

Zion National Park

3-Day Deluxe Itinerary

Editor's Note

Zion is one of the most spectacular national parks in the entire country. There are actually several sections, but by far the most popular area is Zion Canyon. The scenery is breathtaking, and the park is home to two of the most iconic hikes in the world. It's easy to see why this is also one of the most popular parks in the United States.

With popularity comes people. It can be difficult to know the best way to beat the crowds, when to do the hikes (and what to do if you prefer not to hike), where to see the best views, and what else the park has to offer.

This is what this itinerary planner is here for.

Follow this detailed plan, while making choices along the way, and you will have the perfect 3-day itinerary tailored to your needs but without the stress and hassle of planning from scratch.

Have an amazing trip to Zion!

James

James Ian
Founder



Parks Collecting

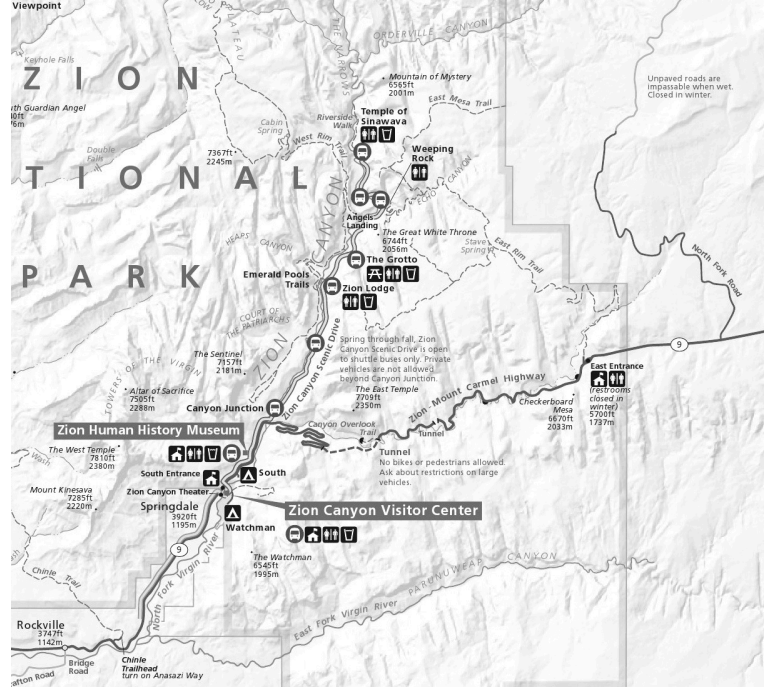


WHAT'S INCLUDED

- P2. Park Overview
- P3. Tips For Visiting Zion
- P5. How to Use This Itinerary
- P7. Itinerary Updates
- P8. Day One Schedule At A Glance
- P9. Day One Detailed Itinerary
- P26. Day Two Schedule At A Glance
- P27. Day Two Detailed Itinerary
- P40. Day Three Schedule At A Glance
- P41. Day Three Detailed Itinerary
- P60. Adjusting Your Schedule
- P61. Useful Links
- P64. Notes

Bonus Extras

- Accommodations Guide
- Dining Guide
- Shuttle Guide



PARK OVERVIEW

Getting Your Bearings

There are actually four main sections to Zion National Park. The section that most people visit - and where you'll spend most of your time on this itinerary - is **Zion Canyon**. This is the main canyon. A free [shuttle bus](#) runs along the floor of the canyon for most of the year, and it's closed to regular traffic whenever the shuttle is operating. There is also the **Upper East Canyon** (East Section), which is atop the main canyon. You'll get to explore part of this area on your trip, too.

Another area is **Kolob Terrace**. This is much less visited, and a welcome respite from the crowds. You'll also have a chance to visit here. The fourth section is **Kolob Canyons**, located in the isolated northwestern section of Zion National Park, 40 miles from the main canyon and accessed via a separate entrance. While it is certainly worth visiting, due to logistics, it's not included in this itinerary.

The town of **Springdale** is just outside the main South Entrance, and most people stay there, although there are other places to stay, too.

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TIPS FOR VISITING

Entrance Fee

Visit the [NPS website](#) for the latest fees. If you plan to visit more than a couple of parks in a year, I recommend buying an [America The Beautiful Pass](#).

Getting There

The major gateway city is **Springdale**, and this is where this itinerary assumes you are based. There's a small regional airport in St George, an hour away, but the nearest major airport is Las Vegas Harry Reid International Airport, about 3 hours' drive away.

[>>> Click here to book your flights](#)

[>>> Click here to book your rental car](#)

Due to its proximity to **Bryce Canyon National Park**, most people combine a trip to both parks, which I recommend. I suggest starting in Bryce Canyon National Park - you can get there from Las Vegas or include the two parks in an epic road trip around Utah's Big Five national parks. From Bryce Canyon, drive south to Zion and enter the park at the East Entrance. At the end of your trip to Zion, you can drive to Las Vegas or even the Grand Canyon. The same airports service Bryce Canyon.

If you are visiting Bryce Canyon as well, you can get my [Bryce Canyon Itinerary](#) at a 20% with discount code ZNNP.

If you come from Bryce Canyon National Park, or go to there after, you'll go through Zion's East Entrance (you'll do this on Day 3 of the itinerary also). This means you'll go through the **Zion- Mt. Carmel Tunnel**. When this was built in the 1920's, it was an engineering marvel; however, large vehicles were also less common, and it wasn't created to accommodate large RVs.



TIPS FOR VISITING

If your vehicle is 11'4" -13'1" tall or 7'10" wide or wider, you'll need one-way traffic control. The NPS will close the tunnel to two-way traffic to allow large vehicles to proceed through the tunnel by themselves so they can successfully navigate the turns. The hours vary throughout the year (you can't go through the tunnel outside those hours, so make sure you enter/ exit during that window of time) and there is a fee. You can arrange this at the Entrance Gates. Check the [NPS website](#) for times and fees.

If you're coming straight from, or going to, Bryce Canyon National Park, see the **Adjusting Your Schedule** section for how to do this.

Getting Around

You will take the free and mandatory **shuttle** along Zion Canyon for most of the year. This leaves from the Visitor Center near the South Entrance. There is parking at the Visitor Center near the south gate and in Springdale.

The Visitor Center parking lots are usually full by 8:00AM in summer, so if you get a late start, park in Springdale (or leave it at your accommodation if you're staying there) and catch the free Springdale town shuttle to the Visitor Center.

There are often long lines for the national park shuttle, so get there as early as possible. They are frequent and lines do move pretty quickly. Read more details in the [Shuttle Guide](#).

Day 3 of the itinerary includes sections of the park you can only access with **your own vehicle**. There is one section that need a high clearance vehicle or 4WD/ AWD for, but I've provided an alternative, so you'll be fine with a regular vehicle. You can drive most places in an RV or with a trailer, but where an RV has limitations, this is clearly indicated, and an alternative is provided.



HOW TO USE THIS ITINERARY

This itinerary planner is designed to balance taking away the overwhelm with still giving you the freedom to **create an itinerary that suits your interests** and comfort level.

Please read all this information carefully so you can take full advantage of the itinerary planner.



Hikes

Where appropriate, several hike options are given, based on varying levels of difficulty and interest. In this case, you can **choose the hike** that best suits you.



Description

Includes **don't-miss sights and sites**. Where this includes wildlife, keep in mind that although these are common places to see wildlife, wild animals don't always show up on cue, so I can't promise you will see any animals.



Meals

Meal suggestions or times are given. Detailed options are provided in the [Dining Guide](#).



Driving Directions

Detailed **driving directions** are provided for each day. I have indicated where a road is closed to RVs and/ or trailers.



Things To Note

Includes any warnings, **important information**, considerations or closures.



Highlights

There are great views throughout the park, but these are especially **famous viewpoints and/ or sights**.



Less-Active Options

To really get the most out of the national parks, you need to leave the roads, but that doesn't mean you can't have an awesome time if you can't or prefer not to hike.

Non-hiking options are great for those with **limited mobility or fitness**.

Some of these suggestions involve no walking at all, while others may involve short distances on flat or mostly flat paths.



Accommodations

This itinerary is based around you staying in nearby **Springdale**. Accommodation options in Springdale are provided in the [Accommodations Guide](#). However, I recommend staying inside the park if possible and you will also find all of the national park lodges and campgrounds in the [Accommodations Guide](#). I also list some places to stay nearby.

If you do stay somewhere other than Springdale, read the **Adjusting Your Schedule** section so you can easily adapt your schedule based on where you stay.



Recommended

This symbol indicates that this is my **recommended choice**. However, you can still choose whichever option best suits your comfort level and interests.



HOW TO USE THIS ITINERARY

The itinerary is **timed** for the best hiking conditions, the best chance of getting a parking space, and the best chance of shorter lines at the shuttle.

Consequently, the itinerary has you **getting up early** in the morning. Zion is extremely popular and by getting into the park early, you will avoid having to wait in line to get through the park entrance and minimize your chances of long lines for the shuttle. This is also the best light for photos. The national parks are more popular than ever, so the earlier you get there, the better.

If you're coming straight from, or going to, Bryce Canyon National Park, see the **Adjusting Your Schedule** section for how to do this.

The itinerary has a detailed breakdown of suggested **activities**, with **alternatives** or **flexible options** in the morning and afternoon. Each of the alternate options take about the same length of time, so you can choose one, then move on to the next activity no matter which option you chose.

I strongly suggest **sticking to the order of events** in the schedule each day. They are arranged and timed intentionally so that you get the most out of your trip.

The days are also **arranged in this order** for a reason. However, you can **move them around if you need to**. For example, if you can get a permit for Angels Landing on a different day, take it! and move the days around. I've scheduled The Narrows for Day 2 to give you a chance to pick up any rental gear at the end of Day 1, but also to give you a small buffer in case the slot canyon is closed for Day 2 due to flash floods or high water volumes. If that's the case, do Day 3 on the second day and try again for The Narrows the next day. On Day 3, you can easily leave from the East Section direct to Bryce Canyon if you're headed there after Zion (and skip Kolob Terrace).

Note that the **maps** here are designed to give you an overview of the park and where to go, but are no replacement for a detailed map, especially of the hiking trails. You can pick up maps at a Visitor Center or buy a very detailed printed topographic map there or before you go.



ITINERARY UPDATES

This itinerary is reviewed annually, but is not updated in real time, throughout each year. However, I want you to have the best trip possible and for this itinerary to be as useful as possible. So, I do provide updates on changing conditions such as road works, facilities closures, trail closures, etc. that may affect part of this itinerary.

[CHECK FOR ITINERARY UPDATES HERE](#)

I update this regularly, so I recommend checking frequently, especially as your trip gets closer.

THE DAY BEFORE



You will arrive in Springdale (or wherever your accommodation is).

Check the [Accommodation Guide](#) to find a place to stay in Springdale and another nearby area, including inside the national park.



Use the [Dining Guide](#) to find somewhere for dinner.



DAY 1 AT A GLANCE

You'll start your day with the most popular hike in Zion - and one of the most famous hikes in the country - Angels Landing. You need a permit for the full hike, but there are other options if you can't get one (or would prefer not to cross the narrow ridge involved). In the afternoon, you'll explore Emerald Pools at your own comfort level.

OPTION A [P.9,10-12]

6:15AM: Park Visitor Center
 7:00AM: Catch shuttle to Grotto *
 7:30AM: Start **Angels Landing hike****
 12:00PM: End Angels Landing hike.
 Lunch in Grotto picnic area or catch shuttle to Zion Lodge
 12:15PM: Lunch

OPTION B [P.9,13-14]

7:00AM: Park Visitor Center
 7:30AM: Catch shuttle to Grotto *
 8:00AM: Start hike to **Scout Lookout**
 11:00AM: End Scout Lookout hike.
 Catch shuttle to Lodge
 11:30AM: Lunch

OPTION C1 [P.15, 16] [summer***]

7:30AM: Park Visitor Center. Visit outside section of Visitor Center
 8:00AM: Inside Visitor Center
 8:30AM: Walk first half **Pa'Rus Trail**
 9:00AM: **Zion Human History Museum**
 9:45AM: Walk second half Pa'Rus Trail
 10:15AM: Canyon Junction Bridge. Take next shuttle to **Big Bend**
 10:30AM: Big Bend

OPTION C2 [P.15,17] [spring/fall***]

7:30AM: Park Visitor Center. Visit outside section of Visitor Center
 8:00AM: Inside Visitor Center
 8:30AM: Walk **Pa'Rus Trail**
 9:30AM: Canyon Junction Bridge. Take next shuttle to Museum
 10:00AM: **Zion Human History Museum**
 10:45AM: Shuttle to **Big Bend**
 11:00AM: Big Bend

[P.18]

11:05AM: Walk to Menu Falls
 11:25AM: **Menu Falls**
 11:35AM: Walk to **Temple of Sinawava**
 11:50AM: Arrive Temple of Sinawava
 12:00PM: Shuttle to Zion Lodge
 12:15PM: Lunch

OPTION A [P.19-22]

1:30PM: **Lower Emerald Pools Trail**
 2:10PM: Connector Trail to **Middle Emerald Pools**
 2:30PM: **Upper Emerald Pools Trail** (round-trip)
 3:45PM: **Kayenta Trail**
 4:30PM: **Grotto Trail** (or take shuttle back to Springdale)
 5:00PM: Arrive Zion Lodge. Take shuttle to Springdale

OPTION B [P.19-21, 23]

1:30PM: **Lower Emerald Pools Trail**
 2:10PM: Connector Trail to **Middle Emerald Pools**
 2:30PM: **Upper Emerald Pools Trail** (round-trip)
 3:45PM: **Middle Emerald Pools Trail**
 4:30PM: Arrive Zion Lodge. Take shuttle to Springdale

OPTION C [P.19-21,24]

1:30PM: **Lower Emerald Pools Trail**
 2:10PM: Connector Trail to **Middle Emerald Pools**
 2:30PM: **Middle Emerald Pools Trail**
 3:15PM: Arrive Zion Lodge.

If you didn't do Option C in the morning, choose either Big Bend-Menu Falls-Temple of Sinawava OR Museum. If you did Option C, return to Springdale and explore town.

OPTION D [P.19-21,25]

1:30PM: **Lower Emerald Pools Trail**
 2:10PM: Return on **Lower Emerald Pools Trail**
 2:40PM: Arrive Zion Lodge.

If you didn't do Option C in the morning, do Big Bend-Menu Falls-Temple of Sinawava AND Museum. If you did Option C, return to Springdale and explore town.



Check at Visitor Center if The Narrows is expected to be open tomorrow + double check time of first shuttle
 Go to Springdale and pick up rental gear if you rented any equipment for The Narrows
 Get lunch for picnic tomorrow if choosing Option A tomorrow morning (longer Narrows hike)



5:30 | 6:00 PM: Dinner

*Or rent a bicycle or e-bike and skip the shuttle
 **You need to have a permit for the full Angels Landing hike
 *** Museum opens 9:00AM summer and 10:00AM spring and fall



DAY 1

MORNING: 6:15AM - 1:30PM

Angels Landing or Pa'Rus Trail

Today you'll hike all or part of the famous Angels Landing trail or, if you prefer a less strenuous activity level, walk the easy Pa'Rus Trail.

