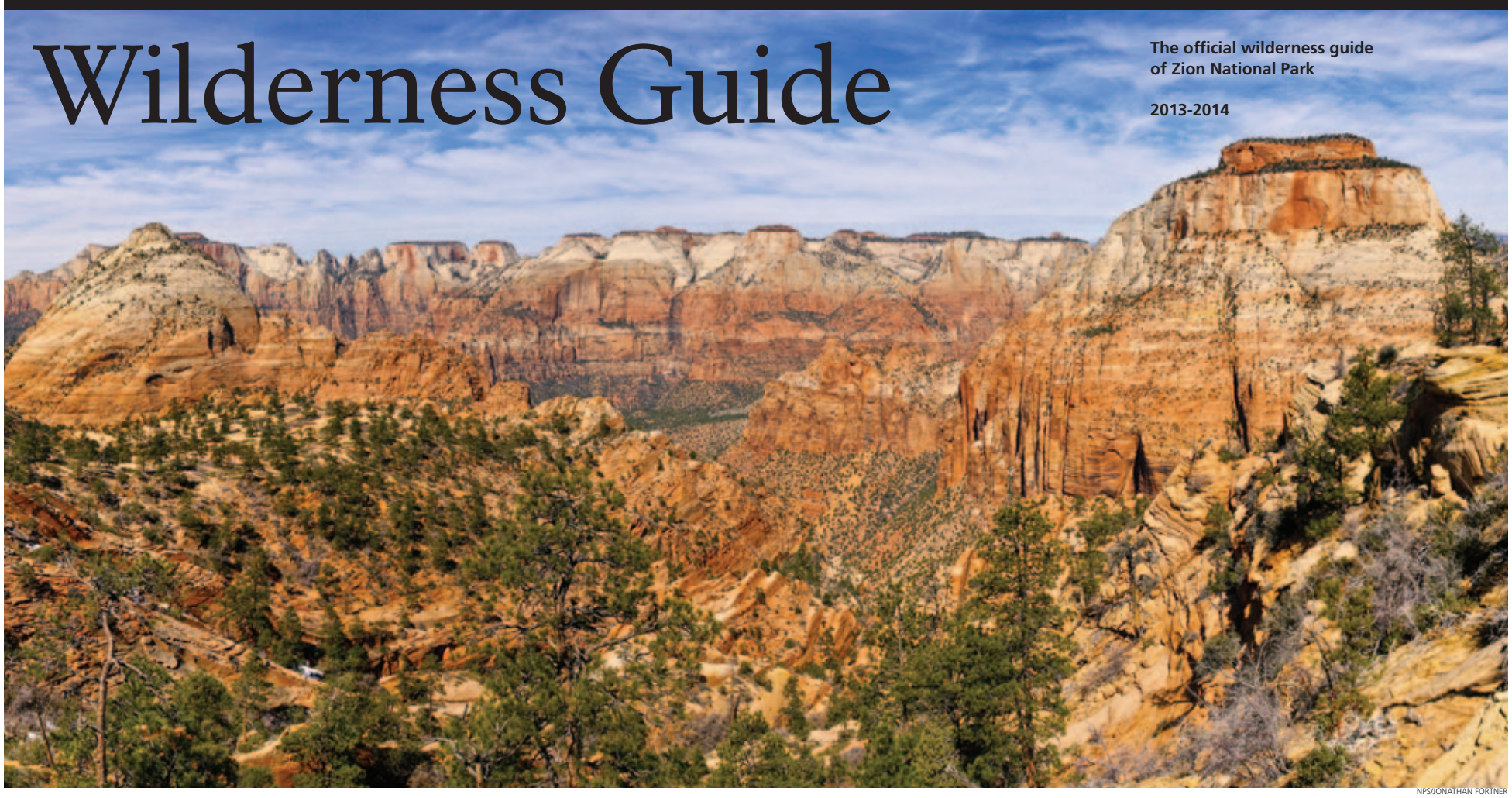
Zion National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wilderness Guide

The official wilderness guide of Zion National Park

2013-2014



NPS/JONATHAN FORTNER

Plan Your Trip

Welcome to Zion National Park. Zion is a spectacular network of colorful canyons, forested mesas, and striking deserts. All of the land within the park boundary is preserved by the National Park Service for the benefit of the public. In addition, a remarkable 84 percent of this extraordinary landscape is preserved as wilderness. This designation will ensure that over 124,400 acres of the park will continue to be a place where nature and its "community of life are untrammeled by man, a place where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

PREPARE AND PLAN AHEAD

More than 40,000 people receive permits to visit the Zion Wilderness each year. Traveling into the wilderness, even on short trips, can be challenging and risky and requires careful planning before you begin. Summer weather is hot and dry and winters can be cold and icy. Narrow canyons are subject to flash flooding and dangerous cliffs are common. Often there are no trail indicators or directional signs and routes can be difficult to find and follow. Each year, people are injured or die while exploring the park. Your safety depends on your own good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant observation. Speak with park rangers at park visitor centers for current conditions, weather forecasts, and flash flood potential ratings.

LEAVE NO TRACE

While traveling through the wilderness, please show respect for your national park, fellow visitors, and future generations.

Stay on the trail. If you must leave the trail, travel in canyon bottoms, in river or stream courses, or on slickrock whenever possible. Avoid stepping on vegetation or biological soil crusts.

Do not build or destroy rock cairns. They are used to mark the trail or route. If placed incorrectly, they can mislead visitors, causing unnecessary damage to the resource and potential injuries. Also, do not build structures including benches, tables and shelters. Leave the area in a natural state for others to enjoy. Camping is limited to designated sites in much of the Zion Wilderness. In areas where at-large camping is permitted, camp at least 300 feet from water and out of view of trails and streams. Camp one-quarter mile from springs. Campfires are not allowed in the wilderness. Please use a gas stove.

Carry all of your trash out of the park, including toilet paper. Use a human waste disposal bag, or trash bag, to transport your solid waste. If you do not have a disposal bag, waste can be buried in a small hole 4 to 8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water and campsites. Human waste bags must be used in The Narrows.

It is illegal to remove anything from the park. Leave the flowers, rocks, and everything else for others to enjoy. Do not write or carve on natural surfaces.

