



The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

**RICK'S ROADS**

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2022.09.17  
Capitol Reef National Park

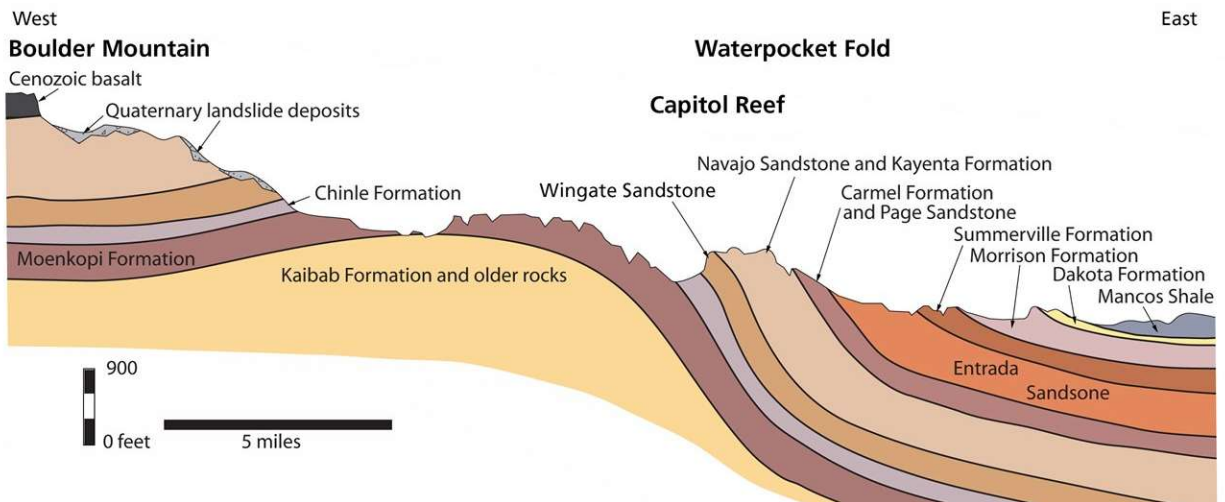


Old Mr. Sun was brilliant for today's Capitol Reef National Park rock show. The park name comes from: *capitol* for the white domes of Navajo Sandstone that resemble capitol building domes, and *reef* for the rocky cliffs which are a barrier to travel, like an ocean reef.

The aptly named Scenic Drive, which is just about the only road in the park, is on the west side of the towering ridge that runs the length of the park, so the afternoon sun put those beautiful red and beige Utah rocks on vibrant display.



That ridge (photo, above), called the Waterpocket Fold, is a *geologic monocline*, and it extends well beyond both ends of CRNP. This “wrinkle in the earth” stretches about 100 miles on a northeast-southwest line. The eastern end of a tectonic plate dropped, dramatically raising the western edge. As it did, it ripped upward the ground to the west, exposing the different layers or soil/rock.



*Chart courtesy of National Park Service*

[https://nps.gov/care/learn/nature/images/Ron-Blakey-D\\_27\\_CapReefSect.tif?maxwidth=1300&maxheight=1300&autorotate=false](https://nps.gov/care/learn/nature/images/Ron-Blakey-D_27_CapReefSect.tif?maxwidth=1300&maxheight=1300&autorotate=false)

This is why so many areas of the cliffs appear striped. Ahhh, but those are not sides of horizontal striations, like you’d see at the Grand Canyon; they are exposed edges of the ripped-and-raised underground layers. Pretty cool, right?

(Thanks for the use of the chart, NPS. Just spreadin’ the knowledge that you provide.)

The drive along Scenic Drive was short this day; it gated shut at Golden Throne (photo next page). There had been a disastrous flash flood there in June, and the dirt

