



Bryce, Capitol Reef and Zion

Crown Jewels of Utah

This trip is all about driving through awe-inspiring scenery. Almost every turn or overlook along the road brings another, “Oh, wow, look at that!” And if you’d enjoy hiking in such scenery, there are plenty of opportunities to do that, too.

In just four days, you’ll see three spectacular national parks in Utah—Bryce, Capitol Reef and Zion—as well as two national monuments, Cedar Breaks and Grand Staircase Escalante.

Along the way, you’ll travel Utah’s ultra scenic Highway 12, which has been designated a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration.

The best times to travel in Southern Utah, to avoid both the summer heat and the crowds of people who want to see these parks, are May through mid-June and late-September through mid-October.

But be forewarned: You may return home with a sprained right index finger...from pressing the camera button too much.

Pathfinder Newsletter

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Guided Tours of Cities, Towns, and National Parks in the American West
by the Authors of *Seven Perfect Days in Arizona*, *Seven Perfect Days in Colorado*,
and *Seven Perfect Days in Northern California*

In a Nutshell

Let's start by characterizing the three parks and two monuments...to help you decide whether this trip is for you.

What they are not: Bryce is not a canyon; Capitol Reef is not a reef; Zion is not Heaven; Cedar Breaks has no cedars; and Grand Staircase-Escalante has no stairs. Then, what are they?

From its rim, Bryce is a series of amphitheatres and ravines that are full of primarily apricot- and peach-colored spires, commonly called hoodoos, which rise from the depths and radiate an awe-inspiring spiritual beauty.

Capitol Reef is mostly Wide-Open-West, bordered by stunning dark-red cliffs and dominated by a unique 100-mile-long (161 kilometer) white rock formation called the Waterpocket Fold. And there is a historic pioneer settlement to see.

Zion is a spectacular canyon that's rimmed by predominantly pink and white walls that rise to 2,000 feet (600 meters) above the canyon floor. It's known for its excellent hiking opportunities.

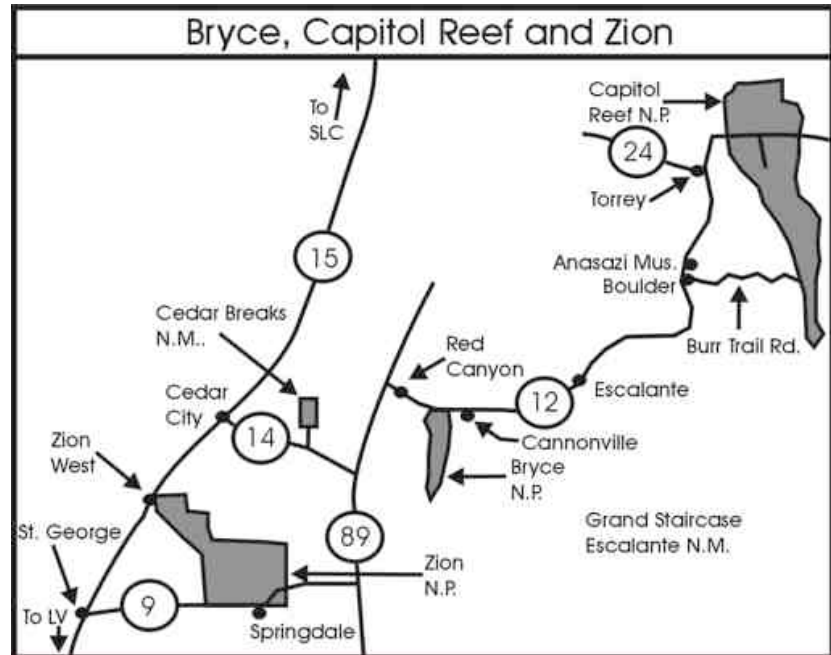
Cedar Breaks is a gorgeous, smaller version of Bryce, at 10,000 feet (3,000 m) above sea level.

Grand Staircase-Escalante is nearly two million acres (769,000 hectares) of slickrock (petrified sand dunes and seabed), a fascinating other-worldly environment that steps-up five levels from the Arizona-Utah border.

As for Highway 12, the road that mostly connects these parks and monuments, it has also been named as one of only 27 All-American roads in the United States—because it “provides visitors with a unique driving experience and is considered a destination unto itself.”

Highway 12 and all these parks and monuments lie within the Colorado Plateau, which is a geologic entity that was once under a shallow inland sea, was uplifted 10-15 million years ago to 5,000-11,000 feet elevation (1,524-3,350 m), and today makes up much of Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico.

By the way, the difference between a national park and a national monument is: national parks are authorized by Congressional legislation, to “preserve a range of superb natural or cultural wonders”; national monuments are created by executive order of the president under the Antiquities Act, to “preserve a single unique cultural or natural feature.” There are 58 national parks with a combined 52 million acres of land (21 million hectares). The National Park Service



also manages 74 national monuments having a combined two million acres of land (809,000 hectares). Some national monuments are managed by other federal agencies.