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

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

Wilderness Permit Hours

	Zion Canyon Visitor Center 435 772-0170	Kolob Canyons Visitor Center 435 586-9548
October 13 to March 1	8:00 am to 4:30 pm	8:00 am to 4:30 pm
March 2 to April 20	8:00 am to 5:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
April 21 to May 24	7:00 am to 6:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
May 25 to September 2	7:00 am to 7:30 pm	8:00 am to 6:00 pm
September 3 to October 12	7:00 am to 6:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Permits are required for overnight trips in the wilderness, 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 may be obtained on the day before or day of your trip.

Reservations & Permits

Permits are required for all overnight trips, including climbing bivouacs, all through-hikes of The Narrows and its tributaries, all canyons requiring the use of descending gear or ropes, and all trips into The Subway (Left Fork). All permits (including those with reservations and those awarded though the lottery) must be obtained in person on the day before or day of the trip at the Zion Canyon or Kolob Canyons Visitor Centers. Use the park's online reservation system to help you plan ahead and save time at www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm.

GET A PERMIT

There are several ways to obtain a permit for your trip into the Zion Wilderness. Over half of all available permits are secured using the advance reservation system. The remaining permits are obtained through the Last Minute Drawing (canyoneering day trips) or as Walk-in Permits (backpacking trips).

CALENDAR RESERVATIONS

All visitors can reserve a wide variety of canyoneering, camping, and climbing trips using the online reservation system. Please note that calendar reservations are not permits. Visitors with calendar reservations must pick up their permits at either the Zion Canyon or Kolob Canyons Visitor Center before beginning their trip.

MAKING A CALENDAR RESERVATION

Reservations are available online during a three month time frame. On the fifth day of every month at 10:00 am MT, reservations for the next month become available. If they are still available, reservations can be made until 5:00 pm MT, on the day before your trip.

There is a $5.00 non-refundable fee for an online calendar reservation, and there is an additional charge for a permit that is determined by the size of your group.

Many of the permits for The Subway (Left Fork) and Mystery Canyon are secured through the Advance Lottery system prior to calendar reservations becoming available.

ADVANCE LOTTERY RESERVATIONS

The Advance Lottery is for trips through The Subway (Left Fork) and Mystery Canyon. Due to the popularity of these areas, the park created an online lottery for reservations. The Advance Lottery does not run from November through March due to a low demand for permits.

Advance Lottery applications are completed online. Entries must be submitted three months prior to your planned trip. Entries are limited to one request per individual per canyon per month. Entrants can request three prioritized dates. The non-refundable lottery application fee is $5.00.

Applicants will be sent a notification email on the fifth day of the following month with information about the status of their request. If a reservation is awarded, the permit must be obtained before the trip at a park visitor center.

Occasionally, a few spaces remain after the Advance Lottery has been held. These spaces can be reserved through the Calendar Reservations system.

LAST MINUTE DRAWING RESERVATIONS

All visitors can apply for the Last Minute Drawing for canyoneering day trips. The Last Minute Drawing eliminates the need to wait in long lines for last minute permits. When a slot canyon day trip is fully booked online through the Calendar Reservations system or the Advance Lottery, the Last Minute Drawing becomes an option. Individuals can submit an application for the Last Minute Drawing to obtain any remaining reservations for permits. The Last Minute Drawing is limited to one request per individual per canyon.

Last Minute Drawing applications are completed online. Entries can be submitted as early as one week prior to a trip date until two days before at noon MT. The drawing is held at 1:00 pm MT, two days before a trip date. Any spaces not taken through the drawing will be available as Walk-in Permits the day before a trip date.

Applicants will be sent a notification email with information about the status of their request. If a reservation is awarded, the permit must be obtained before the trip at a park visitor center.

WALK-IN PERMITS

About one-third of wilderness campsites are not available through the reservation system. They are made available as Walk-in Permits and can be obtained the day before your trip starts. Any slot canyon or climbing permits not taken through the reservation system are available as Walk-in Permits. Wilderness campsites, climbing areas, and slot canyons that are not listed in the reservation system, are only available as Walk-in Permits. Plan ahead and obtain a reservation to avoid any disappointment.

ZION EXPRESS MEMBERSHIP

Zion Express Membership allows members who have obtained a reservation to convert it to a permit online, three days before their trip. The entire permit process can be completed online. Zion Express Membership is recommended for frequent visitors.

The benefits of membership include:

- No cost to enroll.
- No waiting in line to pick up permit.
- No need to coordinate with Wilderness Desk hours of operation.
- Greater flexibility in planning (allows for early starts and late finishes)
- Reservation fees are applied to the cost of the permit.
- Membership is valid for three years.

To become a Zion Express Member, visit the Zion Canyon Wilderness Desk to complete a short orientation and sign a program agreement form.

Reservation Dates

For a trip in	Calendar reservations are available on
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

For The Subway (Left Fork) or Mystery Canyon, please read the Advance Lottery Reservations section on this page.

GROUP SIZE LIMITS

Large groups result in larger impacts. All groups traveling into the Zion Wilderness must follow the group size limit for that area. These limits apply to all trips into the park's wilderness including trips that do not require a permit. Wilderness trails have a group size limit of 12, but many canyoneering areas are limited to 6.

Group size limits are strictly enforced. Permits will be denied and violators will be cited if limits are exceeded.

Groups are limited to a maximum of 6 or 12 people that share the same affiliation (e.g., school, club, scout troop, family, and friends). Groups that exceed these limits may not split up and visit the same drainage, route, or wilderness trail on the same day, but may split up and visit different areas.

Group size limits do not apply to most trails in Zion Canyon, including the Emerald Pools Trails, Angels Landing, Riverside Walk, Watchman Trail, and The Narrows below the junction with Orderville Canyon.

Permit Fees

Fees help cover the costs of issuing permits, wilderness patrols, resource monitoring, and trail repairs. Fees are non-refundable and based on group size.

- $10.00 for 1 to 2 people
- $15.00 for 3 to 7 people
- $20.00 for 8 to 12 people

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

Wilderness 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

Wildlife

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

RESPECT WILDLIFE

Please keep all animals wild and healthy by viewing them from a safe distance. Do not feed or touch wildlife. Store food and trash responsibly.

