

# STONE & SILENCE



ADVENTURES ON THE  
COLORADO PLATEAU

P H O T O G R A P H S

L I N D E W A I D H O F E R


A N E L E C T R O N I C  
P H O T O B O O K F R O M  
W E S T E R N E Y E P R E S S

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# STONE & SILENCE



L I N D E    W A I D H O F E R

# STONE & SILENCE



PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
LINDE WAIDHOFER

TEXTS BY  
LITO TEJADA-FLORES

AN ELECTRONIC PHOTO BOOK FROM  
WESTERN EYE PRESS

# LINES OF SIGHT

Linde Waidhofer did not choose this country. It chose her. And she said yes. She didn't choose her shapes, her textures, her warm desert palette. They chose her. And she said yes. It was the right answer. That was ten years and many hundreds of miles hiked, and blisters, and rolls of film ago. It was a momentous yes, full of consequences, like falling in love—another way of describing Linde's relation to the wild mysterious landscapes of the sandstone southwest.

Linde is in love with desert light, with the clear, dry, thin air that invites a fifty-mile glance, a hundred-mile gaze, in love with simplicity and emptiness, with lines of sight that nothing less than a distant mountain range can block. She is in love with landscapes that owe more to space than form, and with others where form has cast off all the restraints of common sense. She is in love with the stone and silence of the southwest.

The conventional wisdom in too many intellectual and artistic circles is that the West is finished, ruined: the land raped, the landscape irrevocably altered and not for the better by the heavy hand of man, industry, development, tourism, pollution. That nothing is left of the original, unspoiled, mind-expanding western landscape worth protecting, preserving, celebrating. The relation of artist to landscape, it's often asserted, has been reduced to documenting the destruction, the disappearance and marginalization of natural beauty. Beauty itself, to the post-modern eye, seems too trivial a matter to be of real concern to real artists. Linde Waidhofer disagrees, passionately.

What brings Linde back into this rich, empty country again and again is a precious and altogether unlikely sense of discovery, of an improbable world improbably stumbled upon, the sense—which we know to be false, but still the strongest of illusions—of being the first visitor to reach the bottom of this canyon, the top of this bluff, the edge of this mesa. It's true that we've done our damndest to tame and to

trash the southwest. It's true that certain landscapes have been lost for good, but so much remains. So much wild, undisturbed country, ignored first by settlers, then by miners and loggers and entrepreneurs, because so much of the southwest has always been dismissed as empty, unproductive, badlands. Or worselands. An undisturbed purity still characterizes much of this country. The great national parks may seem an exception. They aren't. For all the visitors to Zion, to the Grand Canyon, to Arches and Canyonlands, these parks remain essentially empty except for a handful of popular trails, a handful of designated viewpoints. Linde and I have spent days on end walking through remote corners of these parks, delighting in the feeling that we were the only people there. And the rest of the southwest is emptier still.

We don't know whether to be gleeful or melancholy that more Europeans than Americans have discovered the special beauty of the sandstone southwest. I remember chatting with an Italian visitor in Arches National Park. "For two days," he told me, "I have been driving through pure landscape—pure landscape—the purest I have ever seen." It's true. The asphalt ribbon of a two-lane road slicing across the Navajo nation doesn't seem to affect the oceans of sandstone and sage, piñon and juniper, low sand and high buttes on either side. And when you leave the road and start walking, you know you are walking back in time, from late 20th-century time into geologic time. Surrounded by stone and silence, your thoughts slow and steady. Your emotions race. Wild, unspoiled beauty becomes an addiction.

What Linde Waidhofer is searching for, when she looks through her viewfinder, is the graphic and photographic equivalent of these soaring and subtle emotions. Photographing surprise, awe, mystery, emptiness is not the same thing as photographing a sunset. Linde returns to the same special spots again and again until her emotions are in tune with the light and both fill the frame. Ultimately, her long pure lines of sight run deep across the desert southwest and straight back to the heart.

# S A N D S T O N E

1

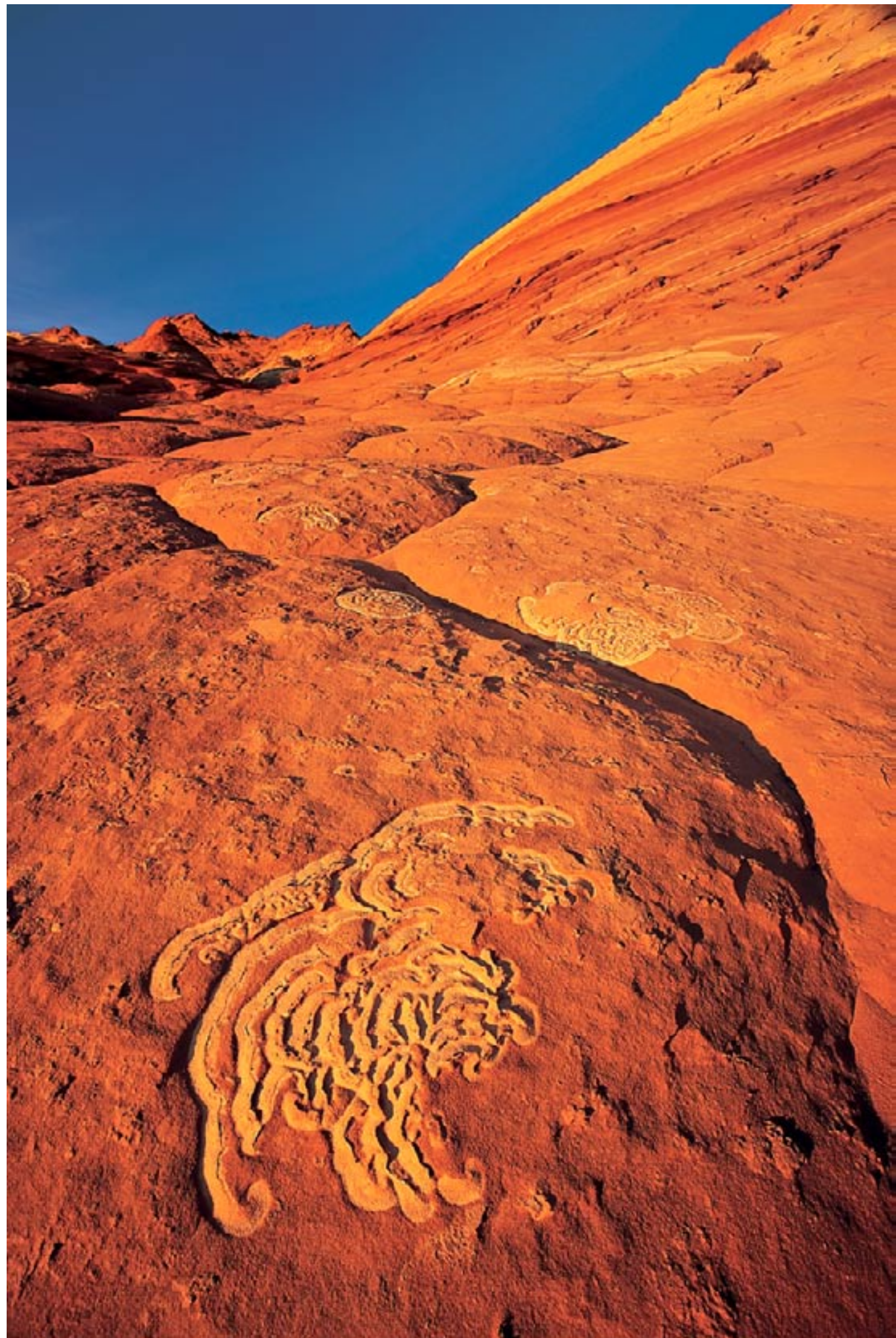


is both the skeleton and the storybook of the southwest, a truthful but ambiguous book. We can read it as science and history, a year-by-year, age-by-age record of seabed and lake bottom, uplift and subsidence, mountain building and erosion, or we can read it as poetry, the intimate journal of the earth. Sandstone poetry full of images that will haunt us, images and colors we can use—in traffic, at home, at work, paying taxes, in the grip of the pushy present. Perspectives we can use, the long slow look at life. A poetry full of beauty we can use, unplanned but perfect beauty, perfected one grain of sand at a time. Grains added. Grains subtracted. Rock in a dry land, patiently remembering water.

