Zion National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Backcountry Planner

The official backcountry planner of Zion National Park

2010-2011

Plan Your Trip

Trips into the backcountry, even short ones, require careful planning. Summer weather is hot and dry, but winter can be cold and icy. Narrow canyons are subject to flash flooding, and dangerous cliffs are everywhere. Park rangers at the Zion Canyon and Kolob Canyons Visitor Centers can help by providing current conditions, weather forecasts, and flash flood potential ratings, but your safety is your responsibility. Every year, people are seriously injured or die while visiting the backcountry of Zion National Park. Your safety depends on your own good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant observation. Please don't let an accident ruin your vacation.

PERMITS AND RESERVATIONS

Permits are required for overnight trips in the backcountry including climbing bivouacs, all through hikes of the Virgin River and tributaries, and all canyons requiring the use of descending gear or ropes, including the Subway. Online reservations for a permit may be made in advance. Go to Plan Your Visit on www.nps.gov/zion for more information.

CALENDAR RESERVATIONS

Reservations are available online for a wide variety of canyon, backpack, and climbing trips. They are available on a first-come, first-served basis from the dates listed in the chart until 5:00 p.m. on the day before your trip. Reservations are for permits, which must be obtained at either visitor center prior to your trip. Many of the spaces for the Subway and Mystery Canyon may already be taken by lottery entrants prior to calendar reservations becoming available. A non-refundable $5.00 fee is charged for each calendar reservation.

LOTTERY RESERVATIONS

The Subway and Mystery Canyon are the two most popular backcountry areas in Zion National Park. Due to their popularity, the park created an online lottery to provide a fair opportunity for all interested visitors to compete for reservations. The deadline for entry into the lottery is three months prior to your planned trip. Visitors are limited to one lottery entry each month for each area. The lottery does not apply for trips from November through March. A non-refundable $5.00 fee is charged for each lottery entry.

GROUP SIZE LIMITS

Large groups result in larger impacts. Group size is limited to a maximum of 6 or 12 people that share the same affiliation (e.g., school, club, scout troop, family, and friends). Larger groups may split and visit different areas, but they may not visit the same drainage, route, or backcountry trail, on the same day. This is strictly enforced and violators are cited. The group size limit only applies to backcountry routes and trails, it does not apply to trails in Zion Canyon, such as Emerald Pools, Angels Landing, Observation Point, and the Narrows to Orderville Canyon.

Backcountry Permit Hours

	Zion Canyon Visitor Center 435 772-0170	Kolob Canyons Visitor Center 435 586-9548
October 25 to April 24	8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
April 25 to May 27	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.	8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
May 28 to September 6	7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
September 7 to October 24	7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.	8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Permits are required for overnight trips in the backcountry, including climbing bivouacs, through hikes of the Virgin River and tributaries, and canyons requiring the use of descending gear or ropes, including the Subway. Permits are available the day before or the day of a trip.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Zion National Park

Superintendent
Jock Whitworth

Mailing Address
Zion National Park
Springdale, UT 84767

Park Information
435 772-3256

Backcountry Information
435 772-0170

Website
www.nps.gov/zion

E-mail
ZION_park_information@nps.gov

Lost and Found
Report at any visitor center

Emergencies
911 or 435 772-3322

Permits

ZION EXPRESS PERMITS
Frequent visitors can obtain permits online with Zion Express Permits. Express permit members can obtain permits three days before their trip. The entire permit process can be completed over the internet. Reservations and online permits are available until 5:00 p.m. the day before your trip. Avoid lines, use Zion Express Permits.

There are two requirements to obtain online permits:

- You must be a member of the Zion Express Permit Program. To become a member, visit the Zion Canyon Backcountry Desk once every three years. You'll be asked to complete a short orientation and sign a program agreement. Membership for those who signed up in 2008 will be valid through 2010.
- You must have a reservation for your permit.

WALK-IN PERMITS
Walk-in permits are available for all areas in Zion National Park. At least 25 percent of all permits are set aside for walk-in visitors. Walk-in permits are available the day before or the day of your trip. Difficult to obtain permits include the Subway, Mystery Canyon, the Narrows on weekends, the West Rim in the spring, and all areas on holiday weekends. You'll have greater success obtaining walk-in permits if you arrive at the Zion Canyon Backcountry Desk as soon as it opens on the day before your intended trip.

CLIMBING TRIPS
Reservations are available online for eight of the park's most popular climbing routes: Lunar Ecstasy, Spaceshot, Moonlight Buttress, Prodigal Son, Touchstone, Desert Shield, Monkeyfinger, and Tricks of the Trade. The number of climbers on Zion's walls is not limited, but a reservation is necessary to obtain an online permit.

OTHER AREAS
Reservations and permits for canyon trips, backpacking trips, and climbing trips not listed as available for online reservations are available as walk-in permits.

PERMIT FEES
Fees help defray the cost of issuing permits, backcountry patrol, resource monitoring, and trail maintenance.

Backcountry fees are based on the size of your group:
- $10.00 for 1 to 2 people
- $15.00 for 3 to 7 people
- $20.00 for 8 to 12 people

Reservation Dates

For a backcountry trip in	Calendar reservations become available*
March	January 5
April	February 5
May	March 5
June	April 5
July	May 5
August	June 5
September	July 5
October	August 5
November	September 5
December	October 5
January	November 5
February	December 5

*Visitors interested in the Subway or Mystery Canyon should read Lottery Reservations section.

Transportation

Shuttle Schedule

	Spring and Fall 4/01 to 5/22 9/12 to 10/31	Summer 5/23 to 9/11
Zion Canyon Loop		
First Bus Zion Canyon Visitor Center	6:45 a.m.	5:45 a.m.
Last Bus Zion Canyon Visitor Center	9:30 p.m.	10:30 p.m.
Last Bus Temple of Sinawava	10:00 p.m.	11:00 p.m.
Springdale Loop		
Express Bus Majestic View Lodge	6:30 a.m.	5:30 a.m.
First Bus Zion Canyon Theater	7:15 a.m.	7:00 a.m.
Last Bus Zion Canyon Theater	10:00 p.m.	11:00 p.m.
Last Bus Majestic View Lodge	10:15 p.m.	11:15 p.m.