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 wilderness 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 avoid a confrontation. Always give them a route 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.

Climate

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temperature (°F)												
Average high	52	57	63	73	83	93	100	97	91	78	63	53
Average low	29	31	36	43	52	60	68	66	60	49	37	30
Record high	71	78	86	94	102	114	115	111	110	97	83	71
Record 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)												
Average	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.8	1.6	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.5
Record high	7.5	6.7	7.1	4.4	3.0	4.0	3.6	4.8	6.7	3.3	3.2	4.3
Record snowfall	26	18	14	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	5	21
Thunderstorms	0	0	0	1	4	5	14	15	5	2	0	0

Temperatures at higher elevations, including the Kolob Canyons area of the park, may be 5 to 10 degrees cooler than Zion Canyon.

Weather

SPRING

As the park warms, more areas of the wilderness become accessible. One of the first areas without snow is the Southwest Desert of the park. La Verkin Creek is often snow free by mid-March, and the East and West Rims are usually snow free by early April. In an average year, high water due to snowmelt makes The Narrows impassable until late May.

SUMMER

Zion National Park is hot through the summer months with temperatures regularly exceeding 100°F. Even higher elevation areas such as the Kolob Canyons and West Rim can see high temperatures in excess of 90°F. 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 severe thunderstorms and dramatic flash flooding.

FALL

The brilliant autumn colors and cooler temperatures can make the fall an ideal time for backpacking trips in the park. Canyoneering trips through The Narrows and other slot canyons are best if completed prior to mid-October when cooler temperatures may require wetsuits and other specialized gear.

WINTER

Much of Zion National Park is snow covered through the winter months. All trails, even at lower elevations, can be ice covered and traction devices are highly recommended. In winter, sections of the Kolob Terrace Road are 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.

NPS

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.

Flash Floods

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.

During a flash flood, the water level rises quickly, within minutes or even seconds. A flash flood can rush down a canyon in a wall of water 12 feet high or more.

BE PREPARED

Before starting your trip, pay close attention to the weather forecast and the Flash Flood Potential Rating for the park. If bad weather threatens, do not enter a narrow canyon. Whether hiking, climbing, or canyoneering, your safety depends on your own good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant attention to your surroundings. Your safety is your responsibility.

FLASH FLOOD POTENTIAL RATINGS

In the summer, the National Weather Service issues a daily Flash Flood Potential Rating for multiple areas in Utah. Zion has worked in partnership with the National Weather Service to create specific Flash Flood Potential Ratings for Zion National Park's unique environment and terrain. These flash flood ratings predict the severity of the flooding that is expected to occur within the park.

- Dry: Flash flooding is not expected.
- Low: Flash flooding is possible. Some slot canyons may experience flash flooding.
- Moderate: Flash flooding is probable. Some slot canyons are expected to experience flash flooding.
- High: Flash flooding is expected. Many slot canyons are expected to experience flash flooding.

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 upcanyon

If you observe any of these signs, seek higher ground immediately. Even climbing a few feet may save your life. Remain on high ground until conditions improve. Water levels usually drop within 24 hours. Flash floods can occur in the park during periods of low flash flood potential. A moderate or higher flash flood potential is a serious cause for concern. Slot canyons will be closed if a Flash Flood Warning is issued. The canyons will reopen two hours after the Flash Flood Warning has expired.

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. Other medical clinics are located in Hurricane. The nearest hospitals are in St. George, Cedar City, and Kanab.

Transportation

ZION CANYON SHUTTLE
Travel in Zion Canyon from March 24 to November 3 is by shuttle bus only. The buses are accessible and have room for backpacks, climbing gear, and bicycles. The buses run throughout the day and 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, time your trip so you will not miss the last shuttle of the day.

AUTOMOBILES
Private vehicles are not permitted on the Zion Canyon Scenic Drive from March 24 to November 3. The Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway and other roads in the park are open to private vehicles all year.

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 Wilderness Desk.

BICYCLES
Bicycles are not permitted in the wilderness. Bicycles may travel on roadways and on the Pa'rus Trail. Shuttles will not pass moving bicycles. To allow 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 a helmet. Shuttles have racks for bicycles.

OTHER VEHICLES
ATVs and OHVs are not permitted in the park. Access to private property by snowmobile is allowed.

Shuttle Schedule

	Spring 3/24 to 5/18	Summer 5/19 to 9/07	Early Fall 9/08 to 9/28	Late Fall 9/29 to 11/03
Zion Canyon Shuttle				
First Bus				
from Zion Canyon Visitor Center	7:00 am	6:00 am	7:00 am	7:00 am
Last Bus to Springdale Shuttle				
from Temple of Sinawava	8:05 pm	9:14 pm	8:05 pm	8:00 pm
from Zion Lodge	8:20 pm	9:30 pm	8:20 pm	8:15 pm
Last Bus				
from Zion Canyon Visitor Center	8:45 pm	9:30 pm	8:45 pm	7:45 pm
from Temple of Sinawava	9:30 pm	10:15 pm	9:30 pm	8:30 pm
Springdale Shuttle				
First Bus				
from Majestic View Lodge	6:40 am	5:40 am	6:40 am	6:40 am
from Zion Canyon Theatre	7:00 am	6:00 am	7:00 am	7:00 am
Last Bus to Zion Canyon Shuttle				
from Majestic View Lodge	8:15 pm	9:00 pm	8:15 pm	7:15 pm
Last Bus				
from Zion Canyon Theatre	8:45 pm	10:00 pm	8:45 pm	8:45 pm
from Majestic View Lodge	9:00 pm	10:15 pm	9:00 pm	9:00 pm

The average wait for a shuttle bus is fifteen minutes or less. The wait is longer in the morning and evening, but shorter during peak hours. Shuttles will also operate on weekends in November, with additional service on Thanksgiving Day and Friday. The Shuttle Schedule is subject to change. Please check your Map and Guide for current information.

Safety

STEEP CLIFFS
Falls from cliffs on trails have resulted in deaths. Loose sand or pebbles on stone are very slippery. Be careful of edges when using cameras or binoculars. Never throw or roll rocks, as 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.
- Please watch 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 natural springs can vary, check for information at visitor centers. Do not drink untreated water. Water collected in the wilderness is not safe to drink without treatment. There are two safe methods to treat water.

