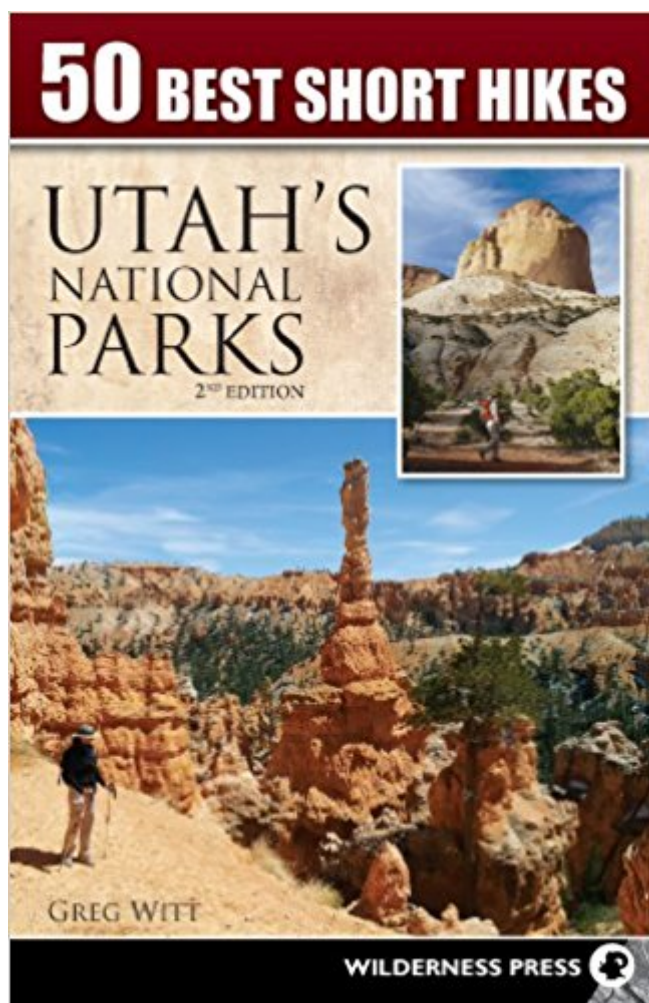


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# 50 Best Short Hikes In Utah's National Parks



## Synopsis

Utah's five national parks--Arches, Bryce, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Zion--hold some of the most awe-inspiring geology on the planet. Each park offers visitors the dramatic scenery that invites exploration and discovery. In *50 Best Short Hikes in Utah's National Parks*, veteran hiking guide Greg Witt shares the best routes in each park, hikes that are both "must see" and accessible. Park visitors who are short on time will find this book to be the ideal traveling companion, quickly helping readers identify the hikes and sights, making the best use of their time and provide maximum enjoyment. Each hike in the book includes distances, highlights, area maps, and easy-to-follow trailhead directions to make hike selection fast and efficient. Once on the trail, the detailed maps, route description, and interpretive details insure that hikers get the most out of their trip. Even avid hikers and experienced desert explorers will find new insights and discoveries as Witt's interesting and approachable style details the geologic forces that created this landscape. He brings to life the human history--prehistoric cliff-dwellers, native tribes, ranchers, farmers, loggers, miners, and outlaws--that adds to the color of the Colorado Plateau where these five parks are set.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Greg Witt has lived the adventures he writes about and shares with audiences around the world. His journeys have taken him to every corner of the globe. He has guided mountaineering expeditions in the Alps and Andes and paddled wild rivers in the Americas. He has dropped teams of adventurers into golden slot canyons, trudged through deep jungles in Africa, Central America, and Asia, and