The Day Before Day One

If you don't drive to Utah, the best airport to fly into is Las Vegas McCarran International; Salt Lake City is farther from the parks. The countryside along Interstate 15 from just north of Las Vegas to the stark Virgin Mountains in the northwestern corner of Arizona is the driest desert you may ever see. But be patient; the elevations and scenery improve significantly after that.

North of St. George, Utah, after you've driven about 160 miles (257 km) from the airport, look for the turnoff to **Zion National Park's Kolob Canyons** visitor center at Exit 40 (www.zion-national-park.info/kolob-canyons.htm). This is the entrance to the westernmost section of Zion; there is no road through this part of the park to Zion Canyon itself.

After a quick visit to the small visitor center, drive five miles (8 km) to the end of Kolob Canyons Road to enjoy an overlook of the stunning, very high, intensely-red sandstone cliffs that you will have just driven through. This, and your next stop, Cedar Breaks, are proper appetizers for the visual feast that lies ahead of you during the next four days.

To get to **Cedar Breaks National Monument**, continue north on Interstate 15 to Cedar City/Exit 59 and drive about 23 miles east (37 km) on Highway 14 (www.nps.gov/ceb/index.htm). Here, you'll enjoy a west-facing amphitheater of primarily red-orange rocks that's 2,000 feet (610 m) deep and three miles (5 km) across. You may need a jacket or sweater, because you'll be nearly two miles (3.2 km) above sea level. By the way, this attraction was named by early settlers who referred to juniper trees as "cedars" and badlands (soft rocks eroded into odd shapes) as "breaks."

After enjoying "Juniper Eroded-Place National Monument," continue west on Highway 14 (a Utah Scenic Byway) for about 23 miles (37 km) until it ends at Highway 89. Then drive north about 21 miles (34 km), and turn right/east on Highway 12.

About one mile (1.6 km) from Highway 89, you'll come upon the appropriately-named **Red Canyon**, which is the beginning of the very special scenery that you'll enjoy along this All-American Road. About seven miles farther (11 km), you'll arrive at the entrance road into Bryce Canyon.

Where to spend the night and have dinner? The choices are limited but very good. First choice is **Bryce Canyon Lodge** inside the park (open April 1-October 31; reserve online at www.brycecanyonlodge.com, or 888-303-297-2757; outside the U.S., call 303-297-2757.) The lodge is very popular, so reservations well in advance are a must. The cabin accommodations are especially enjoyable and food in the lodge is very tasty. The lodge, built in the 1920's, is a National Landmark on the National Register of Historic Places. **Ruby's Inn**, a Best Western Inn (with an adjacent campground) just outside the park entrance, is almost a tourist Mecca in itself (www.rubysinn.com). The food is also very good here. There is additional lodging both east and west of the park's main road (www.utah.com/lodging/brycecanyon.htm). Another good place for dinner is the Canyon Pines Restaurant, which is located four miles west of the Bryce Canyon entrance road.

Day One

This day will be spent enjoying Bryce Canyon National Park and driving spectacular Highway 12. *Here's a tip: National Park entrance fees are usually \$25 per car. If you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident 62 years of age or older, you're eligible for the Golden Age Passport. It costs only \$10.00 and gives you lifetime access to all U.S. National Parks and National Monuments—including those featured in this issue of Pathfinder Newsletter. Passengers who are with you will be admitted free of charge.*

Bryce Canyon National Park

If you're willing and fortunate, you can see the horseshoe-shaped amphitheater of Bryce Canyon at sunrise when it's most sublime. (It's not so bad at sunset, either.) Standing on the Rim Trail of the park's main amphitheater then, when sunlight reflects the best color from the rocks, can produce a spiritual reaction—an intense appreciation of God's handiwork.

On the other hand, Ebenezer Bryce, for whom the canyon was named, looked out at the hoodoos and said, "It's a helluva place to lose a cow."

You can see from here that 2,000-foot deep (610 m) Bryce Canyon is not really a canyon, because no stream has carved its shape. It's a north-south escarpment that borders the Paunsaugunt Plateau. Later, if you wish, you can drive the full 18 miles (29 km) of the road to see different viewpoints within the park. Shuttle buses are available during the summer.

The left-side photograph on page 1 of this issue will help you appreciate the following description that appears on the signboard at Sunrise Point, which you'll visit next.

"The colors of Bryce are the result of oxidized minerals—red, pink and orange from iron, and purple from manganese; the whites are pure limestone... Bryce's climate is ideal for hoodoos. With freezing temperatures more than 200 days a year, the relentless cycle of freezing and thawing widens cracks in the cliffs. Rainwater scours away the frost-wedged debris and cuts narrow gullies between walls, eventually isolating pinnacles and exposing them to even more weathering."

The end result of the erosion and weathering is a fantasyland of castle-, parapet-, animal- and human-like formations that are unique in the world and that intrigue and delight the onlooker. If you're fortunate, you'll see some of the hoodoos turn translucent when direct sunlight hits them; it's then that they are at their most breathtaking. Early geologists called the formations "hoodoos," because they thought the rocks could cast a spell on onlookers.

