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5 Parks



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GETTING THERE

Hit the road to Utah's five national parks, plus Great Basin and Grand Canyon.



Map by Peter Sucheski

Incredible outdoor adventure, five national parks in Utah and ancient settlements combine to make this a trip of a lifetime. Start in Salt Lake City where you may be surprised by the craft-brewing scene and how easy it is to get around this city framed by the Great Salt Lake and Wasatch mountains. Head south to Moab, home to Arches and Canyonlands national parks. From April 1-October 31, 2023, Arches will require timed-entry permits that you must reserve in advance at

Recreation.gov. From there, stop in Bluff where ancient dwellings, pioneer history and rafting await.

Then point your wheels toward stunning Monument Valley and Page, Arizona, where you can explore a slot canyon or rent a kayak to explore Lake Powell. Take a side trip to explore the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. It sits about 1,500 feet higher than the South Rim, making it cooler in the summer. In winter it closes since it

gets blanketed by snow. It's far less developed and visited than the South Rim, making it a hidden gem.

Then head to Kanab, Utah, home to artists, ranchers, film shoots and a fantastic food scene. From Kanab, it's an easy drive to Bryce, Zion and Capitol Reef national parks where spectacular sandstone hoodoos and canyons await. From there, head to the beautiful but uncrowded Great Basin National Park in Nevada just over the Utah border.

WHICH NATIONAL PARK?

Utah's five national parks provide opportunities for unforgettable experiences. Plus, don't miss the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona and Great Basin National Park in Nevada along the way.



BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Famous for its weird and wonderful hoodoos—bulbous rock pillars—this southwestern Utah park also offers hiking, horseback riding, camping and some of the country's darkest skies for stargazing. Drive the park's scenic road for access to a dozen stunning overlooks.



CAPITOL REEF NATIONAL PARK

One of Utah's best-kept secrets, this south-central park preserves unique geology (including the 100-mile-long Waterpocket Fold, a “wrinkle” in the Earth's crust), a preserved Mormon frontier settlement and vast wilderness ideal for multi-day backpacking trips.



ARCHES NATIONAL PARK

Marvel at more than 2,000 natural rock arches at this park just outside of Moab. Some of the formations can be spotted from the road, but the best require a scenic hike. Don't miss the famous Delicate Arch (3 miles round-trip) or the 7-mile (round-trip) Devils Garden Loop. **NOTE: From April 1-October 31, 2023, Arches will require timed-entry permits that you must reserve in advance at [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).**



CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK

So expansive it's divided into four different sections, Canyonlands delivers a quintessential desert experience: deep canyons, prehistoric rock art, rivers and sweeping overlooks. Go to the Needles District for top-notch hiking and backpacking, Island in the Sky for wide views and the Maze to explore strikingly remote terrain.



ZION NATIONAL PARK

This southwestern Utah park has it all—cliffs, slot canyons and dizzying views. Two classic Zion experiences: hiking the 5.4-mile (round-trip) West Rim Trail to Angels Landing and exploring one of the country's best slot canyons in the 16-mile (one-way) Virgin River Narrows. **NOTE: In 2023 everyone who hikes Angels Landing needs to have a permit. Apply at [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).**

ULUM

— MOAB —

Tucked into a secluded, crescent-shaped desert setting—just steps from iconic Looking Glass Arch and surrounded by majestic sandstone cliffs—ULUM Moab offers the perfect blend of sophisticated comfort, luxury amenities, and world-class adventure.

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ARCHES & CANYONLANDS

Here are some of our favorite things to do in these two legendary national parks.

ARCHES

1. DELICATE ARCH

You've likely seen photos of this dramatic, 65-foot-tall rock arch already—now check out the real thing. Short option: Park at the Delicate Arch Viewpoint and take the short trail to a long-distance overlook. Longer option: Hike the 3-mile (round-trip) trail from Wolfe Ranch to see it up-close.

2. FIERY FURNACE

This wild, trail-less zone encompasses giant boulders, narrow squeezes and sheer rock cliffs. To explore it, pick up a permit at a park visitor center or join a ranger-led tour (the best option for beginners).

3. COURTHOUSE WASH

You don't need to go to a museum to see ancient Native American art. Easily accessible from the Lower Courthouse Wash parking area, .5 miles north of the Colorado River on the right side of US 191 is the Courthouse Wash art panel. It's 19 feet high and 52 feet long. Vandals defaced these drawings in 1980, but archaeologists restored the panels only to discover older drawings behind the white shields held by figures.

CANYONLANDS

1. NEEDLES DISTRICT

Located in the southeastern part of the park, the Needles contains popular hiking trails through a desert decorated with rock spires. You'll find a visitor center, ranger programs and the Squaw Flat Campground here.