We hike through an inexplicable geometry of crazy cross-bedding, sedimentary sleight of hand, delicate layers turning into rugged landforms, then sliced and bent and twisted back on themselves, layers becoming lines becoming a mysterious sandstone calligraphy. Much of this sandstone writing is in a language we don't know, haven't yet learned, but still we recognize it as poetry. We memorize these desert lines without trying, we will never completely understand them, never completely forget them.

FIRST LIGHT ON THE  
COLORADO PLATEAU

PLATE 1





LATE LIGHT, NAVAJO SANDSTONE



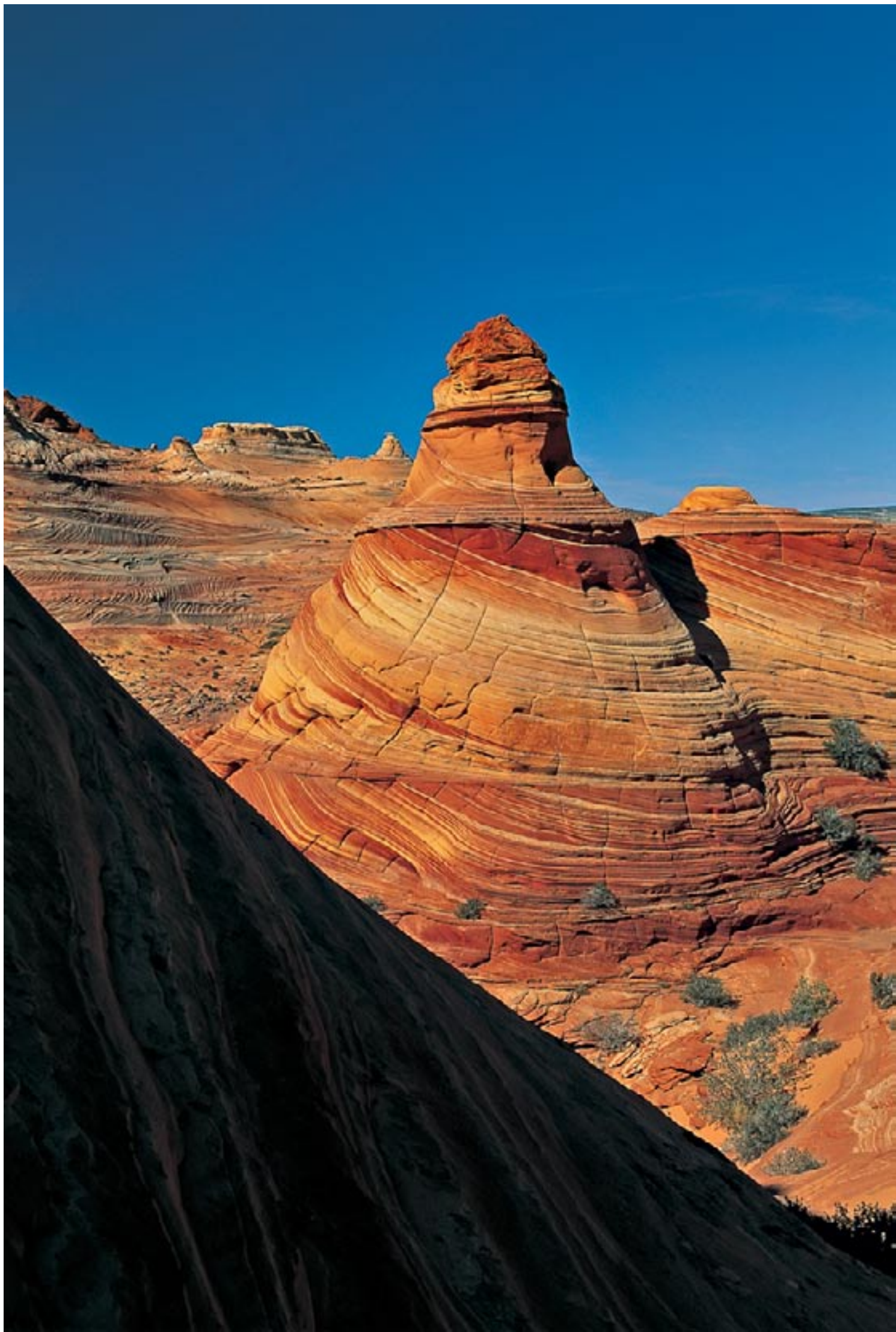
ALCOVE, NAVAJO SANDSTONE

PLATE 3





NAVAJO SANDSTONE



SANDSTONE STUPA

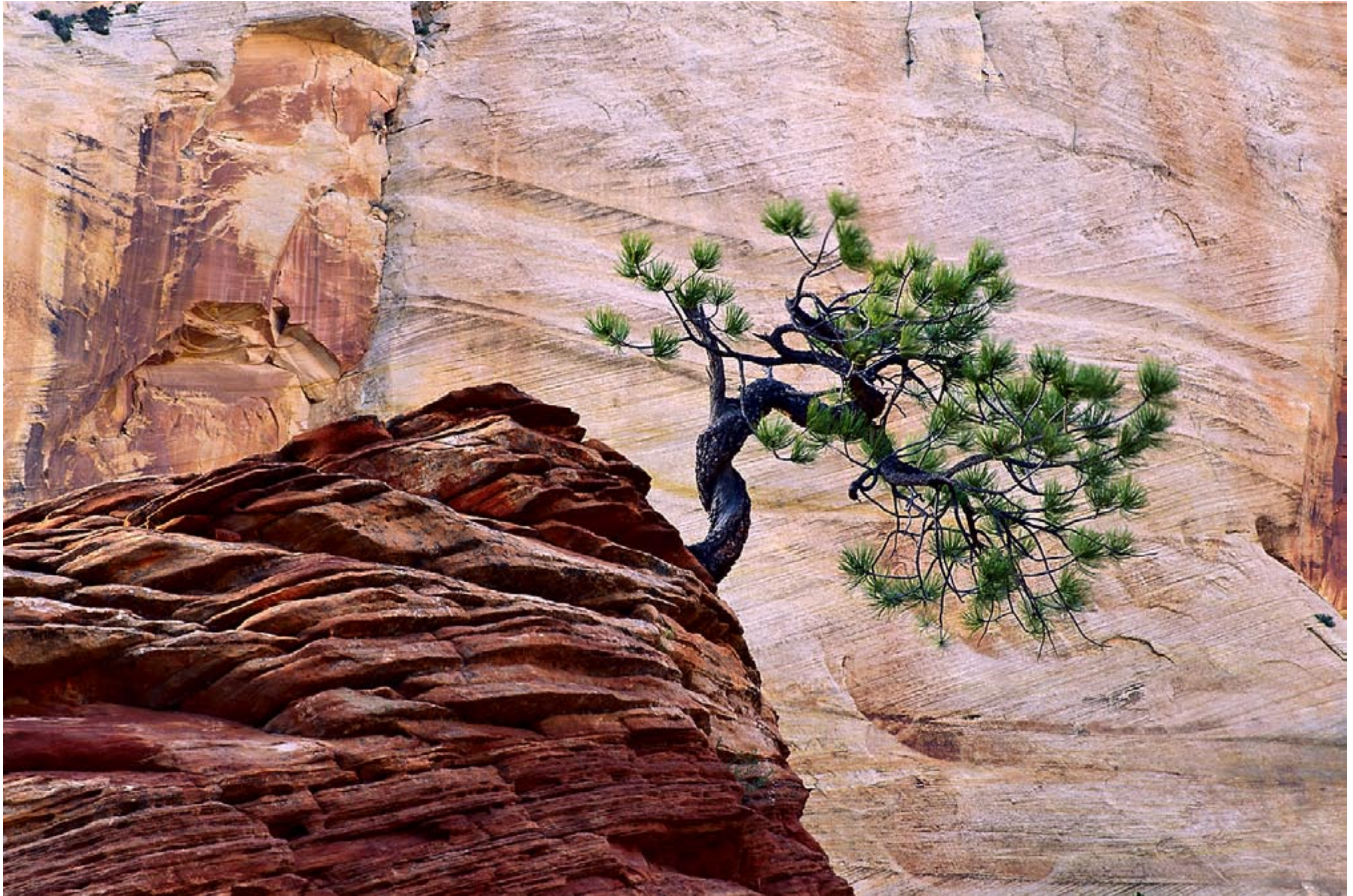
PLATE 5



CHECKERBOARD MESA, ZION



NEAR CHECKERBOARD MESA, ZION



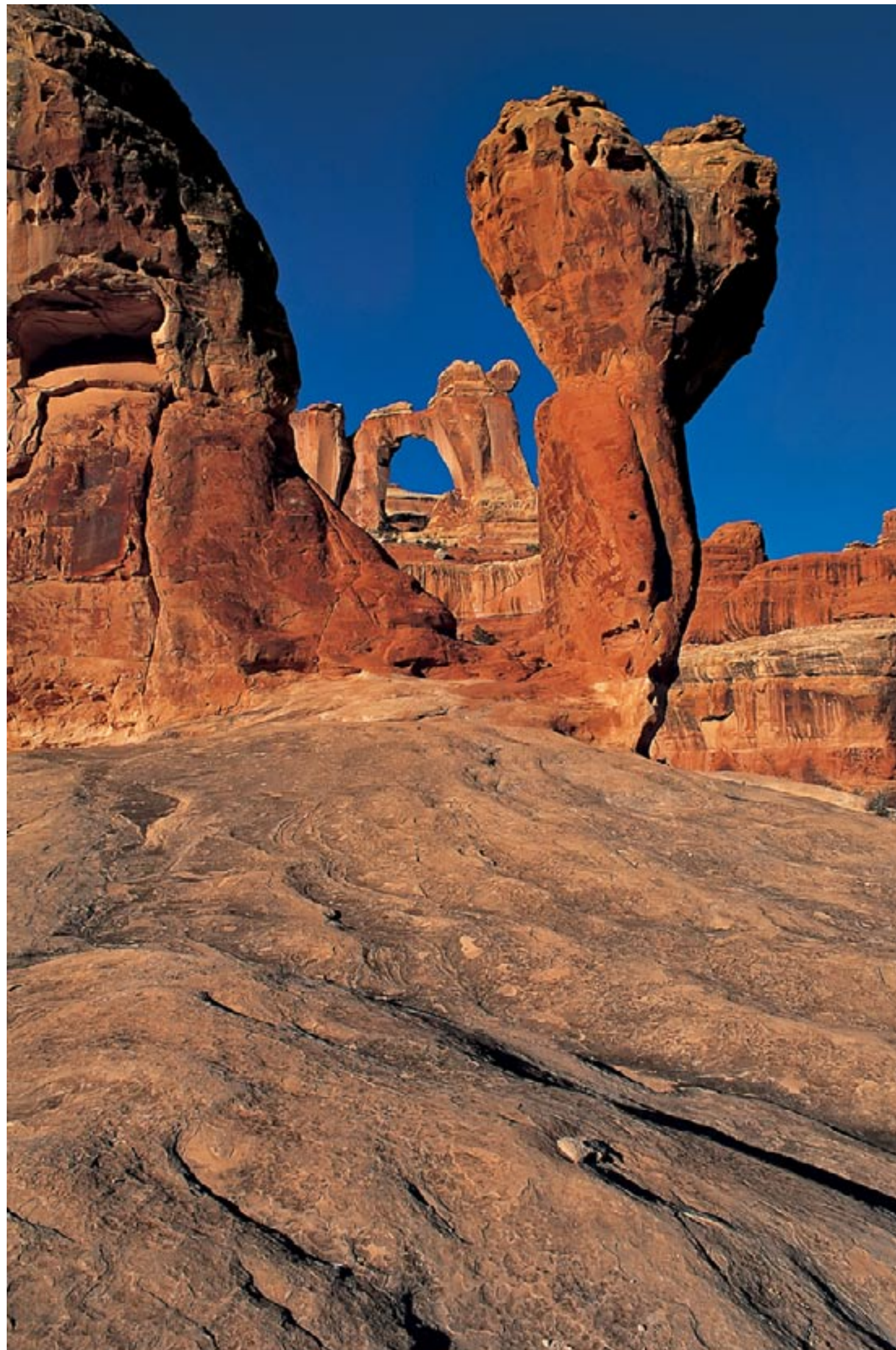
WIND SCULPTURED PINE, ZION



LAVENDER CANYON, CANYONLANDS

ANGEL ARCH & THE MOLAR  
CANYONLANDS

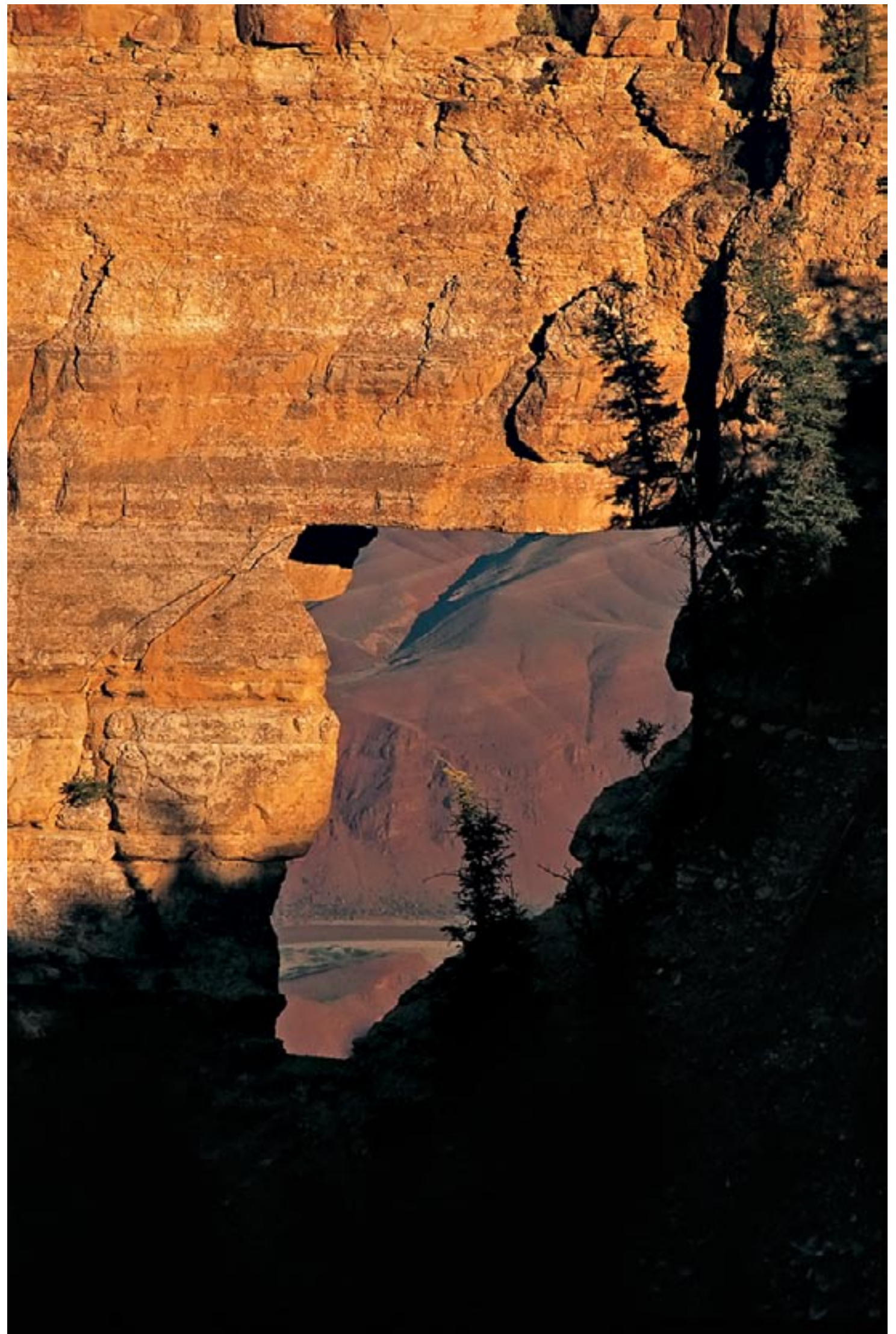
PLATE 10





COLORADO RIVER FROM THE NORTH RIM  
GRAND CANYON

PLATE 11





GATEWAY TO THE NARROWS, ZION

PLATE 12

# 2



## B A D L A N D S

dot the West, play tricks on language, on your mind. How did it start, this 'bad' business? Spaniards looking for gold, for golden cities to plunder, muttered *malpais*, shrugged, spat and marched on past. The gold is still there, at sunrise, at sunset, for those who look twice.....

