

Wade's Walkabout

# Better than Watching a Sunrise

By Mark Wade



**About the Author**

*Mark Wade is active in hiking, writing, photography, and videography. He works as a tourism marketing consultant, for which he has won numerous awards. He is a weekly guest on the KSL Outdoors radio show. Mark is the former Director of Tourism for southwestern Utah and has served on the board of directors for various tourism associations.*



Imagine you're in that near perfect outdoor setting: the breeze, the sounds, the views, the textures, and most importantly the people all combine to shape your impressions, make that moment memorable, and help you realize that you're having an extraordinary experience. In comparison, it is perhaps like watching a sunrise but much better and longer lasting.

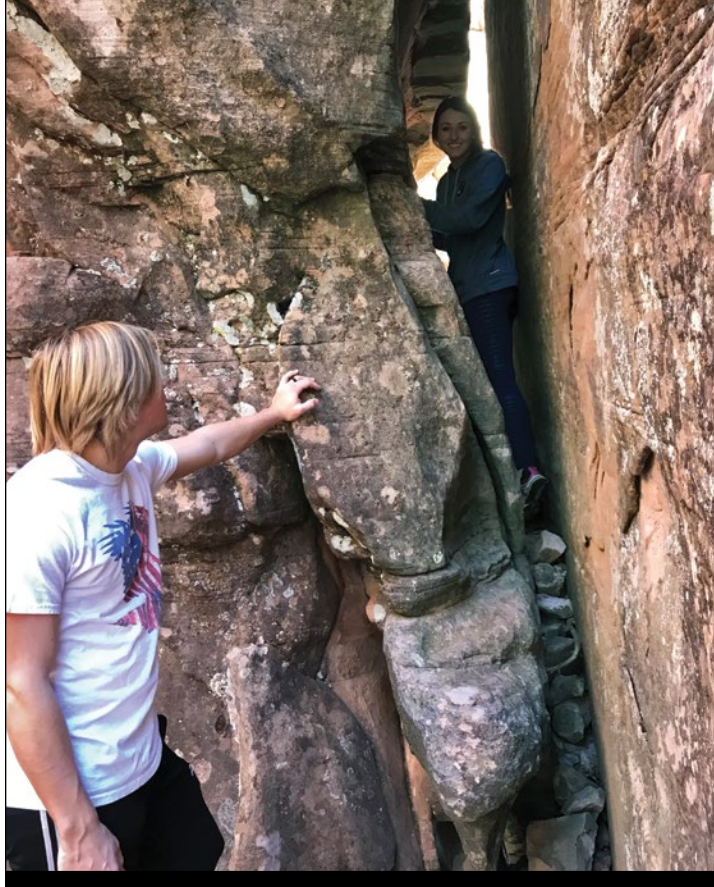
The above description accurately portrays a moment that is indelibly burned into our family memories.

### The Hidden Canyon

A few years back, my wife and I piled the kids into the car on a sunny Saturday morning with the intention of discovering a new place for a family adventure. We headed east with a plan to avoid the crowds at the more common outdoor locations. Along our route, we passed a road leading up the side of a mesa, and we circled back to see where it would take us.

Once on the plateau, the paved road turned to dirt, and we were immediately rewarded with dramatic views of distant formations. Our intended destination was yet unknown as we followed a road that ran across the plateau, parallel to a wide canyon. Soon, we reached a point that appeared to be the narrow beginnings of the main canyon. Call it inspiration or serendipity, but my wife and I had the simultaneous impression that this was a good spot to begin.

We first descended on foot into a shallow gully. The further we trekked, the deeper this small gorge became. Rock faces rose around us, and the weather-smoothed canyon floor rippled with small ridges and empty water carved pockets. I found a round marble-sized pebble and sent it rolling downward through the dry sculpted course. We all watched in delight as the stone weaved and bobbed and finally came



to rest near a small boulder. A game was hatched as we each found more small pebbles to roll toward pre-selected targets.