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

FILTER AND DISINFECT WATER
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 wilderness trails or on the shuttle buses. Even well-behaved pets may disrupt wildlife and other visitors. Do not leave pets in vehicles. Boarding kennels are available in Rockville, Kanab, Hurricane, St. George, and Cedar City.

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. The discharge of firearms and hunting within the park are prohibited. If you have questions, please contact the park at 435 772-3256.

Canyoneering Safety

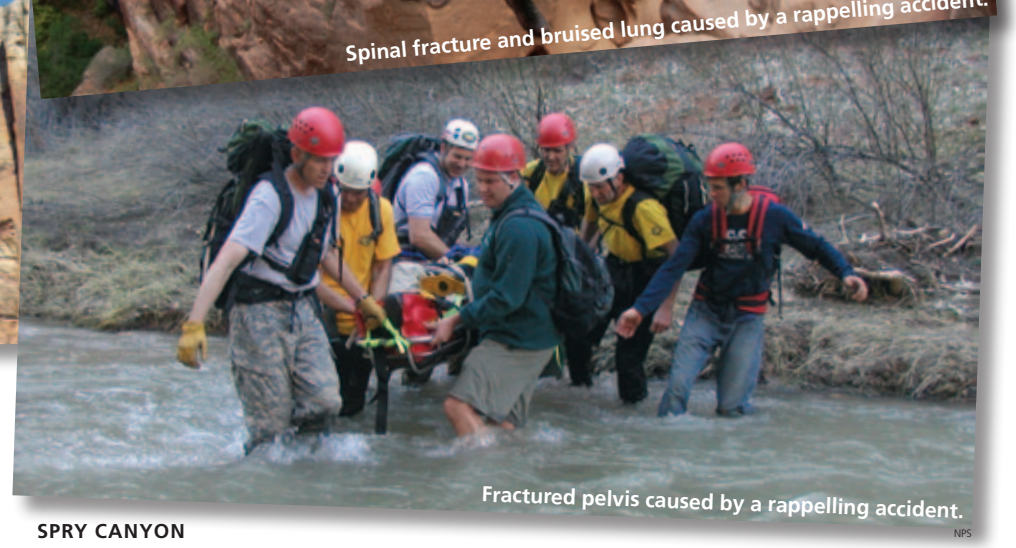
Fractured pelvis caused by a rappelling accident.

Broken ankle caused by a fall.

Spinal fracture and bruised lung caused by a rappelling accident.

Lower leg injury caused by a jumping accident.

Lower leg injury caused by a rappelling accident.


Fractured pelvis caused by a rappelling accident.

NPS

ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN B

There is no substitute for planning ahead, taking the proper equipment, having the right skills, and using sound judgment. Be prepared to take care of yourself and your group by resolving any difficulties that may arise. Rescue is not a certainty. If rescue is possible, it will take hours or days to remove an injured hiker from the wilderness.

THE SUBWAY

On September 18, 2010, a 20-year-old woman was descending The Subway route. When she arrived at the top of a small waterfall, she and other group members jumped instead of using a rope. When she landed, she suffered an angulated, unstable ankle fracture. The injury occurred at 3:00 pm. She was successfully evacuated from the canyon around noon the following day. Her injury required surgery and a long, difficult recovery.

Lower leg fractures are the most common injuries suffered in the wilderness. The most common cause of lower leg injuries is jumping. Do not jump. Bring a rope and use it.

FAT MAN'S MISERY

On June 10, 2010, a father and his two children attempted a one-day trip through the Fat Man's Misery route. The group relied heavily on a GPS unit to locate the route and entered the wrong canyon. They continued through the canyon, even though the features did not match their route description. Eventually, they emerged at the top of a 400-foot cliff without enough rope to descend or the ability to travel back up the canyon. The group was reported missing on the afternoon of June 11 and was not found until the afternoon of June 12.

Even heavily traveled canyons in the park are routes, not maintained trails. Do you have a map and a route description? Are you confident in your ability to use them? When you enter a canyon and pull your rope after your first rappel, you are committed. You must complete the canyon whether or not it is the canyon that you intended to enter.

SPRY CANYON

On July 24, 2010, the National Weather Service forecast indicated a 30 percent chance of rain and a moderate flash flood potential. There were no clouds in the morning sky. Three men began a descent of Spry Canyon. As the day progressed, the clouds increased, and hard rain began around 4:00 pm. The men found themselves clinging to a small shelf in a narrow canyon with rapidly rising water levels. All three eventually had to let go. One man was washed over a 40-foot cliff. The other two men were washed over the 40-foot drop, plus an additional 60-foot cliff. Remarkably, all three men survived.