For the very best views of the hoodoos, we suggest that you walk to the two primary overlooks in this amphitheater and take at least one hike down among them. If you don't want to hike down, you may continue walking on the paved Rim Trail past Sunrise Point to Fairyland Point, and past Sunset Point to Inspiration and Bryce Points.

Since the elevation here is 8,000 feet (2,440 m) above sea level, you're likely to experience some shortness of breath. We do not recommend strenuous hiking if you have a heart condition or breathing difficulties. On this and any hike in Southern Utah, be sure to carry plenty of water, wear a hat and put on sunscreen.

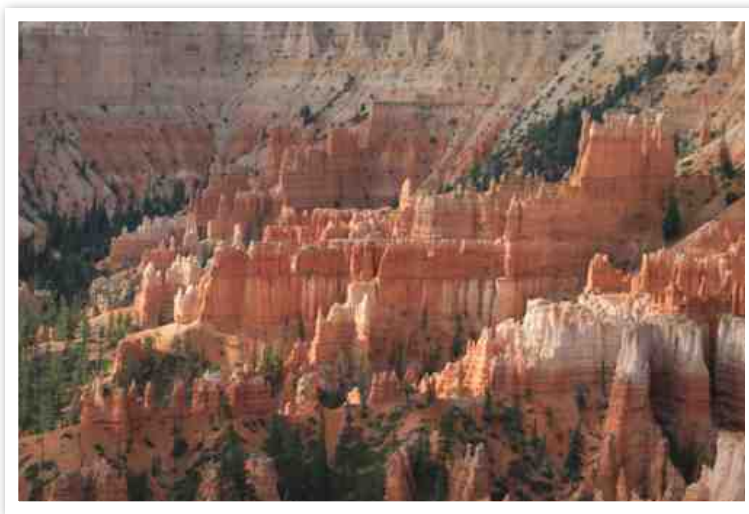
Look to the left side of the amphitheater for a small hill and you'll find **Sunrise Point**. There, you'll find both a fantastic view and the start of **Queens Garden Trail**, which is consid-

ered the least difficult of the trails descending from the rim. It's 1.8 miles (2.9 km) round trip and has an elevation change of 320 feet (98 m).

One-half mile away (.8 km), on the right side of the amphitheater, you'll find **Sunset Point** and a trailhead. A short distance down this trail, you'll come to a "T." To the left is the end of **Navajo Loop Trail**. To the right is the beginning of the trail, which is 1.3 miles in its entirety. It will take about an hour and a half to hike the loop.

If you want to walk only a short distance down into the amphitheater, to see the iconic hoodoos that have helped make Bryce so popular, turn left at the "T." To hike the entire trail, turn right. There is an elevation change of 550 feet (168 m).

After a steep descent, negotiating a series of switchbacks and a high-walled slot canyon called Wall Street, you'll emerge into the main amphitheater. At the bottom of the trail, you'll



find that the Navajo Loop Trail connects with the less-demanding Queen's Garden Trail, enabling you to make a complete loop back to the rim at Sunrise Point, if that's your pleasure. Allow three hours for the combo-trail hike. There are no bathrooms down in the amphitheater.

Do stop at the **Visitor Center**, either when arriving or leaving Bryce. The 22-minute film, "Bryce Canyon: Shadows of Time," shows on the half-hour and the hour and focuses on the geology, animals, plants and human history of Bryce

Canyon. The visitor center also has a very interesting museum—including a geologic cross section of the Grand Staircase region (more on that later)—a bookstore/gift shop, and it provides information on available ranger walks and talks. (www.nps.gov/brca, 435-834-5322)

Super-Scenic Highway 12

After you have a quick and probably late lunch at the lodge, we suggest that you leave Bryce Canyon, turn right/east on beautiful Highway 12 and enjoy the next 112 miles (180 km) of ever-changing, stunning scenery. You'll be heading toward the town of Torrey and Capitol Reef National Park with one very interesting stop in the town of Boulder.

We'll try not to overstate what you'll see while driving the 77 miles (124 km) between Bryce and Boulder. But, this is a true adventure, because there is a surprise around every bend in the road. The variety of scenes is amazing. One traveler reported on TripAdvisor.com: "I've been to all 50 states and Rte. 12 is my hands-down favorite route in the entire country." We've been to 48 states and we agree.

You'll be driving through a succession of valleys, all of which are different from each other. Two are farmland with tan cliffs to the right and left. Several are grazing land with deep-red cliffs and side canyons. Another is high desert with pinyon pine and juniper trees. Still an-

other is grazing land interspersed with chaparral (a mix of desert shrubs) and bordered by pine trees. Then there is a descent through all-rock hills (gray slickrock called Navajo Sandstone), which host only very small plants that cling to life in the rock crevices. Finally, there is The Hogback, a two-mile stretch of road just before Boulder that drops away sharply on both sides to Navajo sandstone, which seems to stretch for miles.

When you arrive at Boulder, you'll probably be thinking, "In two days, we get to see all that again...from the other direction...and there's more of Highway 12 ahead today!"

