nileGUIDE
ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP

Rene S

Top 10 Best Restaurants in Zion

Zion National Park, 1 Day

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: With the town of Springdale immediately adjacent to Zion, not to mention nearby St. George and its epicurean treats, you have plenty of choices when visiting this stunning national park. Chow down morning, noon, and night...you won't be disappointed with the restaurant possibilities surrounding Zion National Park. From enjoying a delicious wrap to fancy coffee, a hearty steak dinner to fish tacos, these places deliver. Oh, and some of them have the best views imaginable too--it's always fine dining if you have Zion's spectacular cliffs to gaze upon. Bon appetit!

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Zion National Park

Red Rock Grill
Fine dining with a view

Cosmopolitan Restaurant
Old World Charm and Wild West ambiance

Thunderbird Restaurant
Great diner food

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Day 1 - Zion National Park

QUICK NOTE

contact:
tel: (435) 772-7760
http://www.zionlodge.com/Red-Rock-Grill-880.html

location:
1640 W Redstone Center Dr
Zion National Park UT 84098

hours:
Daily 6:30-10am,
11:30am-3pm, and 5:30-9pm

1 Red Rock Grill

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Sit out on the terrace for full sensory impact!

DESCRIPTION: The Red Rock Grill in Zion National Park Lodge will wow you in both surroundings and menu. Look out at the park from the beautiful terrace while dining on carefully cultivated items such as Prickly Pear Trout Salad, Seafood Alfredo, Chipotle Tilapia, and Navajo Eggplant – this is a Zion experience not to be missed. For all those cocktail aficionados out there, you'll love their spirits menu, featuring Nature's Cosmo, the Springdale Mojito, a Blue Moon Margarita, and a delectable treat known as Persephone's Bane, featuring pomegranate juice and light rum. © NileGuide

roolrool

contact:
tel: (435) 879-6862
http://www.cosmodining.com/

location:
1915 Wells Fargo Rd.
Leeds/Silver Reef UT 84746

hours:
M-Sat, 4pm10-pm

2 Cosmopolitan Restaurant

DESCRIPTION: Just north of St. George, this most unlikely fine dining establishment is nestled into an old Wells Fargo building, artfully combining Old World charm and Wild West ambiance. European cuisine master Chef Imi Kun creates wonders for the palate. You won't be disappointed. Plates include Hungarian Tenderloin Goulash with Goat Cheese and Dill Spaetzle (dumplings), Black Angus-Filetto Gorgonzola, Chipotle Cream Smoked Salmon, and Lobster Ravioli with Vodka Sauce. Get off the beaten path and treat yourself! © NileGuide

sillyjilly

contact:
tel: (435) 648-2203

location:
At the junction of Utah 9 and U.S. 89 in the Best Western East Zion Thunderbird Lodge
Mount Carmel UT 84737

3 Thunderbird Restaurant

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
On the eastern side of Zion, so plan your day around exploring that area and beyond. Good place to stop on your way to or from Bryce Canyon

DESCRIPTION: The Thunderbird Restaurant in Zion is known for well priced American classics and fantastic homemade pies. An expansive breakfast menu gets you ready for the day, while a homey and comforting dinner menu welcomes you back after a long day. A slice of pie is practically mandatory at this historic Zion eatery, as Thunderbird is known for that pie, in addition to the quirky, misspelled sign outside. © NileGuide

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Zion National Park Snapshot

Local Info

Zion National Park is among the most popular(2.5 million visitors a year) of the United States' national parks for several good reasons. In practical terms, it's one of the most accessible, being an easy two-hour drive fromLas Vegas, NV. The largest city in southern Utah,St. George, is practically at Zion's doorstep just 40 miles west, providing an excellent selection of stores in which to stock up on the basic goods before you hit the trail. Boasting 300+ days a year of beautiful sunshine and blue skies, this park can enjoyed during all seasons. And with visitation in the peak months of July and August topping 11,000 per day, you might want to consider coming during the other equally beautiful and considerably cooler months.

Zion is exceptionally friendly to bicycle travel, with the paved highway through the Park as well as one trail(Pa' Rus, 3.5 miles along the Virgin River right through the valley; the trail is flat and gorgeous) being open to those of you willing to pedal. In fact, in the summertime, the Scenic Drive is open only to bicycles, chartered buses, and the park's exceptional clean fuelshuttle(which is free). After years of build-up toward smog, traffic, and snarling visitors and rangers alike, Zion opened its shuttle system in 2000, which has dramatically reduced all sorts of vehicle-related problems. The shuttle also stops in several places in the immediately adjacent town ofSpringdale, making both staying and eating in town a viable option for travelers.

