

Utah: Bryce & Zion Canyons

Tour-Only Itinerary

Refrigerator Canyon. Thor's Hammer. After a week walking through Utah's national parks, you've gotten used to descriptive names. Now it's Zion's colorful landscape that's grabbing your attention. Your snaking climb up the zigzag path known as Walter's Wiggles has earned you the best view of this Utah hiking trip. That's saying something. Framed by sheer red-rock faces, the Virgin River winds through the verdant valley below. In a lifetime of walking, you've never seen scenery so divine. Bryce's labyrinth of fiery-hued, wind-sculpted hoodoos. Shocks of slot-canyon greenery contrasting with ruddy streaks of mineral-rich "desert varnish." The polychrome glow of Zion's sandstone cliffs at dawn. Returning your gaze to Angel's Landing, the knife-edged formation now soaring before you, you've got to admit—it's a pretty apt name.



Highlights

- From the edge of the rim, descend into the heart of Bryce Canyon on foot, observing natural amphitheaters and unique rock formations as you go.
- Explore the frontier beauty of Springdale, your home for three nights, and admire the local art inspired by Zion's soaring backdrop of multicolored sandstone.
- With expert guides, discover how the Ancestral Puebloans thrived in Zion's extreme climate, and perhaps spot their ancient rock art during your hike.

On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated moderate, walking an average of 2 to 8 miles per day, with occasional options. While this is not a mountain-climbing tour, there are daily ascents and descents. This tour is not recommended for those who suffer from severe vertigo or a fear of heights, although this terrain may be easily omitted. The ascents and descents are gradual as opposed to very sharp and steep, and our pace is generally slow, approximately 2 miles per hour. The highest elevation during the trip is about 9,000 feet. The trails are a combination of dirt and paved paths; some are wooded and others are quite open and exposed. Proper sunscreen and head protection are necessary. Classic

canyon walking and scenery are included in Bryce and Zion

DAY 1

Arrive in St. George. Join your *Utah: Bryce & Zion Canyons* tour

Snow Canyon; 2-3 miles, easy to moderate. Travel to Bryce Canyon National Park. Fairyland Point to Sunrise Point via the Fairyland Rim Trail; 3 miles, easy to moderate

Your guides will meet you at the Inn on the Cliff at 8:00 a.m. in the lobby. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for walking.

Upon meeting your guides in St. George, you travel north to the day's destination of Bryce Canyon National Park, with several stops en route to break up the approximate two-and-a-half-hour drive. The drive follows the course of the Virgin River—rising almost 8,000 feet from its terminus at Lake Mead to its origin at Navajo Lake on the Colorado Plateau—the vast geologic area that includes not only Bryce and Zion Canyons but also the Grand Canyon. Your morning walk in Snow Canyon, located in the 62,000-acre Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, offers your first glimpse of the area's colorful sandstone cliffs. Once ancient sand dunes, these formations have been sculpted over time by the wind and rain.

Continuing the drive to Bryce Canyon, you disembark your van at Fairyland Point. Here, you walk along the Fairyland Rim trail that brings you on foot to Sunrise Point, where you look down into Bryce Amphitheater, the most concentrated area of hoodoos in the park. Panoramic views of Bryce Canyon are a magical introduction to this area, as you walk past the red, orange, and white hoodoos. These fantastic rock spires glow in the afternoon light underneath Ponderosa pines. In the distance, you have views of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Aquarius Plateau, and Navajo Mountain. You may choose to shorten the walk if you arrive by van at Sunrise Point and walk along the rim to see views of Bryce Amphitheater.

From here, a short drive takes you to your hotel in Bryce Canyon City, known as Ruby's Inn until a name change in 2007. The town has been built on tourism since its founding in 1916 by Reuben C. "Ruby" Syrett. It remains a tiny settlement today, with a population of just a couple hundred. You gather for dinner at one of the local restaurants.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Optional Sunrise Walk. Bryce Point to Sunset Point

Rim of Bryce; 1 mile, easy. Bryce Point to Sunset Point; 3-4 miles, moderate, 700-1,000-ft. elevation gain. Afternoon walk: Bristlecone Loop via Rainbow and Yovimpa Points; 1 mile, easy

Early risers may wish to join the guides for a serene sunrise walk along the rim of Bryce Canyon and catch the morning rays over the Aquarius Plateau, bathing the hoodoos in warm hues.

After a hearty breakfast in the dining room, you start today's walk on the rim of the canyon, with spectacular views of Bryce Amphitheater and the Paria River Valley beyond. Passing multicolored limestone rock formations, both surreal and whimsical, you descend gently into the heart of the canyon, making your way through a stand of bristlecone pines. These pines are the park's oldest living trees, said to date back over 2,000 years. You ascend gradually out of the canyon on the Navajo Loop through the "Wall Street" formation—massive orange limestone fins. These rocks were once part of an ancient lakebed, and now they provide cooling shade. Pass beneath these remarkable rocks and continue along the trail for a view of Thor's Hammer, one of the park's most impressive hoodoos.

