

Rivers & Redrock Itinerary

A 3-day adventure from Las Vegas to Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks.

While what happens in Vegas stays there, what happens in Southern Utah will stay with you forever. Utah's national parks are rejuvenating and exhilarating escapes from the built world to the natural world. Join travelers from all over the world for worship at the Temple of Sinawava in Zion then climb to 9,000 feet and peer down into an amphitheater of hoodoos.

Explore the itinerary below

DAY 1: Las Vegas to Zion National Park

Distance: 158 miles/2.5 hours

Zion translates to "The Promised Land," and that means for you some of the most spectacular hiking of your lifetime and impossible landscapes you will never forget. Carved by water and time beyond the stretch of the imagination, Zion National Park is a canyon that invites you to participate in the very forces that created it.

Zion National Park's soaring towers and massive monoliths create a spectacular grandeur. Over 100 years old, Zion is Utah's most visited park, welcoming more than 3 million visitors in 2012. There are numerous easy, self-guided trails and more adventurous or strenuous hikes can be found in the park.

Hike: 1) The Emerald Pools in the park is a relatively easy three-mile, round-trip, signature hike and is fun for the whole family. Likewise for the accessible **2)** Riverwalk at the Gateway to the Narrows. Or choose a more strenuous adventure in **3)** the Narrows. Taller and older kids will be able to join you for this hike in the Virgin River itself. With a little extra time, hire an experienced guide and grab a permit and hike even deeper to access the magnificent **4)** Subway section of The Narrows. **5)** Angel's Landing is a strenuous 5 miles and can take several hours, but if you've given yourself the time, this is a powerful hike you'll never forget.

Canyoneering: Zion National Park has become a favorite in this exciting sport. Dozens of canyons offer route finding, rappelling, swimming and hike challenges for beginners to advanced. Permit required.

Camping: All three campgrounds are popular, so make your reservations early. There are also several campgrounds a short drive outside the park. Zion lodging abounds in gateway communities along Highway 9 and in St. George.

Additional park activities: Backpacking, bicycling, birding, horse-back riding, rafting and ranger-led programs.

Get there:

There are actually two entrances to Zion on Highway 9. From Vegas, you'll arrive at the western entrance, 33 miles east of I-15. The northern Kolob Canyons section is accessible off I-15, 18 miles south of Cedar City.

You'll follow the [Zion Park Scenic Byway](#) state Route 9 through the towns of Hurricane, LaVerkin, Virgin, Rockdale, and Springdale. Each town has a special story to share, as the byway carves through the red rock of the Virgin River corridor.

Zion Camping and Lodging:

Side Trips:

State Parks:

[Quail Creek Reservoir State Park](#) boasts some of the warmest waters in the state. [Sand Hollow State Park](#) offers boating and fishing or ride the dunes of Sand Mountain on an off-highway vehicle and camp [in](#) one of two developed campgrounds.

DAY 2: Zion National Park to Bryce Canyon National Park

Distance: 88 miles/approximately 2 hours

Wake Up in Zion:

If you like, start your morning off with a leisure stroll and look for the 207 species of birds that call Zion National Park home. Bird lists available at the visitors centers.

Bryce Canyon National Park is a series of natural amphitheaters sunk into pink cliffs and filled with delicate red rock "hoodoos." The most brilliant hues of the park come alive with the rising and setting of the sun. Summertime offers a myriad of walking/hiking trails and a 37-mile scenic drive overlooking incredible vistas. Bryce Canyon Lodge, a national historic landmark, is open April through November.

Drive: Easy drives within the park have spectacular views of redrock and pine forest scenery. Stop along the way at the Sunrise, Sunset, Inspiration, and Bryce view points.

Hikes: There are many trails within Bryce Canyon National Park, from easy to strenuous, with varying backdrops. You can choose a hike to a waterfall, redrock hoodoos, spruce tree forests, the Bryce Amphitheater, and other famous landscapes. Navajo Loop Trail is a 1.3-mile hiking path that wanders through rock formations and draws you into the mystical hoodoos' perspective. If you have time, continue along the Queen's Garden trail for the best round-trip access to Bryce Canyon. The trail adds about 1.8 miles (3 km) and rises 320 feet back up to Sunrise Point. Alternatively, the park recommends taking the Queens Garden/Navajo Loop combination from Sunrise Point to the canyon floor then returning up the Navajo Trail. Depending on your pace, the approximately 3 miles (4.6 km) of the combination hike will take about three hours.

At Night: Stargaze under incredibly dark skies at 9,000 feet (2,700 m). The longest active astronomy program in the National Park Service inspires unforgettable awe.

Ranger Program: Park rangers will share interesting facts and activities about the park, including wildlife stories, geologic history, kids interests, full moon hikes, astronomy and snowshoeing.

Getting to Bryce Canyon:

Along the way you will drive the [Mount Carmel Scenic Byway](#) (with an option to stop for a short hike to get one last glimpse of Zion from the Canyon Overlook trail, just past the narrow tunnel) and a stretch of historic Highway 89, which is populated with a number of quaint towns originally established by Mormon

pioneers.

Bryce Lodging and Information:

Mental Note:

Come back in winter for cross-country skiing and showshoeing. See the park in relative solitude experience the magic of snow-dusted hoodoos for yourself.

DAY 3: Bryce Canyon National Park and the Drive Home

Wake Up: If you've stayed up for the stars, it might be hard to wake up for the sunrise. It's okay if you sleep in. You've earned the rest. If you do make it up, you'll be spellbound by the light breaking over an iconic horizon, and a dance of shadows like you've never before seen.

Stay and Ride: Tour guides offer 2-hour and 4-hour horse/mule rides along dedicated park trails for a different take on Bryce Canyon.

Return to Las Vegas back through Zion National Park or take the scenic byway route in the summer season through Panguitch and follow

[Utah's Patchwork Parkway National Scenic Byway](#) to Cedar Breaks National Monument. This will require an early start, but is well worth the detour. Total drive time minimum 6 hours. If you're camping, spend a night at 10,000 feet (more than 3,000 meters) at the Cedar Breaks Campground.

Side Trip:

Cedar Breaks National Monument's geology started around 60 million years ago with erosion, uplift, and deposition, and is popular today for wildflower walks in summer, brilliant leaf color in autumn, and showshoeing/snowmobiling in winter. Other year-round activities include hiking, camping, star parties, and ranger programs. Cedar Breaks Scenic Byway, [state Route 48](#), is the main road through Cedar Breaks National Monument.

Area Camping and Lodging:

[Panguitch, Cedar Breaks National Monument](#)