



Zion National Park

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Best Hikes

- The Narrows (p58)
- Angels Landing (p54)
- Emerald Pools (p52)
- Hidden Canyon (p56)
- The Subway (p63)
- West Rim Trail (p55)

Best Experiences

- Canyoneering (p72)
- Backpacking the Narrows (p58)
- Hanging Gardens (p52)
- Mountain biking (p71)
- Exploring East Zion (p77)

Why Go?

From secret oases of trickling water to the hot-pink blooms of a prickly pear cactus, Zion's treasures turn up in the most unexpected places. That's not to say that the soaring majesty of 2000ft sandstone cliffs won't leave you awestruck, but it's the finer details that really make Zion stand apart. You don't need to be an amateur photographer to enjoy all that the park has to offer, however – though it is likely you'll fill up your memory card with pictures by trip's end.

Whether you're capturing the play of shadows along the canyon walls, sharing the satisfaction of pulling over the final ledge of Angels Landing, admiring the echoes of water in the curves of a slot canyon or wading knee-deep in the adventure-fueled fun of the Narrows, Zion will continue to leave you breathless, every step of the way.

Driving Distances (miles)

Grand Canyon North Rim (Park Entrance)	145				
Kolob Canyons (Park Entrance)	110	140			
Las Vegas	260	250	150		
Springdale	85	110	40	160	
Zion National Park (Springdale Entrance)	85	100	40	160	1
Bryce Canyon National Park (Park Entrance)					
Grand Canyon North Rim (Park Entrance)					
Kolob Canyons (Park Entrance)					
Las Vegas					
Springdale					

Note: Distances are approximate

Entrances

Zion encompasses roughly 148,000 acres of land, though the vast majority of visitors head straight for Zion Canyon, the park's main attraction. Zion Canyon is closest to the south (main) entrance, outside the town of Springdale on Hwy 9. This supremely scenic highway continues 11.5 miles east through the park and the Zion–Mt Carmel Tunnel to the east entrance, where visitors from Bryce and other Utah parks will likely arrive. The park has two other entirely separate access points: Kolob Terrace Rd, which climbs from the town of Virgin over 4000ft up to the canyon-top area west of the main canyon, and Kolob Canyons, 40 miles (one hour) northwest of the main canyon, reached via I-15.

DON'T MISS

Zion's unique landscape has to be seen to be believed – it may be smaller than the Grand Canyon, but in a way this makes it easier to handle, with perspectives that are both monumental and yet still manageable at the same time. Hop on the **shuttle** (p78) for the best park overview, as it transports you the length of the main canyon.

Check out the oasis-like hanging gardens at the **Emerald Pools** (p52) or **Weeping Rock** (p54), where plants like scarlet monkey flowers and golden columbine grow from shaded seeps, clinging to the canyon walls.

Adventure lovers will want to make the white-knuckle climb up to **Angels Landing** (p54), the park's legendary vertigo-inducing trail up the canyon walls and out across a narrow fin of sandstone, with precipitous drop-offs nearly 1500ft down to the canyon floor.

Equally famous is the hike down – or up – the Virgin River, known as **the Narrows** (p58). Wading through chest-deep water with your backpack hoisted overhead and sheer walls closing in makes this a quintessential Zion experience.

If you prefer an even tighter squeeze, then Zion's slot canyons are a must. **Hidden Canyon** (p56) is a good intro as you won't need any gear; other descents like **Keyhole** (p71), **Mystery** (p71) and the **Subway** (p63) all require rope, harnesses and wetsuits.

WHY 'ZION'?

One of the park's first Mormon settlers called the canyon 'Little Zion,' referring to it as a place of refuge. The original Paiute name was Mukuntuweap, meaning 'straight-up land.'

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Entrance fee (valid 7 days)** vehicle/motorcycle/cyclist \$30/25/15
- ➔ **Total area** 148,000 acres
- ➔ **Elevation range** 3660–8700ft
- ➔ **Average July temperature** 100°F (38°C)
- ➔ **Age of water seeping into the Emerald Pools** 12,000 years old

Reservations

Only one campground in Zion, Watchman, takes reservations. Consequently, you'll have to book months ahead if you want a guaranteed spot. Likewise, if you plan on backpacking or canyoneering, you should reserve your permits three months in advance.

Resources

- ➔ **Zion National Park** (www.nps.gov/zion)
- ➔ **Zion Natural History Association** (www.zionpark.org)
- ➔ **Zion Canyoneering Routes** (www.canyoneeringusa.com)
- ➔ **Cedar Breaks National Monument** (www.nps.gov/cebr)

When You Arrive

- ➔ Zion National Park is open 24/7 year-round. Park passes can be purchased at the south (main) and east entrance stations and at Kolob Canyons visitor center. Remember to hold on to your receipt if you are traveling to both the Zion Canyon and Kolob Canyons.
- ➔ If you are traveling between the south and east entrances and have a vehicle over 11ft 4in tall or 7ft 10in wide, you will need to pay an additional RV tunnel escort fee.