The afternoon walk is reached via a 20-minute drive to Bryce's southern point at an elevation of 9,100 feet. This easy walk begins on the canyon rim and offers tremendous views for hundreds of miles in all directions: to the north are Bryce's 14 amphitheaters; northeast, the red and orange cliffs of the Aquarius Plateau; to the east, the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, one of the world's greatest sources of dinosaur fossils; and to the south, the North Rim of the Grand Canyon is visible.

This evening, you linger over refined Western fare, perhaps a grilled steak or rainbow trout accompanied by a Utah microbrew at a local restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3

Travel to Zion National Park

Mossy Cave Trail; 1 mile, easy. Zion National Park Pa'rus Trail; 2 miles, easy

After breakfast, you travel to Zion National Park, stopping along the way to walk the Mossy Cave Trail for beautiful views of Water Canyon and its moss overhang.

The entrance to Zion Canyon is breathtaking. You emerge from the historic Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel, which was cut laboriously through 1.1 miles of sandstone, and descend into Zion's main canyon, carved out of rock by the Virgin River. Zion is a true natural wonder, not only due to its unique geology and stunning scenery, but also for the incredible variety of flora and fauna—from peregrine falcons to the desert bighorn sheep and the Zion snail, found nowhere else on Earth. In addition to its rich natural history, the canyon contains evidence of human history extending back 2,000 years to the Ancestral Puebloans, as well as the Paiutes of 800 years ago.

The Pa'rus (Paiute word meaning bubbling, tumbling water) multi-use trail follows the Virgin River along the canyon bottom, crossing several bridges and offering views of the towering sandstone cliffs on either side.

Your home for the next three nights is an inn resort along the Virgin River in the charming town of Springdale. After some time to unpack and freshen up in your spacious room, you venture out for dinner at a favorite nearby restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

Scout Lookout. Independent exploration of Springdale

5 miles; moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation gain. Optional afternoon walk: Emerald Pools Trail; 2-3 miles, easy

After breakfast, you set off from Zion Lodge on the Grotto Trail on a moderate walk to Scout Lookout (elevation gain of 1,000 feet). A winding trail leads from the valley floor through a series of switchbacks into Refrigerator Canyon, where, as its name implies, you are sheltered and cooled from the desert sun. You continue through Walter's Wiggles, where closely cut switchbacks lead to spectacular Scout Lookout. The park unfolds below, with views of the Virgin River and canyon walls.

Enjoy a picnic lunch back on the canyon floor at the Grotto Picnic Area. After lunch, choose to return to Springdale and enjoy a full afternoon in town, or hike the Emerald Pools Trail returning to the lodge around

3:00 p.m. The afternoon walk leads to several pools and underneath a cool waterfall. Depending on the season, the falls can be either a steady stream or a slight trickle.

The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure. Relax at your inn's inviting swimming pool and hot tub, or take advantage of the visitors' center at Zion National Park. This evening, you return to Springdale for dinner on your own, with your guides offering many suggestions from outdoor cafés to fine-dining restaurants.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5

Watchman Trail. Riverside Walk. The Narrows (conditions permitting)

Watchman Trail; 3 miles, 400 ft elevation gain, moderate. Riverside Walk; 2 miles, easy OR the Narrows; 3-5 miles, moderate, water-level dependent

Today's walks offer views of lower and upper Zion Canyon on two separate routes. The Watchman Trail starts at the Visitor Center and ascends 400 feet to a viewpoint of lower Zion Canyon. After a picnic lunch, board the Zion Canyon shuttle and take it all the way to the end of Zion Scenic Drive to reach upper Zion Canyon. There, you enter the narrowest part of the canyon along the Riverside Walk.

Water levels permitting, our alternate plan (instead of the Watchman Trail) is to enjoy an all-day walk in the Narrows, which starts on the Riverside Walk on the riverbank, then enters the river bed and winds through the narrowest parts of the canyon.*

This evening, you venture into lively Springdale for a celebratory farewell dinner at a favorite local restaurant serving fresh, innovative cuisine.

**Water levels vary in the Narrows. River boots and sock rentals are included in your tour price, and in cooler weather, dry pants are also included.*

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6

Sunrise Walk in Zion

Sunrise walk; 1-2 miles, easy to moderate

Before breakfast, we offer a sunrise walk in Zion. Watch the rising sun illuminate the sandstone cliffs with a red glow; the sunlight strikes the clifftops first, then creates a bright line that slowly makes its way down the cliffs.

This afternoon, you enjoy lunch at a lovely restaurant in Ancestor Square in St. George, Utah, which features locally grown organic fare with Southwest flavors. After lunch, complimentary transportation is provided to the Inn on the Cliff and St. George Shuttle at approximately 3:00 p.m. or to the St. George Regional Airport, arriving at 3:30 p.m.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
15 on-tour meals: 5 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 4 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