

Adobe Town a 'labyrinth of natural fortresses'

• It's a long trip, but one of Wyoming's best-kept secrets is awe-inspiring.

By **Tori Adams**
Times staff writer

BITTER CREEK — The bizarre fairland of rock formations found in Adobe Town west of Rawlins rivals the best nature offers in several national parks.

Adobe Town's hoodoos, banded rocks and spires aren't quite as colorful as Utah's Cedar Breaks and Bryce Canyon, but the shapes are every bit as fantastic and the vistas are inspiring.

Traveling south from the Bitter Creek exit off Interstate 80, visitors encounter miles and miles of sagebrush flats cut with intermittent creeks before the land crests at a series of rims shaped like a backwards question mark.

You'll have no clue you're walking up to one of those apparently unprepossessing rims until the view deep into Adobe Town suddenly opens before you.

Miles and miles of strange rock formations in the Adobe Town Rim are awe-inspiring, and their scope

and breadth are surprising. Adobe Town is one of Wyoming's best-kept secrets because it is so remote and hard for the average highway tourist to find.

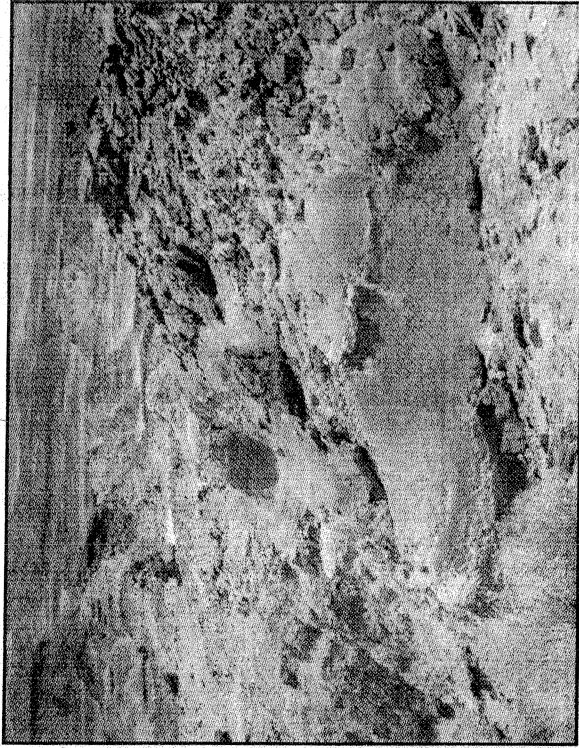
You'll need a high-clearance vehicle, a full tank of gas, a Bureau of Land Management map and plenty of water to get there, but a visit is well worth the full day it'll take. It's a good idea to take a spare can of gas and pack a substantial picnic lunch.

Both Adobe Town Rim and Skull Creek Rim are in a Bureau of Land Management wilderness study area, and are part of a larger wilderness area proposed by a coalition of environmental groups.

Erik Molvar, who led many tours through the area this spring for Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, said his group considers Adobe Town of "national park quality."

Sloping down from both Adobe Town and Skull Creek rims nearly as far as the eye can see are columns and pillars of gray stone supporting caps mostly of a dark red sandstone.

In some places, hoodoo formations line up like a marching army, sometimes so closely packed together there are just tiny windows



Daily Times / Tori Adams
Volcanic ash, mostly gray, is sandwiched between layers of colored rock, mainly sandstone, to make up the Adobe Town formation west of Rawlins. The harder sandstone protects the softer ash, allowing erosion to create spires and mushroom-like formations called hoodoos.

between them.

In other places, they're widely spaced and the shorter ones can look like huge alien mushrooms. Tall formations sometimes look like clustered ships' sails or church spires.

Molvar, who wrote about Adobe Town in "Wild Wyoming," said the formations were created by the

forces of erosion that formed other badlands in the West.

Eons of wind and water cut through the soft volcanic ash, which was spewed by eruptions 40 million to 50 million years ago when the Yellowstone caldera was forming.

Harder sandstone was deposited on top of the ash over the intervening millions of years. The sandstone

caps suffered less erosion and are larger in diameter than the solidified ash columns that hold them up.

Adobe Town got its name from Gen. A.A. Humphreys, who led a geological expedition through the area in 1869. He described the area as reminding one "of the ruins of a fortified city" and a "labyrinth of natural fortresses."

The colors of the rocks are mostly gray, beige, sage green and dark red with darker rocks on the rims. In places on Skull Creek Rim, the rocks are decorated with lichens as colorful as a painter's palette.

Humphreys described some of the formations as resembling ornamental domes, buttresses and "jutting pinnacles."

This area is famous for its wild horse herds, which visit the territory frequently. Most horses in the area are mustangs because domestic horses are prohibited unless they're corralled.

Molvar said Adobe Town is a good place to hobble and picket your sure to hobble and picket your horses every night to prevent the wild herds from spitting them off.

Herds of antelope and a large

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Adobe \ Late August, early October great time to visit area

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population of birds of prey can be seen in the area.

Desert wildflowers are out in May and

June, including evening primroses and a particularly bright red Indian paintbrush.

It's likely to be very hot and dry in July

and the first part of August. Late August through early October are a great time to

visit.

Molvar cautions to not visit after heavy

rains or when rain is likely because the clay

roads can quickly turn impassable even to a

four-wheel-drive vehicle.

How to get there: Adobe Town is

accessed exclusively by dirt roads, ranging

from well-kept county roads to unmarked

dirt two-tracks.

The easiest way to get there is to take the

Bitter Creek exit off I-80 about 72 miles west

of Rawlins. Travel south past the railroad

tracks. Turn left on Sweetwater County Road

19 and follow the signs to the Eversole

Ranch. Less than three miles past the ranch,

the county road swings to the right at a Y

intersection, but you'll continue straight on

BLM Road 4412, which isn't marked. Go 3.6

miles on 4412, turn left and go four miles to

Adobe Town Rim. About 100 yards of walk-

ing is required.

From there, you can follow the two-track

describe accurately.

but this route is longer and harder to

Wyoming 789 a few miles north of Baggs,

west on Carbon County Road 700 from

The area also can be found by traveling

few yards beyond the end of the two-track.

done well site you encounter. The rim is a

gravel road and turn left at the second aban-

Cow Creek Ranch, go left on an improved

about eight miles south to the abandoned

tion past the Eversole Ranch, take BLM 4412

To get to Skull Creek Rim, from the jun-

ctuar vistas.

north along the rim to other equally spectac-

Mustangs can frequently be seen running and grazing around the area.