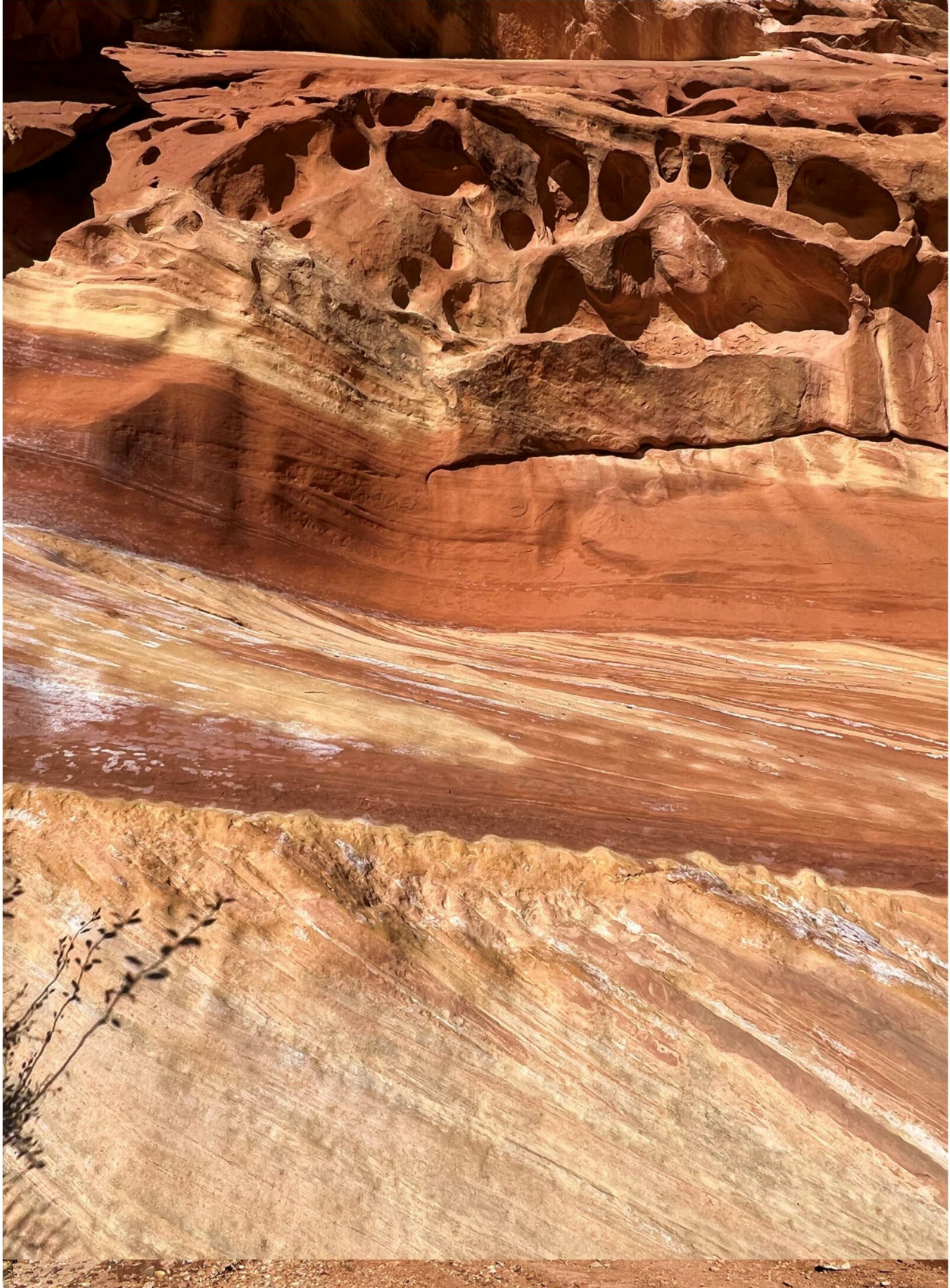


road and cement parking area were ravaged. I saw a video of it, taken by a guy who got stuck in the middle of it with his family. Quite the ordeal.

