of light--a warming bath of glowing orange, a harsh white glare, an even indirect illumination with no

shadow, and deep shadow. The image is reminiscent of those depicted in Bruce Barnbaum's astonishing book, VISUAL SYMPHONY. Page 116 shows a dozen tiny waterfalls, where water spills from knife-edge stone formations that form the streambed. This unique image is somewhat reminiscent of David Muench's depiction of Havasupai Falls, in NATURE'S AMERICA (page 125 of NATURE'S AMERICA). One wishes for more photos of The Wave. For those interested in more of The Wave, I recommend Reiner Sahm's book, CANYONLANDS PANORAMIC PHOTOGRAPHY. Reiner Sahm's book also introduces the reader to Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument, and to Goblin Valley State Park, two other parks vastly underrepresented by books on the American Southwest. Also Laurent Martres has two books (two volumes) on Utah and Arizona. The second volume features a number of photos of The Wave. The quality of the prints in Mr. Dykinga's book is quite good. With the naked eye, one cannot discern any grain in the color prints. However, with a loupe (5X magnification), the grain is readily evident. The grain does not resemble specks, but instead takes a form resembling that of woven cloth. Fortunately, only a minority of the photographs in Mr. Dykinga's book are flower pictures. There are only eight flower pictures. Also, fortunately, none of the photos contains people, e.g., tourists, hikers, or indigenous farmers. As is the case with Ansel Adams, Bruce Barnbaum, David Muench, and a handful of other photographers, Mr. Dykinga takes extra care (and time) to wait for the lighting conditions to be perfect, before depressing the shutter. Mr. Dykinga is an experienced photographer, as indicated by the fact that he won the Pulitzer Prize. The prize, awarded to him in 1971, was for his photographs at the Lincoln and Dixon State Schools for the Retarded in Illinois, when he worked for the Chicago Sun-Times.

This is one of several photo books by this author, which are detailed guides to exactly where to locate specific subjects for landscape photography in the geographical areas covered by each book - there is some overlap between the books. There is some discussion of specific photo techniques, mainly addressing the issues imposed by the unique areas and subjects, including non-photo advice on how not to hurt yourself in what is mainly desert country. Primarily, this is a collection of directions in the nature of what landscape features are out there and how find them, with some comments on best techniques, lighting, and types of equipment to consider. Some caution might be applied to use of the guide to avoid mere duplication of the author's experience or photos. Prior to discovering this and its related guides, I have personally "been there and done that" over much of the same geography. I later bought the guides to plan new trips and found them well worth the cost and time invested. These guides are a great resource for planning if your time on the ground is limited and you want to maximize your experience.

An excellent book both photographically and in its narrative. I originally was looking for photos of the slot canyons near Lake Powell, but this book provided a lot more than that. A great feel and honor to these lands.

The pictures are lovely, but many are of locations that you probably won't reach like the wave which requires a permit that is granted months in advance, so if you want pictures of things you may see, it is not for you. If you are lucky enough to get to the wave or just want a nice coffee table book, this is for you.

Great photography and is a good coffee table book. However, I thought it will give directions to the areas where the images were taken, but was disappointed.

The number of photographic works exploring the nuances of the Colorado Plateau is seemingly endless. Many can be browsed once and left behind. This book is the scintillating exception. Jack Dykinga's photographic work is simply exceptional, and beyond the pale. Each color photograph appears as exquisitely crafted as a piece of fine crystal, beginning with very cover of the paperback edition. One can only envy his great patience and expertise in composing each work. Much of the photography comes from the Paria Wilderness, an area of the Plateau not usually treated to any degree in most works, and the novelty is refreshing. A particularly enjoyable facet of the book is that use of a telephoto lens has been largely eschewed, leaving a series of scenes that the enterprising tourist can find and view with his or her own eyes, just as depicted by the book. Charles Bowden's accompanying text is evocative and hearkens a wild diffusion of images and memories of the fascinating region. It is an apt companion to Dykinga's superb work. If you are limited to five or less books about the Colorado plateau, let this be one of them. I enjoy it more every time I read it.

In 1998 I'd seen a photo on a calendar of the Vermillion Cliffs in Utah, but had no idea where exactly it was located. I teach photography and my students and I had done some research to find it, but discovered it was a very large area. When I found Mr. Dykinga's book I was even more determined for my students to see and photograph the area. Needless to say, the book is truly inspirational thanks to Jack's remarkable work. If you know a photographer or a traveller - this is the book for them! Enjoy the treat yourself as well. Jeff Grimm Bedford, TX

An hymn to the nature and it's landscapes, whose pictures are superb in both the technical and artistic plans.

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