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Utah's Mighty Five

September 25- October 4, 2024
10 Days – 9 Nights

Utah's "Mighty Five" national parks anchor a long line of uniquely amazing natural features stretching across southern Utah and northern Arizona. These masterpieces, formed over millions of years by changing environments, uplift and erosive forces, include Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Zion National Parks. Though amazing on their own, these destinations are accompanied by an abundance of state and national forests and recreation areas as well as many state parks that all highlight the unique features the area has to offer.



On this trip, you will see scenery and geologic features unlike anywhere else on the planet. The region boasts thousands of arches with some spanning over 300 feet and numerous columns called Hoodoos. The cliffs, domes, natural bridges, canyons and buttes have been carved by wind and water over millennia and make for breathtaking vistas and wonderful places to explore. Additionally, the remote nature of the parks means the star gazing will be fantastic!

* Transportation to St. George Regional Airport and from Grand Junction Regional Airport are not included in trip fees.. Travelers are welcome to coordinate their flights to accompany the trip leaders from Gerald R Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, MI.

** Meals included: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

Itinerary

Day 1: St. George, UT

Your tour of southern Utah will begin at Saint George Regional Airport on the edge of the Mojave desert in southwest Utah. We will take the scenic 50-mile drive northeast to Zion National Park (ZNP) at the edge of the Colorado Plateau and the Grand Staircase. Once checked into our lodging at the park, we will get the travel out of our legs on a nearby trail before dinner. (D)**



Day 2: Zion National Park

We will use the NPS shuttle service to move around the park as private vehicles are not allowed beyond a certain point. On this day, we will explore primarily on foot and the many trails that traverse the varied terrain of the canyon. There will be two different hiking options including a more strenuous but scenic 5.4 mile hike through *Walters Wiggles*, *The Chains*, *The Spine*, and *Angel's Landing Summit*. If reading this has your heart racing, don't worry, there

are plenty of trails to keep us more grounded. An ODC naturalist guide will lead a hike along one of the other less rigorous trails including the Emerald Pools or Pa'rus trails lower in the canyon. Later in the day we will lead a group hike before heading into nearby Springdale for dinner. (B, L, D)**

Day 3: Zion National Park

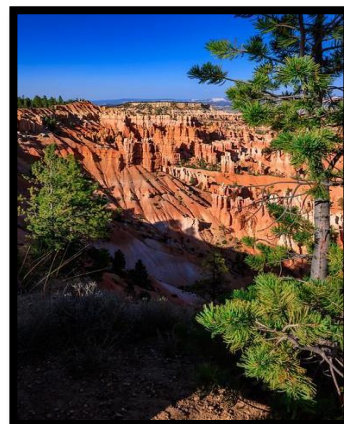
Our second full day at ZNP will explore farther up the canyon to the end of the park road where we find *The Narrows*. This is the narrowest section of the canyon with walls 1000 feet high and river twenty feet wide in places. Much of this "trail" is in the water, so if you choose to join us for a hike, be sure to bring appropriate footwear. If the weather conditions are not favorable for hiking in a narrow canyon (flash flood risk) or you chose to not take a water hike, then we will visit the area, admire the hanging gardens on the canyon walls, and then continue to the Riverside Trail or hike to the Zion Observation Point along the Echo Canyon/East Mesa Trail. Our evening will be spent relaxing and watching the sunset bring the canyon walls alive with changing colors before revealing the vivid night sky beyond the jagged cliffs. (B, L, D)**

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Day 4: Travel to Bryce Canyon National Park

After breakfast, we will make our way up the plateau toward Bryce Canyon National Park (BCNP). Along the way we will take in one last breathtaking view of Zion canyon from the Canyon Overlook Trail. At over 9,000 feet above sea level, BCNP offers visitors a variety of weather conditions throughout the year including close to 8 feet of annual snowfall. After arriving at and settling in to BCNP, we will take a hike along the Rim Trail to the Visitor Center. On the way back to the lodge, we will hike by Sunset Point for the nightly show. (B, L, D)**



