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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Navin75

Best of Bryce Canyon Day Hikes: They'll Kick Your Heinie

Bryce Canyon National Park, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: These Bryce Canyon hikes can be done in a day, if you can hack it. Riggs, Sheep, and Swamp are all considered back country, so plan accordingly with permits and water accessibility. And most people don't do the 11-mile round-trip Rim Trail...but my, oh my, can it be an awesome toughie if you approach it in its entirety. These hikes are a great way to test your stamina and hiking skills, not to mention experience Bryce Canyon in a way most visitors don't. Boots on, & get ready.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Bryce Canyon National Park



Riggs Spring Loop

8.5 miles, popular back country loop. Forested.



Fairyland Loop

Otherworldly beauty



Peekaboo Loop

Classic Bryce. 5.5 mile loop, 1500+-foot elevation change.



Rim Trail

Classic Bryce trail: 5.5 miles one way, 1754-foot elevation change



Sheep Creek Loop

4-mile loop. Shady forest, hoodoos, vistas. Can be demanding.



Swamp Canyon Loop

4-mile loop, 800-foot elevation change, nestled in hoodoos.

Day 1 - Bryce Canyon National Park

QUICK NOTE

contact:

http://www.utah.com/national_parks/bryce_canyon/hiking_trails.htm

location:

Bryce Canyon National Park
Bryce Canyon National Park
UT 84764

1 Riggs Spring Loop

DESCRIPTION: It can be done in a day, since it's only 8.5 miles, but lots of folks take advantage of the nice back country campsites and the spring itself to make this one an overnight. There are plenty of forested parts of the trail, making this a pleasant spring through fall hike. Lots of quaking aspen (quakies) groves are along the way as well. Note: treat the water, of course! The Riggs Spring Loop can also be hooked up the Under-the-Rim Trail to make it a truly extended, vigorous back country experience. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of cm195902

contact:

<http://www.nps.gov/brca/planyourvisit/strenuous hikes.htm>

location:

Bryce Canyon National Park
Bryce Canyon National Park
UT 84764

Fairyland Loop

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

September and October are the best months to hike. Snow-covered in the winter.

DESCRIPTION: The Fairyland Loop takes hikers through striking natural rock formations; don't forget your camera! The trail begins at Fairyland Point, winds through the Bryce Amphitheatre and returns near Sunrise Point. It loses 950 feet in elevation--then gains it. You'll get a workout! Penny-pincher? This trail head starts before the fee station in the Park, so you can experience all of its beauty for free. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of John Monson

contact:

<http://www.nps.gov/brca/planyourvisit/strenuous hikes.htm>

location:

Bryce Canyon National Park
Bryce Canyon National Park
UT 84764

Peekaboo Loop

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

You can see this one by horseback if so inclined; check out canyonrides.com for info.

DESCRIPTION: Starting at Bryce Point, head down below the rim. When you reach the choice of going either left or right at the fork, choose left so you do the trail clockwise. Look up to your left for the Fairy Castle! And if you can, peer off straight ahead in the distance to see folks looking down from Bryce Point, now a mile away and 900 feet above you. Then you'll come to the Wall of Windows, which is more impressive if seen coming up in this direction, from the south. Watch for horses on this trail, and give way if you see them. Or sign up for a horseback ride yourself, which is a really fun and different way to experience Peekaboo Loop. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of mandj98

contact:

http://www.utah.com/national_parks/bryce_canyon/hiking_trails.htm

location:

Bryce Canyon National Park
Bryce Canyon National Park
UT 84764

2 Rim Trail

DESCRIPTION: A great trail, the Rim Trail will require shuttling at one end or the other. The Park shuttle runs to Bryce Point but not Fairyland Point, so plan accordingly. If motivated and it's not shuttle season, you can park in the middle at Sunrise Point, hike out to Fairyland Point, turn back and hike all the way to Bryce Point, then turn around again to head back to your car at Sunrise Point. Some steep climbs with some easier parts; bring moleskin for your tootsies if you don't hike a lot and make sure your boots fit well. The views of the hoodoo-laden hillsides are spectacular, like peering down into a nest of red and cream-colored spires jutting upward from the earth. Note that the Rim Trail is a good spring-through-fall jaunt, although it can be exposed, so be aware of the strong sun. In the wintertime, snow can block access to the trail, or at least make it very muddy and a less pleasant slog. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of John Monson

contact:

<http://www.localhikes.com>

location:

Bryce Canyon National Park
Bryce Canyon National Park
UT 84764

3 Sheep Creek Loop

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Can be difficult. Trail may be impassable after a severe storm. Check at the visitor's center if the weather is iffy.