The average wait for shuttle buses is fifteen minutes or less. During the day the wait is usually shorter. From 9:00 to 10:30 p.m. the summer shuttles run at thirty minute intervals.

ZION CANYON SHUTTLE
Travel in Zion Canyon from April 1 to October 31 is by shuttle bus only. The buses are accessible and also have room for backpacks, climbing gear, two bicycles, and other equipment. The buses run throughout the day. You may get on and off as often as you like. The buses are free. Pets are not allowed.

Plan your trip to include the shuttle. For instance, if your hike ends at a trailhead in Zion Canyon, plan your trip so you will not miss the last shuttle of the day.

OPTIONAL SHUTTLE IN NOVEMBER
An optional Zion Canyon Loop shuttle is available on weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The optional shuttle will also be available on Thursday, November 25 and Friday, November 26.

PRIVATE TAXIS
You may choose to complete your hike at a different location from your starting point. Other shuttle and taxi services are available. Please inquire at the backcountry desk.

AUTOMOBILES
Travel in Zion Canyon from April 1 to October 31 is by shuttle bus only. Only the Zion Canyon Scenic Drive is closed to private vehicles; the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway through the park is open to private vehicles all year.

BICYCLES
Bicycles are not permitted in the backcountry. Bicycles may travel on roadways and on the Pa'rus Trail. When riding from the south entrance, please use the Pa'rus Trail instead of the main road. Shuttles will not pass moving bicycles. If you want a bus to pass, pull over and stop. Do not pass a moving shuttle. Ride on the right side of the road in single file. Wear your helmet. Each shuttle has a rack for two bicycles.

OTHER VEHICLES
Other vehicles such as ATVs and OHVs are not permitted in Zion National Park. However, access to private property north of the park is permitted by snowmobile.

Stock Use

Horses traditionally have been used to explore the terrain of Zion National Park. Allowed stock animals include horses, mules, and burros. Llamas, dogs, goats, camels, and others are not allowed. Permits are not required for day trips. However, stock is prohibited during spring thaws, unusually wet periods, or times when they would cause trail damage. Maximum group size is six animals.

TRAILS

Where trails are present, stock animals must remain on trails. Free trailing or loose herding is not allowed. Stay at a slow walk when passing hikers. When standing, stock must be kept at least 100 feet from drainages.

Check the map on pages 6 and 7 for trails open to stock use. Off-trail use is permitted only in Lower Coalpits Wash from the trailhead to the junction with Scoggins Wash, in Scoggins Wash, in upper Coalpits Wash above the springs, and in Huber Wash.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

The only overnight stock camp is Hop Valley Site A and is limited to one night. A permit is required. Stock must be hobbled or tethered to reduce damage to vegetation. To reduce the spread of noxious and exotic weeds, stock must be fed certified weed-free hay two days prior to the trip.

Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Temperature (°F)												
normal daily max	52	57	63	73	83	93	100	97	91	78	63	53
normal daily min	29	31	36	43	52	60	68	66	60	49	37	30
extreme high	71	78	86	94	102	114	115	111	110	97	83	71
extreme low	-2	4	12	23	22	40	51	50	33	23	13	6
days above 90°F	0	0	0	1	8	21	30	28	18	3	0	0
days below 32°F	19	14	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	18
Precipitation (inches)												
normal	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.8	1.6	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.5
maximum	7.5	6.7	7.1	4.4	3.0	4.0	3.6	4.8	6.7	3.3	3.2	4.3
max 24 hour	1.6	1.3	0.9	1.2	1.8	2.2	1.1	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.3	2.0
maximum snowfall	26	18	14	3	T	0	0	0	T	1	5	21
days w/ precipitation	7	7	8	6	5	3	5	6	4	4	5	6
no. thunderstorms	0	0	0	1	4	5	14	15	5	2	0	0

Temperatures in the Kolob Canyons may be five to ten degrees cooler than Zion Canyon.

Weather

SPRING

As the park warms, additional areas of the backcountry become accessible. In early March, Coalpits Wash in the southwest corner of the park is typically the only snow free area. La Verkin Creek is often snow free by mid-March, and the park's East and West Rims are usually snow free by early April. High water due to snowmelt makes the Narrows impassable in an average year until late May.

SUMMER

Zion National Park is hot through the summer months with temperatures regularly exceeding 100 degrees. Even higher elevation areas such as the Kolob Canyons and West Rim can see high temperatures in excess of 90 degrees. Visitors must pay constant attention to the possibility of thunderstorms and lightning. The park typically experiences a monsoon season from mid-July through mid-September with an increased risk of flash floods.

FALL

The brilliant autumn colors and cooler temperatures can make the fall an ideal time for backpacking trips through the backcountry. Canyoneering trips through the Narrows and other slot canyons are best completed prior to mid-October when cooler temperatures lead to the need for wetsuits and other specialized equipment.

WINTER

Much of Zion National Park is snow covered through the winter months. All trails, even at lower elevations, can be ice covered and crampons are highly recommended. In winter, some of the Kolob Terrace Road is not plowed. Snow causes closures of the Kolob Terrace Road near the Hop Valley Trailhead throughout the winter, as well as periodic closures of the Kolob Canyons Road. Recreational use is limited to skis and snowshoes.

Flash Floods

Flash floods can be extremely violent. The strength of the water can tumble logs and large boulders. A hiker caught in a flash flood like this would not survive.

All narrow canyons are potentially hazardous. Flash floods, often caused by storms miles away, are a real danger and can be life threatening. By entering a narrow canyon you are assuming a risk. Your safety is your responsibility. During a flash flood, the water level rises instantly, within minutes or even seconds. A flash flood can rush down a canyon in a wall of water twelve feet high or more.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Know the weather and flash flood potential forecasts before starting your trip. If bad weather threatens, do not enter a narrow canyon. Whether hiking, climbing, or driving, your safety depends on your own good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant attention to your surroundings. Don't ruin your experience by having an accident. Your safety is your responsibility.