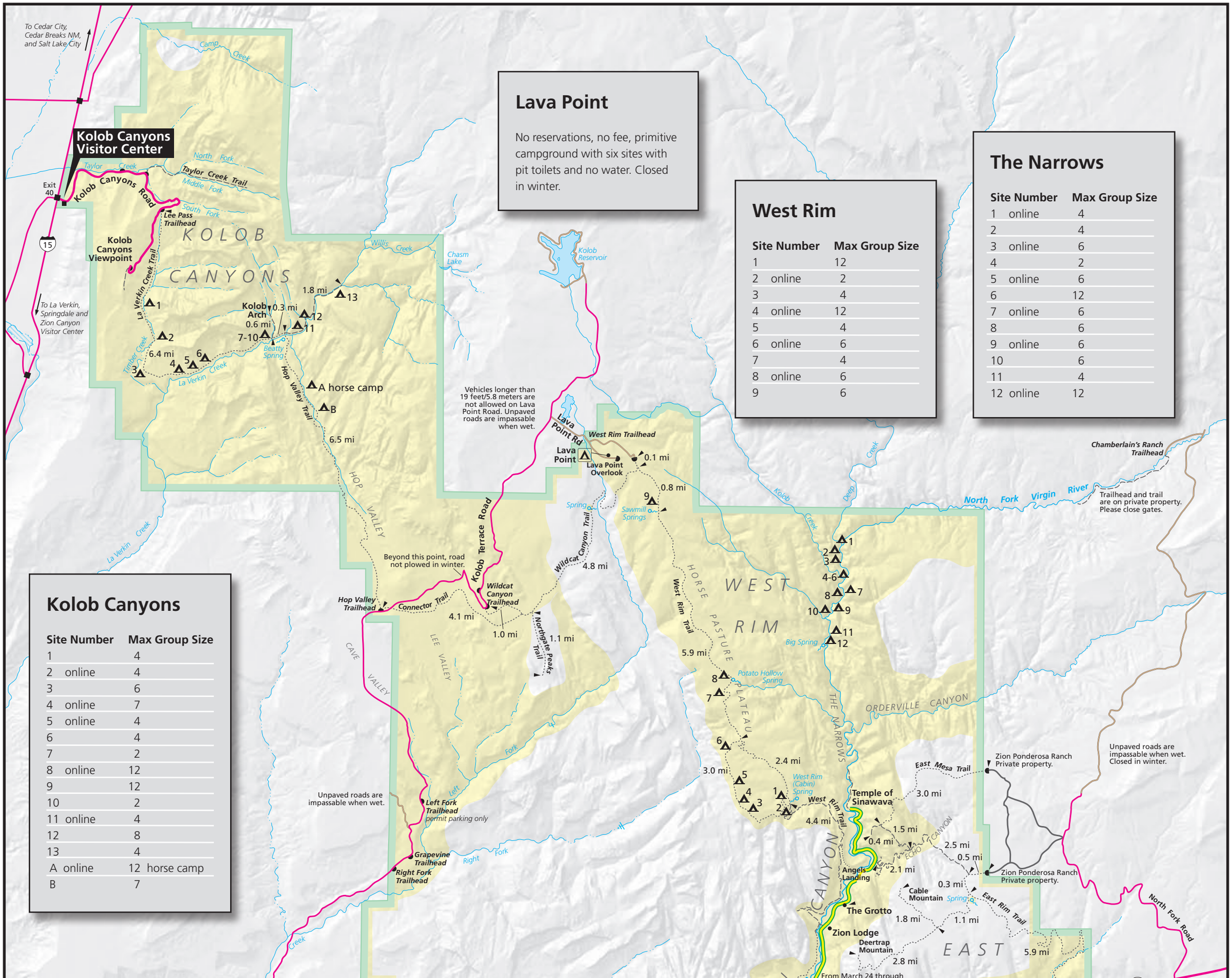
Flash floods occur even during periods of low flash flood potential. When the National Weather Service states that there is a 30 percent chance of rain, they are not stating that there is a 30 percent chance that it will rain. They are stating that 30 percent of the forecast area will be affected by measurable precipitation.

PINE CREEK CANYON

On April 30, 2010, a group of eight entered Pine Creek Canyon. The second person to attempt the last rappel flipped upside down 10 feet below the anchor. He was free hanging 80 feet above the ground. After 45 minutes, he had almost entirely slipped out of his harness and felt he could no longer hold on to the rope to prevent his fall. Another group arrived in time to provide assistance.

Can you assist another group member? Are you capable of stopping yourself mid-rappel to correct a problem? If not, consider taking a canyoneering course before heading out on your own.

Zion National Park



Lava Point

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

West Rim

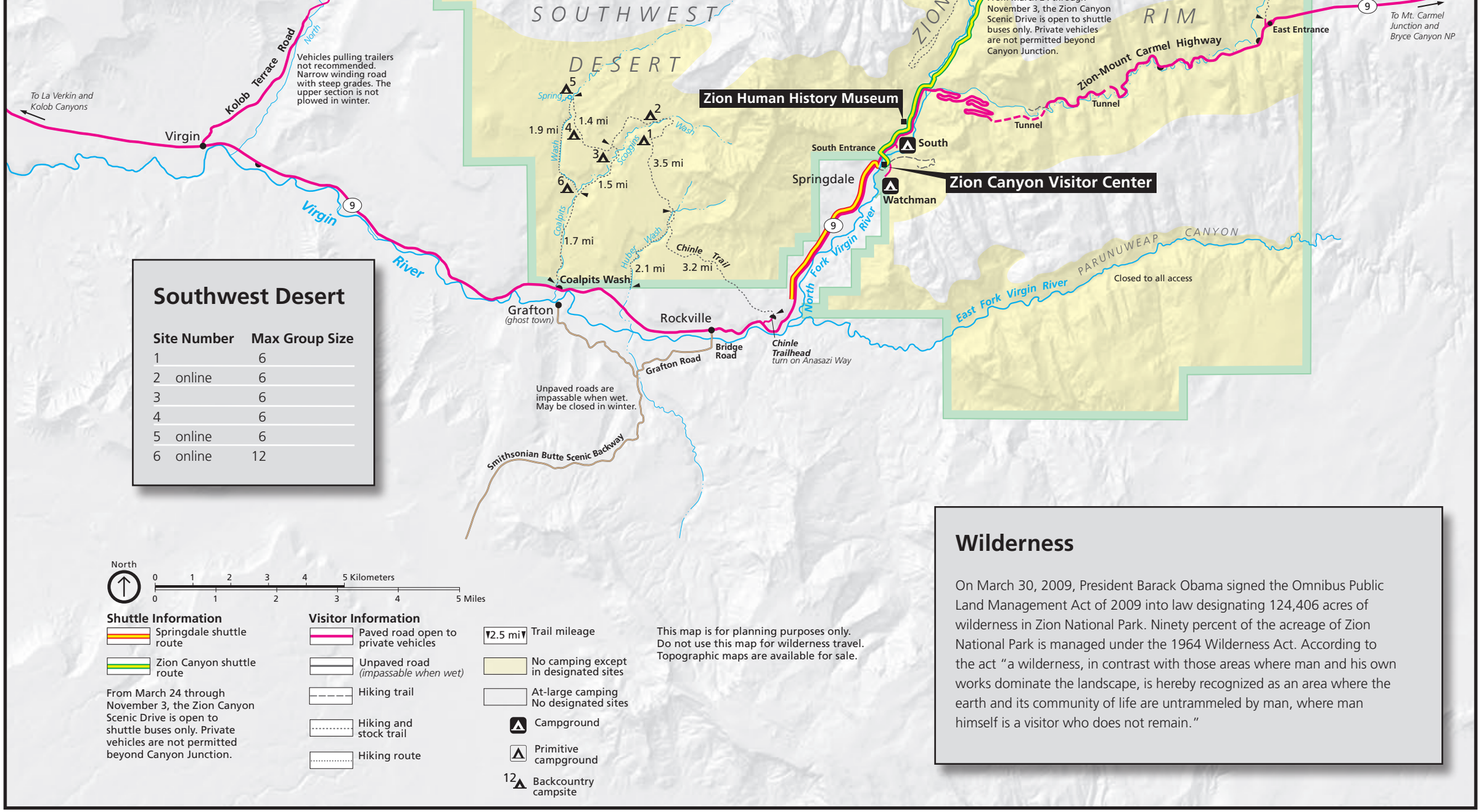
Site Number		Max Group Size
1		12
2	online	2
3		4
4	online	12
5		4
6	online	6
7		4
8	online	6
9		6

