



A canyoneering master's class in Escalante

Canyoneer in Escalante (EXPERT INSTRUCTION INCLUDED)

UTAH The American Canyoneering Association has certified exactly one guiding company in the Southwest: Excursions of Escalante. And in 2009 EOE is launching the most robust canyoneering curriculum in the Four Corners: a series of three-day courses in southern Utah's Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument (\$450, including lunch and gear rental; excursions of escalante.com). “The philosophy we teach is to move extremely slow and efficient,” says owner Rick Green. “The places we take people, there are no trails, there are no cairns. This is the real deal.” Moving methodically and safely leaves plenty of time for admiring the classroom: the monument's Egypt area, a six-mile-long slickrock bench with tiny sand dunes and crimson canyons that rise 300 feet high and narrow to as little as two feet. While rappelling off cliffs into Dr. Seuss–like crevasses and sloshing through pools, learn basic knots, anchors, and rigging methods, as well as how to read maps and judge weather patterns. Each night, return to Escalante's Grand Staircase Bed & Breakfast Inn, a cozy clapboard abode that serves enormous breakfasts (doubles from \$135; escalantebnb.com). After class, participants return to town for a barbecue behind the outfitter's shop and to plan their first guideless canyoneering adventures. Antelope Canyon, anyone? ▲