

Zion Narrows

The diverse trek through Zion's premier canyon is one of the most touted and breathtaking adventures in America. Extraordinary beauty and unique character describe this amazing gorge. Hanging gardens burst from dramatically colored perpendicular walls while trickling water threads its way through moss covered boulders. Gentle slopes give way to sheer walls funneling streams of water into fluted slides and twisting channels cutting deeper and deeper as the journey continues its path southward. Along the sandy perches of the banks, towering ponderosa send their roots downward, hungry for nutrients and water. The entire trip is wondrous. The Zion Narrows deserves its reputation as one of the best, if not the best, hike in the National Park System.

Zion Narrows at a Glance

Photo Album: [Zion Narrows Pictures](#)

Topo Map: [Zion Narrows Map](#)

Day Hike: It can be done as a long day hike or as a relaxed backpack.

Distance: 16-miles

Average Hiking Time: 13-hours. River hiking is time consuming. Don't underestimate your time.

Equipment: Dry bags, sturdy [water shoes](#), neoprene socks, a pair of trekking poles, emergency supplies, emergency overnight gear and plenty of water. Hiking with just a single stick is not suggested in the narrows.

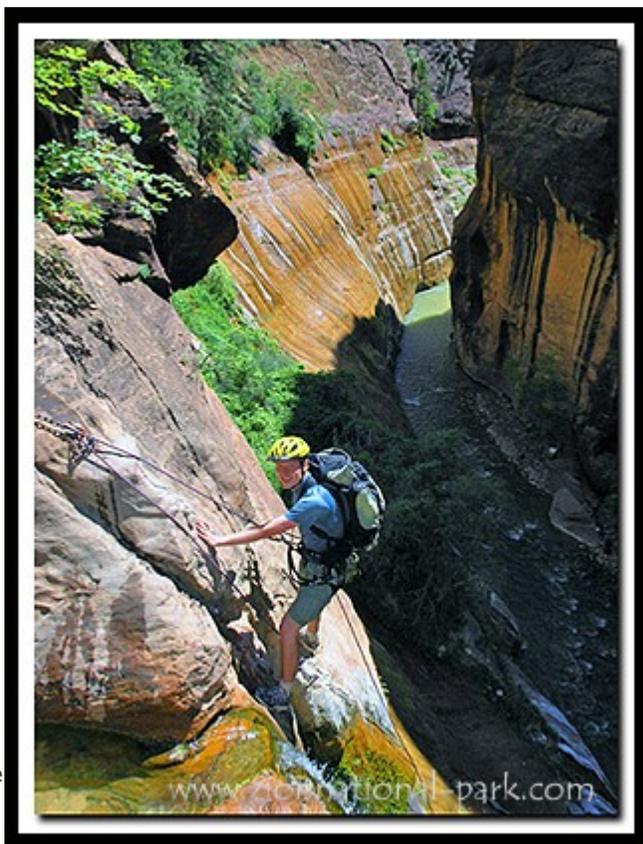
Difficulty: This is a strenuous route due to the demands of river hiking, slippery rocks and swift water crossings, however, the profile is a gentle downhill trek. Swimming is often required for short sections.

Elevation Loss: 1400 feet

Permits: Hikers are allowed to hike a few miles up the Narrows from the Riverside Walk and return without obtaining a permit. A permit is required to hike from Chamberlain's Ranch to Zion Canyon. There are a total of 80 permits allotted per day. 40 hikers are permitted through the online reservation system and 40 hikers are permitted as walk-in. Although you can get a permit the same day you are hiking, you will have better luck obtaining one of the few issued permits if you get your walk-in permit the day prior to the actual day of the hike. For more information call the backcountry desk at 1.435.772.0170 or log onto the parks website and use their online permit system.