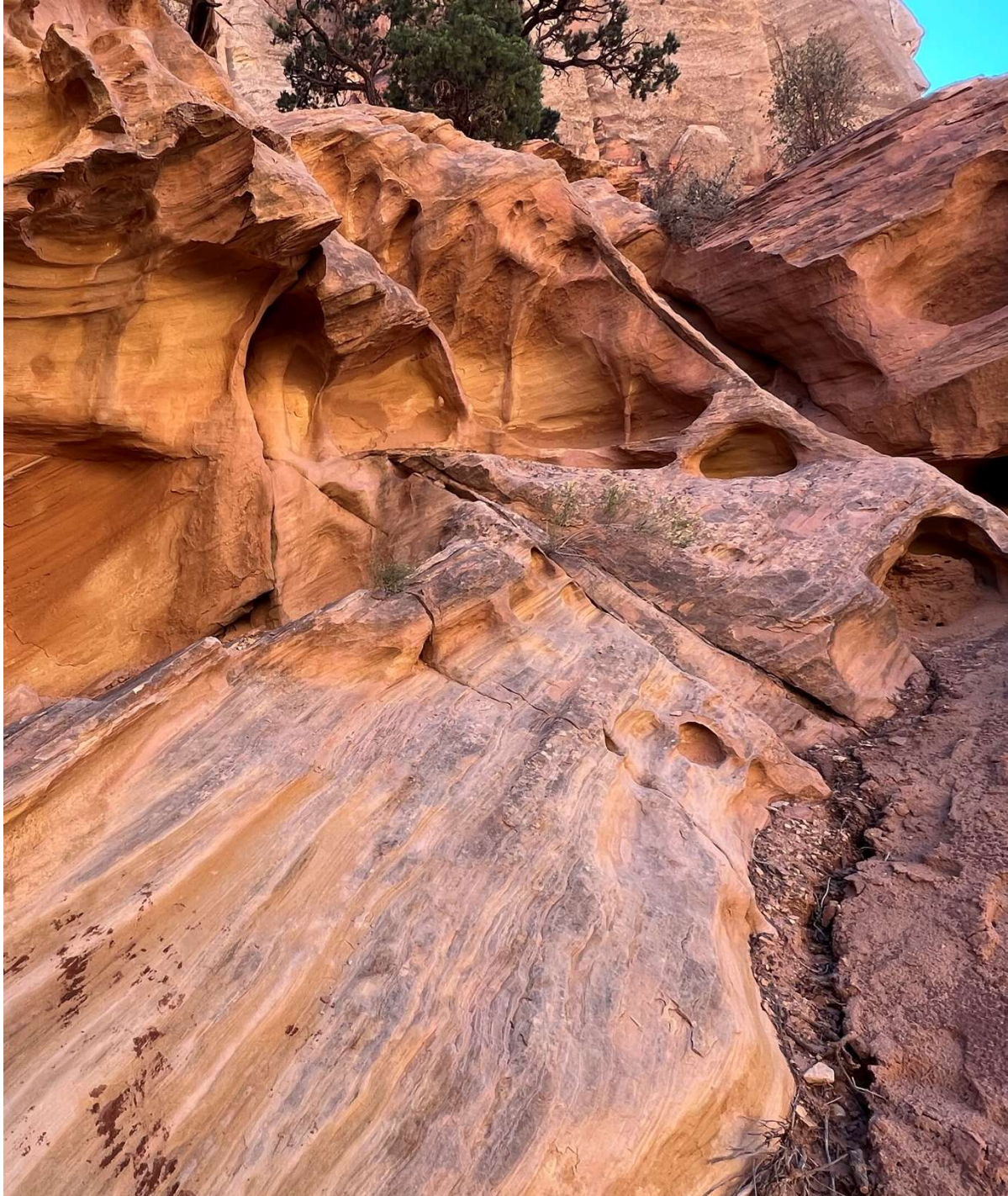
Since I could not drive that part of the road, I hiked it the dang thang instead. I set out for a 30-minute walk that turned out to be a lot longer. Thankfully, that was by choice.

What a mess! Hard to imagine that it was actually passable for ordinary cars just three months ago. It might be a couple of years before that part reopens.