Angels Landing



This is the most popular hike in the park. The views are sensational. The entire hike is 2.7 miles each way (out and back). The last 0.5 miles (each way) from Scout Lookout to Angels Landing involves hiking along a **narrow ridge with steep drop offs** on both sides. There is a **chain** to hold on to. This section could get very congested and be dangerous, so the National Park Service implemented a **permit lottery system** for this section of the hike.

Read my [Guide to Angels Landing Permits](#) for more details about how and when to get them. Most permits are issued in advance, but some are kept for a 'day-before' lottery.



What can you do if you can't get a permit in advance?

- 1) Try each day to get a permit in the 'day-before' lottery. Change the schedule around to try each day if necessary.
- 2) If you try but can't get a permit, you can choose Option B and hike to Scout Landing. This is 2.2 miles of the 2.7-mile (each way) hike and includes the whole trail except the narrow ridge with chains. The views are still amazing. You do NOT need a permit for this part of the hike.

What should you do if you're afraid of heights or have very young children?

The hike to Scout Landing is also a great option if you're like me and are afraid of heights and are freaked out by the chained section. There are still drop offs on this part of the hike, but the path is wide, and it isn't uncommon for young kids - under careful parental control - to hike this section.



DIRECTIONS: Springdale - Zion Visitor Center - Shuttle

Drive east along the main road through Springdale (State Route 9). Enter the park and almost immediately after, turn right into the Visitor Center parking area. Park in the main lot. Walk to the shuttle stop.



DAY 1

MORNING: 6:15AM - 1:30PM



OPTION A: The entire Angels Landing Trail



Breakfast

Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



Adjusting for different permit timeslots

Try to get a permit for the **early morning timeslot** if you can. There will be fewer people on the trail when you start, you'll skip the worst of the heat if you're hiking in summer, and the light is best for photos (mid-afternoon is the worst time for photos).

However, if you can only get a **later morning slot**, start the day's schedule a little later, aiming to be at the trailhead at 9:00AM. Arrive at the Visitor Center parking lot before 8:00AM or it may be full and spend some time in the Visitor Center if need be.

If you get an **afternoon timeslot**, reverse the AM/ PM schedule and hike to Emerald Pools in the morning. Aim to start the Angels Landing hike around 2:00PM.



Shuttle (or cycle) to Grotto 7:00AM

You want to try to get on the **first shuttle** of the day. Lines start to form at least 30 minutes beforehand in the busy summer months. I recommend getting in line by no later than 6:30AM. You will need to stand in line for about half an hour, but it will be worth it when you're on the trail with only a handful of people.

Get off at the Grotto stop.



An alternative to the shuttle is to **rent a bicycle or e-bike** in Springdale and ride to the trailhead. This way, you can skip the lines and even get on the trail before the first shuttle arrives! There are several operators in Springdale offering bike rental. One is [Zion Cycles](#). They do half-day and full-day rentals, and, for an additional fee, you can pick the bike up at 6:30PM the day before, so you can get an early start!



DAY 1

MORNING: 6:15AM - 1:30PM

Angels Landing hike 7:30AM



There is a waterfill station, restrooms and picnic tables at the Grotto. There are also restrooms at Scout Landing, but they're not very nice.



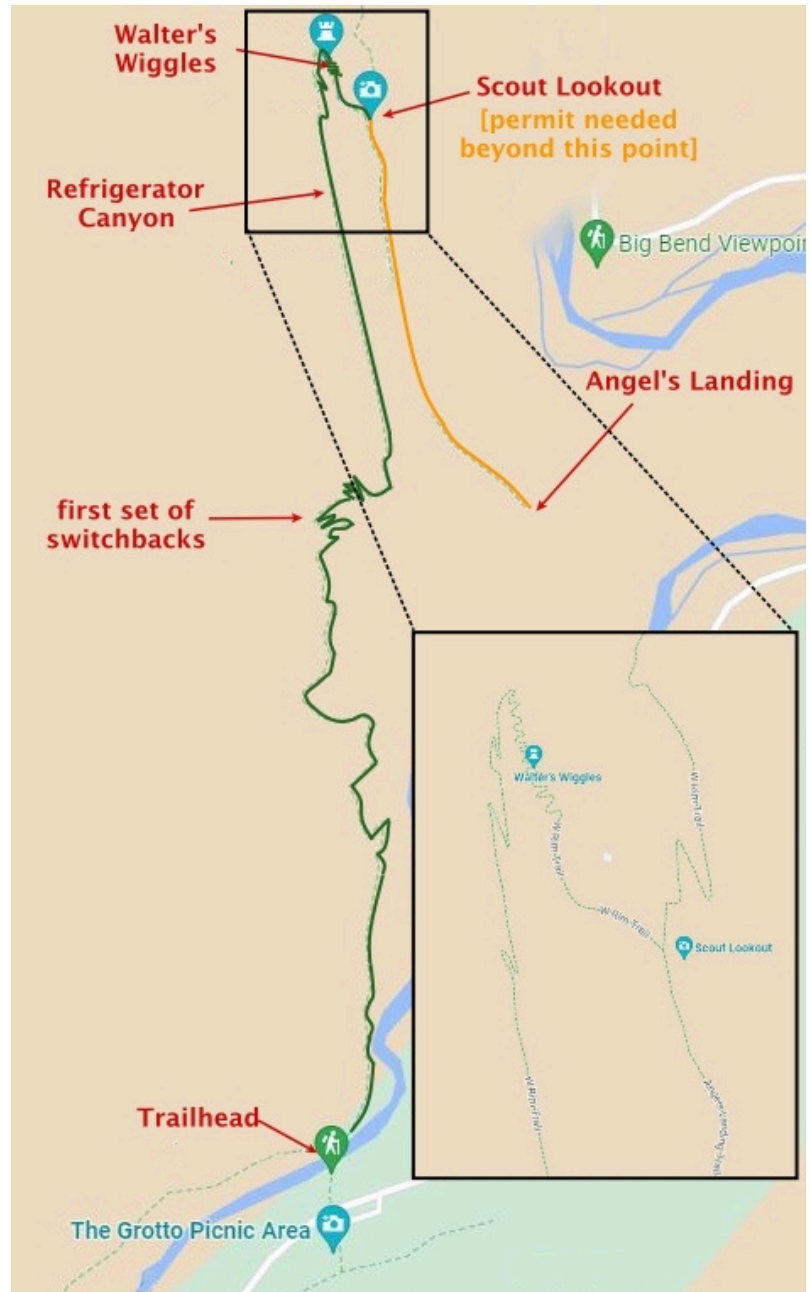
The entire trail is 5.4 miles round trip.

The hike starts flat and easy on the West Rim Trail along the Virgin River. It then heads away from the river. About one mile in, you head up the first set of switchbacks. You'll arrive in Refrigerator Canyon, where there is an easy, flat - and appropriately cool - section. This is a good place to rest from the heat if you're hiking in summer.

The trail then heads up a very steep series of 21 short switchbacks called

Walter's Wiggles. This ends at a flat area called Scout Landing. There are (not very nice) restrooms and great views.

This is the start of the section of the trail that you need a permit for.





DAY 1

MORNING: 6:15AM - 1:30PM



Angels Landing hike

This last section is 0.5 miles each way. The trail goes along the top of a very narrow ridge with steep drop offs on both sides. There is a chain to hold on to for most of the way, but people are going in both directions and there is only one chain.



Practice caution. People have died on this trail!



When you arrive at Angels Landing, there is an area to sit down and enjoy the breathtaking views down Zion Canyon.

When you're ready, return the way you came.



Lunch 12:15PM

There is a picnic area at the Grotto area, near the trailhead. Have a picnic here or catch the shuttle or walk the flat Grotto Trail (30 minutes) to Zion Lodge. Refer to the [Dining Guide](#) for lunch options at Zion Lodge.



DAY 1

MORNING: 7:00AM - 1:30PM

OPTION B: Angels Landing Trail to Scout Lookout

If you're choosing this option because you missed out on a permit for the Angels Landing chained section, you may initially feel like this is a consolation prize. But, as consolations go, it's pretty great. It is actually most of the trail - you just miss the last 0.5 miles - and the views are still incredible by any standards.



Breakfast

Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



Shuttle (or cycle) to Grotto 7:30AM

Aim to get the **7:30AM shuttle**. You will miss the initial first shuttle crowds and not have to get up quite so early, but will still miss the worst crowds (it may not feel it - at the height of summer, there will still be lots of people even at this time of the morning). If you can get an even earlier start, then I recommend that, as the crowds will only grow throughout the day.

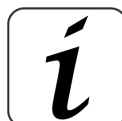
Get off at the Grotto stop.



An alternative to the shuttle is to **rent a bicycle or e-bike** in Springdale and ride to the trailhead. This way, you can skip the lines and even get on the trail before the first shuttle arrives! There are several operators in Springdale offering bike rental. One is [Zion Cycles](#). They do half-day and full-day rentals, and, for an additional fee, you can pick the bike up at 6:30PM the day before, so you can get an early start!



Scout Lookout hike 8:00AM



There is a waterfill station, restrooms and picnic tables at the Grotto. There are also restrooms at Scout Landing, but they're not very nice.

The entire trail is 4.4 miles.



The hike starts flat and easy on the West Rim Trail along the Virgin River. It then heads away from the river.



DAY 1

MORNING: 7:00AM - 1:30PM



Scout Lookout hike

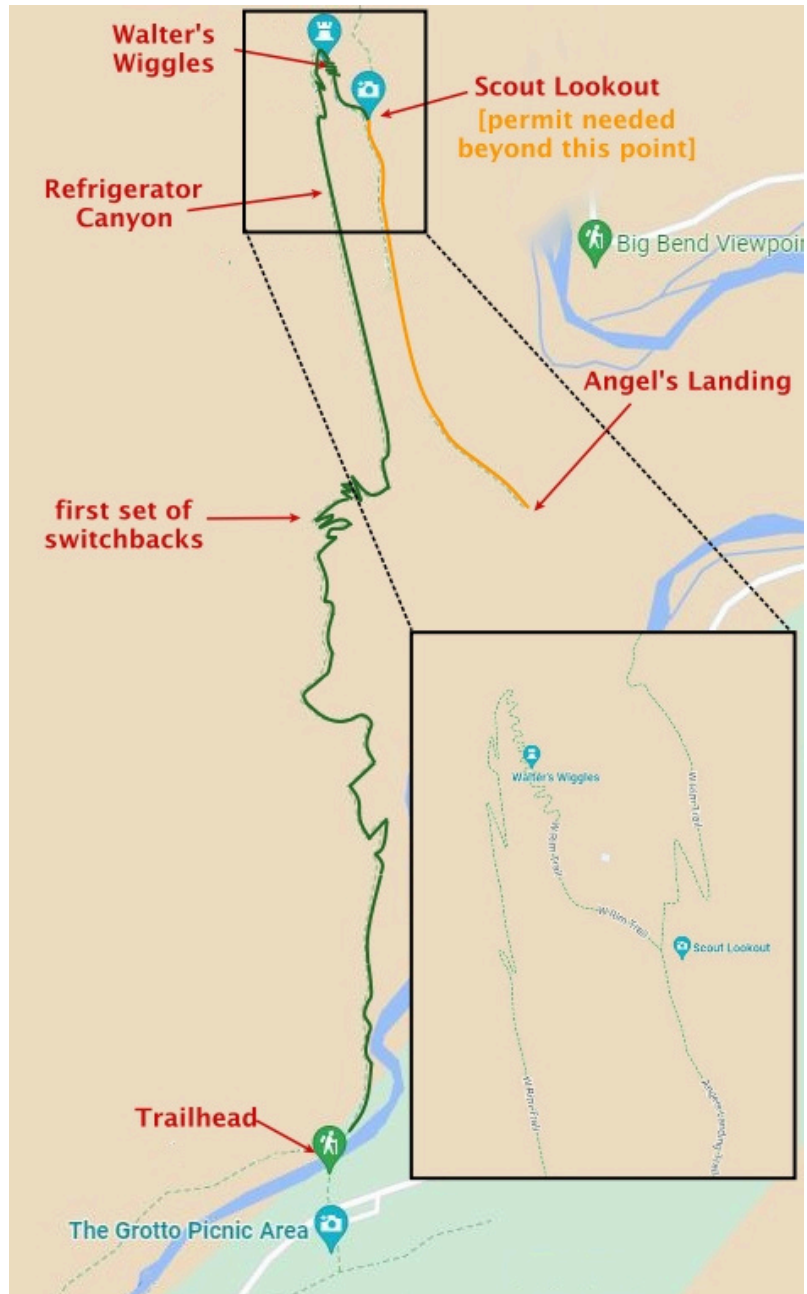
About one mile in, you head up the first set of switchbacks. You'll arrive in Refrigerator Canyon, where there is an easy, flat - and appropriately cool - section. This is a good place to rest from the heat if you're hiking in summer.

The trail then heads up a very steep series of 21 short switchbacks called Walter's Wiggles. This ends at a flat area, which is your destination, Scout Landing.



There are (not very nice) restrooms and great views. You can see the ridge and trail leading to Angels Landing and you also have a view down Zion Canyon.

When you're ready, return the same way.



Lunch 12:15PM

Catch the shuttle or walk the flat Grotto Trail (30 minutes) to Zion Lodge. Refer to the [Dining Guide](#) for lunch options at Zion Lodge.



DAY 1

MORNING: 7:30AM - 1:30PM

OPTION C: Pa'Rus Trail & Museum of Human History

If a 4+-mile hike doesn't rock your boat, then this option is for you. You'll spend some time at the Visitor Center, walk the lovely - and easy - Pa'Rus Trail, and visit the Zion Museum of Human History. If you prefer not to walk the Pa'Rus Trail, you can take the shuttle from stop to stop and relax more at each location.

You'll notice that there's a **Summer option** and a **Spring/ Fall alternative**. The museum opens at 9:00AM in summer, which is most convenient and fits in well with the timings. However, in spring and fall, it doesn't open until 10:00AM. I've made an adjustment, which has you backtracking just a bit to fit in with this timing. The museum is closed in winter, so if you're visiting then, you can get a later start or spend longer at the Visitor Center and/ or Lodge to adjust.



Breakfast

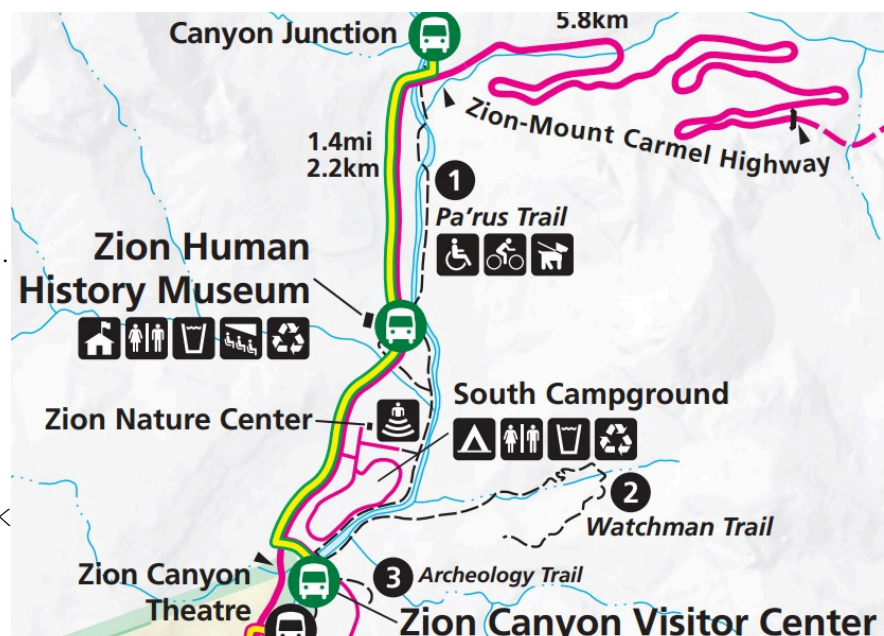
Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



Visitor Center 7:30AM

The Visitor Center doesn't open until 8:00AM, but the parking lot is often full by then in summer, so I recommend getting there earlier.