Trail Conditions: Most of the route requires hiking in the river under conditions with swift water and slippery rocks, but there are some sandy and beaten paths on the side of the river that offer a short reprieve. Be sure to check the weather and river flow before starting this hike, as flash floods can, and do, happen and heavy river flow makes travel tedious and dangerous. If the CFS of the gauge reading is less than 150cfs for a 24 hr. period, hikers can hike from the end of Riverside Walk into the Narrows. Hikers also may be permitted to hike Imlay Canyon, Mystery Canyon and Orderville Canyon at this new less than 150cfs level. The park will not issue permits starting from Chamberlain's Ranch unless the river is and has been flowing less than 120cfs (cubic feet per second) near Springdale for the previous twenty-four hours. The hike is best done in the summer after snow-melt in the high country has subsided and air temperature is warmer.

Trailhead: Chamberlain's Ranch is just off North Fork Road on the east side of the park. It's best to have a 4WD to navigate the dirt road to the trailhead, but it is not required if the road is dry. Commercial shuttles can be rented that leave from Springdale.



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- [Kolob Canyon](#)
- [Bryce Canyon](#)
- [Grand Canyon](#)
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- Sand Dune
- Coyote But





Trailend:

The route will end at the Temple of Sinawava in Zion Canyon. Arrange a shuttle from the Riverside Walk in Zion Canyon, which will be where your hike ends. From late March to late October park at the Zion Canyon Visitor Center or in Springdale and ride the Zion Canyon Shuttle. From November until late March drive into the canyon and park at the Temple of Sinawava parking lot.

Trail Access: Usually from April 1st until October 30th Zion Canyon is accessed via the shuttle. Private cars are allowed in Zion Canyon in the rest of the year. Park at the Zion Canyon Visitor Center to ride the shuttle and get off at the last shuttle stop, the rest of the year drive into the canyon and park at the Temple of Sinawava parking lot.

Off the Beaten Path: Only 80 hikers are allowed through the Zion Narrows per day. However, the section of the narrows near the Temple of Sinawava, where a permit is not required, will be populated.

Classic Zion Hike: Yes

Best Season: Mid-June to mid-September. The water is cold the rest of the year but the canyon can be hiked in a wetsuit. The Narrows is closed when the river gauge reads above 140 cfs

Permits are not issued from the top down when the gauge reads above 120 cfs

So during the spring it is usually closed when the snow is melting and there is sustained high - cold water due to run-off.

Southern Utah Flash Flood info.

[North Fork Virgin River - Flash Flood Info](#)

The Zion Narrows is a slot canyon and like any slot canyon there is a very real danger from flash flooding. Do not hike this trail if it is raining. Remember a storm far off can trigger a flash flood. Flash flood danger is high.

Trailhead - After setting up transportation, drive toward the east entrance of Zion National Park. From the gate it is 2.5 miles to the turn-off for the North Fork Road. Follow the North Fork Road for 5.5 miles, the next 13 miles to the sign indicating the trailhead will be dirt and gravel. Do not attempt to drive this road after a rain or snowstorm as the clay content makes travel difficult or even impossible. On the way north, Birch Hollow is bypassed at 8.5 miles, Orderville Canyon at 12.5 miles and a wooden bridge crosses the North Fork of the Virgin River at almost 18 miles. After the bridge, turn left onto the less traveled road leading to Chamberlain's Ranch, closing the gate behind you. Drive a little further, taking the left fork in the road to get to the parking area for the Zion Narrows, which is adjacent to the North Fork of the Virgin River. Locate the NPS information sign just above the parking area. The route crosses the river and follows a dirt road for the next 3 miles as it traverses privately owned meadows, sadly slated for development in the future. Through previous agreement with the landowners, the NPS has been able to maintain access to the trail. Please respect the rights of the owners and don't abuse their land by straying from the trail or leaving trash.



Zion Narrows - The road ends and a short beaten path drops into the river. The next 12 miles involves zigzagging in and out of the water so put all valuables into your dry bags. Keep eyes peeled on the right bank, during the next half-mile for a 50' jug handle arch. Beyond the arch, Navajo sandstone walls progressively elevate and several narrow sections begin to suggest the "flavor" to come. Soon, deep side canyons make their entrance and the first of 12 campsites are seen.

Waterfall - A seemingly impassable waterfall is encountered about 7 miles into the hike but walk up the left embankment and pass through the cleft in the rock. Never jump off anything in a canyon. Serious injuries have resulted in the past from hikers plunging from the top of the 20' waterfall into the pool below. As you continue down the canyon, high walls rise on either side and filtered sunrays cast shadows and reflect mystical colored light.