Watch for these indications of a possible flash flood:

- Any deterioration in weather conditions
- Build up of clouds or sounds of thunder
- Sudden changes in water clarity from clear to muddy
- Floating debris
- Rising water levels or stronger currents
- Increasing roar of water up canyon

If you observe any of these signs, seek higher ground immediately. Do not try to beat a flash flood out of a canyon. Remain on high ground until conditions improve. Water levels usually drop within 24 hours. If there is no high ground, try to take shelter behind a fin of rock that may break the mass of water and debris. It may be possible to wedge yourself into a crack above the water level. Even climbing a few feet may save your life.

The debris on this rock marks the depth of the last flash flood.

Safety

STEEP CLIFFS
Falls from cliffs on trails have resulted in death. Loose sand or pebbles on stone are very slippery. Be careful of edges when using cameras or binoculars. Never throw or roll rocks, there may be hikers below you. Trails can be snow and ice covered in winter.

- Stay on the trail.
- Stay back from cliff edges.
- Observe posted warnings.
- Parents—watch your children!

WATER
The desert is an extreme environment. Carry enough water, one gallon per person per day, and drink it. Water is available at visitor centers, campgrounds, and the Zion Lodge. Water flow at springs can vary; check for information at visitor centers.

Do not drink untreated water. Water collected in the backcountry is not safe to drink without treating it. There are two safe methods.

Boil
Bring water to a rolling boil for one minute. Add one minute for each 1,000 feet above sea level.

Filter and Disinfect
Filter through an "absolute" 1 micron filter, or one labeled as meeting ANSI/NSF International Standard #53. Then add eight drops of liquid chlorine bleach, or four drops of iodine, per gallon of water and let stand for 30 minutes.

HEAT EXHAUSTION
Heat exhaustion occurs when the body loses more fluid than is taken in. Signs of heat exhaustion include nausea, vomiting, fatigue, headaches, pale appearance, stomach cramps, and cool clammy skin. If a member of your party begins to experience any of these symptoms, stop your hike immediately. Find a cool, shady area and rest with your feet up to distribute fluids throughout your body. It is important to drink fluids, but it is also important to eat. Drinking lots of fluids and not eating, while suffering from heat exhaustion, can lead to a potentially dangerous condition of low blood salt. If heat exhaustion symptoms persist for more than two hours, seek medical help.

Heat stroke is an advanced stage of heat exhaustion. It is the body's inability to cool itself. Symptoms include confusion, disorientation, behavior changes, and seizures. If you believe that a member of your party is suffering from heat stroke, it is imperative to cool them using any available means; and obtain immediate medical assistance.

HYPOTHERMIA
Hypothermia occurs when the body is cooled to dangerous levels. It is the number one killer of outdoor recreationists, even in summer, and it usually happens without the victim's awareness. It is a hazard in narrow canyons because immersion in water is the quickest route to body heat loss. To prevent hypothermia, avoid cotton clothing, it provides no insulation when wet, and eat high energy food before you are chilled. The signs of hypothermia include:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Stumbling and poor coordination
- Fatigue and weakness
- Confusion or slurred speech

If you recognize any of these signs, stop hiking and immediately replace wet clothing with dry clothing. Warm the victim with your own body and a warm drink, and shelter the individual from breezes. A pre-warmed sleeping bag will also help prevent further heat loss.

PETS
Pets are not allowed on backcountry trails or on the shuttle buses. Even well-behaved pets may disrupt wildlife and other visitors. Do not leave pets in vehicles.

FIREARMS
Firearms are permitted in Zion National Park. As of February 22, 2010, a new federal law allows people who can legally possess firearms under federal, Utah, and local laws, to possess firearms in the park. It is the visitor's responsibility to understand and comply with all applicable Utah, local, and federal firearms laws. Federal law prohibits firearms in certain facilities in Zion National Park; those places are posted with signs. If you have questions, please contact the park at 435 772-3256. The discharge of firearms and hunting within the park are prohibited.

Wildlife

You will encounter wildlife while in the backcountry. Be aware that wild animals can be unpredictable. Do not approach or attempt to move sick or injured wildlife. Please report any encounter with sick or injured animals to a park ranger.

MOUNTAIN LIONS
Mountain lions are wild animals and can be dangerous. They have been seen in the park. An attack is unlikely, and the park has never had a reported attack on people or pets. However, mountain lions have attacked in other backcountry areas.

- Watch children closely, and never let them run ahead or lag behind.
- Solo hiking is not encouraged.
- Never approach a mountain lion. Most will try to avoid a confrontation. Always give them a way to escape.
- Do not run. Try to look large and put your arms up.
- If a mountain lion approaches, wave your arms, shout, and throw rocks or sticks at it.
- If attacked, fight back.

Please report any encounters or sightings to a park ranger as soon as possible.

Emergencies

For 24-hour emergency response, call 911 or 435 772-3322. The Zion Canyon Medical Clinic is located in Springdale near the south entrance to the park. For hours, please call 435 772-3226. The nearest hospitals are in St. George, Cedar City, and Kanab.

Leave No Trace

While traveling through the backcountry, please show respect for your national park.

Stay on the trail. If you must leave the trail, avoid stepping on cryptobiotic soil. It can take decades to grow and can be destroyed by a single step. Travel on slickrock and canyon bottoms whenever possible.

Camping is limited to designated sites in much of Zion's backcountry. In areas where at-large camping is permitted, camp at least 100 big steps from water and out of view of trails and streams. Camp one quarter mile from springs.

Carry all of your trash out of the backcountry, including toilet paper. Use a human waste disposal bag to carry your solid waste out of the backcountry. If you do not have a disposal bag, waste can be buried in a small hole 4-8 inches deep and at least 100 big steps from water.

It is illegal to remove anything from Zion National Park. Leave the flowers, rocks, and anything else that you might find for others to enjoy.

Campfires are not allowed in the backcountry. Please use a gas stove.

Feeding wildlife human food is illegal and unhealthy. Animals can become aggressive beggars when fed.

Allow others to enjoy the quiet and solitude of the park. Keep your group quiet and your group size small.

Canyoneering Safety

ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN B
There is no substitute for planning ahead, taking the proper equipment, having the right skills, and using sound judgment. Have fun and explore, but being prepared and understanding the consequences of your actions can make the difference between having a wonderful trip and tragedy.