Day 5: Bryce Canyon National Park

We will hike to the iconic hoodoos after breakfast using the Queen's Garden and Navajo loop to get up close with the rock features that make BCNP so special. On this trail we will see *Queen Victoria*, *Thor's Hammer*, *Two Bridges*, and the bottom of *Wall Street*. For anyone not interested in the three mile hike, our staff will provide an alternate

guided hike option. After lunch, we will also take in a National Park Service ranger-led program and end the day enjoying the Bryce night sky. (B, L, D)**



Day 6: Travel to Capitol Reef National Park

After leaving Bryce Canyon in the morning, we will drive to Capitol Reef National Park (CRNP) to the northeast. It's here that we will explore the cultural and geologic history of the unique site with visits to historic Fruita with its heirloom orchards and remnants of an 1880's settlement. It includes petroglyphs that remain from the Archaic hunters and gathers and the Fremont people who lived in the area for thousands of years. We will head south along the park's scenic drive to view sites such as Cassidy Arch, Pectol's Pyramid, Slickrock Divide, the Golden Throne, and the Capitol Gorge. (B, L, D)**

Day 7: Capitol Reef National Park to Moab, UT

It is recommended that you have a four-wheel drive vehicle to visit the Cathedral Valley to see the massive monoliths. After breakfast, we will begin a 4-hour Jeep tour to see formations such as Temples of the Sun and Moon and Glass Mountain and view sinkholes, lava formations and sweeping views over the national park. After the tour we will make our way to Moab, UT for the night. (B, L, D)**

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Day 8: Canyonlands National Park

Canyonlands National Park (CNP) encompasses some 527 square miles of eastern Utah where the Green River and the Colorado River have worn their course through the surrounding plateau. We will experience this landscape by car and foot as we visit the Islands in the Sky mesa with its 1000-foot cliffs overlooking the surrounding terrain. We will continue our scenic touring south where we will stop for a short hike to the Grand View Point



overlooking the White Rim, Maze and Needles, and the distant mountains. After a day filled with hiking and amazing scenery, you will be ready to sit back and enjoy a cowboy-style Dutch oven dinner overlooking the Colorado River. After dinner, we will board a flat bottom boat for a 2-hour cruise up the river including a light and sound show with music and narration highlighting the history of the Canyonlands. (B, L, D)**



Day 9: Arches National Park

On our last day of exploration, we'll hit the trails along the Arches National Park Road that reaches Devil's Garden and the red-rock sites that it offers. Formations along the way will include Park Avenue, Courthouse Towers, Petrified Dunes, Balanced Rock, and countless natural arches carved by the delicate power of the environment. For the evening, we will visit Moab where you will have time to explore on your

own. Maybe you'll choose to take in a show at Moab's Backyard Theater just steps off main street. (B, L, D)**

Day 10: Travel Back to Michigan

Our last day will include a three hour scenic drive to Grand Junction, Colorado. Before we board a plane at Grand Junction Regional Airport, we will take a detour to see Colorado National Monument. Our route will include driving the historic Rim Rock Drive to take in the sights before our afternoon flight to Grand Rapids, Michigan. (B, L)**

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Pricing: \$4,950 per person (based on double occupancy) (\$1,350 single supplement)

Payment: \$750 deposit due at the time of booking and required to hold a place on the trip; \$2,000 2nd Payment due February 1, 2024. Final balance is due by May 1, 2024. All payments may be made at one time if desired via cash or check.

Transaction fees apply for making payments with a credit card.

Cancellations: Full refunds will be made until March 25, 2024. After March 25, 2024, up to 50% of money received may be forfeited by the participant. No refunds will be given for cancellation after May 25, 2024. We encourage you to speak to a travel agent about trip insurance to protect yourself if unexpected situations require you to cancel your participation.

Included: 9 nights lodging; all transportation while in Utah; naturalist guides; fees/admission for park, tours, shuttles, etc; all meals as indicated in itinerary

Not included: Meals while in transit to and from Utah, souvenirs, snacks between meals, alcoholic beverages, additional tours, and activities away from the group

Please contact trip leader Mike Graves or to learn more or to make a payment:
616.393.9453 mikeg@outdoordiscovery.org.



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