There are outdoor panels with information exhibits. When the center opens, go inside. There are more interpretive displays, and a store. If you're planning to hike The Narrows, ask a ranger about conditions, and pick up a map.





DAY 1

EARLY MORNING: 7:30AM - 11:05AM

OPTION C1: Pa'Rus Trail & Museum of Human History

Choose this option in **summer**, when the museum opens at 9:00AM.



Pa'Rus Trail 8:30AM

This is very easy, flat, paved trail that is wheelchair accessible. It's the only trail in the park that allows pets and bicycles.

From the Visitor Center, head north and cross a footbridge over the Virgin River. The wide path follows alongside the Virgin River. In the spring, the surrounding area is often filled with wildflowers. You may see mule deer, foxes and coyotes along the way.

After 0.8 miles, you'll come to a connector trail on the left to the Zion Human History Museum. Take this and 0.2 miles further along, you'll come to the museum.



Zion Human History Museum 9:00AM

This small museum has permanent and temporary exhibits showcasing the human history of Zion National Park, including Native American life and culture, and historic pioneer settlement in the area. On the hour and half hour, there's a free 22-minute film that gives a great overview of the park. There's also a small store run by the Zion National Park Forever Project.



Pa'Rus Trail 9:45AM

Head back along the connector trail to the Pa'Rus Trail and continue in the same direction, away from the Visitor Center. The trail continues for another mile, crossing a couple of footbridges, until you come to the end at **Canyon Junction**. This is the intersection between Zion Canyon Scenic Drive and Route 9, and the start of the section of the canyon that you can't drive (except in winter when the shuttle doesn't run). The views here are pretty great.



Take the next shuttle and get off at **Big Bend**, the second last stop.



DAY 1

EARLY MORNING: 7:30AM - 11:05AM

OPTION C2: Pa'Rus Trail & Museum of Human History

Choose this option in **spring/ fall**, when the museum opens at 10:00AM.



Pa'Rus Trail 8:30AM

This is very easy, flat, paved trail that is wheelchair accessible. It's the only trail in the park that allows pets and bicycles.

From the Visitor Center, head north and cross a footbridge over the Virgin River. The wide path follows alongside the Virgin River, crossing the river over footbridges a couple of times. In the spring, the surrounding area is often filled with wildflowers. You may see mule deer, foxes and coyotes along the way.

After 1.8 miles, you come to the end at Canyon Junction. This is the intersection between Zion Canyon Scenic Drive and Route 9, and the start of the section of the canyon that you can't drive (except in winter when the shuttle doesn't run). The views here are pretty great.



Take the next shuttle back towards the Visitor Center and get off at the next stop, Zion Museum.



Zion Human History Museum 10:00AM

This small museum has permanent and temporary exhibits showcasing the human history of Zion National Park, including Native American life and culture and historic pioneer settlement in the area. On the hour and half hour, there's a free 22-minute film that gives a great overview of the park. There's also a small store run by the Zion National Park Forever Project.



Take the next shuttle into the canyon and get off at Big Bend, the second last stop.



DAY 1

LATE MORNING: 11:05AM - 1:30PM

OPTION C: Big Bend - Menu Falls



Big Bend 10:30AM | 11:00AM

The views at Big Bend, a wide bend in the Virgin River, are superb. You can see the Great White Throne to the south and other dramatic cliff faces (keep an eye out for rock climbers). There is a viewpoint, but it's also one of the few places that can get access to the Virgin River. There's a sandy 'beach', and the cottonwood trees are a blaze of gold in the fall. Wild turkeys and California condors are often seen here.



Menu Falls walk 11:05AM

If you've had enough walking for now, you can take the shuttle to the Temple of Sinawava, but it's an easy walk, and you can stop off at a small waterfall that few people see.

From Big Bend, walk along the road (keep an eye out for shuttle buses!) towards the end of the canyon (away from Springdale) for about half a mile. Look to your right (east) for a short path that leads to an alcove in the forest. There is a small wooden viewing deck from where you can see Menu Falls.



Menu Falls was given its name because a picture of it was included on the cover of the first Zion Lodge menu. The small waterfall is just 10 feet high and has a small flow, but it's a lovely cool spot that is rarely crowded.



Continue walking to the Temple of Sinawava. You can walk along the road, but there is also a small trail of use along the Virgin River that's a little nicer.

At the Temple of Sinawava, catch the next shuttle to Zion Lodge (or have a picnic there if you prefer).



Lunch 12:15PM

Refer to the [Dining Guide](#) for lunch options at Zion Lodge.



DAY 1

AFTERNOON: 1:30PM - 5:30PM

Emerald Pools



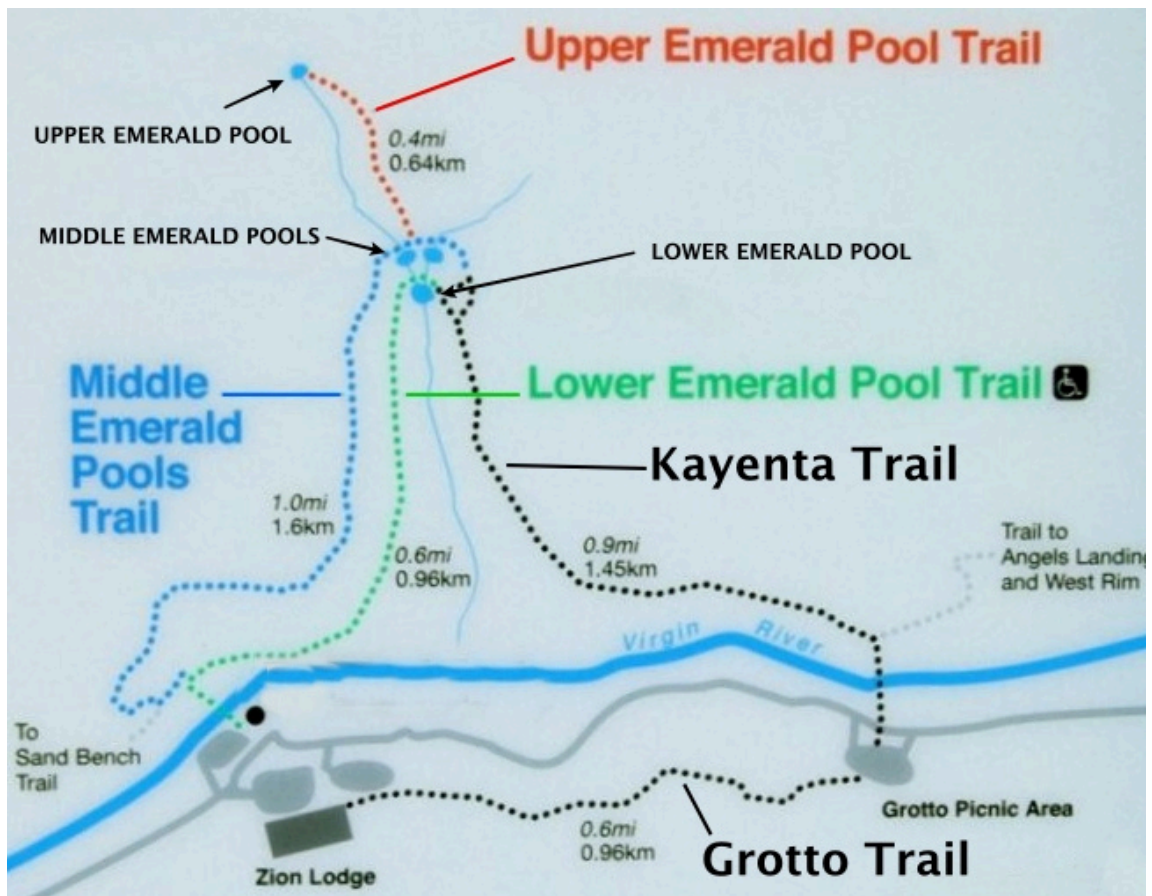
The Emerald Pools are several beautiful emerald green pools surrounded by lush vegetation and connected by a couple of tall waterfalls.



There is water in the pools year-round, and they are always beautiful, but the waterfalls are often reduced to a trickle in summer, and the stream that the Lower Emerald Pool Trail goes along is often dried up in the hottest summer months. No swimming is allowed at any time of year because the environment is fragile, and the pools are an essential source of water for wildlife.

The pools are reached by a network of trails, and you can choose which one(s) to hike, depending on your level of fitness and interest.

The main starting point is Zion Lodge.





DAY 1

AFTERNOON: 1:30PM - 5:30PM



Lower Emerald Pool

Lower Emerald Pool is a lush oasis with some plants even growing on the cliff face, forming a beautiful hanging garden. There's an alcove below a rock overhang where a waterfall drops (or drips) down from the middle pools above, forming the lower pool. The trail actually crosses this alcove.



The **Lower Emerald Pool Trail** is the easiest of the Emerald Pool trails and goes to the bottom pool. It's paved and wheelchair accessible. From the Zion Lodge shuttle stop, head to your right and follow the signs to the Emerald Pools Trailhead. Cross the footbridge to the trailhead.

The trail starts alongside the banks of the Virgin River for a short distance before turning left and entering pinyon-juniper woodland, following a stream the rest of the way.

You can return the way you came (Option D) or continue up the **connector trail** to the Middle Emerald Pools above (Options A-C). You'll pass the junction with the Kayenta Trail (which you'll take to return after you've been to the Upper Emerald Pool if you choose Option A) on the right. The connector trail is dirt, sand, more rugged and rock covered.



Middle Emerald Pools

The **Middle Emerald Pools** can be reached via the short connector trail from the Lower Emerald Pool below, or from the Lodge via the Middle Emerald Pool Trail.

Using the Connector Trail, you'll arrive at the top of the cliff you just walked under and see the beautiful pools that form the start of the waterfall that drops down to the Lower Emerald Pool, which you saw below. In turn, they are pools here are fed from the Upper Emerald Pool above it. It's a beautiful area.



DAY 1

AFTERNOON: 1:30PM - 5:30PM



Middle Emerald Pools

You can take the **Middle Emerald Pool Trail** back to the Lodge (Options B and C). The trail is an unpaved sandstone ledge that runs above and parallel to the Lower Emerald Pool trail. There are moderate drop offs and there's a somewhat steep descent at the end near the Lodge trailhead.



Upper Emerald Pool

From the Middle Emerald Pools, there's a side trail (out-and-back) that climbs to the **Upper Emerald Pool**. This is the largest of the pools. It's located at the bottom of steep 300-foot-high cliff that surround the area on three sides, forming a dramatic natural amphitheater. Water drops (or drips) down a vertical canyon wall from the mouth of Heaps Canyon far above.



The **Upper Emerald Pool Trail** (Options A and B) is more challenging and is a fairly steep climb up a sandy and rocky trail. There's a 200 feet elevation change in 0.5 miles.

Return the same way back to the Middle Emerald Pools. You can then return to the Lodge via the Middle Emerald Pools Trail (Option B) or take the Kayenta Trail to the Grotto (Option A).



Other Trails

The unpaved **Kayenta Trail** leaves from the connector trail between the Middle and Lower Pools and heads out to the Grotto (0.9 miles). There are moderate drop offs. There are restrooms and water filling stations at the Grotto.

From the Grotto, you can take the Grotto Trail back to Zion Lodge to make a full loop, or (my recommendation), just hop on the shuttle back to Springdale.

The **Grotto Trail** is a flat trail that is near the road for most of the way. It's not uncommon to see wildlife on this trail.



DAY 1

AFTERNOON: 1:30PM - 5:30PM

Emerald Pools



OPTION A: Up to 2 hours 55 minutes | 3.5 miles | Moderate Lower-Middle-Upper Emerald Pools Hike 1:30PM

- + **Lower Emerald Pool Trail** (30 minutes/ 0.7 miles)
- + Connector Trail to **Middle Emerald Pools** (10 minutes/ 0.2 miles)
- + **Upper Emerald Pools Trail** round trip (60 minutes/ 1.0 miles)
- + **Kayenta Trail** to Grotto shuttle stop (45 minutes/ 1.0 mile)
- + Shuttle from Grotto OR **Grotto Trail** to Lodge (30 minutes/ 0.5 miles)

This, together with Option B, is the most energetic option, but you get to visit all the pools. This route either doesn't return to the lodge (and you just take the shuttle back to Springdale) or, if you choose to, makes a loop that then makes this the longest hike this afternoon.

From Zion Lodge, take the Lower Emerald Pool Trail. Spend about 10 minutes there, then take the connector trail up to the Middle Emerald Pools. After another 10 minutes or so there, climb up to the Upper Emerald Pool. This is a particularly lovely spot, so hang out for about 15 minutes before returning to the Middle Pools. Start back down to the Lower Pool but take the Kayenta Trail off the connector trail. When you get to the Grotto, you can either take the shuttle back to Springdale (which is what I'd do), or, if you want to complete the loop, walk along the Grotto Trail back to the Lodge (this takes about half an hour).



Dinner 5:30 | 6:00PM

Use the [Dining Guide](#) to find a place for dinner at Zion Lodge, in Springdale, or near your accommodation.



Accommodations

Use the [Accommodations Guide](#) to find somewhere to stay.



Evening

Check at the Visitor Center for any **evening ranger programs**.



If you want to the **sunset**, a popular place is Canyon Junction Bridge. There's a lovely view of Watchman Tower and the Virgin River.



DAY 1

AFTERNOON: 1:30PM - 5:30PM

Emerald Pools



OPTION B: 2 hours 25 minutes | 3.1 miles | Moderate

Lower-Middle-Upper Emerald Pools Hike 1:30PM

- + **Lower Emerald Pool Trail** (30 minutes/ 0.7 miles)
- + Connector Trail to **Middle Emerald Pools** (10 minutes/ 0.2 miles)
- + **Upper Emerald Pools Trail** round trip (60 minutes/ 1.0 mile)
- + return to Lodge via **Middle Emerald Pools Trail** (45 minutes/ 1.1 miles)

This, together with Option A, is the most energetic option, but you get to visit all the pools. This route returns to the lodge via a different route.

From Zion Lodge, take the Lower Emerald Pool Trail. Spend about 10 minutes there, then take the connector trail up to the Middle Emerald Pools. After another 10 minutes or so there, climb up to the Upper Emerald Pool. This is a particularly lovely spot, so hang out for about 15 minutes before returning to the Middle Pools. Return to Zion Lodge via the Middle Emerald Pools Trail.



Dinner 5:30 PM

Either hang out at the Lodge until dinner time or take the shuttle back to Springdale. Use the [Dining Guide](#) to find a place for dinner at Zion Lodge, in Springdale, or near your accommodation.