ORDERVILLE CANYON
On June 11, 2004, a 31-year-old woman was descending Orderville Canyon. She needed to get to the bottom of an eight foot waterfall. Instead of down-climbing or using a rope, she jumped. The pool that she chose as her landing zone was shallow, and its rocky bottom was uneven. Her ankle snapped, and appeared to be deformed. The injury occurred at 3:00 in the afternoon. After a difficult and painful carryout, she arrived at the hospital eight hours later.

Lower leg injuries are the most common injuries suffered by visitors to Zion's backcountry. The most common cause of serious lower leg injuries is jumping. Do not jump. It's an especially bad idea to jump into a pool of water. Use a rope.

THE SUBWAY
On August 6, 2004, a Boy Scout group was descending the Subway. A 14-year-old boy was not traveling with the adult leaders. He missed a critical right-hand turn, and began working his way down a steep slope. The boy took a tumbling 40-foot fall and landed in the bottom of the canyon. He suffered serious head, back, and internal injuries.

Even heavily traveled canyons in Zion are routes, not maintained trails. Do you have a map and a route description? Are you confident in your ability to use them? Is your group traveling together?

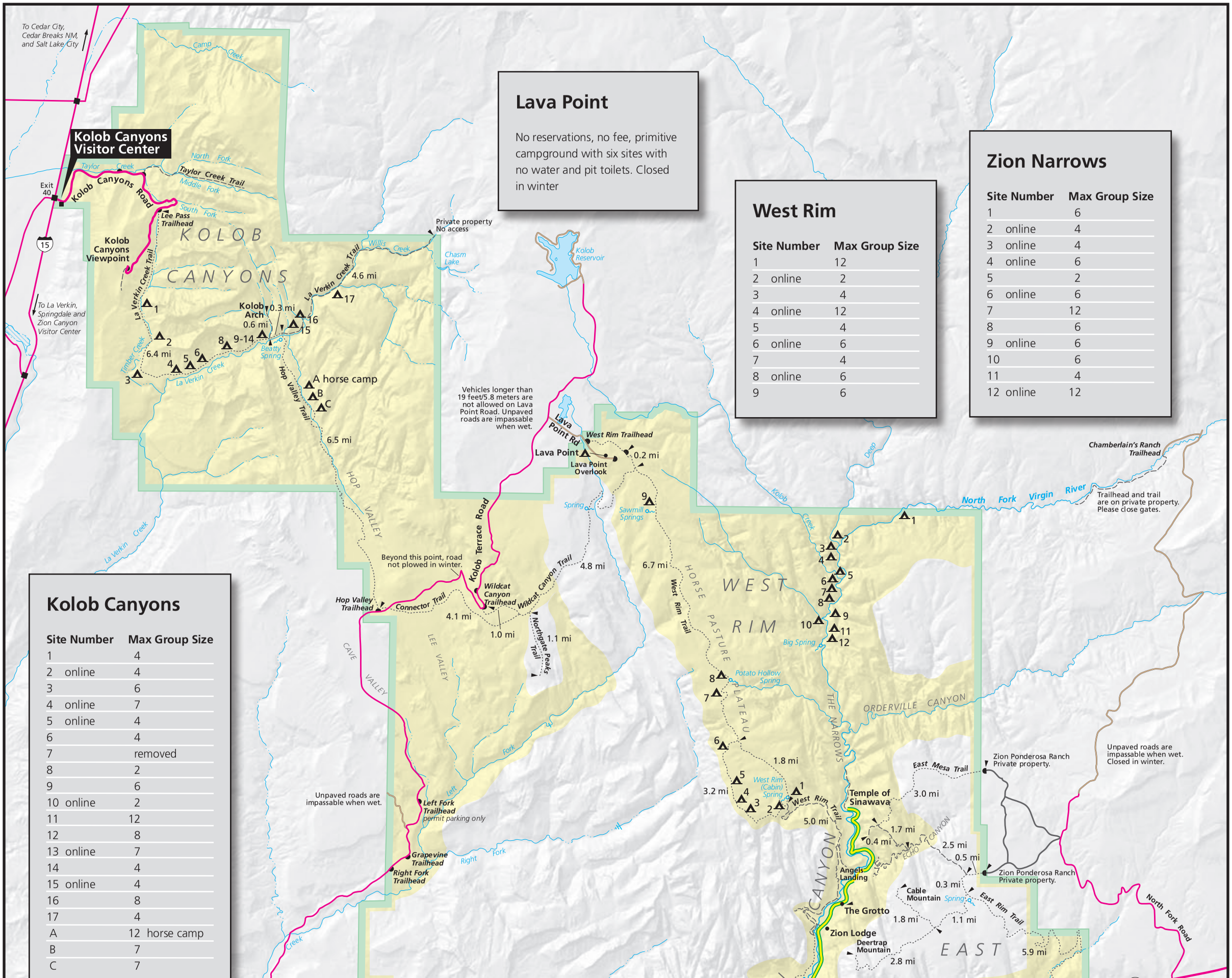
BEHUNIN CANYON
On November 29, 2004, a group of two was attempting the last rappel in Behunin Canyon after dark. They threw their ropes off a ledge, and a 27-year-old male began his descent. The ends of his ropes were caught in bushes, and he rappelled into the belly of his ropes. He was one hundred feet off the ground, free hanging in mid-air. He was not able to continue his descent and he had no way to go back up his rope. Visitors in the Emerald Pools area heard his cries for help.

What would you do? Can you stop yourself mid-rappel to correct a problem? Can you ascend back up your rope? Could you assist another group member when they have difficulty? If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, consider taking a canyoneering course before heading out on your own.

KEYHOLE CANYON
On June 22, 2004, a group of seven people, including a seven-year-old and a one-year-old infant, completed one rappel and one frigid swim, and decided that they could not continue their trip. They spent a very cold night in the canyon. Rangers rescued the group the following morning.

Can all members of your group safely complete the trip? Do you have equipment to travel after dark? Do you have extra clothes and food? Will someone report you missing if you are overdue?