DESCRIPTION: The first mile is along the Rim...then the trail drops down 876 feet on this hike! But once below the Rim you end up strolling through an evergreen forest as well as meadows. Awesome vistas are as breathtaking as any to be found in Bryce Canyon. The most unexpected view is of a sandstone wall that sort of resembles one of those giant organs that are played in church. Who knew! Campsites such as the Sheep Creek one can connect this trail with others to make it a nice back country journey. © NileGuide



Fundenburg

contact:

<http://www.nps.gov/brca/planyourvisit/moderatehikes.htm>

location:

Bryce Canyon National Park
Bryce Canyon National Park
UT 84764

Swamp Canyon Loop

DESCRIPTION: This is a trail that has somewhat less grand outlooks than many other Bryce hikes--the advantage, however, is that you get a closer connection with nature on this one. You'll be cozily tucked in by towering rock fins and those wild hoodoos as you meander along this moderately difficult trail. Swamp Canyon Loop meets up for a while with the Under-the-Rim trail before returning to the Swamp Canyon Overlook. © NileGuide



gamillos

Bryce Canyon National Park Snapshot

Local Info

Bryce Canyon National Park is located in Utah's Canyon Country. Some 35,835 acres (14,502 ha) or 56 mi² (145 km²) in extent, the designated area around the spectacular Bryce Canyon (not actually a canyon, but rather a giant natural amphitheater created by erosion) became a United States National Monument in 1923 and was designated as a National Park in 1928. The park is one of the most popular in Utah with nearly one million people visiting each year.

Bryce Canyon consists of a series of horseshoe-shaped amphitheaters carved from the eastern edge of the Paunsaugunt Plateau in southern Utah. The erosional force of frost-wedging and the dissolving power of rainwater have shaped the colorful limestone rock of the Claron Formation into bizarre shapes including slot canyons, windows, fins, and spires called "hoodoos." The varied colors of the rocks and rock formations contribute to the spectacular views.

Bryce lies at a much higher elevation than nearby Zion National Park and the Grand Canyon, varying from 8,000 to 9,000 feet (2,440 to 2,740 m), whereas the south rim of the Grand Canyon sits at 7,000 feet (2,130 m) above sea level. Bryce Canyon National Park therefore has a substantially different ecology and climate, offering a contrast for visitors to the southwest (who often visit all three parks in a single vacation).

©

History

The area was settled by Mormon pioneers in the 1850s and was named after Ebenezer Bryce, who homesteaded in the area in 1875 and was known to have described the canyon as "a hell of a place to lose a cow". President Warren G. Harding proclaimed Bryce Canyon a national monument on June 8, 1923. On June 7, 1924, Congress passed a bill to establish Utah National Park, when all land within the national monument would become the property of the United States. The land was acquired and the name was restored to Bryce Canyon. On February 25, 1928,

Bryce Canyon officially became a national park.

©

Hotel Insights

The only hotel within the park is Bryce Canyon Lodge, located between Sunrise and Sunset Points.

Camping

There are two campgrounds within the park. Facilities at the campgrounds include drinking water and restrooms, and pay showers are available during the summer at the general store.

* North Campground (Year Round).

Located near the Visitor Center, this campground offers 107 campsites, with some sites suitable for RVs. Fees are \$10 per site, and reservations can be made from May through September up to 240 days in advance by calling 877-444-6777 or visiting www.ReserveUSA.com. Note that a \$9 fee is charged for all reservations.

* Sunset Campground (April- October).

Located near Sunset Point and offering 101 campsites, with some sites suitable for RVs. Fees are \$15 per site, and all sites are first-come, first-serve.

Additional campgrounds cluster outside of the park's borders:

* Ruby's Campground, Highway 63, Ph: (866) 866-6616. Located just outside of the park entrance, rates are charged based on the number of people per site and begin at \$18 for two people, increasing by \$2 for each additional person. Rates for RVs start at \$26 for two people, also increasing by \$2 for additional individuals.