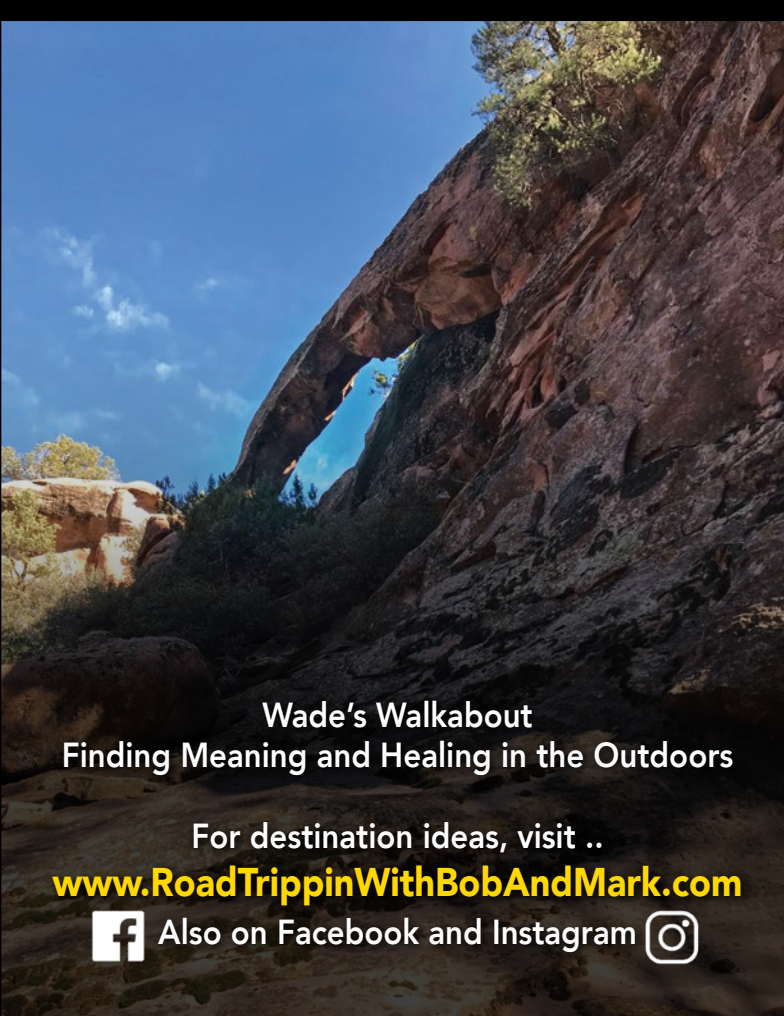
Moving downward, we encountered a crevice in the ravine wall to our right. A cursory check showed that this opening passed through to daylight on the other side of a thin sandstone formation. Together, we passed readily through the gap and felt as if we were entering a portal to another world. Large boulders filled the center of this separate side canyon, each with spaces to crawl between.

A new game ensued as my wife set a timer on her watch, and we devised an obstacle course for each child to negotiate under and around the boulders. One attempt was not enough as each child dashed repeatedly through the sequence in an effort to improve their prior time.

Next we walked around a nearby rock outcropping and discovered that we were standing below a small arch formation. For a moment, we stood in awe of a forty-foot span which hugged the cliff face. We worked our way up the side of the canyon over various obstructions until we found ourselves standing where we could view the arch from various vantage points.

Perhaps this formation has a name on someone's map, but that day, we decided to christen the rock structure Wade Arch. Somewhere in the course of these small events, my wife and I made eye contact with each other and exchanged a non-verbal expression that said, "This is magical!" We spent several hours in this small area, playing, laughing, inventing games, and taking in the quiet enchantment of this unique location.

Over the years, we've occasionally returned to this spot, but we still count this initial visit as one of the highlights of our family experiences. While this spot will remain largely unknown to the world, there is a secret location waiting somewhere for your exploration—a place where families and friends can share in the simple joys of personal discovery. Perhaps you'll have an experience that is better than watching a sunrise.



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