Backcountry Planning Map



Lava Point

No reservations, no fee, primitive campground with six sites with no water and pit toilets. Closed in winter

West Rim

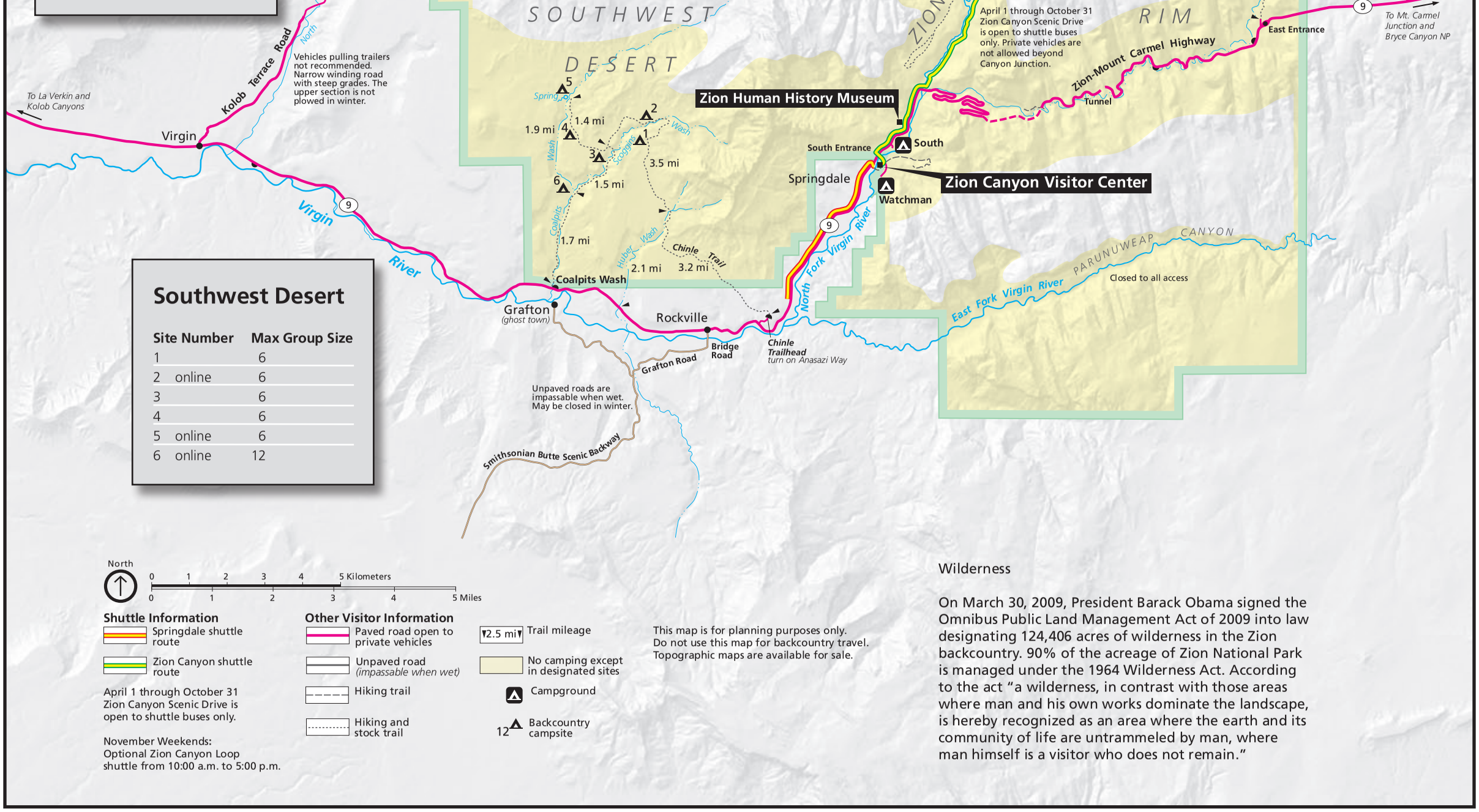
Site Number		Max Group Size
1		12
2	online	2
3		4
4	online	12
5		4
6	online	6
7		4
8	online	6
9		6

Zion Narrows

Site Number		Max Group Size
1		6
2	online	4
3	online	4
4	online	6
5		2
6	online	6
7		12
8		6
9	online	6
10		6
11		4
12	online	12

Kolob Canyons

Site Number		Max Group Size
1		4
2	online	4
3		6
4	online	7
5	online	4
6		4
7		removed
8		2
9		6
10	online	2
11		12
12		8
13	online	7
14		4
15	online	4
16		8
17		4
A		12 horse camp
B		7
C		7



Southwest Desert

Site Number		Max Group Size
1		6
2	online	6
3		6
4		6
5	online	6
6	online	12

North

0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

Shuttle Information

- Springdale shuttle route
- Zion Canyon shuttle route

April 1 through October 31 Zion Canyon Scenic Drive is open to shuttle buses only.

November Weekends: Optional Zion Canyon Loop shuttle from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Other Visitor Information

- Paved road open to private vehicles
- Unpaved road *(impassable when wet)*
- Hiking trail
- Hiking and stock trail
- 2.5 mi — Trail mileage
- No camping except in designated sites
- Campground
- 12 — Backcountry campsite

This map is for planning purposes only. Do not use this map for backcountry travel. Topographic maps are available for sale.

Wilderness

On March 30, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 into law designating 124,406 acres of wilderness in the Zion backcountry. 90% of the acreage of Zion National Park is managed under the 1964 Wilderness Act. According to the act "a wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

Zion National Park's backcountry is managed using standards that were developed to measure the health of natural resources and to determine the number of encounters people considered desirable and acceptable while experiencing wilderness. These two standards were combined with existing management zones to create overall use limits and group size limits. The use limits are evaluated each year, and may change as conditions warrant.