Just north of Boulder, on the right side of the road, you'll find the **Anasazi State Park Museum** (www.utah.com/stateparks/anasazi.htm). This site will give you a chance to stretch your legs and provide an opportunity to learn about the pre-Navajo Native American culture that thrived on the Colorado Plateau between A.D. 1 and 1300.

Excavations here—in what is called the Coombs Site—have uncovered about 100 living and storage rooms that accommodated about 200 residents, plus thousands of artifacts. Inside the museum, you can see some of those artifacts, a 22-minute video on the Anasazi (perhaps more accurately called Ancestral Puebloans), and other exhibits on the history and life of these people. Outside, you'll find a life-size replica of a six-room pueblo, the actual foundation of another, a pit house, and excellent signboards that describe the site and how the Anasazi functioned there 900 years ago.

Back in the car and heading toward Torrey, which is 35 miles away, you'll be in anticipation of what other pleasures Highway 12 will bring. It may bring cows and deer, since there are no fences along the road; so be on the lookout!

Completely different, but scenic because of the long vistas from the overlooks, this section of the highway is dominated by the ascent and descent of Boulder Mountain and the thick groves of aspen, pine and other tall trees. Be sure to stop at Larb Hollow Overlook, where you'll be able to look down on Capitol Reef National Park and see parts of the park's signature white, 100-mile long (160 km) Waterpocket Fold.

Where to spend the next two nights and where to eat in Torrey? For lodging, we recommend the Best Western Capitol Reef Resort (a misnomer; it's a motel with one tennis court) located two miles east of Torrey on Highway 24, 435-425-3111, www.bestwesternutah.com/hotels/best-western-capitol-reef-resort/ and the Day's Inn Torrey-Capitol Reef located at the junction of Highways 12 and 24, 435-425-3761, www.daysinn.com/DaysInn/control/Booking/property_info?propertyId=05340.

For dinner, we recommend Café Diablo for outstanding cuisine that's reasonably-priced (599 W. Main St., 435-425-3070, www.cafediablo.net) and The Rim Rock Inn & Restaurant for traditional Western fare (2523 E. Utah Highway 24, 435-425-3388, www.therimrock.net/dining.html). For breakfast, we recommend Capitol Reef Inn & Cafe (360 Main St, 435-425-3271, www.capitolreeffinn.com) and Sandstone Inn & Restaurant (875 E. Utah 12, 435-425-3775, www.capitolreefwonderland.com).

Day Two

This day will be entirely devoted to leisurely exploring and enjoying **Capitol Reef National Park**. If red is your favorite color, you'll love this place.

Capitol Reef was established as a national monument by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in August 1937 and as a national park by congress in December 1971.

Because there are no traditional food services in the park, you may want to consider what to do about lunch before leaving Torrey. There is a grocery store just east of the Capitol Reef Inn & Café; there is a Subway sandwich store at the junction of Highways 12 and 24; and there is the Gifford House in the park. We opted for the homemade pie, ice cream and breads at the Gifford House and were glad we did.

The first two stops at Capitol Reef National Park are Panorama Point and Goose Necks Point, which are accessible seven miles (11 km) east of the Highway 12/24 junction.

As the name suggests, Panorama Point provides the opportunity for a 360-degree view of the western side of the park. This is a simply gorgeous scene of western wide-open-spaces and of a miles-long ridge of deep red sandstone to the north. The anomaly on this ridge is a layer of green-gray rock called the Chinle Formation, which runs horizontally through the ridge at about its mid-point.

One signboard here describes the glaciation that occurred in this area. Another asserts that Capitol Reef National Park has the clearest air in America and that the average summer visual range is 145 miles (235 km). That's contrasted with the average visibility in the Ohio River Valley, which is nine miles (15 km).

The park's signature formation, the 100-mile long Waterpocket Fold is described as a "warp in the earth's crust that was created as the Rocky Mountains were formed [65 million years ago] and then was tilted and left as golden-white domes." This afternoon, you'll pass through the Waterpocket Fold as you hike the narrows of Capitol Gorge.

Next, follow the adjoining dirt/gravel road one mile to Goosenecks Point, where you'll hike briefly to look down 800 feet (245 m) to the floor of a canyon that has been carved by Sulphur Creek into a series of five s-shaped curves that almost meet one another. Dramatic.

On the other side of the parking area, you'll find the trailhead to Sunset Point, which is an easy .3 mile (.5 km) hike. Here, you can enjoy the beautiful panoramic view to the East from the comfort of a bench.

Next stop: the Visitor Center of Capitol Reef National Park, two miles (3.2 km) east of Panorama Point (www.nps.gov/care, 435-425-3791, x111). Here, you'll want to watch the excellent 18-minute film that shows on the hour and the half-hour. You'll also have the opportunity to study a relief map of the entire park, showing the full extent of the Waterpocket Fold. Displays explain the geology, Fremont Indian culture and Mormon settlement of the area. Homesteader Niels Johnson arrived in 1880 and eight or ten families lived here in 1902.