2. ISLAND IN THE SKY DISTRICT

The closest district to Moab, Island in the Sky is the place for rim-side views over deep, vast canyons. Hiking trails to arches and domes descend into this area, and the White Rim Road, popular with mountain bikers and four-wheel drivers, circles the district. It contains a visitor center, ranger programs and Willow Flat Campground.

3. MAZE DISTRICT

Experienced hikers visit the untracked Maze area for solitude, scenery and adventure—trips to this zone usually require several days. There is a ranger station but no visitor center.



UNDER CANVAS

Road trip through the American Southwest's most iconic national parks and monuments via the Grand Circle—stopping at five Under Canvas locations along the way: Zion, Bryce Canyon, Moab, Lake Powell - Grand Staircase, and Grand Canyon.

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ZION

This gorgeous national park offers breathtaking views, lodging and great educational stops. Here are our top seven.



1. ZION HUMAN HISTORY MUSEUM

Located .5 miles north of the South Entrance in Springdale, this museum features permanent displays on the area's Native American culture and pioneer settlements. A permanent exhibit on water explains its importance to the ancient people of the area and how it created the unique landforms that define Zion.

Temporary exhibits have included replicas of Union Pacific Railroad lodging, Civilian Conservation Corps diaries, park ranger photos and more. A free 22-minute video shown every half hour provides a

general overview to the park. Books, maps, posters and films are available for purchase and rangers are on hand to answer questions.

2. COURT OF THE PATRIARCHS

A short walk from the shuttle stop of the same name yields expansive views of one of the park's most identifiable landmarks. Named for the Bible's Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, these three craggy peaks of banded sandstone tower above the surrounding landscape. Take the 3.5-mile Sand Bench Trail (round-trip) for a closer look.

3. ZION LODGE

The only lodging located within park boundaries, this hotel has been a part of Zion since the 1920s. After being destroyed by a fire in 1966, the lodge was rebuilt in 100 days; its exterior was remodeled in 1990 to restore the original rustic appearance.

Today, the Zion Lodge offers a variety of accommodations, including cabins, hotel rooms and suites. Cabins come equipped with a gas fireplace, private porch and full bath. Hotel rooms feature similar amenities, in addition to a flat-screen TV with satellite. Air conditioning and complimentary wireless internet are also provided.

The Red Rock Grill is the lodge's signature dining room, with indoor and terrace seating. The menu features American cuisine with Southwestern-inspired dishes. Reservations required; zionlodge.com.

4. THE GROTTO

Enjoy a picnic in this cottonwood grove while enjoying views of the Virgin River and Angels Landing. Restrooms and water are available; many trails leave from here.

5. ANGELS LANDING

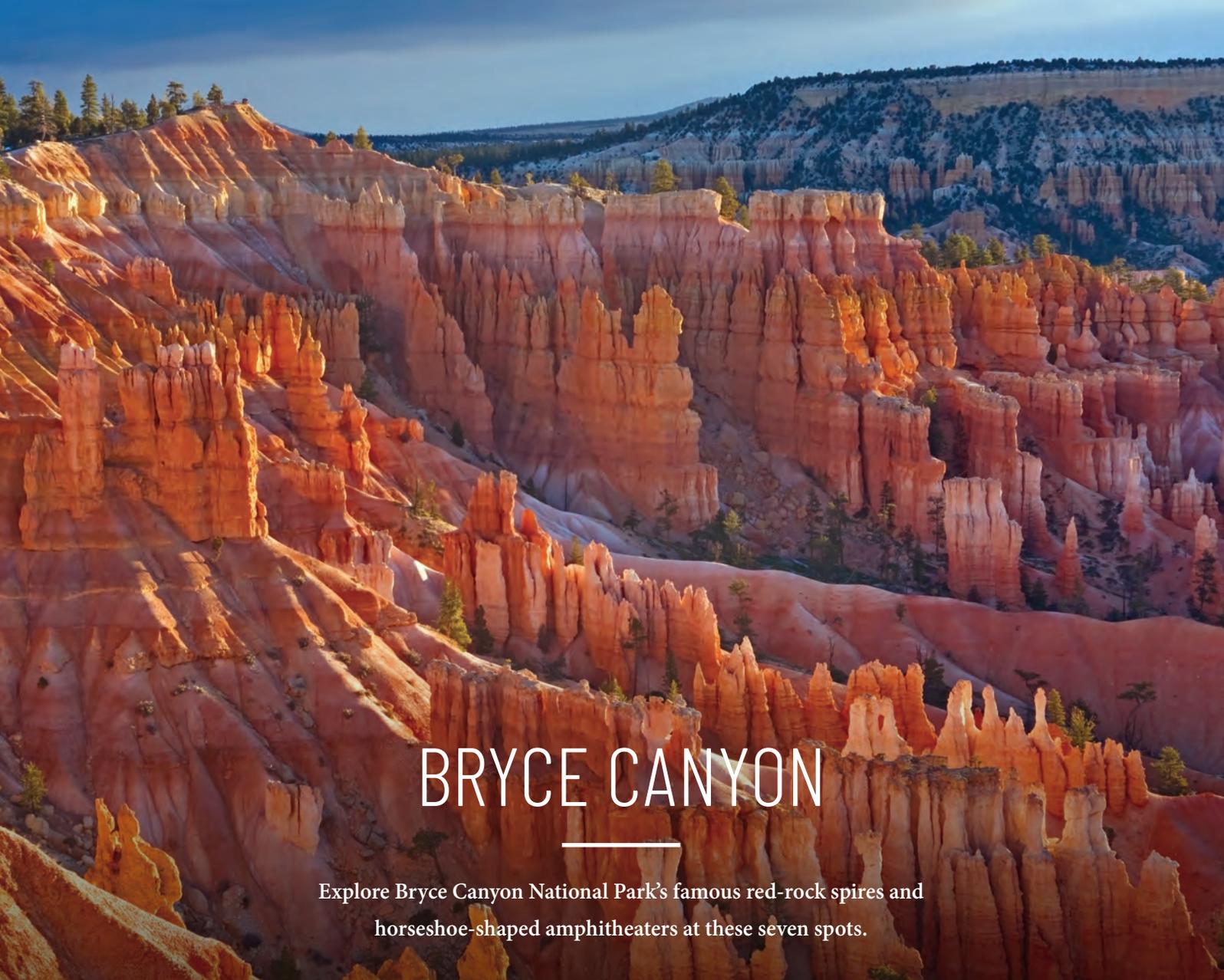
Depart from the Grotto shuttle stop for one of the country's most memorable and harrowing hikes. This 5,790-foot sandstone prow towers above the Virgin River, offering the best views in Zion. The trail is steep—it gains 1,500-plus feet in 2.4 miles—and terrifying if slick (or if you have vertigo). Cables provide sure grips on the exposed fin that leads to 360-degree vistas. There have been fatalities here, so it is not for young kids or those with unsure footing.