Backcountry Use Limits

Area	Total Use Limit	Online Spaces Available	Walk-in Spaces Available	Group Size Limit
Behunin Canyon*	12 people per day	6 people per day	6 people per day	6
Echo Canyon*	12 people per day	6 people per day	6 people per day	6
Keyhole Canyon	80 people per day	60 people per day	20 people per day	12
Mystery Canyon	12 people per day	6 people per day	6 people per day	6
Orderville Canyon*	50 people per day	30 people per day	20 people per day	12
Pine Creek Canyon*	50 people per day	30 people per day	20 people per day	12
Spry Canyon	20 people per day	14 people per day	6 people per day	6
Subway (Left Fork)	80 people per day	60 people per day	20 people per day	12
Zion Narrows	40 people per day	24 people per day	16 people per day	12

*Total use limits are reduced from March through August for wildlife protection.

Backpacking & Camping

WEST RIM TRAIL

Late spring and fall are ideal times for hiking the West Rim. Temperatures are usually ten to fifteen degrees cooler than Zion Canyon. The trail is typically snow covered from December through April.

The trail traces a series of canyon rims with panoramic views. Camping is permitted in designated campsites. Water may be available at Cabin, Potato Hollow, and Sawmill Springs. Check with park rangers for water availability.

A difficult, but rewarding, one-night backpack can be accomplished by hiking from the Grotto to one of the campsites near Cabin Spring. The trip is 5 miles one way with 2,200 feet of elevation gain.

A more moderate West Rim trip involves hiking from Lava Point to a campsite near Potato Hollow. The trip is 5 miles one way.

KOLOB CANYONS

Spring and fall are ideal seasons for hiking in La Verkin Creek. Temperatures are typically five to ten degrees cooler than Zion Canyon. Trails are frequently snow covered in winter, and summer temperatures regularly top 100 degrees.

The trail follows a flowing stream through a red-walled valley bottom. Camping is limited to designated areas.

An excellent two-night backpack can be accomplished by hiking to one of several campsites near Kolob Arch. The middle day can be spent day hiking to Kolob Arch, Bear Trap Canyon, or upper La Verkin Creek. The trip is 7 miles one way.

OTHER ROUTES

The map shows where camping is limited to designated campsites, including the Narrows, West Rim, La Verkin Creek, and the Southwest Desert. In other areas, at-large camping is permitted. Water and maintained trails are not always available in the at-large camping areas. Permits are required and visitors are required to camp one mile from roads, out of sight of trails, and a quarter mile from springs.

EXTENDED TRIPS

Trips up to fifty miles can be made in Zion National Park's backcountry by combining the La Verkin Creek, Hop Valley, Wildcat Canyon, West Rim, and East Rim Trails. The route crosses several roads, so shorter versions are also possible. A vehicle shuttle is necessary.

FIRES

Campfires are not allowed in the backcountry. Please use a gas stove.

West Rim Trail

Climbing

Zion National Park's 2,000-foot cliffs are world renowned for their big wall climbs. Zion is not a place for inexperienced climbers. There are few top roping areas and no sport climbs. Permits are not required for day climbs, but they are required for all overnight bivouacs. Route descriptions are kept at the Zion Canyon Backcountry Desk.

ROUTE CLOSURES
Some rock formations and routes are closed to climbing from early March through August each year to protect nesting peregrine falcons. Some areas that are routinely closed include the Great White Throne, Cable Mountain, the Court of the Patriarchs, and Angels Landing. Check at the visitor centers or visit www.nps.gov/zion for current closure information.

MINIMUM IMPACT CLIMBING
When approaching a climb, please use established trails to prevent further erosion of slopes. It is illegal to camp at the base of the wall or in your vehicle. It is illegal to use power drills to place bolts. Never climb directly above trails where hikers may be hit by dislodged rocks. Tube or bag human waste and carry it out. Do not drop your waste.

Canyoneering

BACKUP EQUIPMENT
The ability to stop, move up, or down while hanging mid-rope is a lifesaving skill that must be learned before you need it. Can you create extra friction? Do you have ascenders? Can you belay the less experienced members of your party?

WEATHER & FLASH FLOOD POTENTIAL
Know the forecast and the potential for flash floods. Be aware of conditions.

MAPS AND ROUTE DESCRIPTION
You must have them and use them.

ANCHOR EQUIPMENT
Are the anchors still good? Do I need to place an anchor? Is there another safe method of creating this anchor? Will the bolt that I am placing safely last for years? Power drills are prohibited in the park.

EXTRA CLOTHING
Could you survive an unexpected night out in the canyon?

EXTRA FOOD
Food keeps your energy up and helps you stay warm if you have to remain out.

WATER
Drink one gallon of water per person per day.

FLASHLIGHT / HEADLAMP
It could be the difference between getting out and spending the night in the canyon.

HELMET
Rock falls can cause severe injuries.

FIRST AID KIT
Even a minor injury can cause major problems in the backcountry.

Remember, cell phones and GPS units rarely work in narrow canyons.

River Trips

Watercraft use in the park requires a backcountry permit. Permits are issued when the river is flowing in excess of 140 cubic feet per second. Kayak trips through the Zion Narrows should only be attempted by expert paddlers who are prepared to survive without assistance for multiple days. Inner tubes are not permitted at any time on any watercourse within the park.

The Zion Narrows

The Virgin River has carved a spectacular gorge in the upper reaches of Zion Canyon: 16 miles long, up to 2000-feet deep, and at times only 20 to 30-feet wide. The Zion Narrows, with its soaring walls, sandstone grottos, natural springs, and hanging gardens can be an unforgettable wilderness experience.

It is not, however, a trip to be underestimated. Hiking the Narrows means hiking in the Virgin River. At least 60% of the hike is spent wading, walking, and sometimes swimming in the river. There is no maintained trail because the route is the river. The current is swift, the water is very cold, and the rocks underfoot are slippery. Flash flooding and hypothermia are constant dangers. Good planning, proper equipment, and sound judgment are essential for a safe and successful trip. Your safety is your responsibility.

GROUP SIZE LIMIT

Large groups produce increased impacts on the backcountry. Group size is limited to a maximum of 12 people sharing the same affiliation (e.g., school, club, scout troop, family, and friends) in the same drainage, route, or backcountry trail on the same day. This is strictly enforced and violators will be cited.

