

# Best Moab Restaurants on a Utah Road Trip

*After venturing out on a Utah road trip adventure during the pandemic, with equal parts caution and anticipation, writer Sandy Bornstein tells us what to expect, and where to find the best Moab restaurants to enjoy along the way.*



*The Park Avenue Trail in Moab.*

## On the Road During the Pandemic: Moab Dining

After the pandemic restrictions were modified, and Colorado and Utah residents were able to travel more freely, Moab became our first road trip destination. I selected this [rural location](#) because it had a manageable driving time of less than 5 ½ hours from Denver to Moab, availability at the town's newest hotel, the [Hoodoo Moab, a Curio Collection by Hilton](#) hotel, and an abundance of [hiking on national park and local trails](#). I also researched the area and learned that the number of reported cases of COVID-19 was negligible.

### **But one important question remained. Where would we eat?**

Our situation was a bit more complicated than usual since we would be traveling with one of our sons and his family that includes two preschoolers. When I made the reservation at this hotel, I asked Daniel Loveridge, the hotel manager, about safety

precautions and food options. When I reserved our suites, the hotel was mandated to sell a specific number of rooms and to have a waiting period between checkout and the next check-in. In addition to these government regulations as well as others, the hotel was following Hilton's new standards for hotel cleanliness.

In May, the onsite restaurant had reopened. By the time we went, in June, most of the town's restaurants were either offering carryout service or dining with limited seating. Loveridge assured me that there would be plenty of food choices if we opted to come. Was I apprehensive about this road trip? Absolutely. Did my fears stop me? No.

Despite decades of traveling, I was embarking on uncharted waters. To be successful on this first pandemic road trip, I adapted to my unfamiliar surroundings. This philosophy had previously worked while traveling in foreign countries. There was no reason why it wouldn't work during the pandemic.





*The dramatic lobby of the Hoodoo Moab Hotel.*

## Driving from Denver to Utah

On the way to Moab, we stopped for a picnic lunch at a park in Grand Junction, Colorado. We took a gamble, hoping to find open restrooms. We were lucky and didn't need to go searching for an alternative location. A couple of hours later, we drove into Moab. Other than working individuals (hotel personnel, park rangers, restaurant workers, and shop owners), at the time, only a small percentage of people were wearing masks. The relaxed attitude stood in sharp contrast to the necessity of wearing a mask wherever we went in Colorado. I was happy to see how many people were eager to travel again. The cars in the parking lot had license plates from several different states.

## Breakfast

With Hilton Honors status, we were provided vouchers for breakfast each morning. While the number of menu items was slightly less than before the pandemic, we had no problem finding something to order each morning. **Avocado toast**, granola with berries and yogurt, scrambled eggs, and oatmeal with dried fruit and nuts were our top picks.



*Avocado Toast dolled up with tomato, red onion, cheese and cilantro.*

## Lunch

Every afternoon, we ordered food from one of the food trucks parked within a short walking distance of the hotel and then carried the entrees back to the hotel. We accommodated our grandchildren by dining in one of our suites.



The freshly made **sweet & spicy and vegan quesadillas** from [Quesadilla Mobilla](#) were our favorites. These southwestern entrees packed with fresh spinach, sweet potatoes, red bell peppers, black beans, and green chile were delicious. The vegetarian option had cheese, while the vegan one had a light layer of refried beans.

A secondary option for a quick bite were sandwiches purchased at [Paninis Plus](#). I enjoyed my **vegan panini** filled with a whole array of vegetables—grilled zucchini, roasted eggplant, spinach, roasted red pepper & roasted onion, with a house sauce. My husband, Ira, had an eggplant parmesan sandwich with roasted and grilled eggplant, roasted red peppers topped with melted parmesan and mozzarella cheeses.



*Chock full of veggies, our vegetarian quesadilla hit the spot.*

## Coffee and Snacks

One of the advantages of having an onsite hotel restaurant is the ability to order food throughout the day. With preschoolers, this is an added perk. Young appetites soar without much notice. After an hour playing in the child-friendly pool, we were happy that the hotel offered mid-day food service adjacent to the pool area.

A refreshing bowl of ice cream is an excellent reward for young children who don't complain while hiking in intense heat. The conveniently located [Moab Coffee Roasters](#) is a local favorite. Everyone walking out of the shop had either an organic coffee or gelato in their hand. In retrospect, I should have splurged and tried an affogato, ice cream or gelato topped with a shot of espresso. Instead, I was content with a delicious cappuccino made with oat milk.