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[Zion Zion Park Zion Hiker Zion Car Kolob Greater](#)

[Canyon Over](#)

[Weeping Roc](#)

[Riverside We](#)

[Emerald Pool](#)

[Kayenta Trail](#)

[Grotto Trail](#)

[Pa'rus Trail](#)

[Watchman](#)

[Sand Bench](#)

[Hidden Cany](#)

[Observation](#)

[Angels Landi](#)

[East Rim](#)

[Zion Narrow](#)

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Directions to Zion National Park

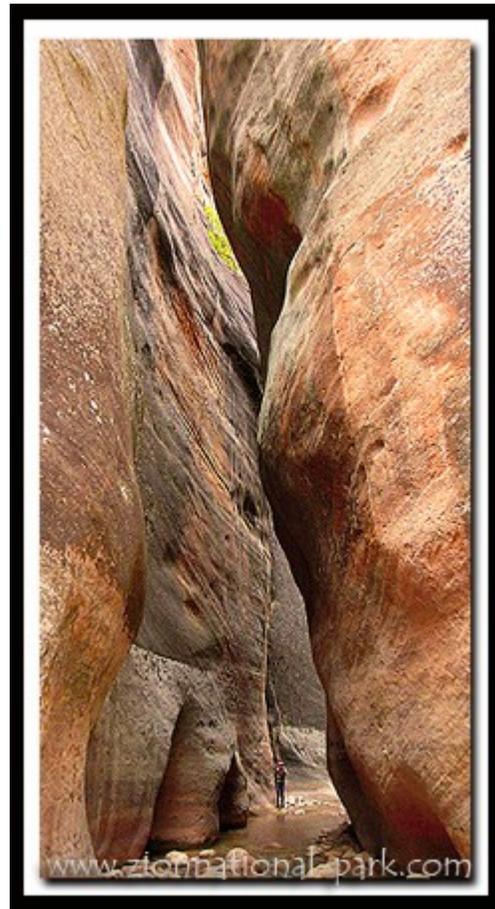
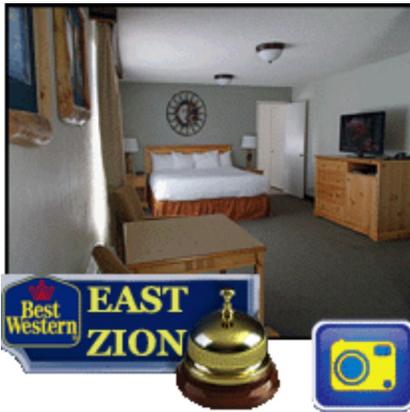
From the North: Travel I-15 south, past Beaver, exit on Hwy 20. Follow US-89 to Mount Carmel Junction. Take SR-9 to Zion's east entrance. From Arizona: Travel US-89A through Fredonia, Arizona and Kanab Utah. Follow US-89 to Mount Carmel Junction. Take SR-9 to the east park entrance.

From the South: Travel I-15 north. Take exit 16 and travel through Hurricane to LaVerkin. Continue on SR-9 to the south entrance of the park. SR-9 through Zion National Park is always open and is also called the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway. See restrictions for RV's.



12 Online Reservations

Lodging and services are available on the gorgeous east side of Zion National Park, where guests are close to Zion National Park (12 miles), Bryce Canyon National Park (60 miles), Cedar Breaks National Monument (45 miles), Coral Pink Sand Dunes (12 miles), and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon (85 miles). It's where city traffic is absent and the skies are bright and clean.



Zion Photos: The magnificent Zion Narrows is a 16-mile long route hiking, wading and swimming downstream, with narrow canyon walls enclosing the route.

Deep Creek - The confluence of Deep Creek and the North Fork of the Virgin River appear at the halfway point of the hike. The new water from the side canyon almost triples the flow of water in your hiking path as it spills its crystalline, cold contents into the canyon. If you have not used hiking poles yet on this trip, now is the time.