WHEN TO HIKE THE NARROWS

Entering the Narrows is safest when the Virgin River is low, clear, and relatively warm. However, conditions change from day to day and are impossible to predict. Check at the Zion Canyon Visitor Center for the latest weather forecast and possible advisories. Permits are not issued when the flow is 120 cubic feet per second (cfs) or greater. Flash floods can occur at any time, but are more common in mid-summer and early fall. From November through May, trips through the Narrows require wetsuits, or even drysuits, and special cold weather preparation. Spring snowmelt frequently causes the river to run at dangerously high levels from March to early June.

DAY HIKE FROM THE BOTTOM AND BACK

This is the easiest way to experience the Narrows. Ride the shuttle to the Temple of Sinawava, walk one mile to the end of the paved Riverside Walk, and begin wading up the river. There is no formal destination, and you return the same way you came. Many hikers try to reach Orderville Canyon, a tributary creek approximately two hours upstream from the end of the paved trail. Travel upstream into Orderville Canyon or beyond Big Springs is prohibited. No permit is required for this day hike and group size limits do not apply.

DAY HIKE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

Walking the entire length of the Narrows can be a grueling experience. Under favorable conditions, the 16-mile route takes an average of 12 hours. Even for well-conditioned hikers, this makes for a long and strenuous day.

Because the trailhead at Chamberlain's Ranch is a 1½-hour drive from the Temple of Sinawava, either two vehicles or a shuttle is necessary. A backcountry permit is required. Group size limits apply.

OVERNIGHT HIKE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

To enjoy the Narrows at a more leisurely pace, some visitors choose to spend a night in the gorge. There are twelve numbered sites. Only one-night stays are allowed, and overnight trips must start from Chamberlain's Ranch. Reservations are recommended for weekend trips. Campsite capacity is limited and only two sites can accommodate groups of more than six people.

TRANSPORTATION

If you are hiking the Narrows from top to bottom, there are several transportation options:

- If you have two vehicles, you can shuttle yourself by parking one vehicle at Chamberlain's Ranch and the other at the Zion Canyon Visitor Center.
- You may make arrangements with a local shuttle service.

At the end of your hike at the Temple of Sinawava, you must catch the Zion Canyon shuttle to the visitor center. Plan your hike so you do not miss the last shuttle of the night.

DIRECTIONS TO CHAMBERLAIN'S RANCH

Chamberlain's Ranch is a 1½-hour drive from Zion Canyon, along paved and dirt roads. The dirt roads are passable for normal cars only when dry. When wet, they may be impassable even for four-wheel drive vehicles. Snow closes the road in winter. From the park's East Entrance station, drive 2½ miles east on Route 9. Turn left on a paved road and continue 18 miles to a bridge that crosses the North Fork of the Virgin River. Turn left beyond the bridge and drive ¼ mile to the gate of Chamberlain's Ranch. Please close the gate behind you. Drive ½ mile farther and park just before the road crosses the river. To begin your hike, cross the river and follow the road for approximately 3 miles. Enter the river at the end of the road past the old cabin. Chamberlain's Ranch is a private ranch outside Zion National Park. Please respect private property.

FOOTWEAR

Hiking the Narrows is like walking on slippery bowling balls. It requires balancing on algae-coated rocks in the middle of a swiftly flowing river. Sturdy footwear is essential. Hiking boots with good ankle support are best. Sandals and bare feet are not appropriate. Inappropriate footwear often results in twisted ankles and crushed toes.

CLOTHING

Even in mid-summer the Narrows can be cool. The water is cold, breezes blow steadily, and very little sunlight penetrates to the canyon floor. Although you'll probably hike in shorts, take plenty of extra warm clothing. Clothing made of wool or synthetic fibers provides the best insulation.

DRINKING WATER

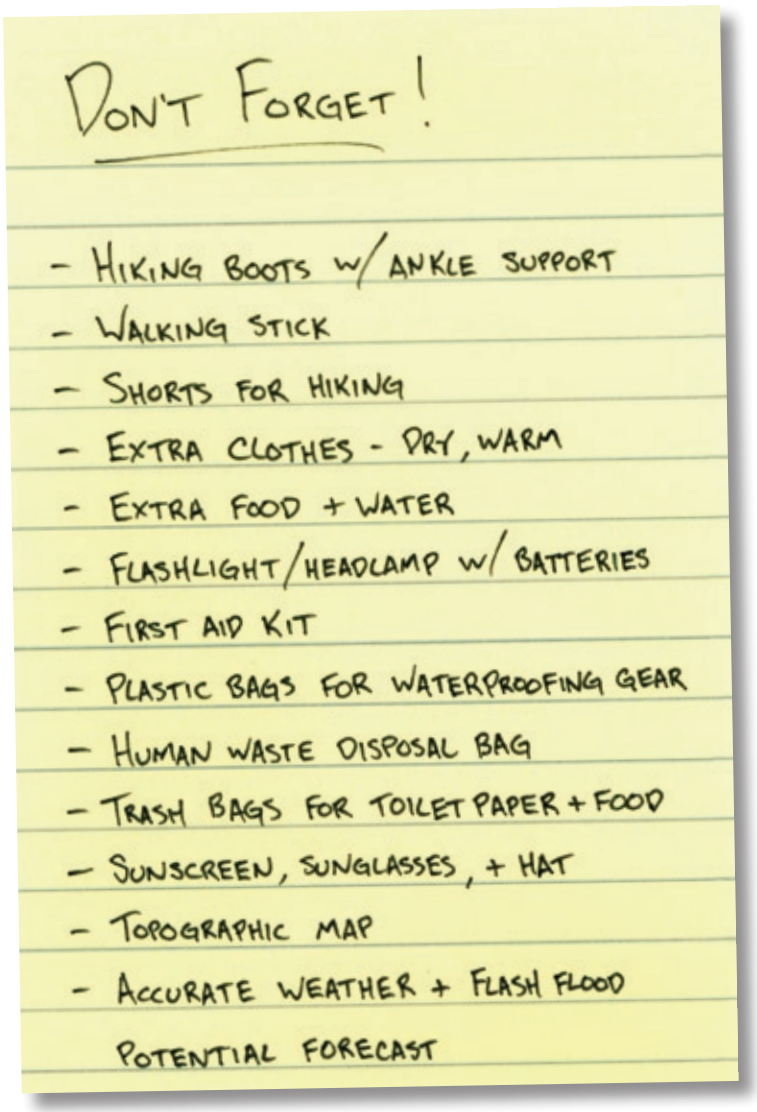
Water in the Virgin River and its springs is not safe to drink untreated. It has passed over rangeland and may be contaminated with illness-causing bacteria. Treat the water you collect by filter, tablets, or by boiling. Hikers are encouraged to carry in all the water you'll need. Drink one gallon of water per person per day.