* Bryce Canyon KOA, Highway 12, Ph: (435) 679-8988 or (888) 562-4710, bvkoa@color-country.net, [14]. Open March 15 to November 15 and located twelve miles from the park entrance, this KOA charges \$18- \$24 for a tent site, \$21- \$30 for an RV site, and \$36- \$48 for a cabin.

Backcountry

All backcountry camping is by permit only. Permits can be obtained for a \$5 fee at the visitor center and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Overnight

camping is allowed only on the Under-the-Rim trail and Riggs Spring Loop trail.

© Wikitravel

Restaurants Insights

The tiny towns near Bryce Canyon are quiet and sometimes quaint – unfortunately, this does not always translate to excellent eating venues. The good news? There are definitely a few varied and tasty menus available for your dining pleasure. Southern Utah fare often consists of local ingredients, prepared simply and occasionally accented with that distinctive Southwestern taste. You just have to get out a bit farther afield.

A few restaurants are exemplars of the Southern Utah food aesthetic – creative and rustic. Hell's Backbone Grill, located in tiny Boulder, UT, and featuring a menu based on Buddhist philosophy, is one of the highest rated restaurants in Utah and is a must-visit if you're in the mood for a special meal. Their menu features "a blend of Western Range, Pueblo Indian and Southwestern flavors." We just call it a feast for your mouth. Bonus? They have an extensive wine list and plenty of beers as well. Esca-Latte in Escalante serves pizza with your high-speed internet connection, as well as features great live music some weekend nights. Kiva Koffeehouse grants you access to their very nice Southwestern book collection with the purchase of a handcrafted cappuccino – and the views of the Escalante River from its floor-to-ceiling windows are unsurpassable. You can also spend the night in their adorable, well-appointed "cabin."

For those looking for a drink with your meal, be aware of Utah's byzantine liquor laws. Not all restaurants have a full liquor license, and not every establishment is in possession of a liquor license at all. If a Cabernet with your steak is all that you desire, be sure to call ahead to confirm that your restaurant of choice is able to serve it.

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Nightlife Insights

There is a dearth of nightlife-dedicated establishments near Bryce Canyon, but the local restaurant scene fills the void to a degree. Both Bryce Canyon Lodge and Cowboy's Buffet and Steakhouse offer

Bryce Canyon National Park Snapshot continued

lengthy beer and wine menus. Outside the park, the renowned Hell's Backbone Grill in Boulder, UT, will pour you a hand-selected wine or a local microbrew if you so desire.

NOTES ON UTAH'S LIQUOR LAWS

It has been mentioned in this section before: if you want to drink in Utah, make sure you understand the intricacies of Utah liquor laws, as they may determine whether you can have a bottle of beer or glass of wine during dinner. In response to tourist demand, some of these laws are currently changing, so be sure to check in with the establishment you're visiting before you embark.

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not impossible to get a beer in Utah. In fact, beer is available in most supermarkets and convenience stores. It is true, however, that your drinks will most likely have a lower alcohol content than what you are used to back home.

Fully licensed restaurants are free to serve 'heavy beer' (over 3.2% alcohol), wine, and liquor from noon until midnight, with regular beer (3.2% or under) from 10 AM until 1 AM. To drink in a restaurant, you must order a meal and be served at either your table or a waiting area. Restaurants with a limited liquor license cannot serve spirits.

Spirited beverages are strictly portion-measured in Utah. Beer sold in supermarkets and convenience store are a maximum of 4.0% alcohol. For those cocktail enthusiasts out there, be aware that mixed drinks in Utah are limited to 1.5 oz of base spirit per drink, with the option of adding another 1.25 oz of "secondary alcoholic flavoring". Wine is limited to 5 oz per glass.

A 'tavern' is any venue where the sales of beer exceed the sales of food. Beer is sold from 10 AM – 1 AM and can be purchased without food, sold both on draft and in bottles/cans. For those looking to take some beer back to your hotel, most taverns will sell you bottled/canned beer to take home.

Regarding the infamous "private clubs" laws, forcing patrons to take out a membership to imbibe at a full liquor service club, as of July 1st 2009, this law will no longer be in effect. In an effort to supplement Utah's booming tourist industry, the state legislature has struck down the strange-to-outsiders law.

