CAPITOL REEF NATIONAL PARK USA

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If you want to see something in the States most Americans haven't, head to Capitol Reef National Park (nps.gov). I don't know what Mars looks like, but it's got to be close to this. Giant slabs of chocolate-red rock rise above enormous canyons, crowned with sweeping yellow sandstone domes like giant teeth biting at the sky. The park's centrepiece is a monocline (called Waterpocket Fold), a buckle in the earth's surface 100 miles long – a scale I'd only grasped once I'd driven 1,000-vertical-feet to the top. From on high I could see clear across canyon country to the 11,000ft-high Henry Mountains, the last-discovered range in the continental US. My favourite place to stay is Red River Ranch, a grand Western lodge (£105; redriverranch.com). One night in the hot tub I thought the sky was cloudy, until I looked through binoculars and realised it was milky with a zillion stars.

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John Vlahides, Lonely Planet guidebook author

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