## Dinner in Moab

When searching for restaurants offering a selection of vegetarian options, [98 Center](#) appeared to be our best bet since their Vietnamese meals included organic, locally sourced ingredients. Disappointingly, the complete menu was still not available, and it was not possible to dine in the restaurant. Despite these limitations, we thoroughly enjoyed the food.

My **bánh mì salad with marinated grilled portobello mushrooms** (\$19) was packed with healthy produce — local greens topped with cucumber, avocado, pickled daikon and carrots, red onion, cilantro, tomatoes, toasted almonds, tamari roasted sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, and dried cranberries, with a container of homemade dressing. Surprisingly, the presentation in a carryout container was worth photographing. Ira ordered a bánh mì chicken sandwich on an amoroso bun. In addition to slices of organic lemon grass chicken, the sandwich was filled with chicken liver pate, pickled daikon and carrots, cucumber, cilantro, spicy chilis, hoisin, and mayo.



*A Banh Mi Salad in Moab.*

After one of our late afternoon hikes, [Josie Wyatt's Grill](#), the hotel's dining room, was picked for its convenience. We encountered only a small number of other guests. The fish eaters in our group ordered either the **grilled salmon filet served with cauliflower puree, celery, and dried cranberry salad, drizzled with a lemon-dill yogurt sauce** or the **Guinness fish and chips served with steak fries**. My appetite was satisfied by the eclectic mix of ingredients in the salmon entree.





*Salmon entree enjoyed at Josie Wyatt's Grill.*

## Driving from Utah to Colorado

On the way back, we stopped in Glenwood Springs to stretch our legs and to use the restroom. [Sundae on Grand Avenue](#) was one of the few shops with a visible open sign from the street. The store had just opened earlier in the week. While waiting for our order, we learned that unlike their competition that outsources their ice cream, Sundae uses their open kitchen to make fresh batches of ice cream daily.

## Reflection on First Pandemic Road Trip

I stepped outside my comfort zone when I decided to take my first pandemic road trip. After abiding by the stay-at-home orders for months, I wasn't sure if it was too soon to travel. With so much conflicting medical information, I realized it may remain unlikely

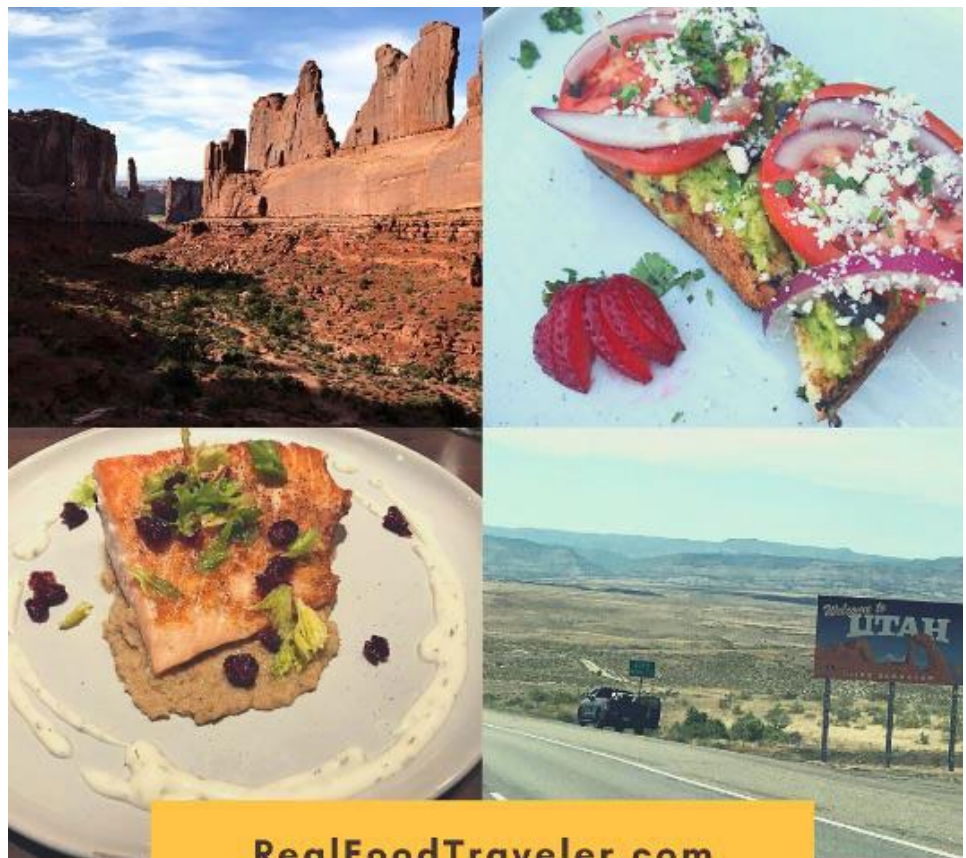
to assess the actual risk until the pandemic is eradicated. I had to accept the fact that while I might come in contact with a contagious individual, my chances of getting sick were minimal if I stayed a safe distance away, maintained good hygiene, and remained outdoors most of the time. I am happy that my passion for travel overruled my fears. We had a spectacular time with our son and his family in one of our favorite national parks, one of the [Mighty 5 Utah](#). And our concerns regarding what we would eat ended up not being an issue.