Accommodations

Use the [Accommodations Guide](#) to find somewhere to stay.



Evening

Check at the Visitor Center for any **evening ranger programs**.



If you want to the **sunset**, a popular place is Canyon Junction Bridge. There's a lovely view of Watchman Tower and the Virgin River.



DAY 1

AFTERNOON: 1:30PM - 5:30PM

Emerald Pools



OPTION C: 1 hours 25 minutes | 2.0 miles | Moderate

Lower-Middle Emerald Pools Hike 1:30PM

- + **Lower Emerald Pool Trail** (30 minutes/ 0.7 miles)
- + Connector Trail to **Middle Emerald Pools** (10 minutes/ 0.2 miles)
- + return via **Middle Emerald Pools Trail** (45 minutes/ 1.1 miles)

This option cuts out the steep climb to the Upper Pools, but still takes in the Lower and Middle Pools. For variety, you return to Zion Lodge via the Middle Emerald Pools Trail, which is rated as moderate mostly because of the descent at the end.

From Zion Lodge, take the Lower Emerald Pool Trail. Spend about 10 minutes there, then take the connector trail up to the Middle Emerald Pools. After another 10 minutes or so there, return to Zion Lodge via the Middle Emerald Pools Trail.



Additional Activities 3:15PM

If you didn't do Option C in the morning, choose either Big Bend-Menu Falls-Temple of Sinawava OR the museum (see p 17, 18). If you did Option C, return to Springdale and explore town.



Dinner 5:30PM

Use the [Dining Guide](#) to find a place for dinner at Zion Lodge, in Springdale, or near your accommodation.



Accommodations

Use the [Accommodations Guide](#) to find somewhere to stay.



Evening

Check at the Visitor Center for any **evening ranger programs**.



If you want to the **sunset**, a popular place is Canyon Junction Bridge. There's a lovely view of Watchman Tower and the Virgin River.



DAY 1

AFTERNOON: 1:30PM - 5:30PM

Emerald Pools



OPTION D: 60 minutes | 1.4 miles | Easy

Lower Emerald Pools Hike 1:30PM

+ **Lower Emerald Pool Trail** (return same way) (30 minutes/ 0.7 miles)
+ return the same way (30 minutes/ 0.7 miles)

This is the easiest option and is ideal if you have limited mobility, have a stroller, or are just too tired to walk much. You'll get to see the Lower Pool, spending about 10 minutes there before returning on the same trail. The trail is easy, mostly flat, and wheelchair accessible.



Additional Activities 2:40PM

If you didn't do Option C in the morning, do Big Bend-Menu Falls-Temple of Sinawava AND the museum (see p 17, 18). If you already did Option C, return to Springdale and explore town.



Dinner 5:30PM

Use the [Dining Guide](#) to find a place for dinner at Zion Lodge, in Springdale, or near your accommodation.



Accommodations

Use the [Accommodations Guide](#) to find somewhere to stay.



Evening

Check at the Visitor Center for any **evening ranger programs**.



If you want to see the **sunset**, a popular place is Canyon Junction Bridge. There's a lovely view of Watchman Tower and the Virgin River.



DAY 2 AT A GLANCE

Today, you'll do the other legendary Zion hike, The Narrows (there's also an easier option if you'd prefer not to). In the afternoon, you get to create your own adventure!

OPTION A [P.27-28, 29-31]

6:15AM: Park Visitor Center
7:00AM: Catch shuttle to Temple of Sinawava
8:00AM: Start **Riverside Walk**
8:30AM: Start **The Narrows** hike
12:00PM: Picnic lunch in Narrows
2:00PM: End Narrows hike. Riverside Walk
2:30PM: Shuttle to Springdale
3:15PM: Arrive Springdale

OPTION B [P.27-28, 32-34]

6:15AM: Park Visitor Center
7:00AM: Catch shuttle to Temple of Sinawava
8:00AM: Start **Riverside Walk**
8:30AM: Start **The Narrows** hike
12:00PM: End Narrows hike. Riverside Walk

12:30PM: Shuttle to Zion Lodge
12:45PM: Lunch Zion Lodge or picnic
1:45PM: Shuttle to Springdale
2:15PM: Arrive Springdale
OR
12:30PM: Shuttle to Springdale
1:15PM: Lunch in Springdale

OPTION C [P.35]

7:30AM: Park Visitor Center
8:00AM: Catch shuttle to Temple of Sinawava
8:45AM: Start **Riverside Walk**
9:15AM: Arrive at the start of The Narrows hike. Relax here.
9:45AM: Riverside walk back to shuttle
10:15AM: Shuttle to Springdale
11:00AM: Arrive Springdale
11:30AM: Lunch in Springdale



CREATE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE [P.36-12]

- Option 1:** Bike Ride
- Option 2:** Jeeping - Backcountry Tour
- Option 3:** Canyoneering
- Option 4:** UTV / ATV Tour
- Option 5:** River Tubing
- Option 6:** Helicopter Flight
- Option 7:** Swimming
- Option 8:** Spa
- Option 9:** Ranger Programs
- Option 10:** Horse Riding
- Option 11:** Watchman Trail Hike
- Option 12:** Zipline

Get lunch for picnic tomorrow if choosing Option B tomorrow afternoon (Echo Canyon hike)



5:30 | 6:00 PM: Dinner



DAY 2

MORNING: 6:15AM - [time varies]

The Narrows | Riverside Walk

This morning you'll hike the easy but beautiful Riverside Walk and then, if you're up for it, continue into The Narrows, turning back when you're ready.

The Narrows



The Narrows is the other super famous hike in Zion. You'll hike through a narrow slot canyon with a river running through it and will spend most of the hike wading through the river. Surrounded by towering canyon walls just yards apart, and with the novelty of hiking in a river, it's a super fun experience. But there are some things to know.



Trail Closures

The hike is closed by the NPS when:

1. the river level is too high. It's closed when the **flow rate** is over 150 cubic feet per second (CFS) and during spring snowmelt (typically March-April). Check the current flow rate on [this website](#) before heading out.
2. when a **Flash Flood Warning** is issued by the National Weather Service. It remains closed for two hours after the warning is lifted. Always check the weather and possibility of flash floods before you head out.

I recommend checking at the Visitor Center the day before and check the two websites above the morning of your planned hike, to make sure.



Do you need special equipment?

You will be hiking in a river. The water is flowing, and the riverbed is uneven. The water level varies. In summer, the water temperature is generally pleasant. The rest of the year, it's cold.

I recommend a **stick** to help stabilize you, and good **shoes** that are comfortable when wet. If you're hiking any time other than summer, **neoprene socks** will help keep you warm. In winter, a **dry suit** will help keep you warm. A **dry bag** will keep your stuff (phone, camera, etc.) dry if you accidentally slip and end up under water.



DAY 2

MORNING: 6:15AM - [time varies]

The Narrows



All of these things can be rented from outfitters in Springdale. One outfitter (there are several, but this who I used) is **Zion Adventures**. You need to decide what equipment will make you comfortable. However, I think that at the very minimum, a stick is a BIG help. You can often find spare ones discarded at the trailhead, though if you plan on this and then you don't find one, you'll be without.



There are actually two ways to do the hike. The Top Down hike requires a permit and a drop off at the far end of the slot canyon. Then you hike the entire length of the canyon, most often camping overnight along the way, ending at Riverside Walk.

On this itinerary, you'll do what most people do - the **Bottom Up hike**, which is an out-and-back hike that goes through the most spectacular parts of the canyon.

You will typically crisscross from side to side, finding small sections where there is land along the side which makes it easier to walk. There are occasional small beaches where you can rest and have a snack or lunch.

It typically takes less time to hike back (with the current). For example, if you hiked for 3 hours to go upstream it will generally take about 2 hours to go downstream.



DIRECTIONS: Springdale - Zion Visitor Center - Shuttle

Drive east along the main road through Springdale (State Route 9). Enter the park and almost immediately after, turn right into the Visitor Center parking area. Park in the main lot. Walk to the shuttle stop.



DAY 2

MORNING-AFTERNOON: 6:15AM - 3:15PM



OPTION A: The Narrows to end of Wall Street



Breakfast

Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



Shuttle (or cycle) to Temple of Sinawava 7:00AM

You want to try to get on the **first shuttle** of the day. Lines start to form at least 30 minutes beforehand in the busy summer months. I recommend getting in line by no later than 6:30AM. You will need to stand in line for about half an hour, but it will be worth it when you're on the trail (in the river) with only a handful of people.

Get off at the Temple of Sinawava stop, the last stop on the shuttle route. It takes 45 minutes to get there.



An alternative to the shuttle is to **rent a bicycle or e-bike** in Springdale and ride to the trailhead. This way, you can skip the lines and even get on the trail before the first shuttle arrives! There are several operators in Springdale offering bike rental. One is [Zion Cycles](#). They do half-day and full-day rentals, and, for an additional fee, you can pick the bike up at 6:30PM the day before, so you can get an early start!



Riverside Walk 8:00AM

The hike starts at the end of the Riverside Walk.

This is an easy, paved and flat 1.0-mile trail that runs alongside the Virgin River, passing hanging gardens along the way. From the last shuttle stop, take the trail along the river, deeper into the canyon. There are ferns, moss and trees all around you. It is a lovely, relaxing walk that makes a pleasant start to your day.



DAY 2

MORNING-AFTERNOON: 6:15AM - 3:15PM



OPTION A: The Narrows to end of Wall Street

The Narrows 8:30AM



At the end of the Riverside Walk, kit up if you are wearing anything special and enter the river, walking deeper into the canyon. The canyon is fairly wide and the river shallow to start.

About 0.4 miles into the hike, you'll pass **Mystery Falls**, a 110-foot waterfall that is often not much more than a trickle down the side of the canyon. From here, the canyon walls start to close in. After another 0.3 miles, you'll pass a dramatic alcove on your left, the **Narrows Alcove**, then, another 0.7 miles in, **Grotto Alcove**. Just past this is **Orderville Canyon** on your right. You can explore this side canyon for a while if you like, up to **Veiled Falls**, another small waterfall. Orderville Canyon is the start of the most dramatic section, **Wall Street**. The canyon narrows even more, at times just a few yards across, and the canyon walls tower hundreds of feet high above you.

You'll soon come to a large rock in the middle of the river, 'floating rock'. Wall Street is about 0.5 miles long. The end of the Wall Street section is indicated by two large boulders in the river, and the canyon starts to widen again. This is the best place to turn around as you have now been through the most dramatic section of the canyon. However, few people venture further, and if you're having a great time, you can definitely go even deeper into the canyon.





DAY 2

MORNING-AFTERNOON: 6:15AM - 3:15PM

OPTION A: The Narrows to end of Wall Street



Lunch 12:00PM

Have a picnic lunch inside the canyon. There are narrow beaches along the way that make good places to stop.



Return to Springdale 2:30PM

Take the shuttle back to Springdale.



DAY 2

MORNING-AFTERNOON: 6:15AM - 2:00PM

OPTION B: The Narrows (turning back sooner)



Breakfast

Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



Shuttle (or cycle) to Temple of Sinawava 7:00AM

You want to try to get on the **first shuttle** of the day. Lines start to form at least 30 minutes beforehand in the busy summer months. I recommend getting in line by no later than 6:30AM. You will need to stand in line for about half an hour, but it will be worth it when you're on the trail (in the river) with only a handful of people.

Get off at the Temple of Sinawava stop, the last stop on the shuttle route. It takes 45 minutes to get there.



An alternative to the shuttle is to **rent a bicycle or e-bike** in Springdale and ride to the trailhead. This way, you can skip the lines and even get on the trail before the first shuttle arrives! There are several operators in Springdale offering bike rental. One is [Zion Cycles](#). They do half-day and full-day rentals, and, for an additional fee, you can pick the bike up at 6:30PM the day before, so you can get an early start!



Riverside Walk 8:00AM

The hike starts at the end of the Riverside Walk.

This is an easy, paved and flat 1.0-mile trail that runs alongside the Virgin River, passing hanging gardens along the way. From the last shuttle stop, take the trail along the river, deeper into the canyon. There are ferns, moss and trees all around you. It is a lovely, relaxing walk that makes a pleasant start to your day.



DAY 2

MORNING-AFTERNOON: 6:15AM - 2:00PM

OPTION B: The Narrows (turning back sooner)

The Narrows 8:30AM



At the end of the Riverside Walk, kit up if you are wearing anything special and enter the river, walking deeper into the canyon. The canyon is fairly wide and the river shallow to start.

About 0.4 miles into the hike, you'll pass **Mystery Falls**, a 110-foot waterfall that is often not much more than a trickle down the side of the canyon. From here, the canyon walls start to close in. After another 0.3 miles, you'll pass a dramatic alcove on your left, The **Narrows Alcove** then, another 0.7 miles in, **Grotto Alcove**. Just past this is **Orderville Canyon** on your right. You can explore this side canyon for a while if you like, up to **Veiled Falls**, another small waterfall. Orderville Canyon is the start of the most dramatic section, **Wall Street**. The canyon narrows even more, at times just a few yards across, and the canyon walls tower hundreds of feet high above you.

You'll soon come to a large rock in the middle of the river, 'floating rock'. Wall Street is about 0.5 miles long. The end of the Wall Street section is indicated by two large boulders in the river, and the canyon starts to widen again.

Turn around after 2 hours. You will probably make it to Wall Street in this timeframe, but may not make it to the far end.





DAY 2

MORNING-AFTERNOON: 6:15AM - 2:00PM

OPTION B: The Narrows (turning back sooner)



Return to Zion Lodge 12:30PM

Take the shuttle to Zion Lodge



Lunch 1:15PM

Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch at Zion Lodge.



Return to Springdale 1:45PM

Take the shuttle back to Springdale.

OR



Return to Springdale 12:30PM

Take the shuttle back to Springdale.



Lunch 1:15PM

Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch in Springdale.



DAY 2

MORNING: 7:30AM - 12:30PM

OPTION C: Riverside Walk

Choose this option if you prefer an easier option than hiking in a river. You can start later and enjoy the lovely Riverside Walk.



Breakfast

Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



Shuttle (or cycle) to Temple of Sinawava 8:00AM

There may be long lines for the shuttle, but they tend to move pretty quickly. Hop on the next shuttle available.

Get off at the Temple of Sinawava stop, the last stop on the shuttle route. It takes 45 minutes to get there.



An alternative to the shuttle is to **rent a bicycle or e-bike** in Springdale and ride to the trailhead. This way, you can skip the lines. There are several operators in Springdale offering bike rental. One is [Zion Cycles](#). They do half-day and full-day rentals.



Riverside Walk 8:00AM

This is an easy, wheelchair accessible, paved and flat trail that runs alongside the Virgin River, passing hanging gardens along the way. It's the starting point for the Narrows but is worth hiking in and of itself. It starts from the last shuttle stop and the canyon narrows, so, although it's not a super narrow slot canyon, you are surrounded by tall canyon walls on both sides. There are ferns, moss and trees all around you. It is a lovely, relaxing walk.

When you arrive at the end, find a spot to relax and spend half an hour watching people start The Narrows hike. Then return the way you came.



Return to Springdale 10:15AM

Take the shuttle back to Springdale.



Lunch 11:30M

Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch in Springdale.