Springdale is an added bonus to the Park's popularity with many different visitors, since those who don't wish to have a strictly wilderness-based experience can retreat to asoft bed, hot shower, andreally good meals each night if they want, not to mention a giant screen movie atZion Canyon Theatre. There are also several guiding companies located in town that offer great package deals so you can really get the most out of your visit. If you can, plan to spend a bare minimum of two full days in Zion in order to get a taste of some of its best offerings. Zion is often part of a"loop" tour that many people do, which can include venturing on toBryce Canyon, Capitol Reef,Arches, andCanyonlands National Parks, in order to get an intensive American Southwest experience. Zion is a great place to start off, and it has so much to do and see—take advantage of every minute you spend in this gorgeous, unforgettable place.
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History

Mormon pioneers arrived in Zion in 1863. Issac Behunin built the first log cabin in Zion Canyon, near the location of the current Zion Lodge. Behunin Canyon, a technical slot canyon, was named after him. During the remainder of the century, small communities and homesteads in the area struggled to survive. Pioneers gave the canyon the name"Zion", a Hebrew word meaning safety, or a place of refuge. Despite the name, the canyon offered little arable land, poor soil, and catastrophic flooding, making agriculture a risky venture. By the first decade of the 20th century, the scenic qualities of southern Utah, and Zion Canyon in particular, had been recognized as a potential destination for tourism. In 1909, a presidential executive order designated Mukuntuweap National Monument. The new monument was, however, virtually inaccessible to visitors, since the existing roads were in poor condition and the closest railhead was a hundred miles away. The park's name was changed to Zion National Monument in 1918, and in 1919 the park was expanded and became a national park. Visitation to the new national park increased steadily during the 1920s, and in 1930, the newly completed Zion-Mt Carmel Highway allowed motorists to travel through the park to Mount Carmel Junction, then on to Bryce Canyon and the Grand Canyon. This highway was one of the greatest engineering feats of modern times, requiring the construction of a 5,613-foot tunnel, the Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel, to negotiate the vertical sandstone cliffs of Zion. The switchbacks leading up to the tunnel proved to be an even greater task to accomplish. The Kolob Canyons section, near Cedar City was established as a National Monument in 1937 and added to Zion National Park in 1956.
©

Hotel Insights

Lodging

* Zion Lodge,(in the canyon, three miles north on the Zion Scenic Drive),+1 435 772-7700(reserve-zion@xanterra.com, fax:+1 435 772-7792). check in: 4PM; checkout: 11AM. The lodge is open year-round and has 40 cabins and 80 motel rooms. Cabins include two double-size beds, full bath, and fireplace. Motel rooms include either queen-sized beds or a single king-sized bed, air conditioning, and full bath. The restaurant and cafe here are the only options within the park.$130-$150(seasonal).

Lodging is also available in the nearby towns of Springdale and Mount Carmel Junction.

Camping

There are two campgrounds within the main section of the park:

* Watchman Campground, Located near the south entrance(just across the Virgin River from the Visitor Center). Open year-round. This campground offers sites on a first-come, first-serve basis from November through March, while reservations may be made up to five months in advance during the rest of the year reservations.nps.gov. $16 per site without electric hookups,$18 per site with electric hookups, and$20 per site for river sites.

* South Campground, Located near the south entrance(just north of the Visitor Center). Open March-October. All sites in the South Campground are first-come, first serve. If you're willing to not make any reservations, see if you can get a site here instead of at Watchman, since the campsites generally have more shade and are closer to the Virgin River.$16 per site, per night.

Both of these campgrounds provide restrooms, picnic tables, RV dump, drinking water and utility sinks.

* In the Kolob Terrace section of Zion, there are six primitive sites at Lava Point. The sites are usually open from June to November, but the road will close in the

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winter due to snow. There is no water at the campground.

Backcountry

All backcountry camping requires a permit, which is available for a fee at the visitor center. Maximum group size for backcountry usage is twelve people.

Walk-in permits are issued the day before a canyoneering trip. Backpacking permits are issued up to three days prior to the trip date. Permits given out are limited and issued only when the backcountry desk at the visitor center is open. Express Permits allow participants to obtain a permit on-line. Sign-up every three years is required and must be in person and at the backcountry desk. Due to the popularity of the"Subway" and Mystery Canyon, a lottery has been setup to dole out permits for these two technical slot canyons.

Reservations can be revoked in the event of adverse environmental conditions such as flash flood danger. Hikers are required to obtain a permit in person at the backcountry desk the day before or day of a hike.