The Narrows

Site Number		Max Group Size
1	online	4
2		4
3	online	6
4		2
5	online	6
6		12
7	online	6
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		2	
8	online	12	
9		12	
10		2	
11	online	4	
12		8	
13		4	
A	online	12	horse camp
B		7	



Southwest Desert

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

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 Zion National Park. Ninety percent 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 wilderness 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.

Wilderness Use Limits

Area	Total Use Limit	Advance Reservations	Last Minute Drawing	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
The Narrows	40 people per day	24 people per day	16 people per day	12
The Subway (Left Fork)	80 people per day	60 people per day	20 people per day	12

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

Backpacking

Zion National Park has a number of trails in a variety of landscapes for backpackers to explore. Backpackers in the Zion Wilderness can camp in designated campsites or in at-large areas on Zion's high plateaus, in the low desert shrublands, or next to a river in a narrow canyon.

When planning your trip, consider your interests, time, and ability. There is no perfect trail. Use the Wilderness Guide, other guidebooks, and topographic maps to plan the best trip for you during your visit. Please refer to the map for site locations.

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 West Rim Trail traces a series of canyon rims with panoramic views. A difficult but rewarding one-night backpacking trip can be accomplished by hiking from The Grotto to one of the campsites near Cabin Spring. The trip is five miles one way, with 2,200 feet of elevation gain. A more moderate one-night trip descends from Lava Point to campsites near Potato Hollow.

Water may be available at Cabin, Potato Hollow, and Sawmill Springs. Check at park visitor centers for water availability.

EAST RIM TRAIL

This trail begins at the east entrance of the park and climbs 2,150 feet onto the plateau with views into Jolley Gulch and several small canyons. There are sweeping views of the surrounding terrain before entering a high desert ponderosa forest. As you near the east rim of Zion Canyon, the trail begins a 1,900-foot descent through Echo Canyon, ultimately ending at the Weeping Rock Trailhead.

Water may be available at Stave Spring. Check at park visitor centers for water availability.

SOUTHWEST DESERT

The Chinle Trail crosses the open desert as it winds toward the base of Mount Kinesava. The trail offers spectacular views of the West Temple and Mount Kinesava. The Chinle Trail can be very hot in the summer, but mild in the spring and fall. Coalpits Wash has no developed trail, but there is a well-worn path to the junction with Scoggins Wash.

Water may be available at Coalpits Spring. Check at park visitor centers for water availability.

LA VERKIN CREEK TRAIL

Spring and fall are ideal seasons for hiking in La Verkin Creek. Temperatures are typically 5 to 10 degrees cooler than Zion Canyon. Trails in the Kolob Canyons area of the park are frequently snow covered in winter.

The La Verkin Creek Trail begins at the Lee Pass Trailhead and descends past the finger canyons of the nearby cliffs to Timber Creek. The trail follows the creek downstream until it reaches La Verkin Creek, where the trail starts to gain elevation. As the canyon narrows, you receive stunning views of the surrounding cliffs. The trail from Lee Pass to Kolob Arch is seven miles.

Water may be available at Beatty Spring. Check at park visitor centers for water availability.

OTHER TRAILS AND ROUTES

The map shows the locations 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. Online reservations are available for at-large camping on the East Rim and in Wildcat Canyon.

Water and maintained trails are not always available in the at-large camping areas. Permits are required and visitors must camp one mile from roads, out of sight of trails, and one-quarter mile from any springs.

EXTENDED TRIPS

Trips up to 50 miles in length can be made in Zion National Park's wilderness by combining the La Verkin Creek, Hop Valley, Wildcat Canyon, West Rim, and East Rim Trails. These routes cross several roads, so many variations to your trip are possible. A vehicle shuttle may be necessary.

FIRES

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

West Rim Trail

NPS/CAITLIN CECI

Stock Use

Horses traditionally have been used to explore 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 are prohibited during spring thaws, unusually wet periods, or times when their use 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. Maintain 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, and in Huber Wash.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

The only overnight stock camp is Hop Valley Site A and your stay 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.

Canyoneering

Canyoneering combines route finding, rappelling, problem solving, hiking, and swimming. Zion National Park is one of the premier places in the country to participate in this exciting activity. With dozens of different canyons to explore, some barely wide enough for a human to squeeze through, the park offers opportunities that range from trips for beginners to experiences requiring advanced technical skills.

A short trip into the lower end of The Narrows from the Temple of Sinawava is a great introduction to the slot canyons of the park. For those with expertise and experience, The Subway and Orderville Canyon offer opportunities for route finding, swimming, and short rappels.

MINIMUM IMPACT CANYONEERING
Travel on durable surfaces, like slickrock, river bottoms, or drainages. Avoid steep, sandy, or erodible slopes.

Carry solid waste disposal bags and pack out everything, including toilet paper. Don't bury it, burn it, or leave it.

Prevent bottlenecks. If a faster group catches up to you, allow them to pass.

Avoid bolting. Bolts should only be placed as a last result. Only use a bolt if there are no other safe options for creating an anchor. If bolts are used, they should be placed so that they will last for many years and will avoid scarring on the rock caused by rope pulls.

