

The Wave, Arizona

by Linda Greenup, Field Contributor

The Wave has all the ingredients of that mystical image with its limited access, unique and unusual subject matter and extreme entry measures. The fragile Navajo sandstone imprinted with the forces of wind and water of centuries past is not found anywhere else in the continental United States. With only ten walk-in permits issued daily by the Paria Contact Center, you know it is a privilege not available to many.

I consider myself experienced in the art of difficult hiking routes to unusual images. However, my confidence diminished after digesting the information provided with our permit. We received an area topographical map noting some general hiking landmarks and the reminder that there would be several identical rock formations on this visual route. This is a sandstone butte wilderness environment without constructed trails or signs. Paria Canyon is part of a 110,000-acre wilderness. Most of our hike would be on top of the Canyon's plateau with its multi-hued orange and gold swirling patterns of sandstone, known as the Coyote Buttes. The instructions were clear that they would not ensure the success of the search for The Wave.

Intimidation had made its mark but determination ruled. There were several mental hiccups during the three hours of hiking to The Wave with lots of wasted steps in wrong directions. The hiking was difficult; deep sand covered some steep inclines. We mentally documented the few unique landmarks along

the way so our return trip would take less than three hours. Was it worth it? Here is a glimpse of the Canyon's magnificence – just one of the mystical images captured during the three hours we soaked in The Wave's beauty.

This is not an adventure for everyone. We are in good physical condition but came away exhausted. Some precautions may be in order in case you want to visit The Wave. We were adequately prepared equipment-wise with wide-angle lenses and polarizing filters. We only thought we had enough water. Even in early May the sun can be scorching hot so an adequate water supply and nutritious snacks are important. Except for a passing thunderstorm that threatened in the afternoon, the sky was a beautiful cerulean blue. LG

