



## Country Walkers

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## Utah: Bryce & Zion Canyons

### Travel Style - Guided Walking Tour

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep into the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.



Encounter the best of Utah in two national parks, exploring Bryce's pink-limestone hoodoos and swooping natural arches before moving on to Zion's sandstone slot canyons and lush hanging gardens. In this landscape of undulating slickrock and quick-flowing water, you'll discover a rich palette of red earth and wind-polished stone accented by the green of ponderosa pines. Along shaded walks, you'll hear the chatter of violet-green swallows and cool your feet in moss-lined pools. Bryce Canyon offers otherworldly rock formations flecked with fossils, staggering views of the Aquarius Plateau and Navajo Mountain, and stands of bristlecone pine, some of the oldest trees in the Western Hemisphere. Zion is a geological wonder, with soaring 2,000-foot cliffs, gracefully curving walls of orange stone, and an incredible variety of flora and fauna—from peregrine falcons to desert bighorn sheep and the Zion snail. In both parks, you'll enjoy the daily spectacle of sunset: golden light painting carved crimson cliffs, deep-blue rivers, and vistas unlike any on Earth.

## Tour Only Itinerary - 2019

### Day 1

#### Arrival in St. George

*5-6 miles, easy to moderate*

Upon meeting your guides in St. George, you travel north to the day's final destination of Bryce Canyon National Park, with several stops en route to break up the approximate 2½-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 greater 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 colorful sandstone cliffs, once ancient sand dunes that have been sculpted over time by the wind and rain.



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Next is a stop at Kolob Canyon, in the upper portion of Zion National Park, where you enjoy a picnic lunch. At an elevation of over 6,000 feet, you look over the lower parts of Zion, established as a national park in 1919, with the addition of this Kolob portion in 1956.

Continuing the drive to Bryce Canyon, you disembark your van at Fairyland Point, for the walk along the Fairyland Rim trail that brings you on foot to Bryce Canyon Lodge—your home for the next two nights. Panoramic views of Bryce Canyon are a magical introduction to this area, as you walk past the red, orange, and white hoodoos, fantastic rock spires glowing in the afternoon light, and 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, or arrive by van to your 1920s park lodge, a National Historic Landmark, its privileged location within the park providing unlimited access to the spectacle of Bryce Canyon's rim and a crystalline night sky. You gather for dinner at the rustic-yet-elegant main lodge.

### **Accommodation:** Bryce Canyon Lodge, Bryce Canyon National Park

A National Historic Landmark, the renovated 1920s park lodge offers simple rooms, most with balconies, situated a few feet from the canyon rim at the heart of the national park.

## Day 2

### **Bryce Point to Sunset Point**

*3-4 miles, moderate, 700-1,000-ft. elevation gain; 3 miles, easy to moderate, 500-ft. elevation gain; 1 mile, easy*

After a hearty breakfast in the lodge's dining room, you start today's walk on the rim of the canyon, with spectacular views from Bryce Point 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, also walking through a stand of bristlecone pines—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, between massive orange limestone fins—resulting from an ancient lakebed, now providing cooling shade—and continue on for a view of Thor's Hammer.

This afternoon, choose from two distinct walking options: the longer, the Queen's Garden Loop (named for a hoodoo that looks like Queen Victoria in profile) and Navajo Loop, begins and ends at your lodge, descending to the canyon floor, passing the Twin Bridges, and bringing you into Bryce Amphitheater before rising gradually.

The shorter option is reached via a 20-minute drive to Bryce's southern point at an elevation of 9,100 feet. This easy walk beginning on the canyon rim 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 Alaskan salmon



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accompanied by a Utah microbrew, at the historical lodge dining room.

### **Accommodation: Bryce Canyon Lodge, Bryce Canyon National Park**

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## Day 3

### Transfer to Zion National Park

*2 miles, easy; 1 mile, moderate; 3 miles, easy to moderate*

Early risers may wish to join the guides for a serene sunrise walk and catch the morning rays rising over the Aquarius Plateau, bathing the hoodoos in warm hues. After breakfast, you transfer to Zion National Park, stopping along the way to walk the Canyon Overlook Trail, offering expansive views of Pine Creek Canyon, the East Temple, and the west side of Zion.