DAY 2

AFTERNOON: 12:30 | 2:15 | 3:15PM - 6:00PM

Create Your Own Adventure

There are lots of things to do in and around Zion. This afternoon, you can choose your own activity from the large number of things on offer:

i

Cycling

If you didn't rent a bicycle or e-bike to get to your hike yesterday or this morning, you can rent one this afternoon and cycle along Zion Canyon. Bicycling, including e-bikes, is permitted on all park roadways and on the Pa'rus Trail. Bicycles (but not e-bikes) can be put on the front of the shuttle buses.

Read more about bicycling on the [NPS webpage](#). You can rent bikes from [Zion Cycles](#).

i

Jeeping

Tour the backcountry in a jeep. Get off paved roads into less-visited regions of the national park and surrounding public lands. There are a couple of different options.

Check [Zion Jeep Tours](#) for details.

i

ATV | UTV Tours

Really get offroad in an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) or a Utility Task Vehicle (UTV). There are several guided tours of different lengths available.

Check [UTV Adventure Tours](#) and [ATV Adventure Tours](#) for details.

i

River Tubing

Rent a tube, and float for 2 miles down the Virgin River past shady cottonwood trees and towering sandstone cliffs. It includes relaxing flat-water sections and some rocky sections with small rapids.

Check [Zion Outfitters](#) for details.

i

Helicopter Flight

See the incredible scenery, rock formations, and canyons of the area from the air. There are several flight lengths to choose from.

Check [Zion Helicopters](#) for details.



DAY 2

AFTERNOON: 12:30 | 2:15 | 3:15PM - 6:00PM

Create Your Own Adventure



Swimming (+ hike)

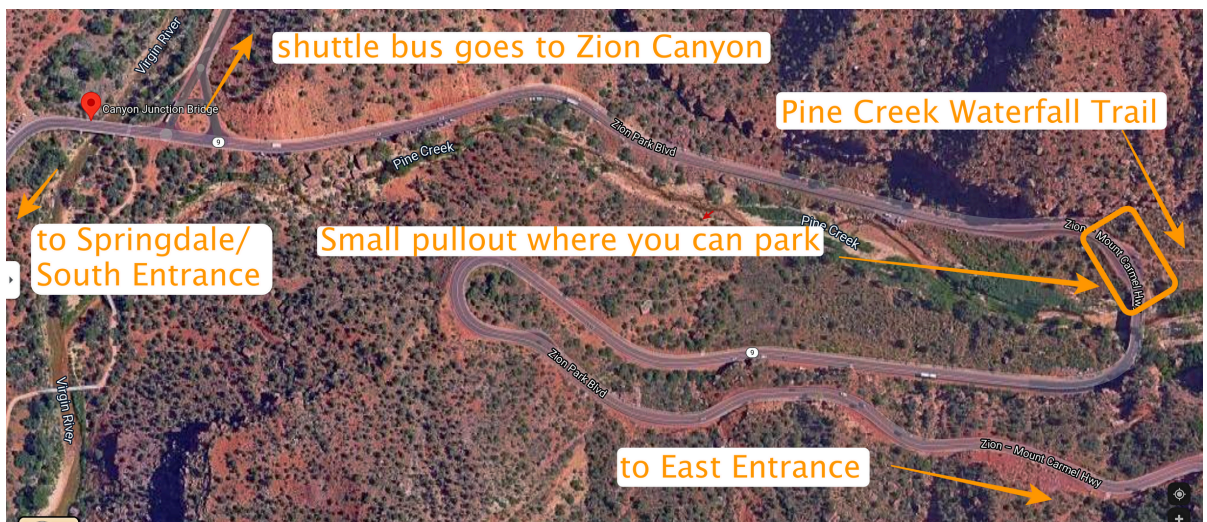
Cool off in summer with a dip at the swimming hole at Pine Creek Waterfall. It's reached from a short 0.35-mile hike (each way) along a creek into Pine Creek Canyon. The hike is not signposted or advertised, so it can feel like you've discovered a 'secret' spot.



From the small pullout (see Driving Directions on the next page), go past the "no bicycles" sign along a well-worn dirt trail. As you get further into the canyon, you'll have to cross the creek a few times, and the trail becomes less defined. You want to head up the canyon, so if you lose the trail for a bit, just keep heading into the canyon and you'll find it again. Go through a small arch and you'll see a 10-foot-high waterfall in front of you. There's a sandy beach and lovely pool at its base that's one of the few places in Zion that swimming is permitted.



The trail is short but does involve some clambering over rocks. Take care, as they can be slippery. Don't do this hike if there are flash flood warnings – check before heading out. The hike is open all year, but October – April, it's too cold to swim.





DAY 2

AFTERNOON: 12:30 | 2:15 | 3:15PM - 6:00PM

Create Your Own Adventure



DIRECTIONS: Springdale - Pine Creek Trailhead

To get to the trailhead, enter Zion National Park at the main South Entrance. Go about 1.5 miles and when you get to Canyon Junction where the shuttle turns left to go into Zion Canyon, bear right and start to head up to the East Gate. The road straightens out for a while, then starts to make a u-turn that forms the first switchback up the side of the canyon. Just as the turn starts, there's a small pullout on the left. There's a "no bicycles" and "no pets" sign. Park here; this is the start of the trailhead. If you go over the Pine Creek Bridge, you've gone too far.

If you prefer not to drive, you could get off at the Canyon Junction stop and walk for about 0.6 miles (15 minutes) along the road (be careful about traffic!)



Spa

If you're feeling sore from all that hiking, or just want a chance to relax and pamper yourself, you can spend some time this afternoon at a spa in Springdale. The Deep Canyon Spa at Flanigan's Inn has appointments from 9:00AM to 8:00PM daily and is close to the park's main South Entrance.

Check [Deep Canyon Spa](#) for details.



Ranger Programs

There are a variety of ranger-led programs, from guided walks to talks and informational presentations. Check in at the main Visitor Center to see what's on offer during your visit.



Horseback Riding

Riding a horse is a different way to experience Zion National Park. Guided rides are available March – October. There are one-hour rides along the Virgin River to the Court of the Patriarchs, and three-hour rides round the Sandbench Trail, with a spectacular view of the Southern end of Zion National Park.

Check [Canyon Rides](#) for details.



DAY 2

AFTERNOON: 12:30 | 2:15 | 3:15PM - 6:00PM

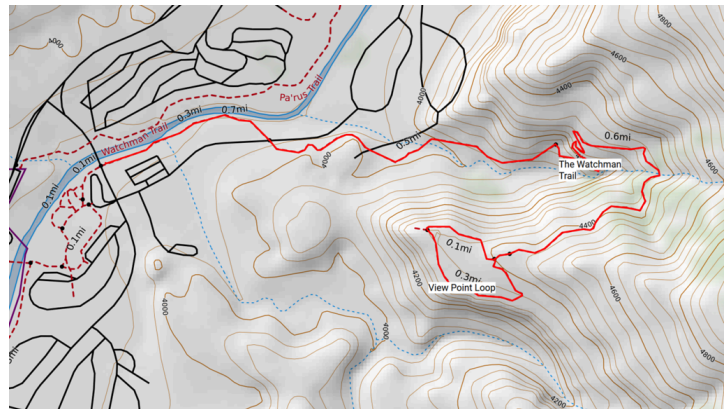


Hike The Watchman Trail

This is a nice hike, especially in the late afternoon. It climbs from the main Visitor Center up to a lookout with wonderful views of the Temples and Towers, lower Zion Canyon, Watchman Peak, and Springdale. There's a short loop around the viewpoint at the end, before you head back along the same trail. The 3-mile round trip hike is rated as moderate due to the elevation gain.



There is very little shade and quite a bit of elevation gain, so it's best not to do this hike in the middle of the day. It can be muddy when wet. There are few exposed areas where you should keep a careful eye on young children.



Zipline

Take a zipline near the Zion entrance area. 4 ziplines over 3,500 feet with lava clifftop views. Check [Zion Zipline](#) for details.



Dinner 5:30 | 6:00PM

Use the [Dining Guide](#) to find a place for dinner in Springdale or near your accommodation.



Accommodations

Use the [Accommodations Guide](#) to find somewhere to stay.



Evening

Check at the Visitor Center for any **evening ranger programs**.



If you want to the **sunset**, a popular place is Canyon Junction Bridge. There's a lovely view of Watchman Tower and the Virgin River.



DAY 3 AT A GLANCE

Today you'll explore two lesser-visited sections of the park - the Upper East Canyon (and my personal favorite view in the entire park) and Kolob Terraces.

OPTION A [P.41, 42-44]

- 6:45AM: Leave. Drive through The Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel
- 7:15AM: **Canyon Overlook Trail**
- 8:15AM: End Canyon Overlook Trail
- 8:25AM: **Checkerboard Mesa**
- 8:30AM: Leave Checkerboard Mesa. Drive to Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort
- 8:50AM: Arrive Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort
- 9:00AM: **Shuttle** to East Mesa Trailhead**
- 9:15AM: Arrive East Mesa Trailhead

OPTION B [P.41, 45-47]

- 7:00AM: Leave. Drive through The Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel
- 7:30AM: **Canyon Overlook Trail**
- 8:30AM: End Canyon Overlook Trail
- 8:40AM: **Checkerboard Mesa**
- 8:45AM: Leave Checkerboard Mesa. **Drive** to East Mesa Trailhead*
- 9:15AM: Arrive East Mesa Trailhead

OPTION A [P.48-49, 50]

- 9:15AM: Hike to **Observation Point**
- 10:30AM: Arrive Observation Point
- 11:00AM: Leave Observation Point. **Return to trailhead**
- 12:15PM: End Observation Point/ East Mesa hike. Drive or shuttle to Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort

OPTION B** [P.48-49, 55-59]

- 9:15AM: Hike to **Observation Point**
- 10:30AM: Arrive Observation Point
- 11:00AM: Leave Observation Point. Hike to **Echo Canyon**
- 12:00PM: Lunch Echo Canyon
- 1:00PM: Continue hike back via East Rim Trail
- 2:30PM: Arrive Stave Spring Trailhead. Shuttle pickup
- 2:45PM: Drive to Virgin (turnoff to Kolob Terrace)
- 3:50PM: Arrive Kolob Terrace turnoff. Drive Kolob Terrace
- 4:45PM: Arrive **Lava Point Overlook**
- 5:00PM: Start drive back
- 6:00PM: Arrive Springdale

- 12:15PM: Drive or shuttle to Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort
- 12:30PM: Lunch at the resort
- 1:30PM: Drive to Virgin (turnoff to Kolob Terrace)


- 12:15PM: Drive to Springdale
- 1:15PM: Lunch in Springdale
- 2:15PM: Drive to Virgin (turnoff to Kolob Terrace)

2:35PM: Arrive Kolob Terrace turnoff. Drive Kolob Terrace **[P.51]**

OPTION A1 [P.52] OPTION A2 [P.53-54]

- 3:30PM: Arrive **Lava Point Overlook**
- 3:45PM: Start drive back
- 4:45PM: Arrive Springdale

- 3:15PM: Arrive Wildcat Canyon Trailhead. Start **Northgate Peaks Trail**
- 4:00PM: Arrive Northpeaks Viewpoint
- 4:15PM: Return hike to trailhead
- 5:00PM: Arrive Trailhead. Drive to Springdale
- 5:45PM: Arrive Springdale

 5:30 | 6:30PM: **Dinner**

*You need to have a high clearance vehicle to get to the East Mesa Trailhead
 ** Option B is only possible if you take the Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort shuttle



DAY 3

EARLY MORNING: 6:45AM - 9:15AM

The East Side



This morning you'll head to the less-crowded east side of the park. You can choose between driving to the East Mesa Trailhead (if you have a high clearance 4WD) or taking a paid shuttle from Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort. This will slightly change the time for the entire morning.



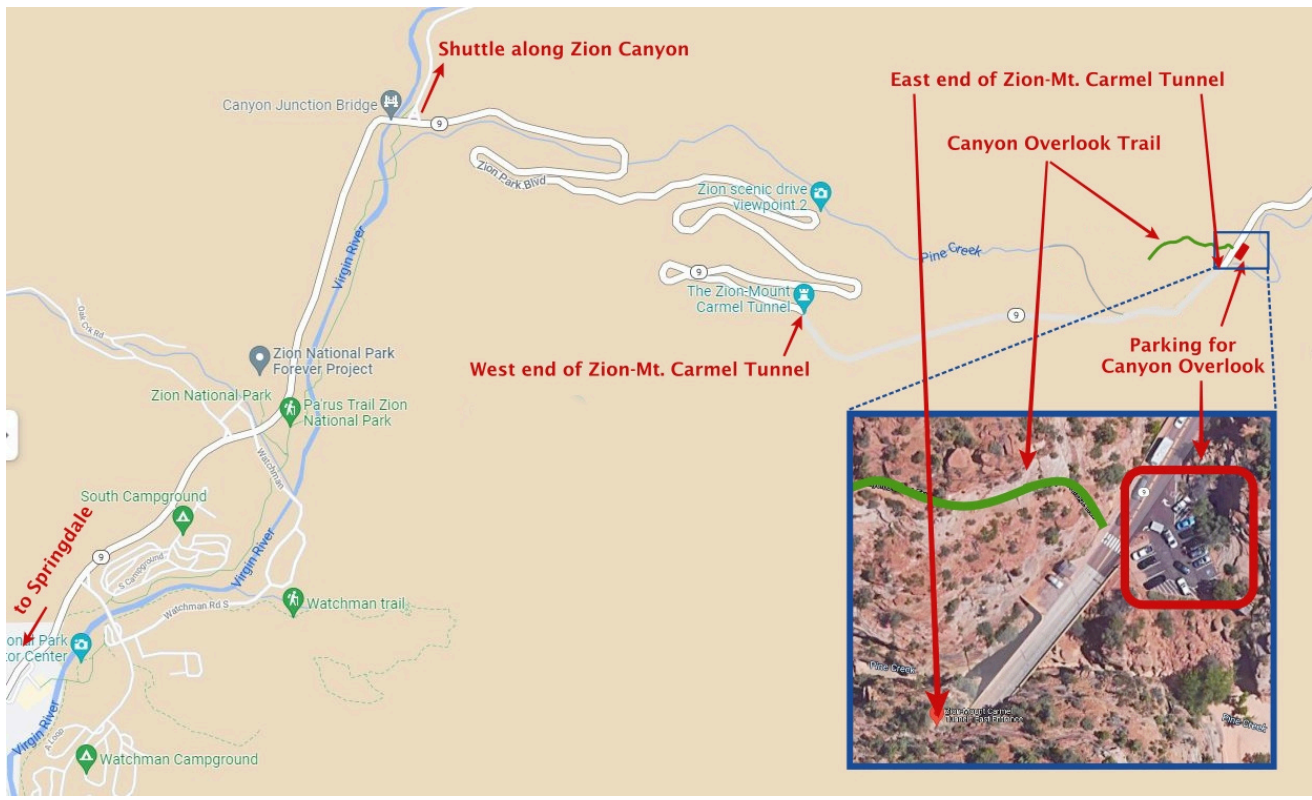
If you prefer not to hike to Canyon Overlook, start an hour later.



DIRECTIONS: Springdale - Canyon Overlook Trailhead

To get to the trailhead, enter Zion National Park at the main South Entrance. Go about 1.5 miles and when you get to Canyon Junction where the shuttle turns left to go into Zion Canyon, bear right and follow the road up several wide switchbacks that climb the side of the canyon. You'll go through the Zion - Mt. Carmel Tunnel. Almost immediately after you emerge from the tunnel, there's a small parking area on your right.