The area was named Fruita about this time because of the 300 acres of apple, peach, cherry, pear, plum and nut trees that were planted by the Mormons. Fruita was abandoned by 1959 and today the approximately 2,500 trees are cared for by the National Park Service.

Before taking the park's scenic drive and a fascinating hike, let's drive a mile farther East on Highway 24 to the Schoolhouse, then one-half mile past that to the petroglyphs site.

The picturesque schoolhouse was built in 1896 by the Mormon community and was renovated in 1966 by the National Park Service. Eight grades were taught simultaneously in this small, one-room building until 1941. In addition to serving as a place of learning, the school-

house was used for Sunday school and as a community center for dances and socials. It's only open from 10-11:30 am.

Accessible via two boardwalks, the petroglyphs, scratched into the vertical rock walls by the Fremont Indians, are interesting to see. One shows what appears to be a group of four warriors garbed in chest protectors and horned headdresses. There are also representations of Bighorn Sheep, deer, rabbits and other figures. One can't help but feel a distant connection to the people who put them there.

For future reference (we recommend that you hike there tomorrow morning), the trail-head to Hickman Bridge is a just a short distance east on Highway 24.

Now, return to the park's main road and head south from the visitor center, where you'll quickly find Gifford House and its barn. The house, barn, schoolhouse and fruit trees are all that's left of the Fruita community.

The Gifford House is your window into what it was like to live in Fruita in the early 1900s. The museum is small but very informative. The homemade bread, pie and ice cream are delicious; pick some fruit for a well-rounded meal if it's in season. There are tables on the front lawn where you can enjoy your picnic lunch as well as the beautiful red-cliff backdrop for this idyllic scene. Or, you can have your picnic on tables at the pavilion in Capitol Gorge. If you need water for your hike in Capitol Gorge, you can purchase it at Gifford House.

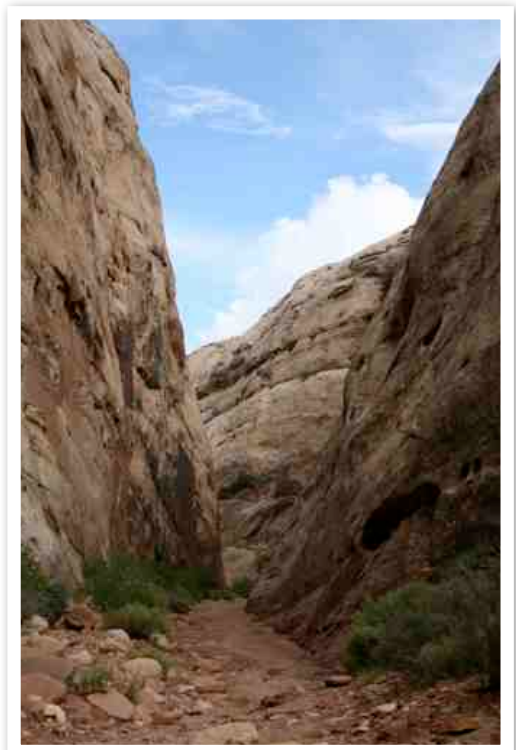
Next, enjoy the park's beautiful and peaceful 10-mile (16 km) Scenic Drive with its variegated—mostly red, gray-green and pink—cliffs on both sides. It's like a rich mosaic that changes with nearly every curve of the road. When the pavement ends and the gravel-and-dirt road begins, you'll start your journey into Capitol Gorge.

As the road gets progressively more narrow, you'll feel the rocks and colors enveloping you until you are in the bosom of the Waterpocket Fold. From the pavilion, it's an easy one-mile walk through Petroglyphs Narrows on the old trail that American Indians and pioneers followed to make their way through the "reef."

Speaking of Indians: if you've seen old Western movies, it's easy to imagine being part of a cavalry unit riding through the narrows in the late 1800s and being fired upon by Indians from about 800 feet (240 m) above.

About half-way through the narrows, you'll come to Pioneer Register, a rock wall on which early travelers scratched their names and visitation date, the earliest being by two prospectors in 1871. Along the way, if you're keen-eyed, you'll see Indian petroglyphs that were scratched into the rock much earlier than that.

Finally, you'll come to an open area and a sign pointing to The Tanks. Only if you are an intrepid hiker should you climb this trail .2 mile (.3 km) to see



the pockets in the Waterpocket Fold. For your information, the Petroglyph Narrows Trail continues one and one-half miles (2.4 km) beyond this point and opens onto the desert.

If you haven't yet had dinner at Café Diablo in Torrey, be sure to do that. You'll be glad you did! (599 W. Main St., 435-425-3070, www.cafediablo.net)

Day Three

We'll start the day by hiking to a natural formation in Capitol Reef National Park called Hickman Bridge. Next we'll return to Boulder and drive the Burr Ridge Trail through the northeast corner of Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, enjoying red-walled Long Canyon, a slot canyon and an overlook of the southern Waterpocket Fold. Then, we'll drive west on Highway 12 along the northern border of Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, and finish the day (by dinnertime) at this night's lodging outside the east entrance to Zion National Park.