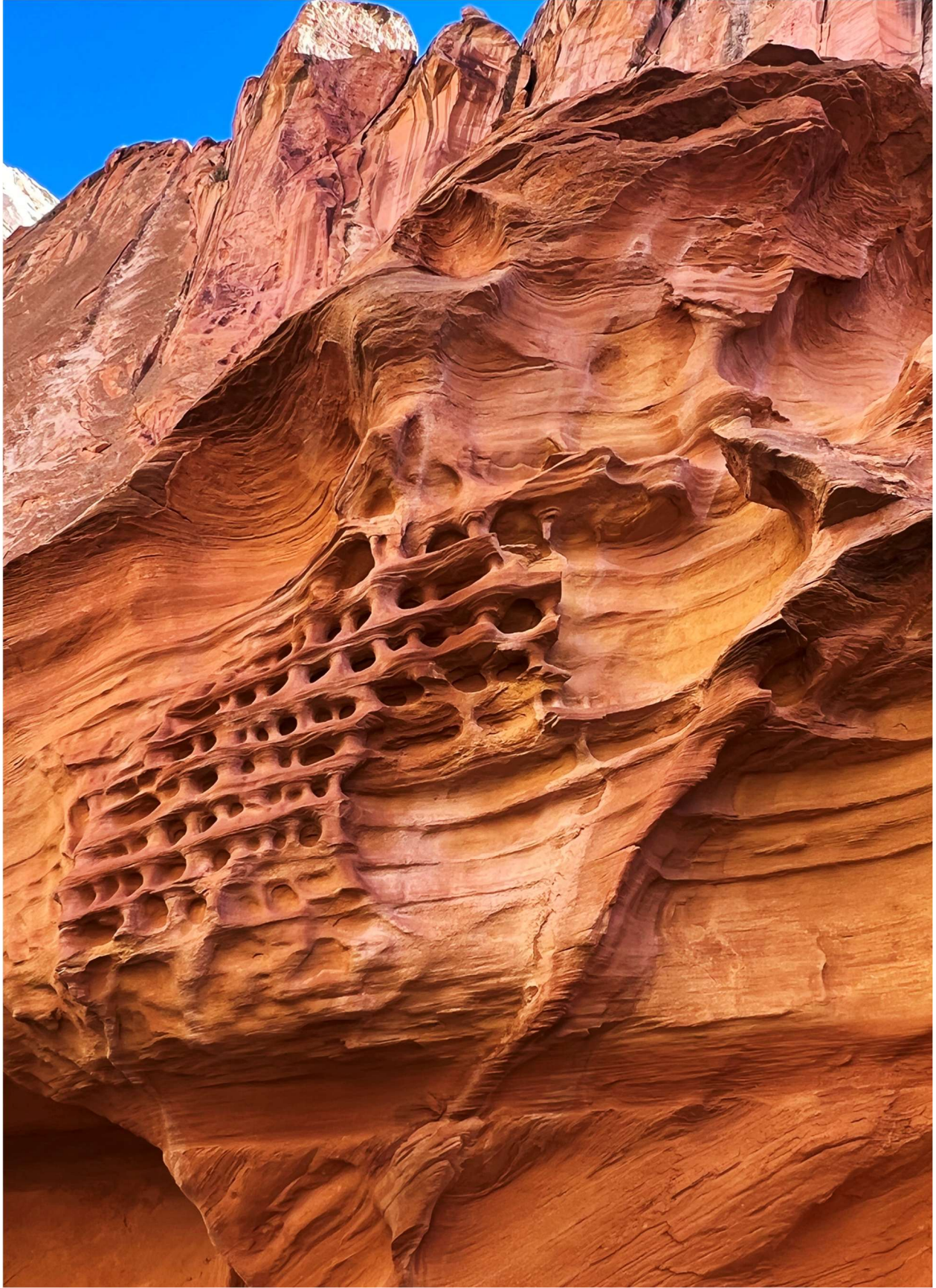




Geology 101



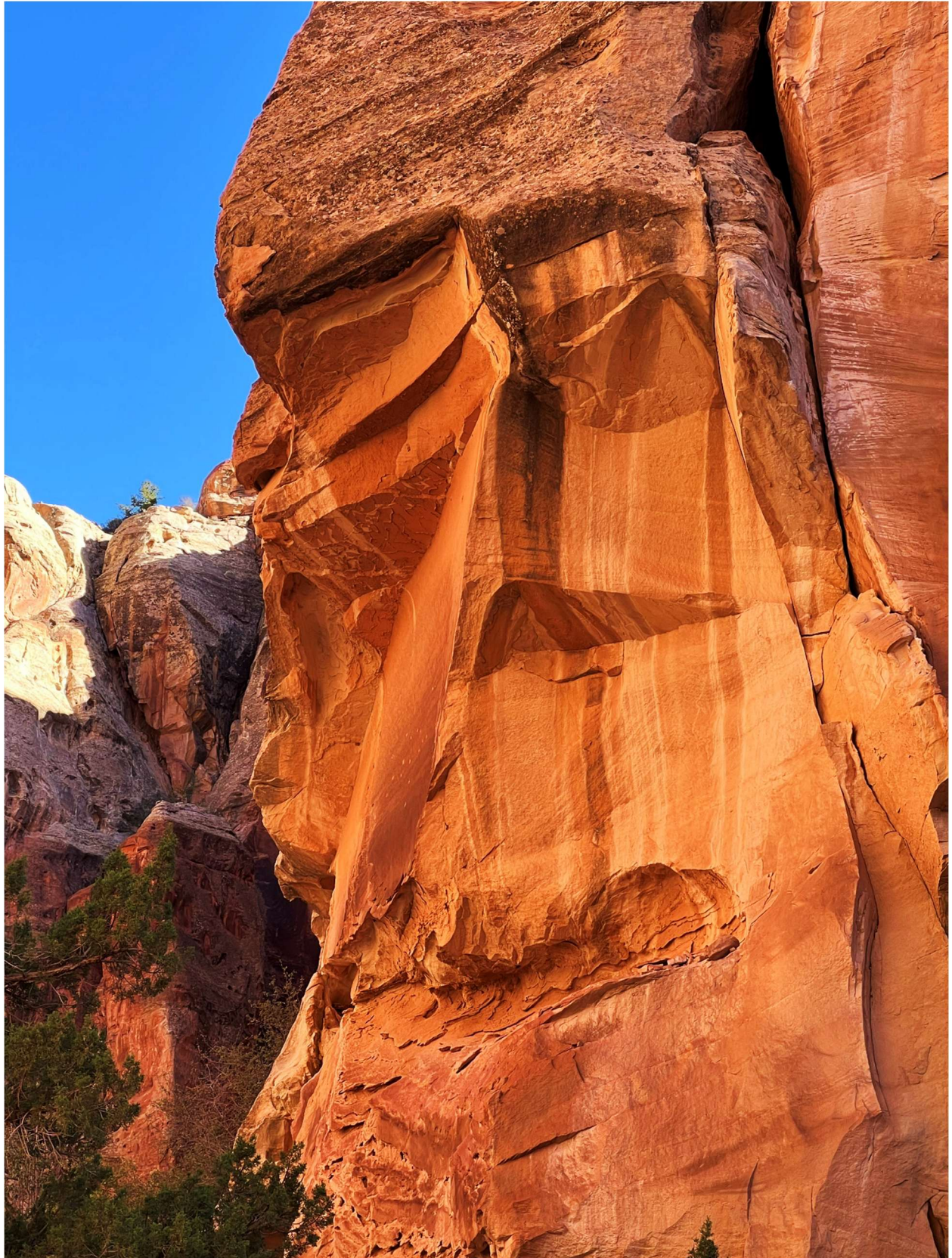
Geologists must lose their freaking minds over places like this: the coloring, the bizarre erosions from eons of wind and water. This area is called Capitol Gorge, and the trail through it actually runs all the way east to the town of Notom, and used to be open to vehicles for through traffic (about 100 years ago, when “traffic” was much, much lighter).