For more information on Utah's liquor laws, please visit http://abc.utah.gov/Liquor_Laws/liquor_laws_affecting_visitors.html

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Things to Do Insights

With a short time to spend in the park:

Stop at the Visitor Center for information, exhibits, and a 22-minute award-winning film which plays on the hour and half-hour. Publications and maps are available for purchase through our Bryce Canyon Natural History Association Bookstore.

Drive to Sunrise, Sunset, Inspiration and Bryce viewpoints.

Hike a canyon trail or stroll along the rim. Check at the Visitor Center for current trail conditions.

Take in a ranger program. Current schedules of ranger activities can be found at the Visitor Center.

NOTE: Pets are not allowed in buildings, on park trails or at viewpoints. However, pets can be walked along roads, in campgrounds, and parking lots, but must be on a leash at all times!

With one or more days to spend in the park (in addition to the above):

Drive to Rainbow Point (18 miles one way) and stop at the 13 viewpoints on your return trip. Check at the Visitor Center for current road conditions and closures.

Take a wrangler-guided horseback or muleback ride on a 2 or 4-hour trip into the canyon.

In winter, snowshoe or cross-country ski the plateau top. Rental cross-country ski equipment and snowshoes are available outside the park.

Information courtesy of the National Park Service.

©

Travel Tips

By car

The 18-mile-long park road is easily accessible to automobiles, although it is closed beyond Rainbow Gate during winter storms. Traffic may be heavy during the

summer, and some viewpoints may not have parking available.

By shuttle

A park shuttle runs during the peak summer months, allowing people to park their cars outside of the park and then travel to the overlooks along the road. Shuttles run from well before sunrise until after sunset and ensure that a full parking lot won't prevent a visit to any of the park's sights. The shuttle runs on clean-burning fuel, which is very welcome in this outdoor setting.

By foot

For backpackers there are multi-day trails that run the length of the park. Permits are required for all overnight camping.

By bike

Bikes are not allowed on most of the park trails, but they are useful for avoiding traffic around the sometimes busy viewpoints. Be aware that much of the park lies between 8,000 and 9,000 feet of elevation, making travel by bicycle much more difficult than it would be at lower elevations.

By guided tour

A number of companies provide guided tours of Bryce Canyon National Park that include transportation from the surrounding areas. Some companies will provide bus travel from nearby towns while others begin in Bryce Canyon National Park. Some will provide just a brief tour with small stops, while others may take you on a hike, and arrange all your meals.

Hydros Adventures Tours (928-310-8141) offers one day and overnight hiking, rafting, backpacking, and adventure tours to Bryce Canyon National Park, the Grand Canyon, Northern Arizona, and Southern Utah. Pickups in Phoenix, Las Vegas, and the Grand Canyon area.

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Fun Facts

1. Interesting fact: Water, ice, and gravity are the natural forces that formed the geological "hoodoos" that make Bryce Canyon unique.

2. Fun fact: This park is named after Ebenezer Bryce, who started ranching the area in 1875. Upon showing the canyons to visitors, he is said to have remarked, "It's a hell of a place to lose a cow."

Bryce Canyon National Park Snapshot continued

3. Cool fact: Prairie dogs were wiped out from the area in the 1950s. In the 1970s, they were reintroduced.

4. Bryce Canyon's rocks are among the youngest of those on the Colorado Plateau, dating back a mere 65 million years ago to the Cretaceous period.

5. Interesting fact: Paiute Indian history says the colorful hoodoos were "Legend People" who were turned into stone by the trickster god Coyote.

6. Weird fact: Marmots, a high-elevation mammal found here, are often called "rockchucks" by the local population.

7. Cool fact: Most rural parts of the U.S. have 2500 stars visible on any given clear night. At Bryce Canyon, that number jumps to a whopping 7500.

8. Fun fact: On a clear day, visibility from Bryce Canyon can exceed 100 miles.

9. Cool fact: Foxes, mountain lions, and black bears inhabit Bryce Canyon, although they are rarely seen.

10. Bryce Canyon is along the southeastern rim of the Paunsaugunt Plateau. The word paunsaugunt comes from the Paiute language. It means place or home of the beavers.

11. Geological fact: Bryce Canyon isn't actually a canyon. It's a natural amphitheatre.

12. There are 400 plant species in this high desert environment.

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