Pristine Zones allow up to 12 people, and hiking/canyoneering in these zones usually requires technical gear and equipment: Mystery Canyon, Imlay Canyon, Kolob Canyon, Behunin Canyon, Heaps Canyon, Echo Canyon, Spry Canyon, Englstead Hollow, Bulloch Canyon, Ice Box, and the Upper Right Fork of North Creek.

Primitive Zones allow up to to fifty visitors: Orderville Canyon, Pine Creek Canyon, Keyhole Canyon, and the Subway.

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Restaurants Insights

Located near the entrance to Zion National Park, the towns of Springdale and Mount Carmel provide necessary sustenance for weary hikers, bikers, climbers, riders, and locals. A wide variety of food awaits you in Springdale and Mount Carmel, and a short jaunt to the town of Hilldale might even teach you a thing or two about some life in these parts.

If you're looking for a casual room and filling food with a beer on the side, look no further than the beer garden atZion Pizza& Noodle Company. A local favorite, Zion Pizza& Noodle in Springdale sells delicious homemade pizza accompanied by Utah microbrews in an outdoor(if you choose) setting. Also in Springdale, theBit& Spur Restaurant serves creative Mexican food with fresh-fruit Margaritas. Both choices provide hearty grub and a comfortable atmosphere for weary travelers and their feet. Perfect for those with a big appetite,The Pioneer Lodge Restaurant offers all-you-can-eat soup and salad.

If, on the other hand, upscale dining is your cup of tea, head to theRed Rock Grill in Zion National Park itself – the food and the view should be more than enough to keep you from leaving. For the culturally curious, head down to the border town of Hilldale to check out theMerry Wives Café, a nod to the'alternative' lifestyles of Southern Utah. Those craving Chinese should wander over toPanda Garden in Springdale; guaranteed it will satisfy all of your spring-roll related cravings.

As with the rest of the region, be aware of Utah's liquor laws if you'd like to have a glass of wine, bottle of beer, or cold martini with dinner. Certain establishments have a limited license or none at all, so call ahead if you'd like to ensure you'll be well watered while downing your nibblies.

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Nightlife Insights

Zion has limited nightlife availability, but Springdale makes up for the selection with the quality of options. Movie buffs will love a trip to the Zion Canyon Giant Screen theater, home to Hollywood hits and local lore. Music fans flick to Dixie State College Tanner Ampitheater, where local and regional musicians play to thousands under the stars.

Beer fans will also not be disappointed, with a variety of options available for the brew aficionado. Sitting on top of the Zion Canyon Brewing Company, the Majestic View Steakhouse and Saloon offers up craft ales, lagers, stouts, IPAs, and bitters as well as amazing food and a stunning view of the park. Visitors looking to relax often head to Zion Pizza and Noodle, where the only beer garden in Springdale will welcome you with open arms.

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 then 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 visithttp://abc.utah.gov/Liquor_Laws/liquor_laws_affecting_visitors.html

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Things to Do Insights

A world class park like Zion offers many opportunities for first time and returning visitors alike. The links below provide a wealth of information on things to do.

Hiking

Zion offers many trails ranging from short"leg-stretcher" walks to strenuous adventures. more...

Wildflowers& Fall Colors

A variety of life zones and habitats makes Zion an excellent location for wildflower walks in spring and brilliant leaf color in autumn.

Photography

Zion offers the photographer many opportunities to explore color, texture, and light.

Backcountry Hiking and Camping

The immense backcountry of Zion offers unmatched opportunities for prepared hikers. more...

Birdwatching

Zion is home to 271 species of birds. Bird checklists are available at the visitor centers. more...

Bicycling

The Pa'rus Trail offers a paved, car-free alternative for bicyclists to connect with the Zion Canyon Scenic Drive. Shuttle buses are equipped with bike racks.

Horseback Riding

Canyon Trail Rides offers one hour and half day horseback rides in Zion Canyon. Most people who ride the trails in Zion have never been on horseback before! For more information visit www.canyonrides.com

Ranger-led activities

Join a Park Ranger to learn more about Zion National Park. Topics include animals, geology, plants, human history and more. Programs include Ride with a Ranger shuttle tours, guided hikes, daytime talks and evening programs at Watchman Campground and Zion Lodge. All programs are free. Check the weekly schedules posted at visitor centers and bulletin boards throughout the park for times, places, and subjects. more...

