

# Welcome to Zion & Bryce Canyon National Parks

*If you think you've seen every possible hue of sandstone, the rising or setting sun over Utah's national parks will show you otherwise.*

## Canyons & Red Rocks

Perhaps nowhere else in the Southwest can compete with southern Utah when it comes to the sheer number of geological works of art. Soaring pinnacles and arches, dizzyingly deep canyons and rainbow-colored rocks are all par for the course. This is where the bones of the earth – and the powerful natural processes that shape them – are laid bare. Take the time to observe the different-colored layers stacked one upon the other: Kayenta, Navajo, Temple Cap, Carmel. These are snapshots of the planet's distant past, and an amazing opportunity to take in the work of 240 million years in a single glance.

## Outdoor Adventures

There's no better way to get a feel for this red-rock wonderland than by having some fun. Serious fun. Whatever your sport, there's a good chance that Utah sets a pretty high standard. Hikes lead to majestic free-standing arches, secret oases, desert labyrinths and exposed traverses across narrow fins. Canyoneers rappel into the earth's wrinkles to explore dark, mystical passageways filled with adventure. Moab's slickrock trails set the standard for mountain biking decades ago, while desert spires and mighty big walls are the envy of rock climbers around the world.

## Scenic Drives & Lookouts

Though southern Utah's majestic parklands are hardly drive-by attractions, scenic roads abound. In fact, they're an essential part of your journey here in canyon country, whether you're driving, cycling, riding the park shuttles in Zion and Bryce, or negotiating a teeth-rattling, nerve-wracking 4WD road in the rugged backcountry. And if there are moments when you feel as if you've seen that view in a Hollywood film, it's because you probably have.

## Beyond the National Parks

You could spend weeks immersed in the national parks and monuments. But then you'd be missing out on some of the most memorable places, from arty, alternative-minded towns like Moab to Native American tribal lands and sites where prehistoric denizens made their mark. Detours are always worthwhile here, whether for an earthy plate of organic, farm-fresh food or to capture another top-of-the-world vista. Local state parks (Snow Canyon, Goblin Valley) and wilderness areas (Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs) deserve consideration, as does off-the-grid Cedar Mesa. Take our suggestions as starting points for your own sojourn.



## Why I Love Zion & Bryce Canyon National Parks

By Christopher Pitts, Writer

I love the prickly pear's hot-pink blooms, the tenacity of crimson paintbrush draped across a rock face. I love exploring canyons: listening to echoes of water – sometimes light and joyous, sometimes rumbling and ominous – or just tracing its ancient passage along the smooth, rippling walls. I love how a place that seems so barren is in fact so full of wonder. It's much like life itself: from afar it might appear tough and unforgiving, but take the time for a closer look and you'll find that each moment has its own special beauty.

**For more about our writers, see p288**