There are pit toilets at the parking area.





DAY 3

EARLY MORNING: 6:45AM - 9:15AM



OPTION A: Taking the shuttle



Breakfast

Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



The Zion - Mount Carmel Tunnel 6:45AM

To get to the East Entrance of Zion, you need to go up some switchbacks and then through the Zion - Mt. Carmel Tunnel. There are restrictions on how wide and long your vehicle can be. If it's too long or wide, you need to get the rangers to stop two-way traffic so you can go through driving in the middle of the road. Read more details in the **Getting There** section on P3.

This service doesn't start this early in the morning. If your vehicle is in this category, skip the Canyon Overlook Trail and arrange to go through the tunnel when the service starts (typically 8:00AM, but double check with the rangers).



Canyon Overlook Trail 7:15AM

The Canyon Overlook trail is just 0.5 miles / 30 minutes each way. From the trailhead, it skirts along the side of a steep hill. There is a short elevation gain at the start, but after that, it is mostly flat and easy. About halfway along, the trail goes through a little shaded alcove with a seep and lush ferns growing out of the sandstone walls. At the end of the trail, there's a wonderful view of Pine Creek Canyon and lower Zion Canyon. You can see Highway 9 and the window holes from the tunnel off to the left. This is a great spot to see the sunrise if you're comfortable hiking in the dark with a headlamp (but exercise caution!).

Return the way you came.



Most of the trail, it's pretty easy, but is officially rated as moderate because there are a few exposed sections with steep drop offs with no railing. If you have young children, keep a close eye on them, and you'll need to decide your own comfort level in doing this with kids or if you have difficulties with balance.



DAY 3

EARLY MORNING: 6:45AM - 9:15AM



Checkerboard Mesa 8:25AM

This is a picturesque butte with unusual horizontal and vertical cracks along its sandstone walls that create a checkerboard-like pattern.

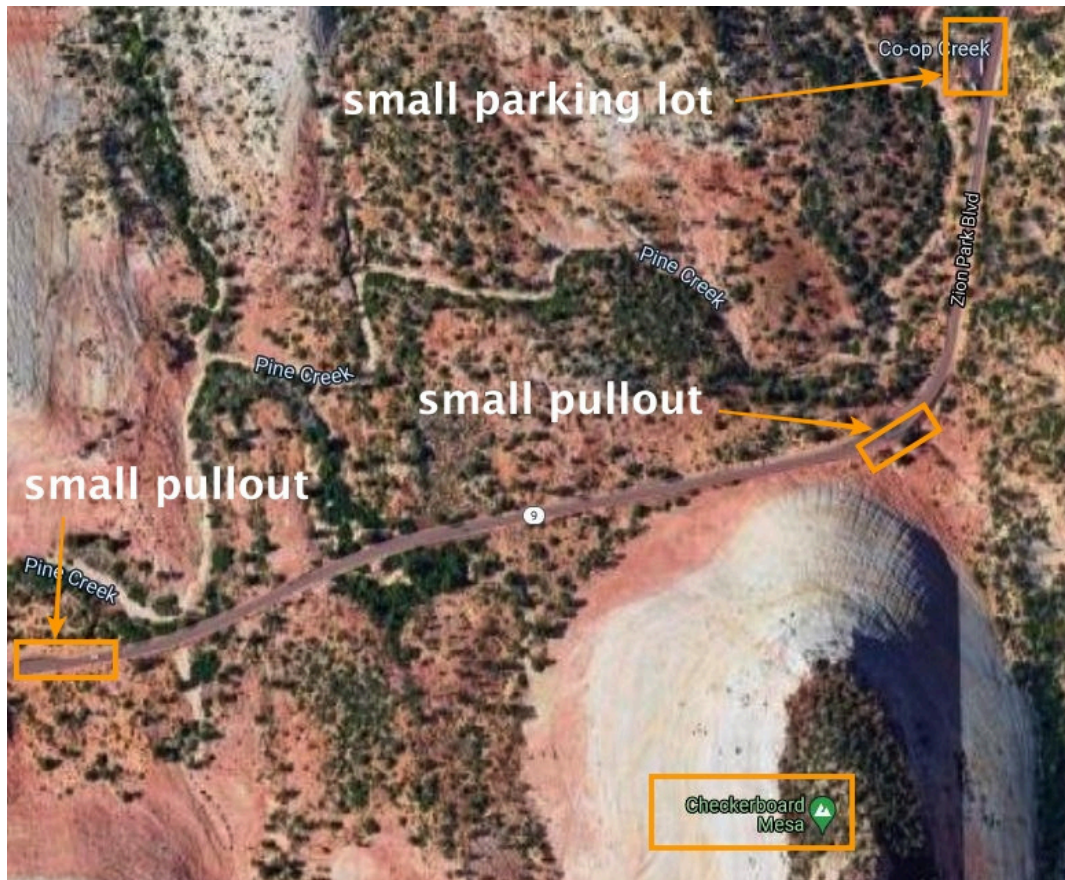


Keep your eye out for a small pullout – there are a couple, one on each side of the road – where you can safely stop and take photos. If they are full, just past the butte, about 0.2 miles before the East Entrance, there's a small parking lot on the left. The view isn't quite as good as the closer pullouts, but you'll still be able to see it and appreciate the freaky patterns.



DIRECTIONS: Canyon Overlook Trail - Checkerboard Mesa

From the parking area, turn right to continue away from Springdale on UT-9E. Drive for about 4.8 miles/ 10 minutes and you'll see Checkerboard Mesa on your right.





DAY 3

EARLY MORNING: 6:45AM - 9:15AM



Shuttle to East Mesa Trailhead 9:00AM

To avoid the bad roads to the **East Mesa Trailhead**, Option A has you take a shuttle from Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort. They own a lot of the land around the eastern edge of Zion National Park and provide a **hiker shuttle service** to the nearby trailheads.

Call them 24 hours in advance on 435-648-2700 to make a reservation. There is a small fee, but it's worth it, in my opinion. The Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort shuttle service is offered all year unless it rained recently and it's too muddy.

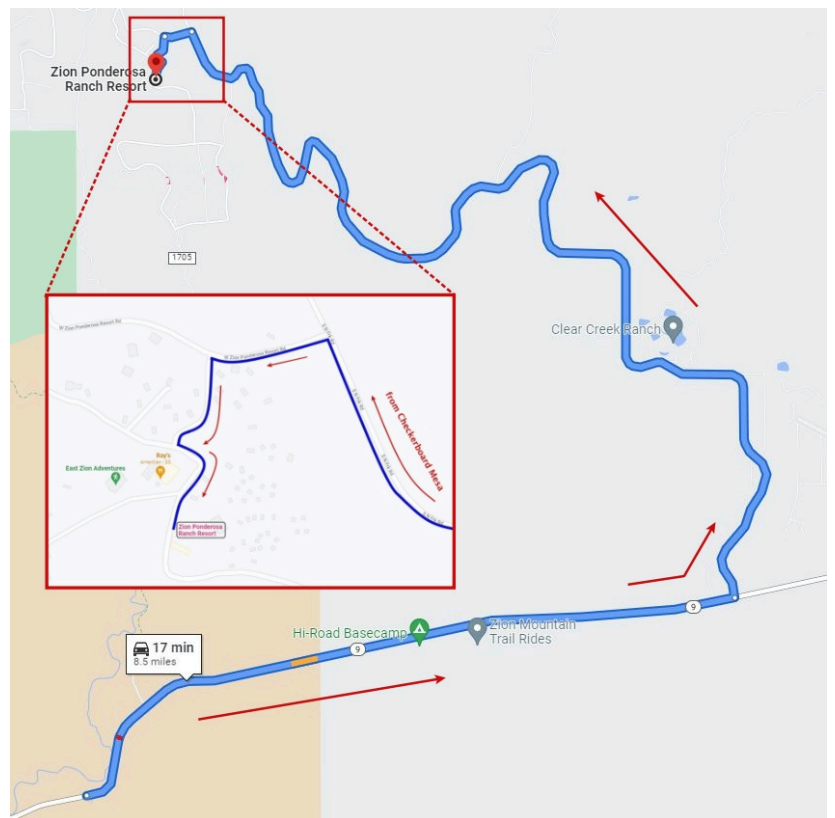


You'll need to take a shuttle if you choose Option B for the Observation Point hike no matter what type of vehicle you have, because with Option B, you hike back to a different trailhead (and get picked up there).



DIRECTIONS: Checkerboard Mesa - Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort

Continue heading east away from Springdale. Go through the East Entrance. After 3 miles/ 5 minutes from Checkerboard Mesa, turn left on to S N Fork Road. Drive another 5.2 miles and turn left on to W Zion Ponderosa Resort Road. Take the next left, drive for 0.1 miles, turn left at the T-intersection (another 0.1 miles). The resort is on the left after another 0.1 miles.





DAY 3

EARLY MORNING: 7:00AM - 9:15AM



OPTION B: Driving to the East Mesa Trailhead



Breakfast

Have breakfast at your hotel or campground before leaving.



The Zion - Mount Carmel Tunnel 7:00AM

To get to the East Entrance of Zion, you need to go up some switchbacks and then through the Zion - Mt. Carmel Tunnel. There are restrictions on how wide and long your vehicle can be. If it's too long or wide, you need to get the rangers to stop two-way traffic so you can go through driving in the middle of the road. Read more details in the **Getting There** section on P3.

This service doesn't start this early in the morning. If your vehicle is in this category, skip the Canyon Overlook Trail and arrange to go through the tunnel when the service starts (typically 8:00AM, but double check with the rangers).



Canyon Overlook Trail 7:30AM

The Canyon Overlook trail is just 0.5 miles / 30 minutes each way. From the trailhead, it skirts along the side of a steep hill. There is a short elevation gain at the start, but after that, it is mostly flat and easy. About halfway along, the trail goes through a little shaded alcove with a seep and lush ferns growing out of the sandstone walls. At the end of the trail, there's a wonderful view of Pine Creek Canyon and lower Zion Canyon. You can see Highway 9 and the window holes from the tunnel off to the left. This is a great spot to see the sunrise if you're comfortable hiking in the dark with a headlamp (but exercise caution!).

Return the way you came.



Most of the trail, it's pretty easy, but is officially rated as moderate because there are a few exposed sections with steep dropoffs with no railing. If you have young children, keep a close eye on them, and you'll need to decide your own comfort level in doing this with kids or if you have difficulties with balance.



DAY 3

EARLY MORNING: 7:00AM - 9:15AM



Checkerboard Mesa 8:40AM

This is a picturesque butte with unusual horizontal and vertical cracks along its sandstone walls that create a checkerboard-like pattern.

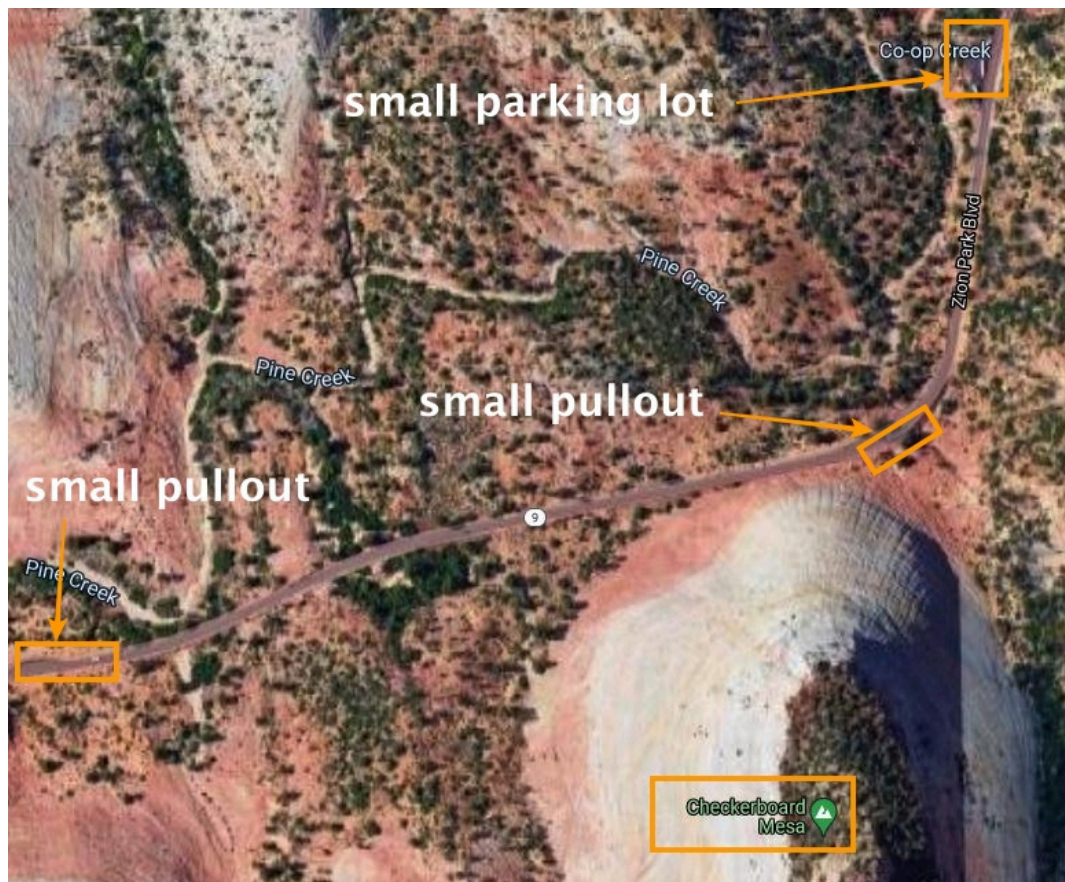


Keep your eye out for a small pullout – there are a couple, one on each side of the road – where you can safely stop and take photos. If they are full, just past the butte, about 0.2 miles before the East Entrance, there's a small parking lot on the left. The view isn't quite as good as the closer pullouts, but you'll still be able to see it and appreciate the freaky patterns.



DIRECTIONS: Canyon Overlook Trail - Checkerboard Mesa

From the parking area, turn right to continue away from Springdale on UT-9E. Drive for about 4.8 miles/ 10 minutes and you'll see Checkerboard Mesa on your right.





DAY 3

EARLY MORNING: 7:00AM - 9:15AM

Drive to East Mesa Trailhead 8:45AM



The East Mesa Trailhead is only accessible by rough dirt roads that you need a high clearance 4WD vehicle to navigate. The roads can be extremely muddy in the winter, spring, and after rainstorms and if you attempt to drive on them then, you will almost certainly get bogged, no matter what type of vehicle you have.

If you don't have a high clearance 4WD, do not attempt the road in any condition. If you have a high clearance 4X4 and the roads are in bad condition (muddy), don't attempt to drive to the trailhead.