Hickman Bridge

You'll find the trailhead for the two-mile, two-hour round trip hike to Hickman Bridge just beyond the petroglyphs on Highway 24. This is a moderately difficult trail requiring some uphill climbing, but at only 5,600 feet elevation it's not all that strenuous...if you take it easy. Don't forget to carry plenty of water.

This is another opportunity to see the Waterpocket Fold up close and personal. As clear evidence of this, after a short distance up the trail turn and look backward at Capitol Dome, above and to the left of the curving road. This and other similar white domes of Navajo sandstone along the Fold are what gave the park its name. This dome reminds viewers of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

Along the trail, you'll see the Fremont River (named for explorer John C. Fremont who passed through the area during the winter of 1853-54), lots of deep-blue sky, black volcanic rocks, prickly pear cactus, the "image" of a young girl high on a triangular-shaped dome of the Waterpocket Fold, and, finally, Hickman Bridge (see the center photograph on page 1 of this issue). When the trail branches—before you reach Hickman Bridge—go to the right; you'll return to that same spot via the left-hand trail.

Technically, this formation is a 130-foot-long by 125-foot-high "bridge" (40 by 38 meters) instead of an "arch." It was carved by rushing water over the millennia; arches are caused by instability in the earth that results in the falling away of weakened rock.

After enjoying and photographing the bridge, walk under it, bear to the left, and return to the trailhead on Highway 24.

Then, retrace your drive to Highway 12 and over Boulder Mountain to the town of Boulder, where you'll be introduced to Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument.

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

This national monument was established by President Bill Clinton in September 1996, as a way of keeping an unusual topography in a wilderness state for the enjoyment of U.S. citizens and others from around the world. It's administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Because the average visitor sees only the long, northernmost edge of this monument, it's hard for them to understand it as an entity. The following description should help put it into perspective.

In general, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument includes most of the landscape east-to-west between Capitol Reef and Bryce National Parks, and north-to-south between Highway 12 and the Utah-Arizona border. The size, "as the crow flies," is roughly 75 miles by 50 miles (120 by 80 kilometers) and 1.9 million acres (769,000 hectares). Its landscape also stretches from 3,500 to 11,000 feet elevation (1,065-3,350 meters). As national parks and monuments go, it's a mind-boggling piece of geography. Because of its rough topography and harsh environment, this was the last place in the continental United States to be mapped.

Within this rocky wilderness are three roughly-equal, massive geologic areas that define the monument: the Grand Staircase, in the west, which is comprised primarily of five ascending levels of vermillion, white, gray and pink sandstone cliffs; the Kaiparowits Plateau, in the center of the monument, which contains rugged mesas and steep canyons; and the Escalante River Canyons, in the east, which contains sandstone cliffs, plateaus and a maze of interconnected canyons. Geologically, it's possible to observe 11 different layers of rock in the monument dating back nearly two billion years; nine of these layers contain numerous footprints of plant-eating and carnivorous dinosaurs that are being studied by paleontologists and geologists. There are also many sites of the Fremont and Ancestral Puebloan cultures in the monument that are under study by archeologists. (One of them, of course, is the Coombs Site at Anasazi State Park in Boulder, which you visited on Day One.)

We'll drive into the monument on Burr Trail Road, currently the only paved road in the monument, then along the northern edge of Grand Staircase-Escalante as we retrace our route from Boulder to the Bryce Canyon area.

Burr Trail Road

We suggest lunch at the Boulder Mesa Restaurant in Boulder (located on Burr Trail Road just one block east of Highway 12), for delicious homemade-style food, then a 34-mile (55 km) round trip drive on Burr Trail Road through the Circle Cliffs area of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Be sure to check the mileage when you leave Boulder, because 11 miles (18 km) from Route 12 you'll have the opportunity to see a wonderful slot canyon.

The original Burr Trail was named for John Burr who moved his cattle between winter and summer ranges along this route during the late 1800's. Today, the trail is paved from Boulder eastward to the border of Capitol Reef National Park; the trail has a gravel surface much of the rest of the way to the northern tip of Lake Powell.

The first six miles of Burr Trail Road will take you through ranching country and past a slickrock formation called Durffrey Mesa. You'll then enter a red rock area and descend to The Gulch and Long Canyon. The Gulch is reportedly the most popular canyon in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument because of its scenery and level hiking.

Follow the road to the left and into Long Canyon, a very beautiful passageway of high-walled, deep-red Wingate Sandstone. Keep looking to the left for a crevice in the wall with an unusually large tree and an automobile pullout on the side of the road. It's there that you'll find the unmarked slot canyon.

Only 300 feet (90 m) or so in length, the slot canyon narrows to about 12 feet wide (4 m) toward its end. There, you can look upward hundreds of feet and see the sky peeking through the rock.

About five miles (8 km) beyond the slot canyon you'll come to an overlook where the road heads sharply downhill and begins a series of switchbacks that are difficult to negotiate when dry and impossible when wet. The grand vista from here is of the lower end of Capitol Reef National Park, the Waterpocket Fold, and the Henry Mountains in the distance to the left.