6. WEeping ROCK

Water drips down sandstone rock—reminiscent of tears—and creates hanging gardens. Participate in ranger programs, walk one of the many trails leaving from this area. A rockslide damaged the area in 2019. Check with a ranger on the status of the trail to be sure it is open.

7. TEMPLE OF SINAWAVA

The shuttle ends at this 3,000-foot natural red-rock amphitheater forming the northern end of Zion Canyon. Named for a powerful Paiute deity known as the Coyote God, this formation is the gateway to The Narrows, a canyon that requires special gear, hiking experience and endurance via the 1-mile Riverside Walk.



BRYCE CANYON

Explore Bryce Canyon National Park's famous red-rock spires and horseshoe-shaped amphitheaters at these seven spots.

1. RAINBOW AND YOVIMPA POINTS

These adjacent overlooks at the park's southern end offer fantastic views back over Bryce Canyon's rock formations. From here at 9,100 feet in elevation, you can clearly see most of the geological Grand Staircase rock layers from the uppermost Pink Cliffs to the red Vermilion Cliffs. Visit both points to get the complete view; hikers can also explore the 7.5-mile Riggs Spring Loop Trail, which connects the two.

2. NATURAL BRIDGE

See one of Bryce Canyon's rock arches at this viewpoint. Erosion of

the Claron Formation rock from ice, rain and gravity sculpted Natural Bridge, a deep red arch in the southern end of the park.

3. FARVIEW POINT

From this overlook, you'll see many of the park's most famous rock formations and even out to the Kaibab Plateau (where the North Rim of the Grand Canyon is located). Enjoy views of hoodoos, fins and caps and pick out the different layers of the Grand Staircase of the Colorado Plateau.

4. PARIA VIEW

Looking for a stunning sunset photo op? Head to this overlook in the

north part of the park, one of the few places where the rock formations face west to catch the evening light. You'll also see slot canyons below and, if you're lucky, peregrine falcons in the sky.

5. BRYCE POINT

This is the place to savor views over the park's amphitheater, especially at sunrise, where the hoodoos are positioned to catch morning light. The Peek-a-Boo Loop Trail descends from this point.

6. SUNRISE AND SUNSET POINTS

Sunrise Point, near the park visitor center, offers views of well-known

formations such as the Silent City and Thor's Hammer. The Claron Formation colors are vivid here, and the Navajo Loop Trail leads to 700-year-old Douglas firs and up to Sunrise Point. At Sunrise, you'll see Boat Mesa and Sinking Ship, plus a limber pine with exposed roots.

7. UNDER-THE-RIM TRAIL

This 23-mile backcountry trail extends from Bryce Point in the park's northern end to Rainbow Point on the southern, passing hoodoos, boulder fields, creeks and scenic ridgelines. Day hikers can sample portions of the trail, but hiking the whole thing requires three to four days and a backcountry permit.