— *Story by Sandy Bornstein, photos by The Traveling Bornsteins.*

*Disclosure: The Traveling Bornsteins received a media discount for their suite accommodations at the Hoodoo Moab, a Curio Collection by Hilton hotel.*

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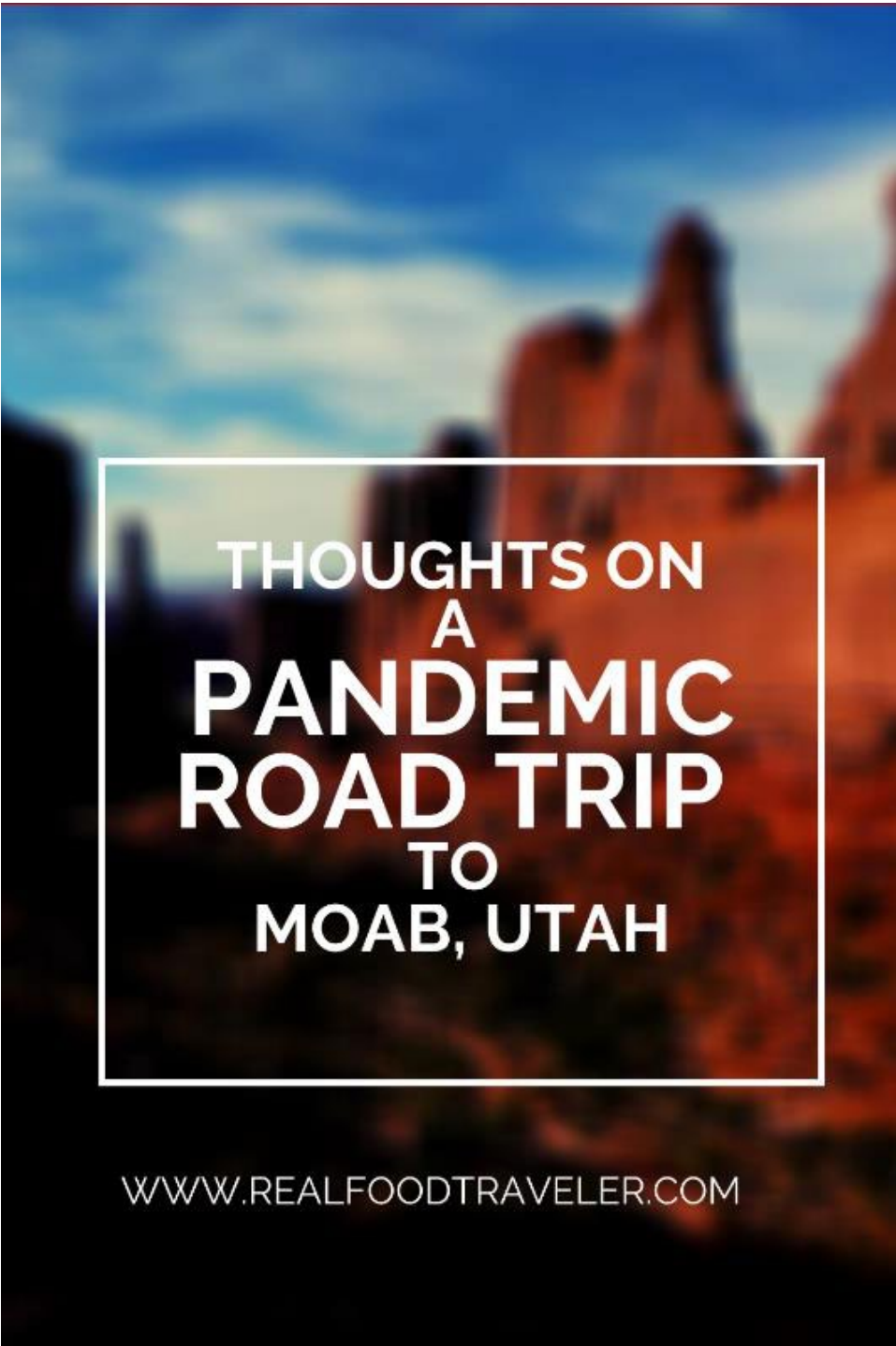