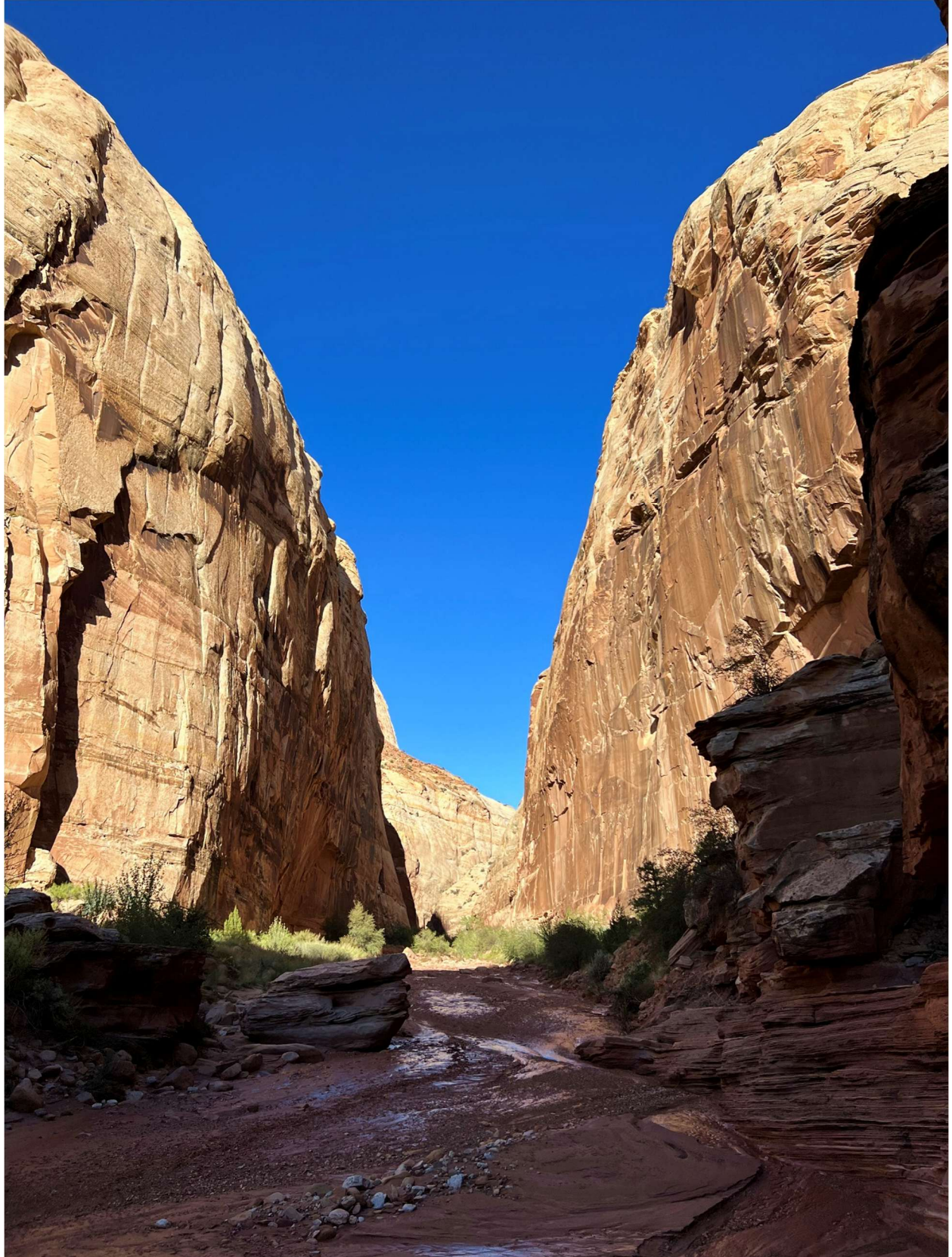
















Nice hike though! Towering cliffs on both sides. I just kept walking down, lengthening my time limit from 30 minutes to 45 to 60 to 75 (5:15 PM), as each bend in the canyon promised enticing views.

My walk back up, without the gawking and focusing and clicking, took 40 minutes. Tremendous hike. I wish I had time to go even further. Next time, I reckon.

As I drove back outward on Scenic Drive, the sun angle was primo for late-day, high-contrast photos.

One, especially, looked like a fortress, with squared-off columns and almost-uniform gaps between them.

The views of the monocline, as it ran off to the northwest were spectacular, and the edges of the colored layers were on full display for much of the ride.

The ranch near the park exit was a nice touch as well.











I turned left as I left the park, to go back west and check out a hotel I had seen several miles up the road on my ride in.

Turns out it was “not suitable” for stealthing; there were no other vehicles to blend in with. That was a little too much “plain sight” to hide in for my tastes.

I headed back to CRNP, and the colored cliffs were even more vivid than before.



I drove past the gate and onward down UT-24, putting my faith in the road gods to guide me to a suitable site. And they did, almost immediately.

It was a roadside turnout, only about a mile east of the CRNP gate. It was gravel, reasonably level, lower than the road, and snuggled up under a tall, leafy tree. With Maxx’s dark color, I hoped I’d be invisible at night to anyone who would rather I not be there.

I pulled in at 7:30, still in daylight, and at 10:30, I was calling it night, being, once again, cautiously optimistic.



*The morning view of my Site For The Nite.*