Zion Canyon Field Institute

Imagine hiking with a wildlife biologist, working on a service project in the Zion Narrows, or discovering the past on an Archaeology Road Trip. Outdoor learning adventures are available with the

Zion Canyon Field Institute
©

Travel Tips

By car

The majority of the park is accessible by car, although Zion Canyon is accessible only by the free shuttle from April through the end of October. Large vehicles,(7'10" in width or 11'4" in height),(RV's, buses, trailers, 5th wheels, and some camper shells) that wish to travel the length of the park, require an escort to be stationed at both ends of the Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel. Large vehicles have trouble staying in their lane while traveling through the tunnel. Escort costs are$15 per vehicle, valid for two trips through the tunnel during a seven day period. Very large vehicles, including those taller than 13'1", may be prohibited from entering the tunnel.

During the winter Zion roads are plowed and sanded, except the Kolob Terrace road, which is closed. Be prepared for winter driving conditions, including potentially icy roads, from November through March.

By shuttle

From mid-March through the end of October, Zion uses a shuttle system to eliminate congestion in the canyon. The Zion Canyon Scenic Drive is closed to all private vehicles during this time(except those with a red pass that are staying at the Zion Lodge). Shuttles are fully accessible, with extra room for bikes, backpacks, and climbing gear.

Zion operates two different shuttle routes. One goes through the town of Springdale(see the Get around section on Springdale), and terminates at the Park entrance, within walking distance of the visitor center.

The other route goes through Zion Canyon and has 9 stops: the Visitor Center, the Zion Human History Museum, Canyon Junction, Court of the Patriarchs, Zion Lodge, Grotto, Weeping Rock, Big Bend, and the Temple of Sinawava.

Frequency of the Zion Canyon route depends on the time of day. In Spring and Fall the shuttle runs from 6:45AM-10PM every day, with 7-15 minute frequency. In the Summer(mid-May to early September) the shuttle runs from 5:45AM-11PM every day, with 6-15 minute frequency, and 30 minute frequency in the very early morning and late evening.

By foot

The beautiful scenery of the park makes a hike practically a mandatory event. Some of the best hikes in the National Park System are in Zion, including Angels Landing and the Zion Narrows. The park offers trails of varying difficulty and length, suitable for twenty minute strolls or multi-day backpacking trips.

By bike

Zion is one of the most bike friendly parks in the National Park System. Bicycles are an excellent option for traveling the Zion Canyon Scenic Drive. Shuttle buses are equipped with bike racks for those wishing to ride only part of the way. Bicycles are permitted only on established roads and the Pa'rus Trail which goes from the Watchman Campground to Canyon Junction. If you're riding from the south entrance into Zion Canyon, take the Pa'rus Trail since it's safer than the main road.

Cyclists must obey traffic laws. Bicycles are not allowed on hiking trails(except the Pa'rus Trail) or off-trail. Ride defensively; automobile traffic can be heavy and drivers may be distracted by the scenery. Park shuttles will not pass bicycles, so use turnouts to allow them to pass. Riding through the Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel is prohibited; bicycles must be transported through the tunnel by motor vehicle. Usually the ranger(escort) at the tunnel will ask those driving a truck if bikers can hop in the back of their trucks. If you aren't bringing your own bike there are a few rental agencies in Springdale.

By guided tour

A number of companies provide guided tours of Zion National Park that include transportation from the surrounding areas. Some companies will provide bus travel from nearby towns while others begin in Zion 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 Zion National Park, the Grand Canyon, Northern Arizona, and Southern Utah. Pickups

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in Phoenix, Las Vegas, and the Grand Canyon area.

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Fun Facts

1. Interesting fact: The word"Zion" is Hebrew. It means"a place of peace and relaxation."

2. Fun fact:"Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" was filmed at the ghost town of Grafton near Zion.

3. Cool fact: Endangered California condors and peregrine falcons are among the 288 bird species seen in Zion.

4. At its dedication July 4,1930, the Zion-Mt. Carmel tunnel was the world's longest at 1.1 mile.

5. Interesting fact: Kolob Arch in Zion's backcountry is one of the word's largest freestanding natural arches. It measures about 287 feet in length.

6. Weird fact: Some of Zion's many canyons are so well hidden that early surveyors missed a few that were twenty miles long.

7. Zion has over 900 species of plant groupings, one of the most diverse in Utah.

8. Fun fact: Zion's Virgin River has four native fish species: Virgin River Spinedace, Speckled Dace, Flannelmouth Sucker, and Desert Sucker.

9. Cool fact: In March 2009, over 124,000 acres of Zion were declared wilderness, which means they are even more protected against any future development.

10. Weird fact: At Weeping Rock, the water that emerges took 1,000 years to travel through the rock from a spring.

11. Humans have been around Zion Canyon for at least 8,000 years.

12. The Olympic Torch passed through Zion on its way to Salt Lake City for the 2002 Games.
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