Badlands, twisted and eroded, twilight tempered, these rainbow slagheaps. Coal black, copper blue, iron red, petrified trees melting out of melting hillsides, gullies scoured by gods, rain, drought, sculpted by water, wind and silence. Mudstone, shale and mystery.

Forget badlands, call them goodlands. Eroded isn't bad. Hollowed out by the wind isn't bad. Unproductive isn't bad. Some land, this land, is destined only to produce a shiver of loneliness, a spasm of beauty, a sucked-in breath of awe. No crops, no cash. Until someone realizes that these polychrome formations may spell minerals. Then the bad in badlands becomes the growl of big power shovels biting into beds of coal, leveling spires, shaving badlands down to flat rubble. It's happening just the other side of the BLM boundary that protects part of New Mexico's Bisti Badlands as wilderness. It shocks you into a simple awareness: we can only destroy badlands, never create them.

BISTI BADLANDS

PLATE 13





CHINLE FORMATION NEAR CAPITOL REEF

BADLANDS NEAR THE  
KAIPAROWITS PLATEAU

PLATE 15





BISTI BADLANDS



BISTI BADLANDS

PLATE 17



BISTI BADLANDS

PLATE 18





BISTI BADLANDS

PLATE 19



BISTI BADLANDS

BISTI BADLANDS

PLATE 21



# 3



## R I M R O C K

ledges, launching pads, springboards to eternity. Unmapped overlooks of the deep desert West. Pacing the rimrock edge of a high mesa at sunset, watching a pair of ravens weave their endless invisible knots in the updrafts rising off the desert floor. Waking up on a pink rimrock platform above a purple desert, hungry for coffee and light, hungry for a new day. Exploring rimrock labyrinths, detours, tracing a shifting interface of sand and stone. Scrambling over rimrock, hiking across rimrock, following a sandstone treasure map.

Alcoves of twisted rock, box canyon hideouts, a ruddy palette of rusted rock, burnt rock, rock peeling and patient and painted with dusty oxides and salts, unlikely rock colors we begin to interpret as long memories of flood and drought. This bright hued, deep wrinkled planetskin tells stories that contradict each other—lakebeds tilted at the sky, defying logic. It doesn't matter. We scramble on, tiptoeing over delicate slabs, brushing our fingers over the desert braille of eroded fins and flakes, breathing to a long-ago rhythm of dry and wet. Rimrock paths we are privileged to share with a few coyotes.