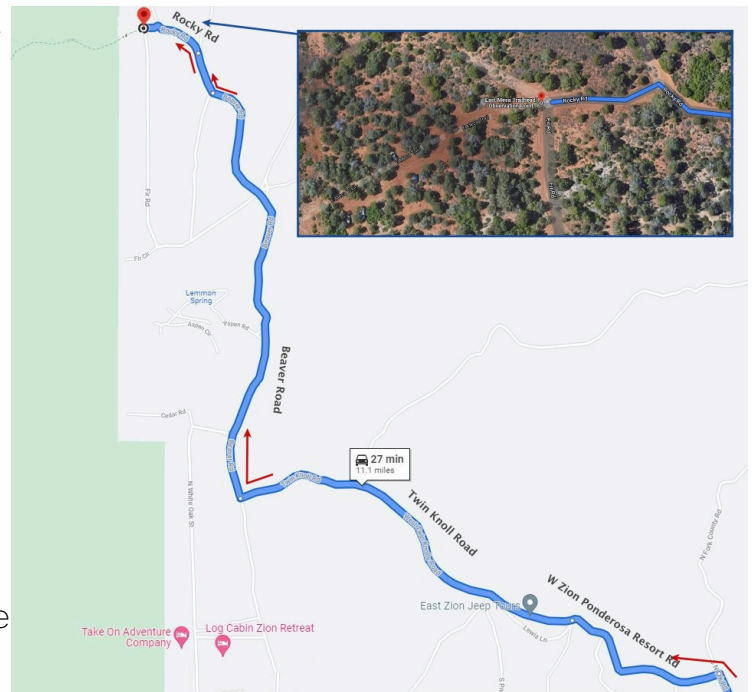
There is a small parking space at the trailhead. The last section of the dirt road just before the trailhead is the steepest part. You used to be able to park half a mile up the hill and miss the worst part of the road, but parking in this gravel lot is no longer allowed. Illegally parked vehicles are frequently towed.



DIRECTIONS: Checkerboard Mesa - East Mesa Trailhead

Continue heading east away from Springdale. Go through the East Entrance. After 3 miles/ 5 minutes from Checkerboard Mesa, turn left on to S N Fork Road. Drive another 5.2 miles and turn left on to W Zion

Ponderosa Resort Road. After 0.5 miles, this changes name to West Twin Knolls Road. After another mile, this ends at a T-junction. Turn right on to Beaver Road. After 1.2 miles, there is a V in the road. Take the right fork on to Rocky Road. After 1.2 miles, there is another V. Take the left fork to continue on Rocky Road. After a very short distance, this meets Fir Road. Cross Fir Road and park at the trailhead to East Mesa Trail.





DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM

Observation Point | Kolob Terrace



Observation Point is, in my opinion, **the best view in Zion National Park**. In fact, it's frequently cited as the most scenic view in Utah! At Observation Point, you stand on the rim of Zion Canyon, 2,200 feet above the canyon floor, with a 270° view over the surrounding area. You can see down the entire length of the canyon, including Angels Landing far below you.

It has the added advantage of being much less visited than Angels Landing and The Narrows. It's a welcome salve after all the crowds, especially if you're visiting in summer.

The downside is that the trailhead is harder to get to. There used to be a steep and strenuous trail up from the main Zion Canyon, but this has been blocked by a major rockfall since 2019 and is unlikely to be reopened anytime soon. However, it can be accessed from the east side of the park, which I recommend anyway, as the hiking is much easier.

You'll hike to Observation Point along the **East Mesa Trail**.



There are two options.

Option A is an **out-and-back hike to Observation Point only**. This is the easiest choice.

Option B is much more strenuous, hiking down **into Echo Canyon and then back up** again, ending at a different trailhead (so you can only do this option if you use the shuttle and arrange to get picked up at a different trailhead, Stave Spring Trailhead). I recommend this only if you're fit and up for a challenging hike.

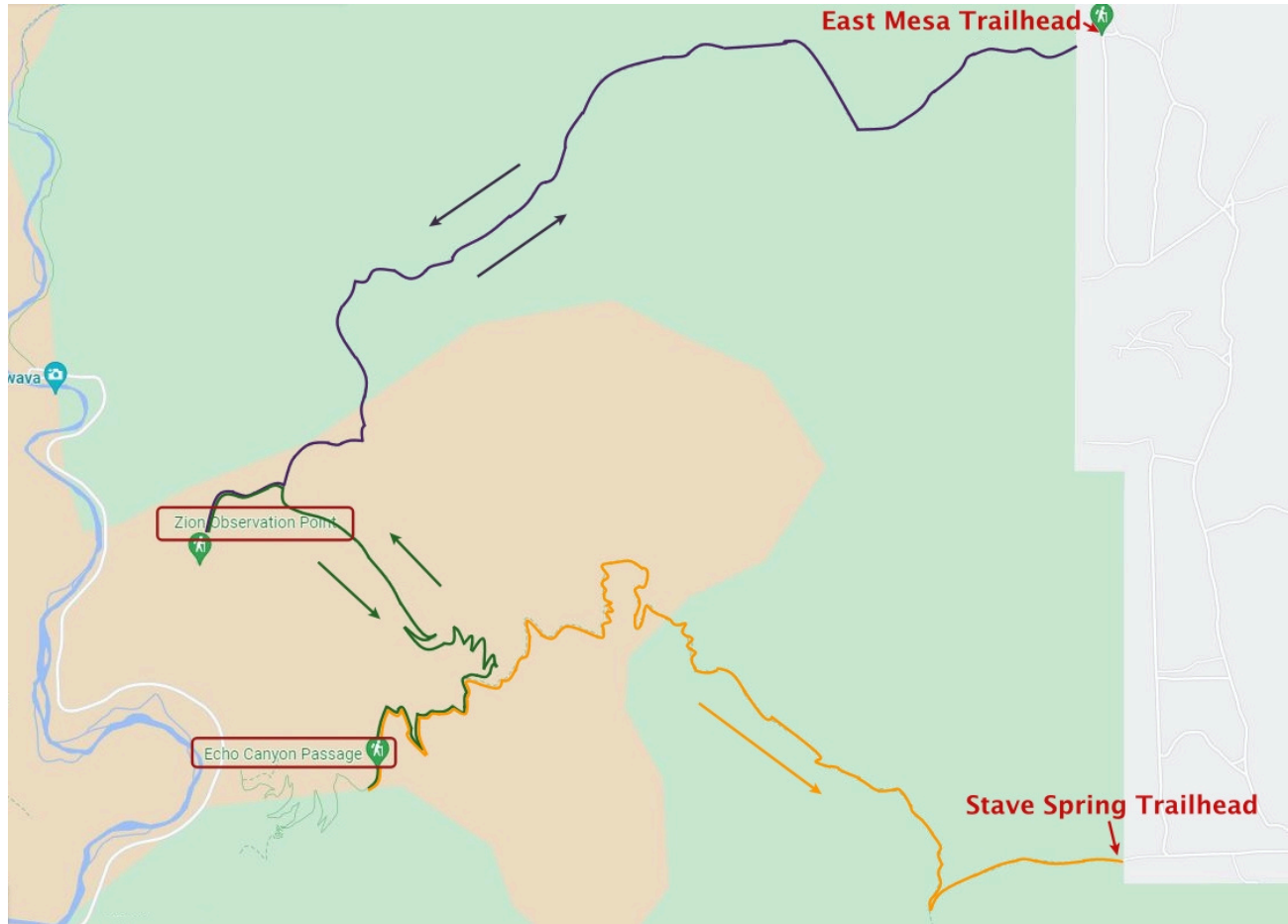
If you prefer not to do this hike at all, Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort is a nice place to hang out and they do arrange some activities. Alternately, you could head back to Springdale and do some of the Adventures from Day 2 that you didn't have a chance to do. Then pick up afternoon Option A at lunchtime and enjoy Kolob Terrace in the afternoon.



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM

Observation Point | Kolob Terrace



Purple: East Mesa Trailhead to Observation Point
Green: Observation Point to Echo Canyon
Yellow: Echo Canyon to Stave Spring Trailhead



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM



OPTION A: Observation Point out-and-back



East Mesa Trail to Observation Point 9:15AM

Start at the East Mesa Trailhead (not to be confused with the East RIM Trail). The sandy trail is mostly along an old jeep road on flat ground that is easy to follow. For three miles (about one hour), it passes through meadows of sage brush, grasses and wildflowers and thinly forested areas and does not have dramatic views. It's a pleasant and pretty easy walk, but after the views of the last couple of days, you may feel a bit underwhelmed. Hang on!

After 3 miles, you come to a junction on your right to a 0.4-mile spur trail that leads to Observation Point (about 15 minutes). The trail descends gradually to the canyon rim. For the last 200 yards, you'll walk the edge of the rim with occasional views into the back of the main canyon toward the Narrows. However, the huge payoff is when you exit the scrubby forest out on to **Observation Point**. The view will take your breath away.



Spend half an hour there. Return the way you came, turning left at the end of the spur trail/ junction with the East Mesa Trail. The trail takes about 1 hour and 15 minutes each way.



Lunch 12:30PM

Take the shuttle or drive back to Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort. Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch in the area.



Drive to Virgin 1:30PM

Drive back through Springdale to the turnoff to Kolob Terrace in Virgin.

OR



Lunch 1:15PM

Take the shuttle back to Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort, then drive to Springdale (or drive direct from the trailhead to Springdale). Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch in Springdale.



Drive to Virgin 2:15PM

Drive to the turnoff to Kolob Terrace in Virgin.



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM



DIRECTIONS: East Mesa - Kolob Terrace Road

Head back the way you came down through the tunnel and back to Springdale. Continue on UT-9W for 13 miles. Turn right on to N Kolob Terrace Rd just as you get into the small town of Virgin (there's a sign). If you pass the Fairfield Inn on your left, you've gone too far.



Kolob Terrace



Kolob Terrace is a less-visited part of Zion National Park that is still very scenic and makes a nice break from the crowds. Kolob Terrace Road goes through a canyon that lies between Zion Canyon and Kolob Canyons. There is a **scenic drive** (Option A1) or lovely **hike** (Option A2).



Don't confuse Kolob Terrace with Kolob Canyons, which is a different part of the park near Cedar City, about an hour away.

Kolob Terrace Road is usually only plowed for the first 14 miles in winter. The rest of the road is usually **closed from November - June** for snow and is open to winter activities like snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. If you're visiting in those months, either enjoy one of these winter activities there or choose another Adventure from Day 2.

This drive isn't recommended for RVs or trailers. **Vehicles over 19 feet aren't permitted** on Kolob Terrace Road. If you have an RV, skip this and do an additional Adventure instead.



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM



OPTION A1: Kolob Terrace Scenic Drive

Enjoy a lovely 22-mile scenic drive along Kolob Terrace Road, ending at a beautiful viewpoint.



Kolob Terrace Scenic Drive 2:35PM

From the turnoff to Lava Point is 22 miles. The drive only takes 45 minutes without any stops, but there are plenty of scenic spots along the way to stop, take photos and enjoy the views.

You'll notice private cabins and farms in parts as you wind in and out of the national park. The road is paved all the way to Lava Point.

If you like off roading, you could keep going - the road becomes gravel after Kolob Reservoir but continues all the way to SR-14 near Cedar City.



Lava Point Overlook 3:30PM

The views here are stunning - and you'll be able to enjoy them without sharing them with thousands of other people. This is one of the best places in Zion to see the sunset, so you could easily hang out here longer and head back to Springdale for a later dinner.



Dinner 5:30PM (or later)

When you're ready, drive back to Springdale. Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch in the area.

That's the end of your Zion National Park itinerary!



From here, it's :

- 1 hour 50 minutes to Bryce Canyon National Park
- 2 hours 30 minutes to Las Vegas
- 4 hours 30 minutes Salt Lake City
- 4 hours 45 minutes to Grand Canyon Village (South Rim)



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM

OPTION A2: Kolob Terrace Drive + Northgate Peaks Hike

Enjoy the lovely scenic drive along Kolob Terrace Road for 15 miles, then do an easy hike with fantastic views.



Kolob Terrace Scenic Drive 2:35PM

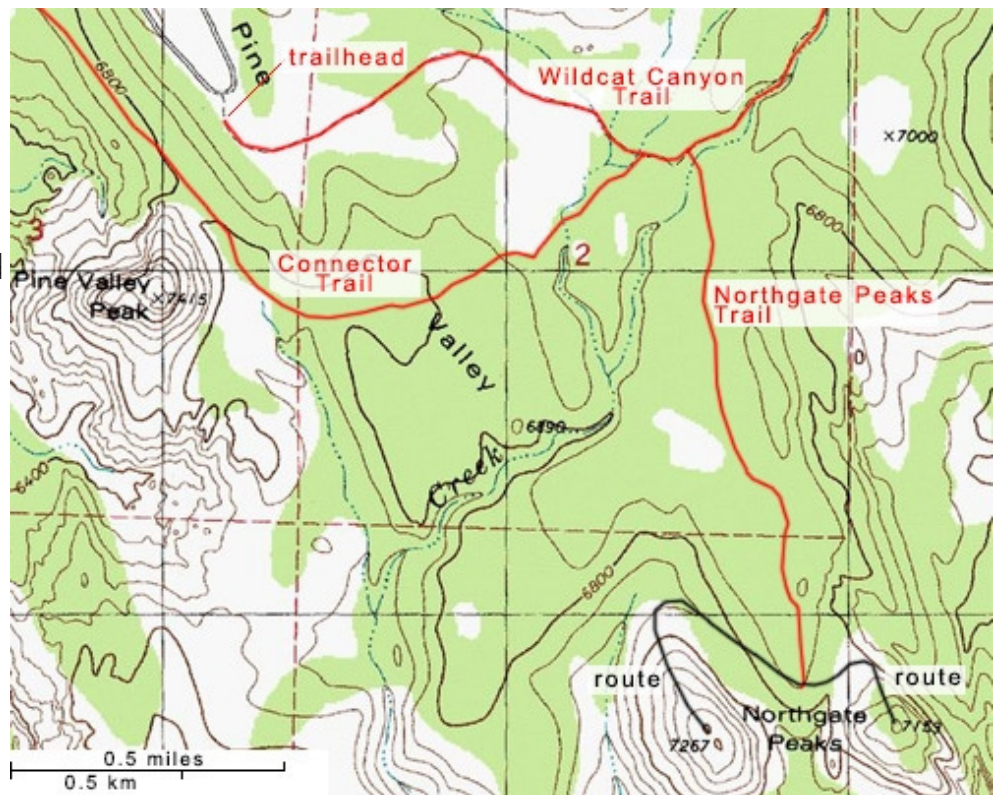
From the turnoff to the trailhead is 15.5 miles. The drive only takes about half an hour without any stops, but there are plenty of scenic spots along the way to stop, take photos and enjoy the views. You'll notice private cabins and farms in parts as you wind in and out of the national park. The road is paved all the way to the trailhead.



Northgate Peaks Trail 3:15PM

This is an easy, family-friendly 4-mile (round trip) hike to a beautiful viewpoint. The trail starts at the **Wildcat Canyon Trailhead**, which is easy to spot about 0.8 miles after a sharp U-turn in the road that heads up a steep hill to the upper plateau.

It follows the eastern edge of Pine Valley and is mostly level the whole way. Starting at the Wildcat Canyon Trailhead, hike along the easy-to-follow





DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM



Northgate Peaks Trail 3:15PM

Wildcat Canyon Trail through a pinion forest with open fields and a few white sandstone formations in the distance. After about a mile, you'll come to a junction with the Connector Trail to Hop Valley. Turn left and continue along the Wildcat Canyon Trail towards Lava Point. After another 0.2 miles, turn right onto the Northgate Peaks Trail. After another 0.2 miles, you'll see a signpost for the Subway Top-Down Route down. Stay on the main trail. You'll pass through forested meadows and after another mile, will reach the end of the trail.