Keyhole Canyon

NPS

There are several items that you should bring on every canyoneering trip in Zion National Park.

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 group?

WEATHER & FLASH FLOOD POTENTIAL
Carefully evaluate the forecast and flash flood potential before entering a narrow canyon. Remember that a 30 percent chance of rain means that 30 percent of the forecasted area will receive measurable precipitation. Continuously evaluate weather conditions. If bad weather threatens, avoid traveling in a slot canyon. If you are in a slot canyon, find higher ground and wait for conditions to improve.

MAP AND ROUTE DESCRIPTION
You must have and use them. Carefully assess your location before beginning your first rappel.

ANCHOR EQUIPMENT
Can you replace webbing if it is worn? Can you create a new anchor if needed?

EXTRA CLOTHING
Could you spend an unexpected night in the canyon?

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

WATER
Drink a minimum of one gallon per person per day.

FLASHLIGHT / HEADLAMP
Every week, canyoneers spend unintended nights camped in the wilderness of the park. A headlamp could make the difference between spending the night in the canyon and making it out.

HELMET
Rock falls can cause severe injuries.

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

Remember, even the most reliable cell phones and GPS units rarely work in the narrow canyons of Zion National Park.

Climbing

Zion National Park's 2,000-foot sandstone cliffs are world renowned for their big wall climbs. Due to their difficulty, most routes in the park are not recommended 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. It is illegal to camp at the base of the wall or in your vehicle. Detailed route descriptions are available at wilderness desks.

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

MINIMUM IMPACT CLIMBING
Many of the park's routes are now going clean. Avoid using pitons and hammers where they are not needed. Excess bolting is discouraged and the use of power drills to place bolts is prohibited. When approaching a climb, please use established trails. 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.

River Trips

All watercraft use in the park requires a wilderness permit. Permits are issued when the river is flowing in excess of 150 cubic feet per second. Watercraft must be specifically designed for whitewater use. Operators must be equipped with approved personal flotation devices. Kayak trips through The Narrows should only be attempted by expert paddlers who are prepared to survive without assistance for multiple days. Permits for kayaking through The Narrows will not be issued on the day of the trip and must be obtained the day before. An early start to this trip is needed. Inner tubes are not permitted at any time on any watercourse within the park.

The Narrows

The Virgin River has carved a spectacular gorge in the upper reaches of Zion Canyon: 16 miles long, up to 2,000-feet deep, and at times only 20 to 30-feet wide. The Narrows, with its soaring walls, sandstone grottos, natural springs, and hanging gardens can be an unforgettable wilderness experience.

The Narrow is not a hike to be underestimated. Hiking The Narrows means hiking in the Virgin River. At least 60 percent 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 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 wilderness. 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 wilderness trail on the same day. Group size limits are strictly enforced. Permits will be denied and violators cited, if limits are exceeded.

WHEN TO HIKE THE NARROWS

Entering The Narrows is safest when the forecast has little chance of rain and the river is low, clear, and relatively warm. 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 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 1 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 Spring is prohibited. No permit is required for this day hike. Group size limits do apply beyond the junction with Orderville Canyon.

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.

The trailhead at Chamberlain's Ranch is a 1.5-hour drive from the Temple of Sinawava. Two vehicles or a shuttle is necessary. A wilderness 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 planning to hike The Narrows from top to bottom, there are a couple of 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 1.5-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, drive 2.5 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 one-quarter mile to the gate of Chamberlain's Ranch. Please close the gate behind you. Drive one-half 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 extra warm clothing. Clothing made of wool or synthetic fibers has the best insulation.

DRINKING WATER

Untreated water from the river and its springs is not safe to drink. 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 of their water. Drink one gallon of water per person per day.

FALLS

Even the most experienced hikers fall in The Narrows. Pack a walking stick for additional stability. It is also a good idea to waterproof your belongings. Many hikers line their packs with plastic bags. Smaller resealable bags provide extra protection for cameras and other items.

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 require wading in waist-deep water. Be prepared to swim. Even when the river is low, chest-deep holes are common. When possible, help the park protect fragile vegetation in The Narrows and hike in or near the river.

NPS/MARC NEIDIG

The Narrows 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 Spring	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 Spring. Watch closely for the mouth of Goose Creek.