NAVAJO SANDSTONE, COLORADO PLATEAU

RIMROCK PASS  
COLORADO PLATEAU  
PLATE 23





NAVAJO SANDSTONE

PLATE 24





NAVAJO SANDSTONE

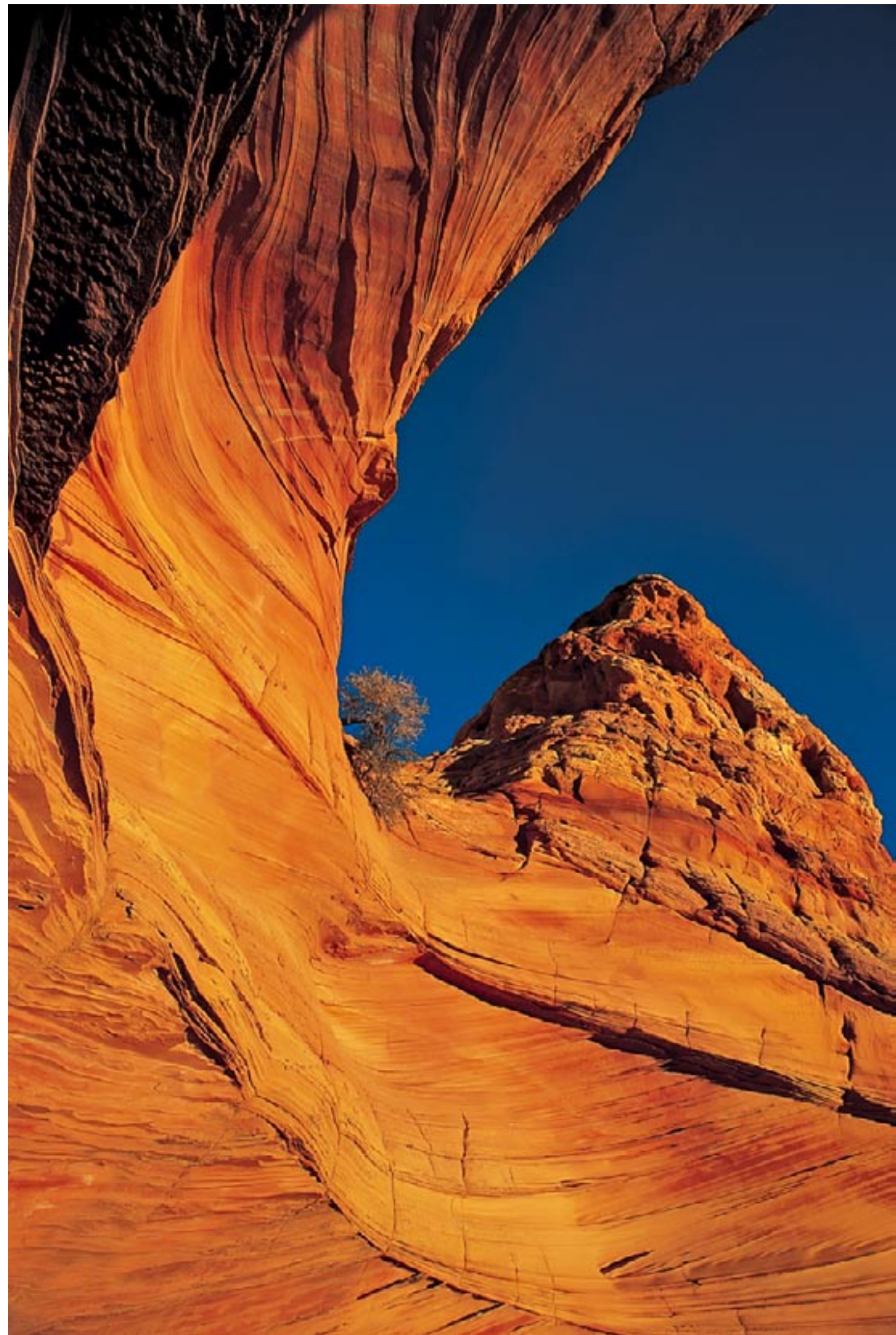
PLATE 25

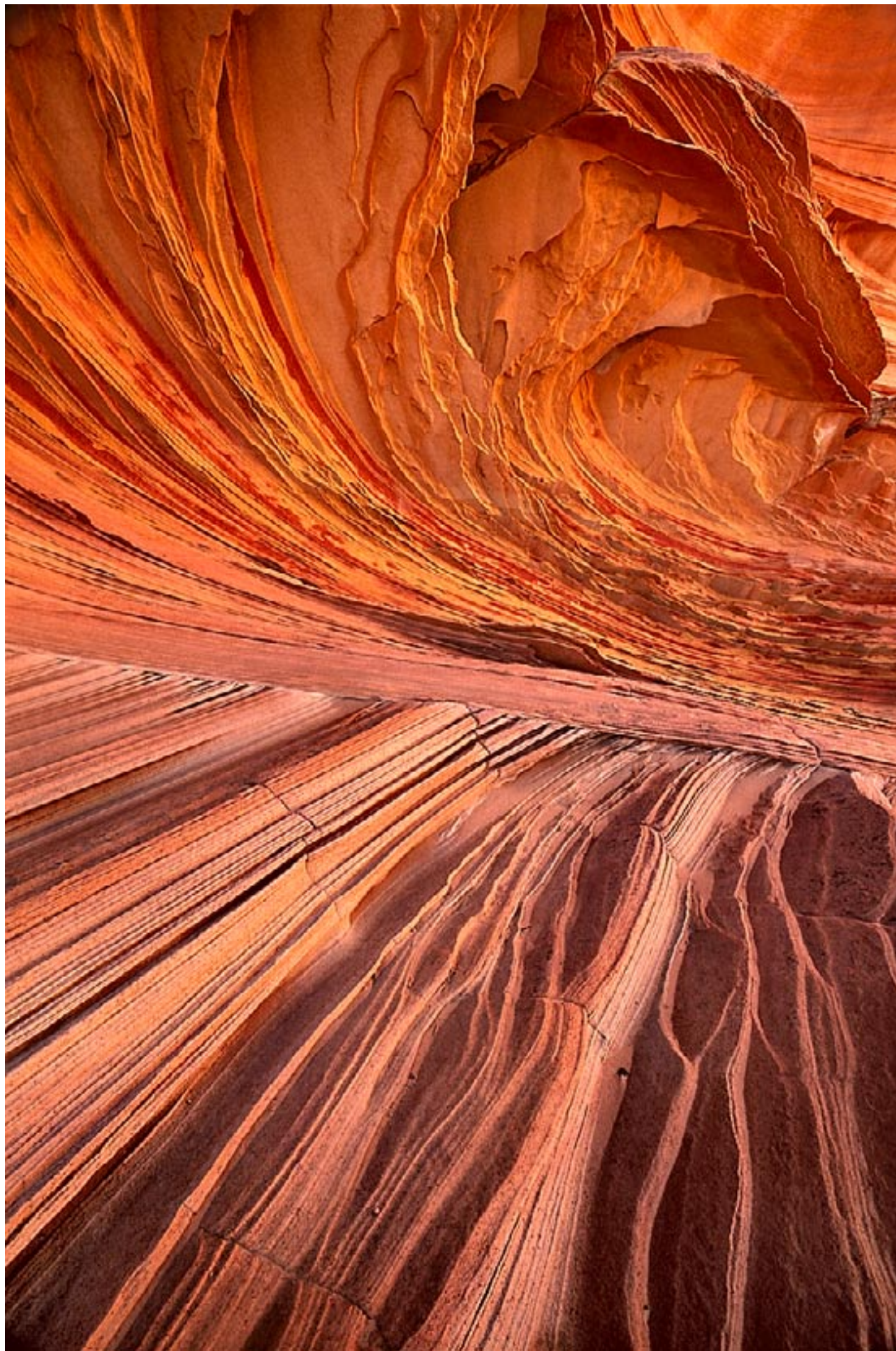


NAVAJO SANDSTONE

NAVAJO SANDSTONE

PLATE 27





CROSS-BEDDED NAVAJO SANDSTONE

PLATE 28



NAVAJO SANDSTONE DETAIL, COLORADO PLATEAU



RIMROCK & MANZANITA, COLORADO PLATEAU

# 4



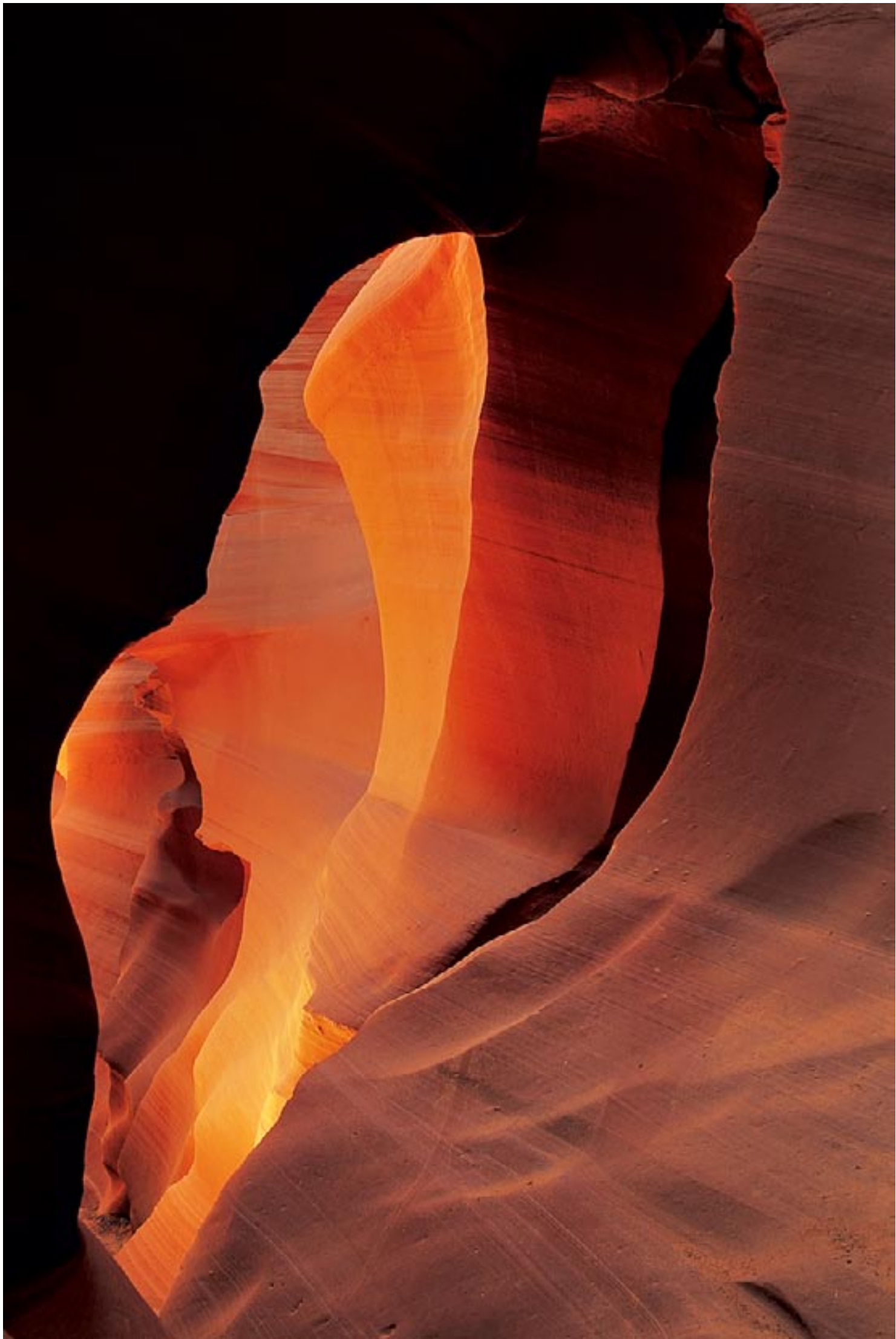
## C A N Y O N S

are ridges turned inside out, a slot canyon the inverse twin of a knife-edge ridge: a knife-edge slice through solid rock. Light tiptoes down into these desert slots like a pilgrim, hushed, respectful, ecstatic. Hikers and photographers retrace this pilgrimage, climbing down into a shadowy crack in the earth in search of light. The sun rises, light descends. Descends, deepens, reddens, bouncing from wall to wall, bouncing from red to red until finally the rock catches fire. The play of light down the walls of a slot canyon is the darkness of a cave turned inside out. We are aliens here, visitors from another planet, to another planet. When we emerge back onto the floor of the desert we are half blinded, not by the sudden glare, but by the beauty we have seen in these narrow canyons, twisting dry rivers, etched deep into the sandstone crust of the southwest.



LOWER ANTELOPE CANYON