Kolob Creek - Farther downstream Kolob Creek enters from the right and may possibly add yet more flow to the river "trail" depending on whether the Washington County Water Conservancy District is releasing water from the Kolob Reservoir for irrigation purposes or not.

Goose Creek - The next side stream is Goose Creek, which also enters from the right. Big Spring is a picturesque oasis, located just past Goose Creek, where water cascades through lush vegetation and tumbles to the river below.

Big Spring - This is a popular area to take a break and filter water for drinking for the rest of the hike. Nearly 11 miles into the hike, crowds that have hiked from the Riverside Walk start to appear. In this north-south running section of the Narrows the lighting is almost eerie. A glowing spectrum of orange, red and pink seem to radiate from within the rock itself. The most well known of the side canyons, Orderville Canyon, will be on your left, 2 miles down river. Expect this canyon to add a gentle flow of cold water to join the churning water you are now hiking in.



Orderville Canyon - This is a popular route that requires a permit but hikers can explore up to the plaque at the first waterfall without one. A little over a mile farther Mystery Falls trickles down the steep side wall as the water from Mystery Spring escapes down the smooth rock face. Now with just a quarter-mile of river hiking left, crowds grow larger as curious tourists dabble in a short walk from the end of the Riverside Walk. Take this trail back to the shuttle or your awaiting vehicle depending on the time of year you have chosen to hike.

Orderville Canyon Narrows

Once in the Narrows there is a choice to go into the Orderville Canyon Narrows. The water is not as fresh as that of the Zion Narrows, but the slot canyon formations are spectacular and the canyon is much narrower than the Zion Narrows. This area is a tributary creek found about two hours upstream from the Zion Canyon entrance. The park allows hikers to go to the first waterfall when hiking from the Zion Narrows.

Remember slot canyons can change dramatically in a short time due to flash floods and water levels in this canyon change. These directions are only a general reference. Be prepared for variations in the canyon.

Backpacking Permit - A permit is needed for all overnight backpacks in the park as well as any trail that requires the use of technical equipment. Obtain permits at the Zion Canyon Visitors Center or by calling: 1.435.771.0172

GPS Coordinates - WGS84 Datum

North Fork Road Crosses Over
North Fork of the Virgin River:
37°23.4400N
112°49.5400W

Gate at Chamberlain Ranch:
37°23.3950N
112°49.9830W

Parking at Narrows Trailhead:
37°23.1200N
112°50.3230W



GPS coordinates are only references and may or may not be accurate. Do not rely on GPS coordinates as the sole method of navigation. Always have an accurate, detailed map at hand and have the proper map reading and navigation skills before setting out on any hike. Many of the hikes listed in this guide travel into canyons where a GPS has limited capabilities. Always check your position with a detailed map before dropping into a canyon.

Freestanding Arches in Zion National Park

[Jug Handle Arch](#)
[Two Pines Arch](#)
[Hidden Canyon](#)
[Bridge Mountain](#)
[Hepworth Arch](#)
[Guardian Arch](#)

[Kolob Arch](#)
[Checkerboard Arch](#)
[Pa'rus Bike Trail](#)
[Englestead Hollow](#)
[Zion Narrows](#)
[Hidden Arch](#)

[The Subway](#)
[Fat Man's Misery](#)
[Spry Canyon](#)
[Pine Creek Canyon](#)
[N Fork Taylor Creek](#)

Beta: Coordinates and other trail and canyoneering information by Zion Park search and rescue veteran team member [Bo Beck](#) and www.zionnational-park.com author [Tanya Milligan](#).

**If you enjoy this site,
please link to us!**

To post trip reports, offer corrections, updates, or for more information please visit the [Zion National Park Forum](#)

Suggested Gear: A sturdy pair of shoes are recommend to hike the trails in Zion National Park. Many quality shoes will help grip the rocks and prevent injury.

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History of the Thunderbird

This is my new favorite quote:

"I don't know who Tanya Milligan is, but I mean www.zionnational-park.com

It's a better site than the NPS's anyway."

Written by the authors of the book: [Favorite Hikes in and around Zion National Park](#)

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