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 wind-blown sandstone by the Virgin River. It 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 Emerald Pools Trail offers an easy to moderate walk to several pools and underneath a cool waterfall. Depending on the season, the falls can be either a steady stream or slight trickle. The vegetation around the pools offers an oasis of shade in the surrounding desert cliffs.

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 local restaurant.

### **Accommodation: Desert Pearl Inn, Springdale**

Local stone, Douglas fir beams, and reclaimed redwood are architecturally designed to create a perfect setting at the gates of Zion National Park. The inn's spacious and stylishly decorated rooms have balconies overlooking the Virgin River and surrounding cliffs. A swimming pool and hot tub are welcome at day's end.

## Day 4

### Scout's Lookout



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*4 miles, moderate to challenging, 1,300 ft. elevation gain; 1 mile, challenging with steep exposures*

After breakfast, you set off from the Grotto trailhead on a moderate walk to Scout's Lookout (elevation gain of 1,300 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, closely cut switchbacks leading to the spectacular Scout's Lookout. The park unfolds below, with views of the Virgin River and canyon walls.

From here, your option is to ascend the dramatic Angel's Landing Trail another half mile and 500 feet up to a peak of rock in the center of Zion Canyon or to hike a few hundred feet farther up the West Rim, where you share a packed trail lunch with your companions under a ponderosa pine on top of the world. Everyone will descend the same route to the river in the early afternoon.

The rest of the afternoon is yours to enjoy by relaxing at your inn's inviting swimming pool and hot tub, or by taking 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, ranging from outdoor cafés to fine-dining restaurants.

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## Day 5

### **Echo Canyon**

*5-6 miles, moderate to challenging, 1,000 ft. elevation gain; 2 miles, easy, or 5 miles, easy to moderate, water-level dependent*

After breakfast in a nearby café, you enjoy one of two walks today. The first possibility is Echo Canyon, a beautiful "hanging canyon" with gorgeous carved curves of orange sandstone and towering Cable Mountain soaring overhead. Starting with a few uphill switchbacks, the paved trail continues to climb about 1,000 feet up to middle Echo Canyon, with its pools and undulating slickrock, a marvel of nature's artistry. You return by the same route out of this beautiful canyon.

Following a packed picnic lunch in the heart of the park, your guides offer an additional afternoon walk to the Gateway of the Narrows. This easy, popular walk along the Virgin River begins at the farthest end of Zion Canyon at the Temple of Sinawava. As you walk beneath massive cliffs, you pass a number of lush hanging gardens and pockets of wildflowers.

The alternate possibility for the day is the Narrows. Should the water level be low enough, you may be able to experience one of the most remarkable hikes in Zion: a slot canyon carved by the Virgin River.



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Beyond the one-mile, paved Riverside Walk, you wade across the river to the opposite shore, continue walking on the river bank, then again crisscross the water in order to make headway up the canyon, as the river winds its way from one canyon side wall to the other side wall. Beneath the towering 1,500-foot cliffs of Navajo sandstone, box elders shine greenly amid the amber rock, and the sky becomes a ribbon of blue high above. The bottom-up walk is 1½ miles to Orderville Canyon, where you turn around and return the same way you came, going with the flow and discovering how adept you have become walking in the water. Your guides are sure you're equipped with all the right gear to make the trip comfortable: water boots, neoprene socks, and walking sticks. (Please be sure to have quick-dry pants as noted in the packing list.)

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

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## Day 6

### **Red Cliffs archaeological site**

*2 miles, easy to moderate*

After breakfast, a final walk takes you through the Red Cliffs archaeological site. The Ancestral Puebloans (formerly known as the Anasazi) lived here from 600 to 1200 AD, and it is thought they left the region in search of the permanent water source of the Rio Grande, where their descendants, the modern Pueblo Indians, live today. The hilltop site contains the rectangular and circular ruins of numerous habitation and storage rooms, and likely provided clear views of enemies and game. Below were the flatter areas for farming corn, squash, and beans, and the water source at the cottonwood-lined Quail Creek. It's still possible to find 1,000-year-old pottery shards on the ground, underneath the red sandstone cliffs. After the walk, you enjoy lunch at a lovely restaurant in Ancestor Square in St. George, Utah, which features locally grown organic fare with Southwest flavors.