

# DEAD HORSE POINT HAPPENINGS

## Autumn Morning Musing at Dead Horse Point State Park

Scott Chandler

A soft cough nearby rouses me out of my own mind. It has been so peaceful that I had retreated into this peace's comfort. I had forgotten that I was not the only person out at Dead Horse Point waiting for the fateful moment to arrive.



The day had started for me much like it probably had for the few others here. We had all woken up early and decided to make a forty minute drive out of town to a remote part of the Colorado Plateau. It is something I had forgone in recent months, valuing precious recharging sleep with all the long summer days full of Moab excitement. What I couldn't know was how many of them wondered and worried about what was to come, whether their time was worth it. Working here, I was waiting for the show to begin, experience was on my side that good things were to come. While our thoughts are surely different on what is to come of our respective days, I can only imagine that our wonder is similar.

All the darkness had me stuck in thoughts of the coming day. For me this means work: what will happen in



the park today, what projects I'll get to work on, what neat people I'll get to meet. It is thoughts of stress, the things that will happen today to push the comfort level. I can only imagine what these thoughts are like for these people around me. Some are probably on trips of a lifetime. All probably have some plan for the day, meticulously chosen out of all the options of the Moab area. Stress is good, but also a white noise demon. It is easy to pick out those visitors that have pushed their vacation stress a little too far while working. I wonder how many here are uncomfortable that their expectations won't be met today.

A slight brightening in the sky signals the start of festivities. The stars slowly disappear one by one. The outline of the La Sal Mountains becomes more and more bold. As the sky brightens I can feel excitement building among the others nearby. They want the full show and know it is coming but oh when will it arrive!? A faint band of pink develops to the west, and my own excitement builds. This "Band of Venus" marks the boundary of Earth's Shadow, night giving way to day. For now it shines on our atmosphere, but I know that as it approaches the horizon so does the moment day starts. I get up and move to the rim. Details in the canyons below are still dim. Some photographers start opening up long exposures, letting the diffuse light create pictures our eyes can't see. The pink band starts to light up the tops

of the Abajo and Henry Mountains.

All at once I can almost feel the tension break. A spark of sunlight tips over the horizon, instant warm is felt on the face. Everyone relaxes, knowing the day is here. The Band of Venus disappears from the sky and is instead lighting up the ground, giving everything an amazing and otherworldly glow. The canyon is lit up in dynamic shadows, changing before our eyes in a noticeable march of time. I look around. Smiles adorn the faces of everyone. With the coming of light it is like all of the workings of the human world have faded away. This sunrise has created a moment so beautiful that time stands still, literally and figuratively bringing us from the shadows into the light. One by one we will break apart, going about to enjoy the coming of autumn.

This is the perfect time to be in the area, not too hot, not too cold and the beginnings and ends of the days manageable. With luck we'll all have a glorious day, moving on to more convenient sunrises to start our coming days. We at least shared this great beginning together, with a world famous sunrise at Dead Horse Point State Park.

For ideas on how Dead Horse Point State Park can fit into your autumn day, visit [deadhorsepoint.utah.gov](http://deadhorsepoint.utah.gov) or call the visitor center, 8:00AM - 6:00PM at 435-259-2614.

For a list of sunrise & sunset times for September see Night Sky Happenings on page 17B.



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