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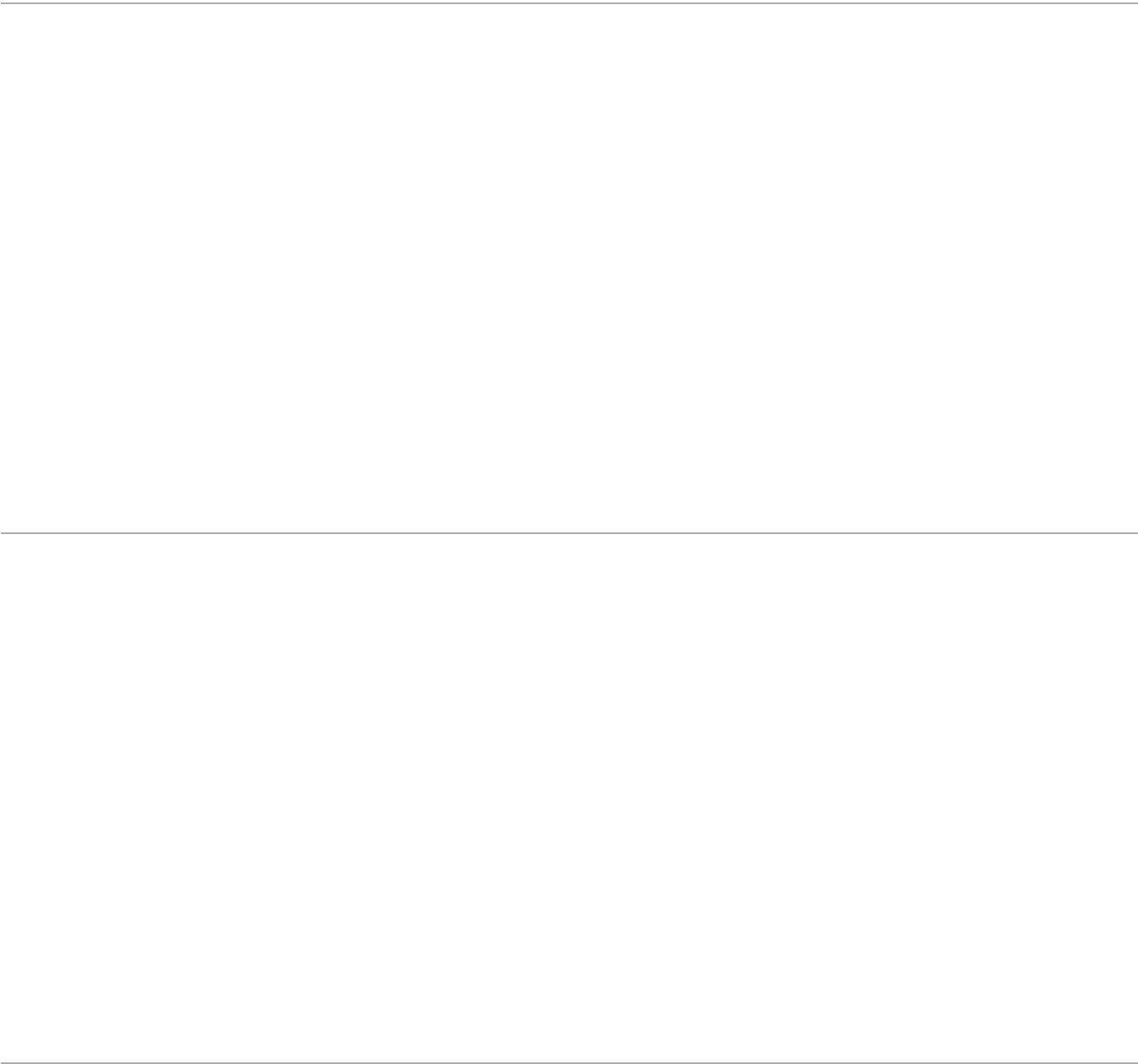
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