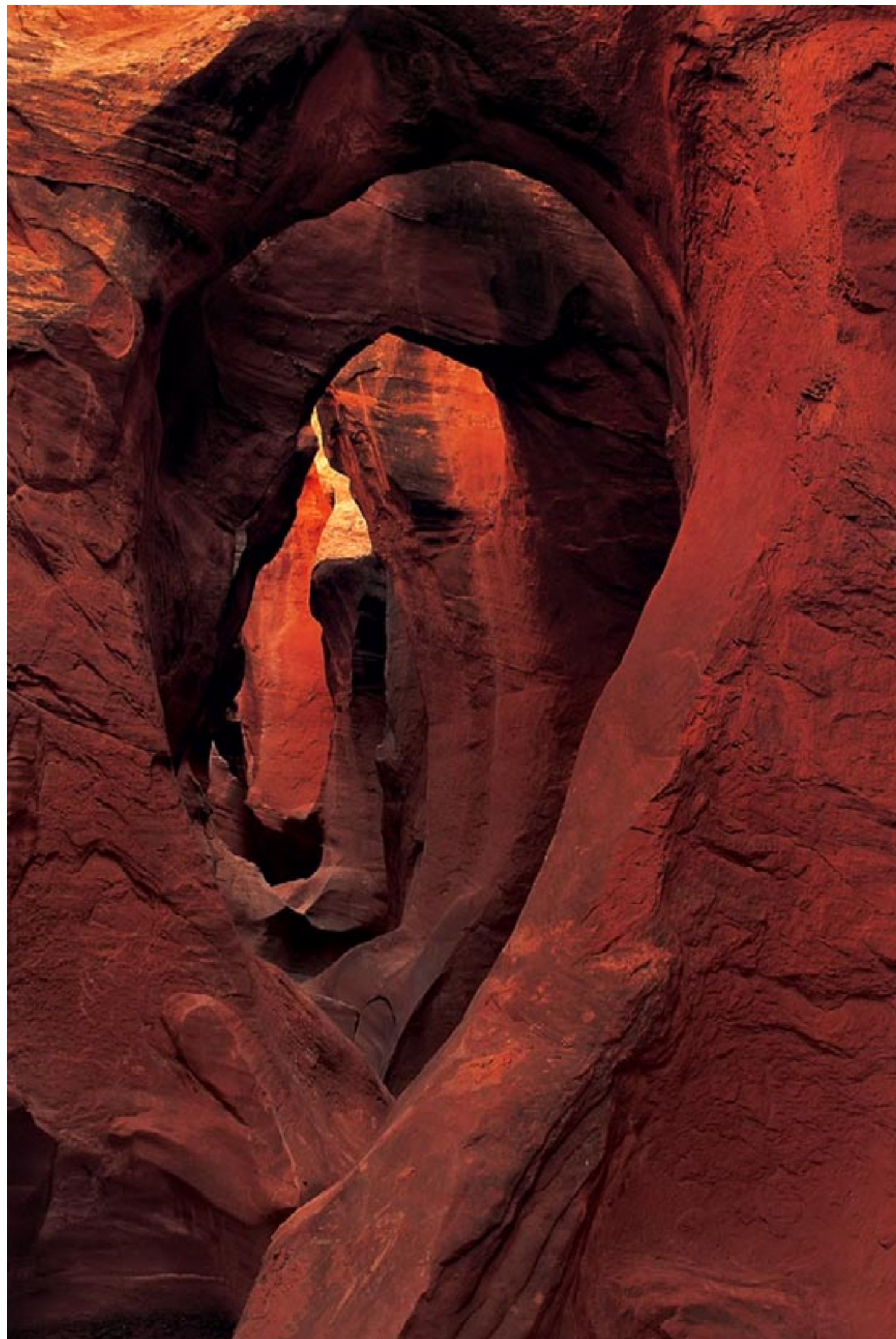


LOWER ANTELOPE CANYON

PLATE 32

PEEKABOO CANYON, ESCALANTE

PLATE 33





LOWER ANTELOPE CANYON



LOWER ANTELOPE CANYON

PLATE 35



# 5

## H O R I Z O N S

haunt us: hundred-mile horizons, distant horizons, 360-degree horizons.

Sky's edge, desert's edge, earth's edge. These far horizons shrink mountain ranges into ripples, wrinkles on a long low line. How far could we see without haze and smog? How far could we see without buildings, without hills and forests?...

Exactly this far. Where the finite earth runs out and infinite sky begins.

Southwestern horizons refract our gaze upward into a sky that fills most of the space we can see, or sense, around us, a sky too big, too deep to believe in, too big, too deep to doubt. The stone monuments, shark-tooth blades of rock, sculptured buttes and mile-long mesas that articulate these horizons are beginnings not ends. Southwestern horizons invite our thoughts to cut loose and soar.

Horizons of stone masquerading as clouds, horizons where rivers spill over the edge of the earth. Rock fingers catching the sun, grasping at weather, combing out stars. Rock fingers silhouetted against pure distance, against red skies, against black skies. Horizons that we can never reach, defended by labyrinths of cross-cut canyons, furrowing the desert floor between here and there, here and forever.