guided archeological expeditions across the parched Arabian Peninsula. His passion for adventure has always focused on sharing his experience with others. Greg is the founder and Chief Adventure Officer of Alpenwild, the leading operator of hiking and trekking tours in the Swiss Alps. Some weeks, Greg hikes more miles than he drives, which means he wears out his boots faster than he wears out his tires. He has crossed the Grand Canyon on foot many times, climbed Colorado's three highest peaks in three days, and in a recent summer in the Alps he hiked over 700 miles and gained nearly 100,000 vertical feet of elevation--the equivalent of climbing Everest 9 times. Now he leads readers on the most breathtaking hikes and exciting outdoor adventures on the globe. He comes ready to discuss the geology, history, archaeology, weather patterns, culture, flora, and fauna of the exciting locales he loves. Other titles include *60 Hikes within 60 Miles: Salt Lake City* and *Ultimate Adventures: A Rough Guide to Adventure Travel*. He is the US Editor of *Off the Tourist Trail: 1000 Unexpected Travel Alternatives* (DK Eyewitness Travel) and a contributing editor of *Make the Most of Your Time on Earth, A Rough Guide to the World*. He lives in Provo, UT.

#### TRAIL NARRATIVE SELECTION Bryce Canyon National Park: Water Canyon and Mossy Cave

**Trailhead Location:** A small parking area located on the south side of Utah Highway 12, just 3.7 miles east of its junction with Utah Highway 63  
**Trail Use:** Walking, hiking  
**Distance &**

**Configuration:** 1.0-mile out-and-back including a short spur to Mossy Cave  
**Elevation Range:** 6,840 at the trailhead to 6,950 at Mossy Cave  
**Facilities:** Vault toilets at the trailhead  
**Highlights:** Wet, often ice-filled cave and nearby waterfall

**Description:** The presence of water in Water Canyon is a tribute to the early settlers who dug a 10-mile irrigation canal by hand in 1892 to bring water from the East Fork Sevier River to the Paria Valley. The canal was successful in sustaining desert farming communities and also created a scenic canyon with a stream--the only stream in Bryce Canyon National Park. The cave, cooling stream, and waterfall make this a fun short hike, well-suited to hikers of all ages and abilities. The location on Highway 12 in the northern section of the park, just east of the park entrance, makes Water Canyon a convenient place to stop and stretch your legs after several hours in the car and before entering the heart of Bryce Canyon.

**Route:** From the roadside parking area the wide trail makes a gentle ascent into the canyon amidst hoodoos on the upper slopes casting a glow of orange and white. Although Water Canyon is not a large canyon, it has a sense of openness with a mix of bristlecone and limber pines on the surrounding slopes. You'll appreciate the sturdy bridge with the metal railing. The two bridges are fairly recent additions and replace numerous previous bridges which had been washed away during flash floods. It's hard to imagine that the small stream you're crossing could swell to a torrent capable of washing out a

bridge but it gives you a sense of the potential for flash flooding in a desert canyon. The stream has a rather inglorious name--Tropic Ditch--but a proud history. It's just over a hundred years since the stream has been in existence, but the stream has already had a profound effect on the canyon ecosystem. It has attracted wildlife not previously seen in the area. Flora such as the Watson Bog Orchid and the Mountain Death Camas appear in the now-watered canyon, and over time the geology of the canyon will continue to become more like other V-shaped stream-cut canyons. After crossing the bridge, the trail ascends more steeply and soon arrives at a fork. Take the route to the left leading on to Mossy Cave. Technically more a grotto or alcove than a cave, Mossy Cave invites inspection nonetheless. This shallow, moss-filled alcove fed by an underground spring, so it is adorned with ferns and in winter with icicles. Now returning down the trail to the fork, take the branch to the right (north) this time and head in the direction of the waterfall. This 15-foot plunge drops into a circular pool exposing dolomite limestone bedrock. The pools are perfect for a refreshing break on a hot summer day. Along with the hoodoos you can also spot several windows sculpted into the rock above the falls to your right. It's a short trail leading to the window and makes for a fun add-on with some great views down to the waterfall. Retrace your route down the canyon to return to the trailhead. Trailhead GPS Coordinates: N37° 39.946' W112° 6.619'