The trail ends at a beautiful view of the Guardian Angels of the Kolob.

Return the way you came and drive back to Springdale. (If it's still light, you could continue to Lava Point and then turn back and have a later dinner).



Dinner 6:30PM (or later)

When you're ready, drive back to Springdale. Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch in the area.

That's the end of your Zion National Park itinerary!



From here, it's :

- 1 hour 50 minutes to Bryce Canyon National Park
- 2 hours 30 minutes to Las Vegas
- 4 hours 30 minutes Salt Lake City
- 4 hours 45 minutes to Grand Canyon Village (South Rim)



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM

OPTION B: Observation Point + Echo Canyon



East Mesa Trail to Observation Point 9:15AM

Start at the East Mesa Trailhead (not to be confused with the East RIM Trail). The sandy trail is mostly along an old jeep road on flat ground that is easy to follow. For three miles (about one hour), it passes through meadows of sage brush, grasses and wildflowers and thinly forested areas and does not have dramatic views. It's a pleasant and pretty easy walk, but after the views of the last couple of days, you may feel a bit underwhelmed. Hang on!

After 3 miles, you come to a junction on your right to a 0.4-mile spur trail that leads to Observation Point (about 15 minutes). The trail descends gradually to the canyon rim. For the last 200 yards, you'll walk the edge of the rim with occasional views into the back of the main canyon toward the Narrows. However, the huge payoff is when you exit the scrubby forest out on to **Observation Point**. The view will take your breath away.



Spend half an hour there.

East Mesa + East Rim Trails to Echo Canyon 11:00AM



You used to be able to continue from Observation Point down into Zion Canyon via Echo Canyon. This way has been blocked by a large rockfall. However, there is still an awesome hike on the East Rim Trail via Echo Canyon that you can do.

Rather than returning along the same trail, this route continues along the East Mesa Trail and connects with the **East Rim Trail**. It goes down into **Echo Canyon**, then back up a different route and ends at **Stave Spring Trailhead**.



From Observation Point, follow the trail back through the brush around the top of the canyon to the junction with the East Mesa Trail. Instead of turning left to return to the East Mesa Trailhead, turn right to continue along a new section of the East Mesa Trail.



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM

East Mesa + East Rim Trails to Echo Canyon



The first mile is mostly level as the trail loops around the top of the main canyon. It then starts down a set of steep switchbacks for about half a mile until you get to junction with the East Rim Trail. In spring, there are plenty of wildflowers alongside the path. If you're afraid of heights, don't look down! The trail follows the canyon wall and you're over 2,000 feet above the floor of Zion Canyon. From the junction of the Observation Point Trail and East Mesa Trail to the junction of East Mesa Trail and East Rim Trail is 1.3 miles (about 40 minutes).



Turn left on to the East Rim Trail. **Note:** You can continue down the East Mesa Trail for another 0.5 miles to get into the narrow slot canyon more. This is a beautiful addition to the hike, but you'll need to turn around and hike back to the junction with the East Rim Trail because of the rockfall blocking the trail. If you do this, add another hour to the hike time and arrange to get picked up an hour later.



Lunch 12:00 | 12:30PM

Have a picnic lunch in Echo Canyon



The East Rim Trail goes through part of **Echo Canyon** and then crosses sections of sliprock with cairns showing the way. The ascent is not too steep, but there are some exposed sections, so take care. The scenery here is spectacular.

After about 1.4 miles (approx. 45 minutes), you'll climb out of the Echo Canyon slot canyon. For the next 0.5 miles, the trail runs along the edge of Echo Canyon, with incredible views down into the canyon. You can see Cathedral Mountain and West Temple.

The last mile or so is a fairly easy section of sagebrush and open forest. The left turnoff to the **Stave Spring Trailhead** is about 0.3 miles after you leave the edge of the canyon. If you get as far as Stave Spring (which is basically just a pipe coming out of the ground) you've gone too far and



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM

East Mesa + East Rim Trails to Echo Canyon



missed the turnoff. The 1.4-mile section from the top of the canyon to the trailhead takes about 30 minutes.



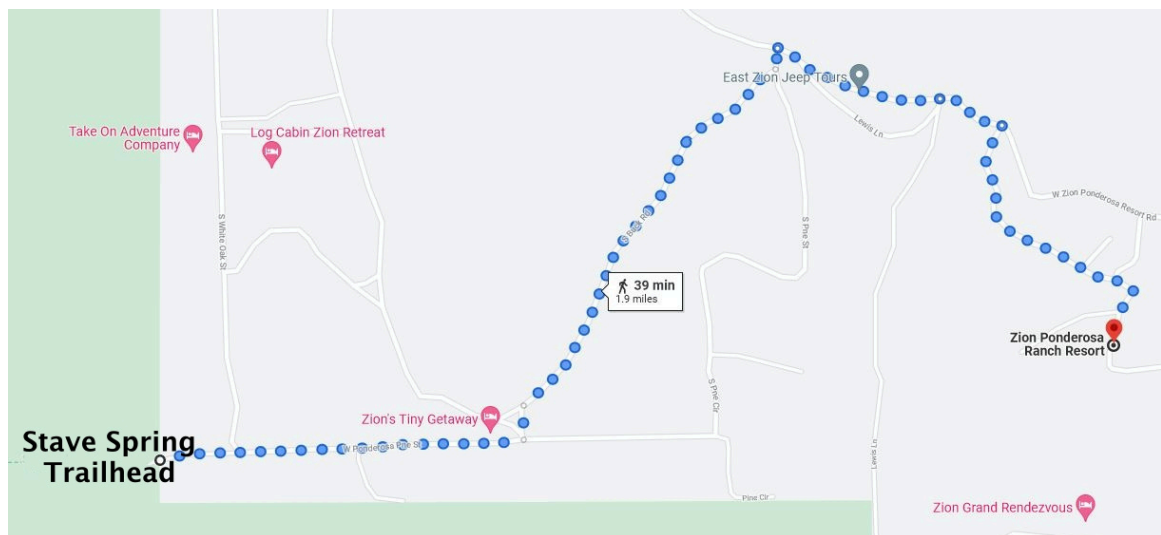
This hike is strenuous. There's little shade for a considerable part of this hike, so make sure you have a hat and sunscreen in summer. The trail is clear for the most part, but there are some sections that are a bit rough, marked by cairns and may involve some scrambling.



Get picked up from the Stave Spring Trailhead at 2:30PM (unless you decided to do the short side hike deeper into Echo canyon, in which case this will 3:30PM).



If you end up missing the shuttle pickup from Stave Spring Trailhead, you can walk back to Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort. It's not exciting (40 minutes).



Drive to Kolob Terrace 2:45PM

Drive to the turnoff to Kolob Terrace in Virgin.



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM



DIRECTIONS: East Mesa - Kolob Terrace Road

Head back the way you came down through the tunnel and back to Springdale. Continue on UT-9W for 13 miles. Turn right on to N Kolob Terrace Rd just as you get into the small town of Virgin (there's a sign). If you pass the Fairfield Inn on your left, you've gone too far.



Kolob Terrace



Kolob Terrace is a less-visited part of Zion National Park that is still very scenic and makes a nice break from the crowds. Kolob Terrace Road goes through a canyon that lies between Zion Canyon and Kolob Canyons. There is a scenic drive (Option A1) and lovely hike (Option A2).



Don't confuse Kolob Terrace with Kolob Canyons, which is a different part of the park near Cedar City, about an hour away.

Kolob Terrace Road is usually only plowed for the first 14 miles in winter. The rest of the road is usually **closed from November - June** for snow and is open to winter activities like snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. If you're visiting in those months, either enjoy one of these winter activities there or choose another Adventure from Day 2.

This drive isn't recommended for RVs or trailers. **Vehicles over 19 feet aren't permitted** on Kolob Terrace. If you have an RV, skip this and do an additional Adventure instead.



DAY 3

DAY: 9:15AM - 6:30PM



Kolob Terrace Scenic Drive 3:50PM

Enjoy a lovely 22-mile scenic drive along Kolob Terrace Road, ending at a beautiful viewpoint. From the turnoff to Lava Point is 22 miles. The drive only takes 45 minutes without any stops, but there are plenty of scenic spots along the way to stop, take photos and enjoy the views. You'll notice private cabins and farms in parts as you wind in and out of the national park. The road is paved all the way to Lava Point. If you like off roading, you could keep going - the road becomes gravel after Kolob Reservoir, but continues all the way to SR-14 near Cedar City.



Lava Point Overlook 4:45PM

The views here are stunning - and you will be able to enjoy them without sharing them with thousands of other people. This is one of the best places in Zion to see the sunset, so you could easily hang out here longer and head back to Springdale for a later dinner.



Dinner 6:30PM

When you're ready, drive back to Springdale. Use the [Dining Guide](#) to choose a place for lunch in the area.

That's the end of your Zion National Park itinerary!



From here, it's :

- 1 hour 50 minutes to Bryce Canyon National Park
- 2 hours 30 minutes to Las Vegas
- 4 hours 30 minutes Salt Lake City
- 4 hours 45 minutes to Grand Canyon Village (South Rim)



ADJUSTING YOUR SCHEDULE

The schedule is based on a stay in **Springdale**. Springdale has the most accommodation options and is close to the main park entrance but there are other places to stay in and around the park. If you stay in or near these places, adjust the schedule as follows:

INSIDE THE PARK

Zion Lodge

DAY ONE: Option A: Catch shuttle around 7:15AM | Option B & C: Catch shuttle around 7:45AM

DAY TWO: Option A & B: Catch shuttle around 7:15AM | Option B: Catch shuttle around 8:15AM

DAY THREE: Keep the same

Watchman & South Campgrounds

DAY ONE: Keep the same

DAY TWO: Keep the same

DAY THREE: Keep the same

Lava Point Campground (Kolob Terraces)

I don't recommend staying here for this itinerary because of the distance to the entrance to the main section of Zion National Park. However, if you do:

DAY ONE: Start 1 hour 15 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 1 hour 15 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start 1 hour 15 minutes earlier

SOUTH ENTRANCE

Virgin

DAY ONE: Start 20 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 20 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start 20 minutes earlier

La Verkin

DAY ONE: Start 25 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 25 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start 25 minutes earlier

Hurricane

DAY ONE: Start 30 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 30 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start 30 minutes earlier

St. George

DAY ONE: Start 1 hour earlier

DAY TWO: Start 1 hour earlier

DAY THREE: Start 1 hour earlier



ADJUSTING YOUR SCHEDULE

EAST ENTRANCE

Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort offers several [activities](#) (canyoneering, horseback riding, jeep tours), if you stay there or nearby it would be more convenient to swap Day 2 and 3 afternoons:

Day 2 afternoon: Drive to Kolob Terrace

Day 3 afternoon: Create Your Own Adventure by organizing an activity through Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort

Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort

DAY ONE: Start 45 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 45 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start at Canyon Overlook. Leave same time.

Mt. Carmel

DAY ONE: Start 45 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 45 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start at Canyon Overlook. Leave same time.

Orderville

DAY ONE: Start 45 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 45 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start at Canyon Overlook. Leave same time.

KOLOB CANYONS ENTRANCE

I don't recommend staying here with this itinerary, as this section of Zion National Park has a separate entrance and is not connected to the main Zion Canyon. If you want to visit Kolob Canyons, I'd recommend visiting there before or after this itinerary. However, if you decide to stay there and use this itinerary:

New Harmony

DAY ONE: Start 1 hour earlier

DAY TWO: Start 1 hour earlier

DAY THREE: Start 1 hour earlier

Kanarrville

DAY ONE: Start 1 hour earlier

DAY TWO: Start 1 hour earlier

DAY THREE: Start 1 hour earlier

Cedar City

DAY ONE: Start 1 hour 15 minutes earlier

DAY TWO: Start 1 hour 15 minutes earlier

DAY THREE: Start 1 hour 15 minutes earlier



ADJUSTING YOUR SCHEDULE

BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK

This itinerary can be easily combined with a [Bryce Canyon itinerary](#).

Going to Bryce Canyon after Zion

If you plan to leave directly for Bryce Canyon, you can skip Kolob Terrace on Day 3 and head to Bryce Canyon directly after the Observation Point hike, since you'll already be at the east end of the park. If you want to see Kolob Terrace, you could go there after The Narrows as your Create Your Own Adventure activity on Day 2.

Coming from Bryce Canyon before Zion

You can easily leave Bryce Canyon at the end of that itinerary and arrive in Springdale in time for dinner, then start this Zion itinerary seamlessly on the next day.

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

This itinerary can also be combined with a [Grand Canyon itinerary](#).

Going to Grand Canyon after Zion

To give yourself time to drive to Grand Canyon Village on the south rim, you can skip Kolob Terrace on Day 3 and head to Grand Canyon directly after the Observation Point hike, since you'll already be at the east end of the park. If you choose option A, you'll arrive at a reasonable hour in time for dinner. If you choose option B, you'll arrive around 8:30PM, so you might want to have dinner on the road on the way there.

If you want to see Kolob Terrace, you could go there after The Narrows as your Create Your Own Adventure activity on Day 2.

Coming from Grand Canyon before Zion

Leave Grand Canyon at the end of the structured activity, skipping the Create Your Own Adventure and using this time to drive to Zion. You'll arrive in time for a latish dinner, then start this Zion itinerary seamlessly on the next day.



USEFUL LINKS

These links are all available in the actual itinerary, but here they are all together as a useful planning and preparation resource.

Bonus extras (Accommodation Guide, Dining Guide, Shuttle Guide)

<https://parkscollecting.com/zion-bonus-extras-sf41v9oz/>

Itinerary Updates

<https://parkscollecting.com/itinerary-updates-f6x9m2/>

Zion National Park Entrance Fee

<https://www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/fees.htm>

Annual Pass: [America The Beautiful Pass](#)

Bryce Canyon National Park Itineraries (use code ZNNP for a 20% discount)

<https://parkscollecting.com/bryce-canyon-itinerary/>

Angel's Landing Permits

<https://parkscollecting.com/how-to-get-angels-landing-permits/>

Bicycle Rentals

<https://www.zioncycles.com/bike-rentals/>

Cycling Information

<https://www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/bicycling.htm>

The Narrows Equipment Rental

<https://www.zionadventures.com/rent-narrows-equipment.html>

The Narrows Flow Rate

<https://waterdata.usgs.gov/ut/nwis/uv/?>

[site_no=09405500&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060,00010,00095,72020](https://waterdata.usgs.gov/ut/nwis/uv/?site_no=09405500&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060,00010,00095,72020)

The Narrows Flash Flood Warnings

<https://www.weather.gov/slc/flashflood>

Zion - Mt. Carmel Tunnel Information

<https://www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/the-zion-mount-carmel-tunnel.htm>

Zion Current Conditions

<https://www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/conditions.htm>

Book Flights: [Skyscanner](#)

Camper Van Rentals: [Escape Campervans](#)

Accommodations

[Hotels and motels](#)

[Vacation rentals](#)

[Campspot](#)

[Campnab](#)

Travel Insurance: [Travellex](#)

Packing Lists: <https://parkscollecting.com/packing-lists/>



TRIP NOTES

PARKS COLLECTING

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