Next, return to Boulder and turn left on Highway 24. About three miles from Boulder, you'll arrive at The Hogback. Here, the road crosses a narrow ridge that drops away precipitously on both sides. Enjoy the view from one of the overlooks. All that's visible for a considerable distance in this seemingly waterless environment is sand-colored Navajo Sandstone with small clumps of desert shrubs and an occasional pinyon pine or juniper tree. But look more closely and you'll see clear evidence of moisture: canyons thickly populated with water-loving cottonwood trees. Hidden within those canyons is a wealth of animal and plant life.

Note that the driving time from The Hogback to tonight's lodging near the east entrance of Zion National Park is about three hours. We guarantee that the scenery all along the way is beautiful and that you will not be bored. But if you wish to arrive by dinnertime, you'll probably need to skip the Calf Creek Recreation Area, Escalante Petrified Forest State Park and Kodachrome Basin State Park and see them on your next trip to Utah. Alternatively, you could visit one or more of them, spend the night at Ruby's Inn or another lodging close to Bryce Canyon, and drive to Zion in the morning.

About 10 miles (16 km) beyond The Hogback, you'll arrive at the **Calf Creek Recreation Area**, which is managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (www.utah.com/hike/calf_creek.htm). There, if you wish, you can see this part of Grand Staircase Escalante up close...and take a five and one-half mile (9 km) round trip hike to 126-foot-high (38 m) Lower Calf Creek Falls. The trail is somewhat strenuous because it's mostly sandy. If the temperature is high, we recommend against the hike unless you carry lots of drinking water and wear sunscreen and a wide-brimmed hat.

Fifteen miles beyond Calf Creek, you'll enter the town of Escalante. A stop at the Escalante Interagency Visitor Center—one of six locations around the periphery of the National Monument that provide information about the monument—can be very educational (755 W. Main St., open daily, 7:30-5:30, 435-826-5499, www.desertusa.com/escalante/index.html). There, through displays, relief maps and conversations with visitor center personnel, you will learn more about this unusual national monument.

One mile west of Escalante on Highway 12, you'll see signs for **Escalante Petrified Forest State Park** (www.utah.com/stateparks/escalante.htm). The draws here are a campground, water activities on the 130-acre (53 h) reservoir, and displays of mineralized wood and dinosaur bones.

Kodachrome Basin State Park is located 9 miles (14 km) south of Highway 12/ Cannonville (www.desertusa.com/kodut/du_kodut_vvc.html). It's unique geology features 61 sand pipes, or "petrified geysers" that stand tall among many colorful rock formations. This park is completely surrounded by Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Enjoying the continuing pleasures of Highway 12, we suggest that you next drive to Highway 89, turn left/south and pass through a beautiful very long valley, then turn right/west on Highway 9 and drive nine miles (14 km) to your overnight accommodations at Zion Mountain Ranch (9065 West SR9, Carmel, UT 84755, 435-648-2555, www.zionmountainresort.com).

Previously called Zion Mountain Resort, we recommend this place for three reasons: 1) it's a beautiful property in a beautiful location featuring excellent cabin accommodations and an excellent restaurant; 2) it's located just four miles (6 km) from the east entrance of Zion National Park and nine miles (14 km) from our first activity tomorrow morning; and 3) it's an excellent jumping-off point if you decide to drive to Page, Arizona for a one-day, add-on side trip.

See the next issue of Pathfinder Newsletter, titled "The Wonders of Page, Arizona," which features a world-famous underground slot canyon, a cliff-top view of Horseshoe Bend on the Colorado River, and water activities at Lake Powell.

Alternatively, you may prefer accommodations in nearby Mount Carmel Junction (www.allgetaways.com/hotels/hotel-city.asp?state=UT&city=Mount+Carmel+Junction) or Springdale at the south entrance to Zion National Park (www.trails.com/springdale_utah-hotels.html).

Day Four

If you're up to it, the best way to enjoy **Zion National Park** is to hike some of its trails. We recommend three trails. (Read ahead two paragraphs, about the first hike; the trail begins before you enter the long tunnel and descend into Zion Canyon.) You can learn about other hikes in advance at www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/hiking-in-zion.htm. Access to all trails is via the park's free propane-powered shuttles, which make eight stops inside the park and operate from early morning to late evening, April through October, with shuttles arriving at stops every seven to ten minutes. See the "Zion Map and Guide" that you received at the entrance station for information about the shuttle system, trails, maps and ranger-led programs.

If the parking lot at the park's visitor center is filled when you arrive (often by mid-morning), drive into Springdale (just outside the park's south entrance), and board the Zion Shuttle at one of the five park-and-ride shuttle stops in town. Put your park entry ticket in your pocket for presentation at the south entrance. Thinking ahead to lunchtime, we recommend that you either plan to have lunch at the Zion Lodge's Castle Dome Café, or carry a picnic lunch to eat while on a hike...remembering to carry your trash back out.