DAWN NEAR DEADHORSE POINT



THE WHITE RIM FROM ISLAND IN THE SKY



GREEN RIVER  
FROM ISLAND IN THE SKY  
PLATE 38





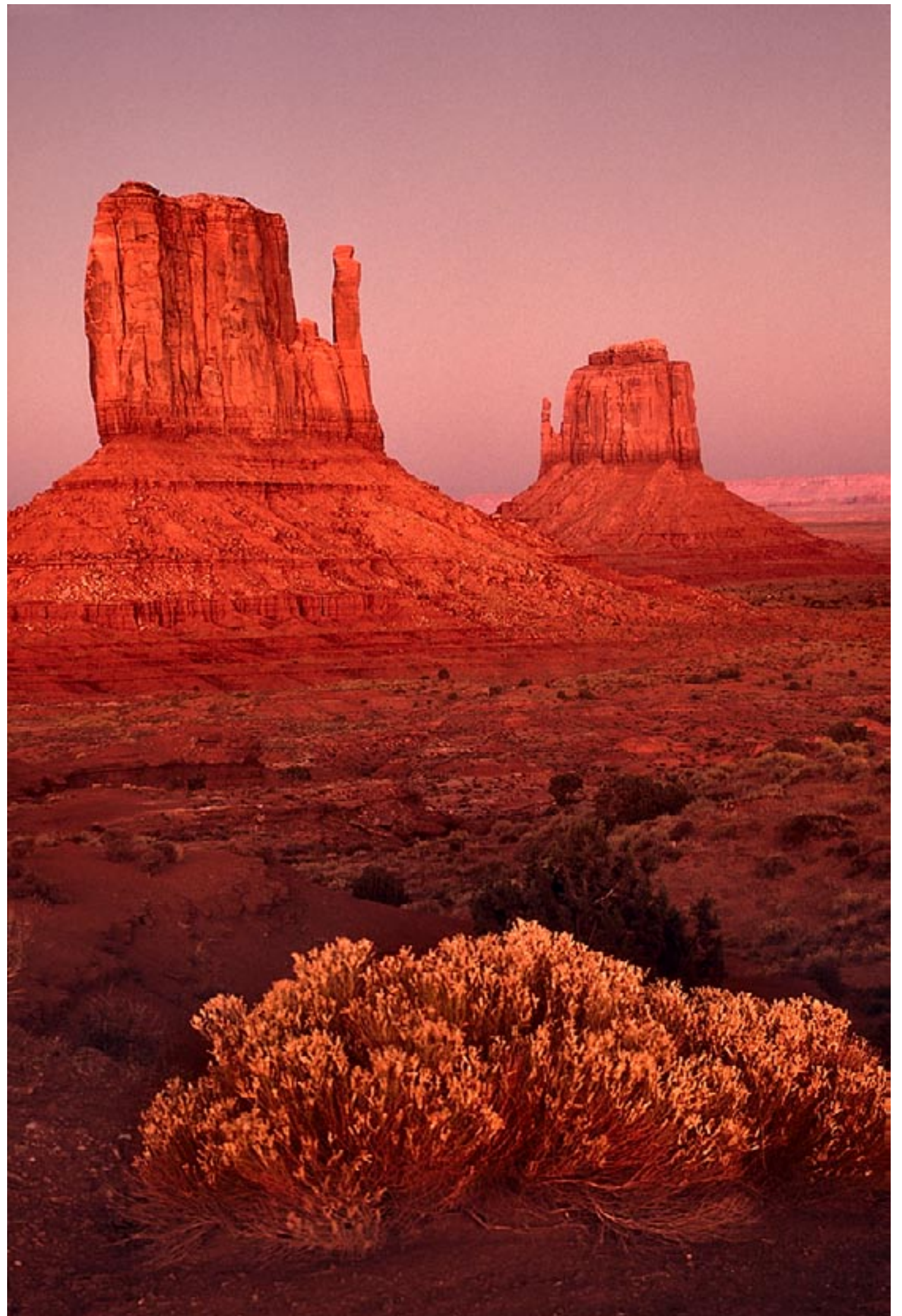
WATERPOCKETS, MULEY POINT



POOLED RAINWATER, MULEY POINT

CHAMISA & MITTEN BUTTES,  
MONUMENT VALLEY

PLATE 41





WEST MITTEN'S SHADOW ON EAST MITTEN, MONUMENT VALLEY



WINTER, BRYCE CANYON



MOONSET, FACTORY BUTTE

# 6



## S I L E N C E

greet us. We are only an hour's walk from the end of the road, a dirt road that runs on an hour past the end of common sense. We are bathed in silence and distance and geology, million-year memories of rock. For four days we will hear no cars, no motors, no generators, no radios, no other voices. No other voices.

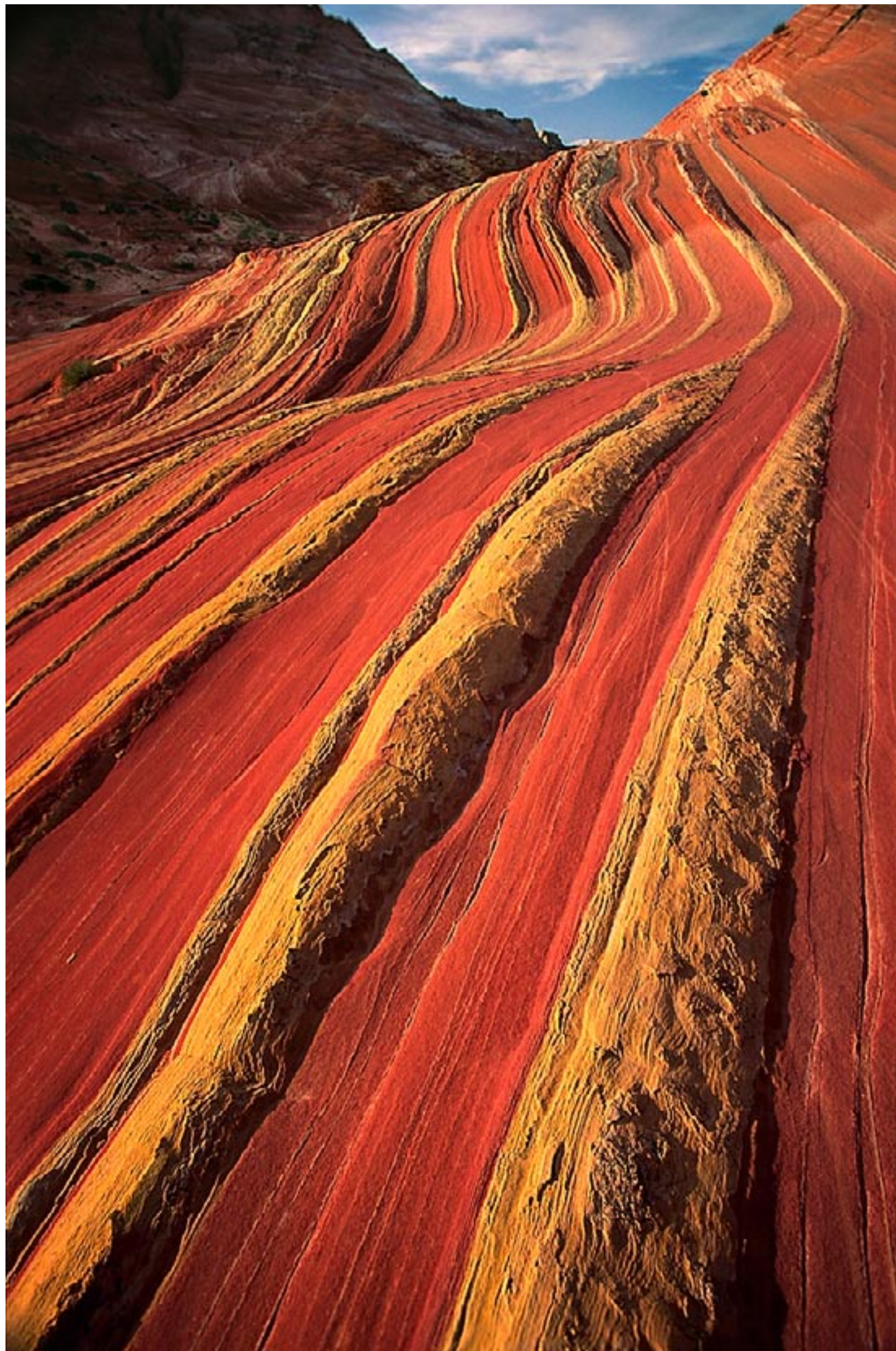
Silence is not a given, it's a choice. Today one can carry a cellular phone into the heart of any wilderness in North America. Choosing silence means leaving all our noisy distractions at home, not only cell phones and transistor radios but idle conversation for no other reason than listening to our own voices, checking in vain that we're really there. The silence of the sandstone southwest is big and all embracing. It is less an absence of sound than an absence of noise, of chatter. There is room in this big silence for coyotes' distant yelping, for a raven's blunt cries or a canyon wren's falling cascade of liquid notes. Always there is room for the wind: wind whistling between sandstone spires, wind shaking the blue-gray berries of junipers, wind rearranging sand grains in gullies, sweeping desert playas clean.