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CAPITOL REEF

Less visited than its sister national parks in Utah, Capitol Reef enables you to get away from the crowds at these four places.



1. FRUITA HISTORIC DISTRICT

Step back to the time of frontier pioneers at the preserved Fruita settlement, site of a small community from the 1880s to early 1940s. Visit the Gifford House, built in 1908 by a Mormon settler and occupied until the late 1960s, for a glimpse of life in historic Fruita. The home now holds a small gift shop and bakery, famous for its delicious pies. The park maintains the fruit orchards planted by early residents, including apple, peach, pear and cherry trees and a one-room schoolhouse still stands in the area. The Fruita Historic District is located just east of the park's visitor center.

2. SUNSET POINT

The place to be when the sun goes down, Sunset Point has dramatic views over Capitol Reef's rock formations and lovely evening light. To reach it, head to the Goosenecks Overlook and pick up the Sunset Point Trail from the parking lot. A short .3-mile trail leads right to the overlook.

3. RIM OVERLOOK TRAIL

Hikers looking for excellent views—including the Fruita Historic District, the Waterpocket Fold formation and rock domes—should head to this 2.3-mile (one-way) trail that leads to a vista 1,000 feet over the park. What's the Waterpocket Fold?

It's a 100-mile-long warp in the Earth's crust that formed 50-70 million years ago. When an ancient fault moved upwards, it lifted a rock layer to the west of the fault 7,000 feet higher than the east. During millions of years since, uplift and erosion have exposed it above ground. Start at the Hickman Bridge trailhead.

4. CASSIDY ARCH

Climb 670 feet from the Grand Wash Road trailhead to a view of Cassidy Arch (named after Butch Cassidy, the famous outlaw who hid out in the area), a thick rock span. The 1.8-mile (one-way) trail skirts sheer drops and passes striped rock walls en route to the arch.

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GREAT BASIN

Just over the Utah border lies Great Basin National Park in Nevada where you can explore the inside of the Earth and a 13,000-foot peak.

Here are three unusual sights to see.



PHOTO: Stella Lake with Wheeler Peak in background [James Marvin Phelps / Flickr]

1. BRISTLECONE PINE TRAIL

See some of the oldest trees in the world on this 2.8-mile round-trip hike. Bristlecone pines thrive in harsh conditions and grow above treeline, so this hike starts at 9,800 feet. You'll gain 600 feet in elevation as you walk this trail, which is dotted by interpretive signs that explain why bristlecone pines play an important role in the ecosystem. One of these trees, nicknamed the Prometheus Tree, was cut down by geographer Donald Currey in 1964. It had 4,862 tree growth rings, indicating the tree was nearly 5,000 years old. You can count its rings today in the visitor center. Bristlecone pines are now protected on federal land and cannot be cut down.

If you walk further down the trail, you can spot the only glacier in Nevada at the base of Wheeler Peak, a 13,064-foot mountain.

2. LEHMAN CAVES

A popular attraction, the Lehman Caves are well-worth seeing, but you must go on a guided tour with a park ranger to tour the caves. Choose between the Lodge Room tour, which covers .4 miles, is 60 minutes long and is ideal for young children and families. Or sign up for the Grand Palace Tour that covers .6 miles, lasts 90 minutes and is for ages 5 and over (except November through February). While you can show up at the park to reserve your spot, park officials highly recommend you buy your tickets online in advance at recreation.gov. These tours fill up, and you don't want to miss out.

3. WHEELER PEAK

Hike or drive to this 13,064-foot peak, the second highest in Nevada. If you hike it, get a very early morning start at the Summit Trail parking lot to avoid afternoon thunderstorms. It's a 8.6-mile round-trip trek, with 2,900 feet in elevation gain, to the summit. Or let your car do the work and take the 12-mile (round-trip) paved Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive, which begins at the park boundary on Hwy. 488. Climb 4,000 feet to the peak's face, while taking in stunning views of the Great Basin Desert below.

INSIDER'S TIPS

From what to pack to entrance fees, here's the scoop.



ONLINE

Visit MyUtahParks.com to find out where to stay and what to do during your vacation. Interested in exploring other national parks? Check us out at NationalParkTrips.com.



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PACKING LIST

- Refillable water bottles or a hydration system
- Binoculars
- Clothing layers to accommodate temperature fluctuations of 30-40 degrees in one day.
- A sun hat, sunglasses and sunscreen
- Rain jacket & bug spray
- Sturdy hiking boots
- Daypack



Learn more at MyUtahParks.com/park/what-to-pack.

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Buy your pass at a park entrance station, purchase a digital pass at recreation.gov or order a card online at REI.com (with no shipping costs).

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