The first hike that we recommend is the popular **Canyon Overlook Trail**. You'll find the trailhead about five miles from the east entrance to the park, just before the long (second) tunnel. There is a parking lot on the right that accommodates about ten cars.

The trail is moderately strenuous, especially where it's initially steep; it's rocky and uneven; and there are several steep drop-offs. However, it's only a one-mile (1.6 km) round trip, there are handrails for the treacherous places, and the view of Zion Canyon is truly spectacular (see the right-hand photo on page one of this issue). There is a signboard at the overlook, which describes what you'll be seeing. You may be amazed to learn that the towering walls of the canyon are about 2,000 feet high (610 m)...that's equivalent to a 200-story building, significantly higher than any building in the world! The peaks on the far side of the canyon average about

7,500 feet above sea level (2,300 m), and the floor of the canyon averages about 4,000 feet (1,200 m). The dominant colors in the canyon are pink, white and red.

The drive through the mile-long Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel, completed in 1930, features five portals that look out onto the canyon; stopping is not allowed. Next come six switchbacks and a gorgeous drive down into the canyon. If you have reservations to stay overnight at Zion Lodge, at Canyon Junction turn right on Zion Canyon Scenic Drive, park at the lodge, and use the shuttle from there; if not, drive through the junction to the park's visitor center or into Springdale.

Here are a few facts about **Zion National Park** that you may find interesting: It became a national park in 1919. It receives nearly three million visitors each year, and is the most-visited national park in Utah. Early Mormon pioneers gave the park and its prominent peaks their biblical names. The canyon was carved over millions of years by floodwaters of its Virgin River. Zion Canyon Scenic Drive (from Canyon Junction to Temple of Sinawava) is 6.5 miles/10.5 km long; cars are not allowed on the Drive in peak season (except for guests of Zion Lodge, who may drive only to the lodge). Surprisingly—because it's in a desert environment—the park is home to 800 species of plants, 75 kinds of mammals, 271 species of birds and 32 kinds of reptiles. (As for animal life, you may see only mule deer, squirrels, lizards and ravens.)

Start your visit to the park at the Zion Canyon Visitor Center to learn about the park's trails, geology, wildlife and history (open 8-8 daily, www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/index.htm, 435-772-3256).

The next shuttle stop is the Zion Human History Museum (open 10-5 daily, www.nps.gov/zion/historyculture/zion-human-history-museum.htm, 435-772-3256). There, you'll see the excellent 22-minute orientation video (shown on the hour and half-hour), and learn about the human history of the area—showcasing American Indian culture and pioneer settlement of the area. The museum also has a bookstore.

From there, we suggest that you get off the bus as follows:

At the Court of the Patriarchs shuttle stop, take a short walk uphill to see the peaks named Abraham (6,990 feet/2,130 meters), Isaac (6,825/2,080) and Jacob (6,831/2,082).

At the Zion Lodge stop, have lunch at the Castle Dome Café, then hike one of the Emerald Pools trails. The trail to the right is an easy walk, is 1.2 miles round trip (2 km), and goes to the lower pool and small waterfalls. The trail to the left is moderate in difficulty, two miles round trip (3.2 km), goes to the middle pool...and then on to the upper pools, if you wish. It is possible to make a loop up one trail and down the other, or to take the connecting Kayenta Trail an additional mile to The Grotto shuttle stop. We suggest that you look carefully at the map of the Emerald Pools Trails in your "Zion Map & Guide," or the posted map at the trailhead, before you choose which trails to take.

Finally, take the shuttle from Zion Lodge or The Grotto to the last stop, Temple of Sinawava. There, the Riverside Walk is an easy two-mile round trip on a paved trail, which follows the Virgin River into the ever-narrowing, heavily-treed canyon. At the end of the trail, you'll observe adventurous hikers sloshing up the river, walking sticks in hand, toward the upper reaches of Zion Canyon where the walls are 2,000 feet high (600 m) and the opening between them narrows to about 25 feet (7.5 m). If you missed the hanging gardens on the way in, watch for them

on the way out; plant life grows on the walls of the canyon, sustained by water that weeps through the rocks.



If you're feeling adventurous and want to hike The Narrows, you can rent water shoes, walking sticks and other gear from Zion Adventure Company in Springdale (36 Lion Blvd., 435-772-1001, www.zionadventures.com).

Overnighting at Zion Lodge is a special experience. The setting is beautiful and serene, the mule deer graze on the front lawn at sunset, the accommodations are lovely, and the food in the Red Rock Grill is varied and tasty. The restaurant is open 5:30-9:00 p.m., reservations

are required; call 435-772-7760. (Zion Lodge is open year-round, reserve online at www.zionlodge.com, or via 888-297-2757. Outside the U.S., call 303-297-2757.)

Here's another tip: If you're wanting to have a very good, quick (buffet-style) breakfast before returning to Las Vegas tomorrow morning, head to the Spotted Dog Cafe, in Springdale (428 Zion Park Blvd., open 7:00 a.m., 435-772-0700, www.spotteddogrestaurantzion.com)

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Next Issue: "The Wonders of Page, Arizona"