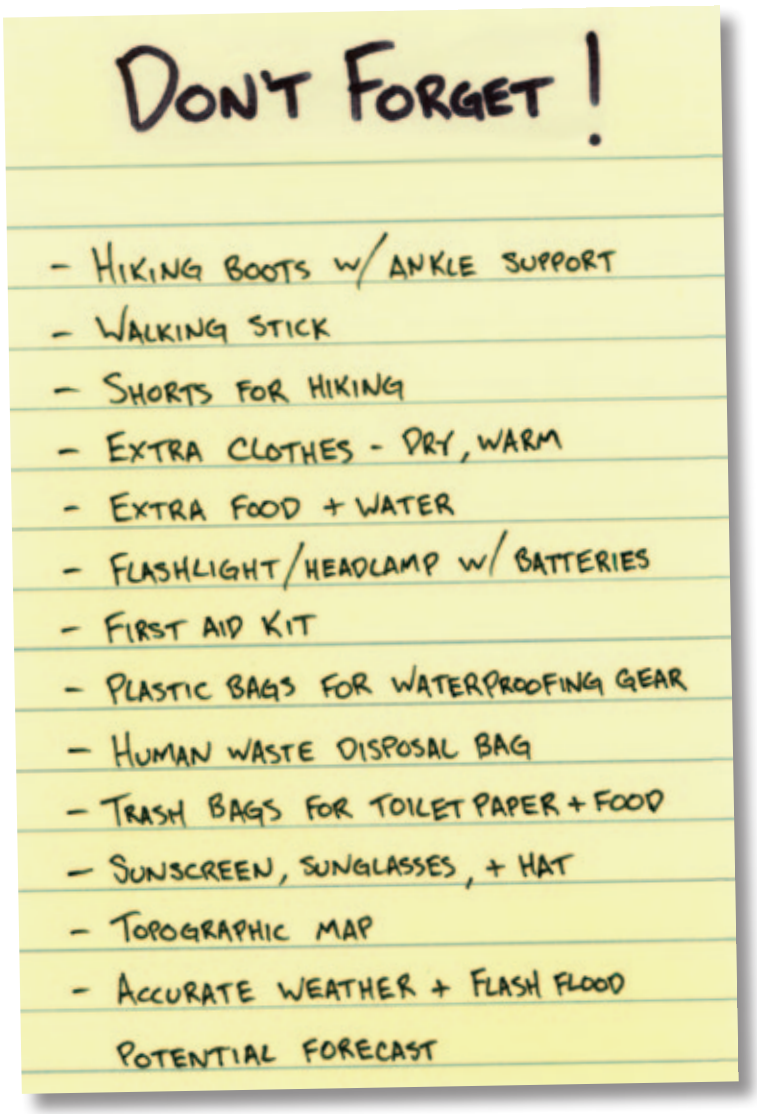
NPS

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 an overnight wilderness permit for The Narrows. It is a lightweight and sanitary way to pack out human waste.

The bag-within-a-bag design and interlocking closure securely contains waste and odor, while the blend of polymers breaks down the waste and transforms it into a deodorized gel. The contents of the disposal bag are safe for landfills and may be deposited in the trash. Use of this waste disposal system is required in The Narrows, and strongly encouraged for all hikers in all park slot canyons, to help protect the Virgin River and the drinking water for Springdale, Rockville, Virgin, La Verkin, Hurricane, St. George, and other communities downstream.

NPS/MARC NEIDIG



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 an experienced hiker of The Subway 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 north of Virgin, Utah.

FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM

This is a strenuous 9.5-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 north of Virgin, Utah.

NPS/CAITLIN CECI

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 slickrock canyons and towering cliffs of southwestern 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.

Favorite Hikes In & Around Zion National Park by Tanya Milligan and Bo Beck
Information about hikes within a 100-mile radius of Zion National Park.

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-sized guide to map and compass navigation.

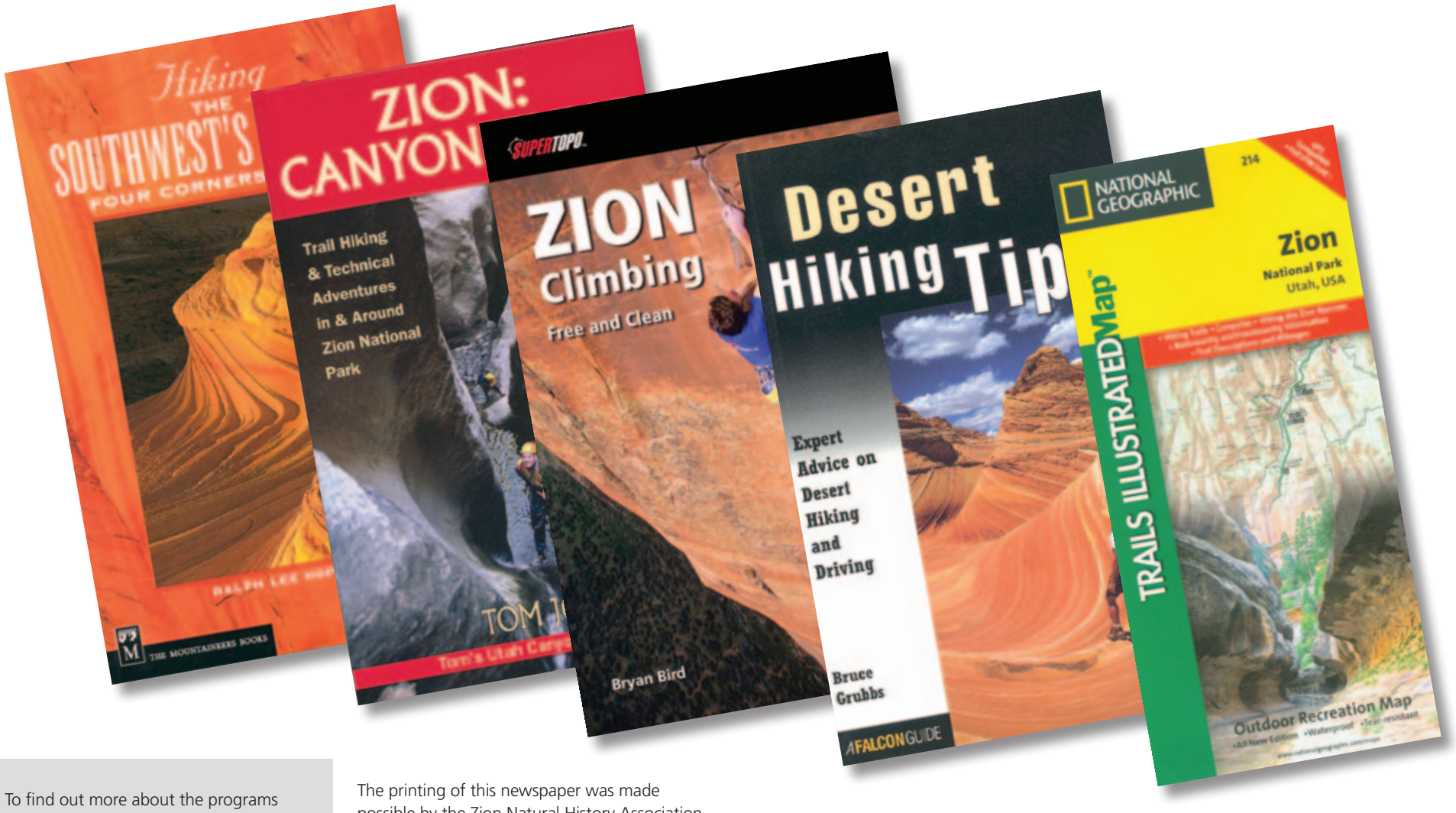
Backpacker Magazine's Trailside First Aid by Molly Absolon
Information about recognition, treatment, and prevention of injuries.

MAPS

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

St. George and 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.



To find out more about the programs and publications available through the Zion Natural History Association, please visit our website at www.zionpark.org or call 800 635-3959.

The printing of this newspaper was made possible by the Zion Natural History Association.

Printed with SOY INK

Printed on recycled paper. Please recycle again.