The silence of the high desert is a choice that becomes a habit, a habit that demands practice, a skill we learn from the land. We begin to hear this silence when our voices drop to respectful whispers. We begin to understand this silence when we start to hear all the other whispers this landscape contains. This silence contains everything that's left when words fail ... and fall away.



NAVAJO SANDSTONE





NAJAVO SANDSTONE

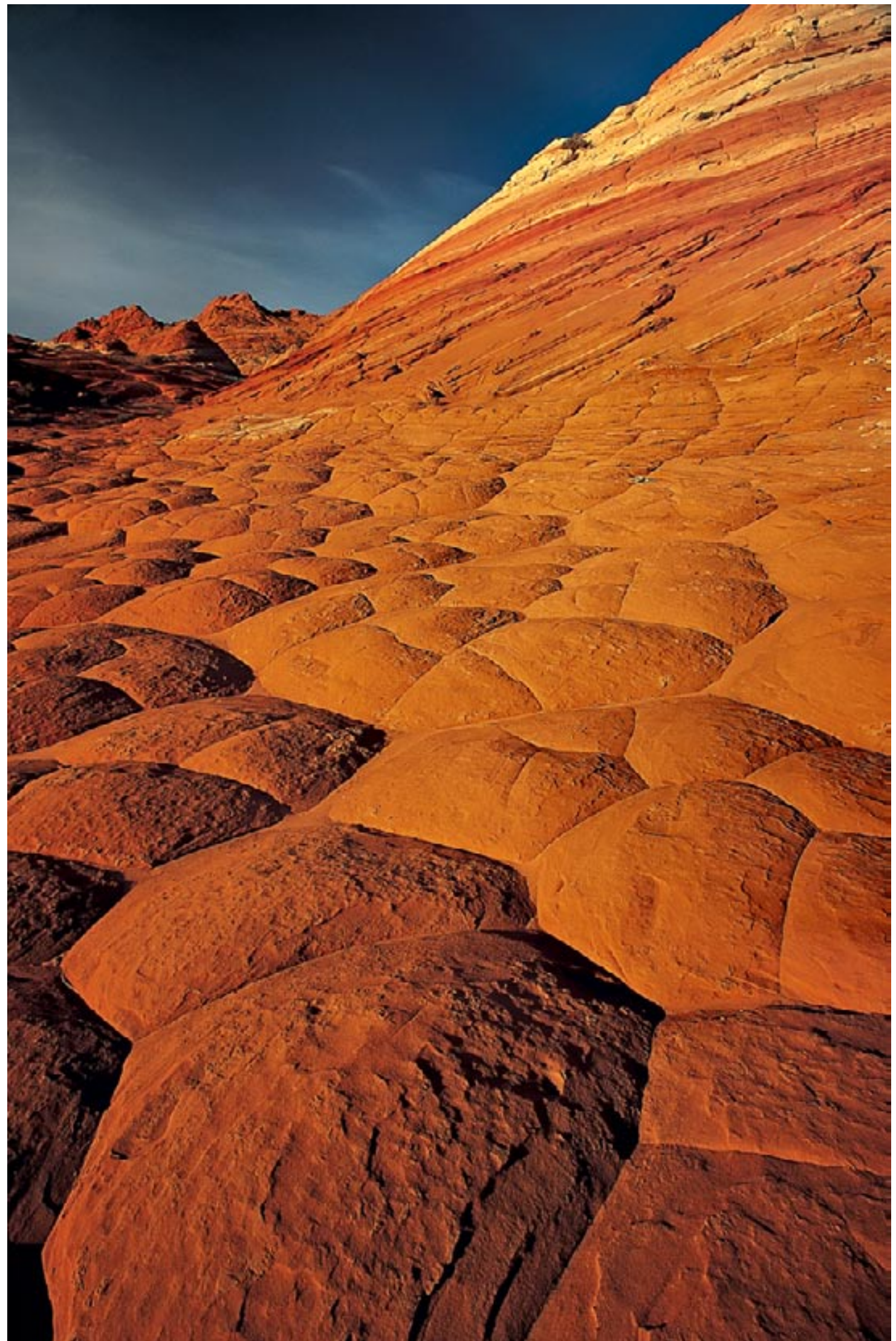
PLATE 46



RINCON, NAJAVO SANDSTONE

SANDSTONE COBBLES, COLORADO PLATEAU

PLATE 48





NAJAVO SANDSTONE

PLATE 49

LAST LIGHT ON THE COLORADO PLATEAU

PLATE 50

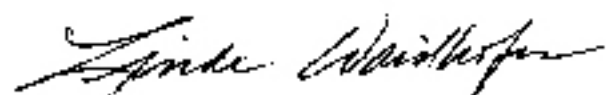


P H O T O G R A P H I N G      S T O N E      &      S I L E N C E

A few years ago, photographing the red autumn blaze of dog-tooth maples in the high canyons near the eastern edge of Zion National Park I met another woman photographer schlepping tripod and lenses from one creek full of color to the next. A rare and enjoyable encounter. We talked, traded stories of our respective photo trips, hers east from California, mine west from Colorado. I was flattered that she knew my work but shocked to hear: “Linde Waidhofer, you’re the photographer who uses filters to get those strange colors.” Wrong.

I confess, I love the fleeting fantastic colors that light up the Colorado Plateau, the high desert and its sandstone walls, for precious instants—and I love the way my current film, Fuji Velvia, captures them. But I am willing to wait and hope they’ll happen, to scout my favorite places at different times of the year, and come back to them again and again and again until I’m rewarded by light, by color. Which is one way of saying that all the images in this book—and in fact, all my images—are straight photographs, unfiltered, and perhaps it’s worth noting in this digital age, unmanipulated in any way.

Although the art of photography is deep and complex and challenging, the act of photography for me is simple and direct. I used 35mm transparency film exclusively to photograph the images in Stone & Silence; and today I use a Canon digital camera, with the same commitment to capturing real but mysterious places, moments and light.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Linde Waidhofer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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## STONE & SILENCE

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## STONE & SILENCE

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using Adobe InDesign CS2 and Adobe Acrobat Pro.

The text face is Adobe Minion Pro designed by Robert Slimbach.

The display type is Adobe Trajan Pro designed by Carol Twombly.

The original ink-on-paper edition of STONE & SILENCE

is now out of print and copies have become collectors' items.


All the photographs in STONE & SILENCE are available  
as archival fine-art prints. Detailed information on Linde Waidhofer's  
prints and their prices is available on her web site,

***[www.WesternEye.com](http://www.WesternEye.com)***

You will also find information and links to purchase other photo books by  
Linde Waidhofer. And you can contact the photographer at

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