WATER DEPTH

The water level varies in the Narrows. Under ideal conditions, when flow is less than 70 cubic feet per second, most crossings are around knee-deep. Higher flows mean higher water, a stronger current, and may include wading in waist-deep water. Be prepared to swim. Even when the river is low, chest-deep holes are common.

WATERPROOFING

Even the most experienced hikers fall occasionally in the Narrows. It is a good idea to waterproof your belongings. Many hikers line their packs with large plastic garbage bags. Smaller resealable bags provide extra protection for cameras and other valuables.



The Subway & Left Fork

There are two ways to hike the Subway. Both trips involve extensive route finding. Visitors are encouraged to do the trip with experienced Subway hikers or obtain a detailed route description. Permits are required regardless of the direction of travel. The Subway is a day use area only.

FROM THE BOTTOM AND BACK

This is a strenuous 9-mile round-trip hike requiring route finding, stream crossing, and scrambling over boulders. This hike begins and ends at the Left Fork Trailhead on the Kolob Terrace Road.

FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM

This is a strenuous 9½ mile hike that requires rappelling skills, 60 feet of rope, and extensive route finding experience. The route also requires swimming through several deep pools of very cold debris-filled water. The trail begins at the Wildcat Canyon Trailhead and ends at the Left Fork Trailhead. Both trailheads are located on the Kolob Terrace Road.

Hiking Timetable

Chamberlain's Ranch	0:00 / 0.0 mi
Old Cabin	1:00 / 2.3 mi
First Narrows	3:30 / 6.1 mi
Waterfall	4:15 / 8.3 mi
Deep Creek	5:00 / 8.9 mi
Kolob Creek	5:45 / 9.8 mi
Goose Creek	6:35 / 10.9 mi
Big Springs	7:20 / 11.5 mi
Orderville Canyon	10:00 / 13.5 mi
Riverside Walk	11:50 / 15.1 mi
Temple of Sinawava	12:20 / 16.2 mi

Track your progress by recognizing side canyons like Deep Creek, Kolob Creek, and Big Springs. Watch closely for the mouth of Goose Creek.

Protect the Virgin River

With the increase in recreational use along Zion National Park's waterways, the National Park Service introduced a human waste disposal program for overnight users in the Narrows. An environmentally friendly human waste disposal bag, complete with use and disposal instructions, is provided to all party members with every Narrows overnight backcountry permit. It is a lightweight, sanitary way to pack out waste. The bag-within-a-bag design and interlocking closure securely contains waste and odor, while the blend of polymers breaks down waste and turns it into a deodorized gel. The contents of the bag are safe for landfills and may be deposited in the trash. Use of this waste disposal system is strongly encouraged for all Narrows hikers as a means for protecting the Virgin River and the drinking water for Springdale, and the communities farther downstream.

Maps & Guides

ZION NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The Zion Natural History Association sells maps and guides, as well as other books, at park visitor centers. ZNHA is a non-profit membership organization which supports the scientific, educational, historical, and interpretive activities of the park. Members receive a 20% discount.

AREA GUIDES

Hiking Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks by Eric Molvar and Tamara Martin.
An illustrated guide to the breathtaking slick-rock canyons and towering cliffs of southwest Utah.

Hiking the Southwest's Geology, Four Corners Region by Ralph Lee Hopkins.
Information on 50 hikes includes the landscape and geologic features along each trail.

Hiking the Southwest's Canyon Country by Sandra Hinchman.
Describes backpacking, day hikes, and canyon routes.

Hiking Utah: A Falcon Guide by David Hall.
Introduction to day and overnight hikes throughout Utah's backcountry.

Zion: Canyoneering by Tom Jones.
Descriptions of trail hikes, off-trail hikes, and technical canyoneering routes.

Desert Rock by Eric Bjornstad.
Rock climbing routes in National Parks of the Colorado Plateau.

Rock Climbing Utah: A Falcon Guide by Stewart M. Green.
A guide for planning climbing trips in Utah.

Zion Climbing: Free and Clean by Bryan Bird.
A climber's guide to Zion National Park.

HOW-TO BOOKS

Desert Hiking Tips by Bruce Grubbs.
Covers desert tips from drinking water to flash floods.

Leave No Trace by Will Harmon.
The official pocket-size Leave No Trace manual of the American Hiking Society.

Reading Weather by Jim Woodmency.
Weather basics to help you avoid bad weather on your outdoor adventures.

Route Finding by Gregory Crouch.
Pocket-size guide to map and compass navigation.

Emergency Survival, A Pocket Guide by Christopher Van Tilburg, M.D.
Quick information for outdoor safety.

MAPS

Zion Topographic Map
Scale 1:37,700 39 x 25"
Backcountry and hiking information, paper, folded.

Trails Illustrated Topo Map of Zion National Park
Scale approximately 1:37,700 30 x 25"
Backcountry and hiking information, waterproof, tear resistant, folded.

St. George & Springdale, Utah Trail Map
Scale 1:25,000, 27 x 39"
Hiking information, waterproof, tear resistant, folded.

USGS Topographic Maps
Scale 1:24,000, 7.5 minute quads. Paper, rolled.
Kanarraville, Kolob Arch, Kolob Reservoir, Cogswell Point, Smith Mesa, Guardian Angels, Temple of Sinawava, Clear Creek, Springdale East and West, and The Barracks.

For More Information

To find out more about the programs and publications available through the Zion Natural History Association, please visit www.zionpark.org.

Zion Natural History Association
Zion National Park
Springdale, UT 84767
800 635-3959

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