From the junction of Utah Highway 63 and Utah Highway 12 continue east on Highway 12 for 3.7 miles to a small parking area located on the south side of the highway. **SIDEBAR: The Tropic Ditch** In 1874, a few pioneers heard about the Paria Valley from the Native Americans. It sounded appealing, with a favorable climate, abundant grazing, arable land, timber, coal, and water. The pioneers soon settled the communities of Cannonville and Henrieville which lie to the east of Bryce Canyon on the Paria River. But the growth of these communities forced farmers to look for more reliable water sources than the seasonal flow of the Paria River. They conceived a plan to bring water from the East Fork Sevier River on the Paunsaugunt Plateau to the west of Bryce Canyon to augment the flow of the Paria River. From 1890 to 1892 Mormon pioneers labored with picks and shovels to carve a 10-mile canal across the Paunsaugunt Plateau. Since that time, except during the drought of 2002, the Tropic Ditch has supplied irrigation water to the Paria Valley. The water rights extend from mid-April to mid-October when you'll see water pouring over the falls and down the canyon.

A number of years ago, Wilderness Press published a series of 50 Best Short Hikes, guides meant for families and really almost everyone. The Utah National Parks selection was one of the best sellers in the series, but author Ron Adkison has passed on, and Wilderness Press has brought in Greg Witt to write a new version of this book. He has done a marvelous job. Yes, the book remains

true to the original series and focuses on walks the whole family can enjoy. But these are spectacular hikes, and any hiker of any ability level will find something to captivate in this book, including die hard exercise enthusiasts who would normally shy away from a book with the word "short" in the title. Utah's national parks are managed with day hikers in mind. Backpacking is often an option, of course, but water sources are scarce and unreliable, and often the best scenery is fairly close at hand anyway. Visitors to Arches, for example, can take in much of the park in an extended day, and one of the best features of this book is that Witt offers a "park in a day" preface to each chapter so visitors coming for spring break, probably the best time to visit most of these parks, can get the maximum enjoyment for their time. Utah is not that easily accessible to me, and books like this are ideal for my type of exploration. Often, you can get a better feel for a park by doing two or three short hikes than one long one in any event. And one cannot quarrel with the hike selection: Park Avenue and Devil's Garden in Arches, The Queen's Garden-Navajo Loop in Bryce, Mesa Arch and Grand View Point in Canyonlands, and Hickman Bridge in Capitol Reef. Virtually every one of my favorite trails appears in this book. Each park gets about 10 trails, with Zion (correctly) meriting slightly more. Mileages are accurate, sketch maps adequate, and the side bars on natural history make the text all the more enjoyable. But most importantly, this book gets you out of your car and onto the trails in short order, allowing you to experience the best of each park. And what makes it a great book is that if you use it once, you are sure to want to use it again. I know my week long visit this year has whetted my appetite for more, and I have avidly read, and reread, the route descriptions in this fine little volume. I can hardly wait to use it again next year. That is the mark of a great hiking guide. Get it.

I used this guide as a companion on a trip last to Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. It gives some great information on specific hikes, and pointed me toward the most rewarding. With the background information in this guide, I was able to predetermine my hikes ahead of time instead of wasting precious time while on vacation. Nice book, good location information, and fantastic hiking time estimates. I have hiked 13 of the 50, and they were all amazing. Cannot wait to fulfill the balance.

The book accurately describes the trails and gives a good indication of their difficulty and the trails' special features. It was fun to read about the trails ahead of time and think about what we might want to try. We spent a day at Bryce Canyon and 4 days at Zion and found that the trails in those parks were clearly marked, so the book trail maps were not really needed, and the park free

publications gave us much of the same information about difficulty and interest points. The book was not needed as a carry-on in our backpacks, but it was a helpful resource in planning.

Yes at this time it very much met my needs. I'm preparing to take a months vacation out in Utah 's canyon/arches area. This book gave me a good idea of what to expect and how to take the best advantage of what is available. I am a Senior age camper but the book list some trails I'm sure I can handle. I would very much recommend this book for someone planning to travel the area.

I've been blessed to have hiked throughout the world - France, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Mexico, Canada - and living in the U.S. I've hiked in nearly every Western state, with the greatest accomplishment having been conquering some huge fears and climbing to the summit of the Grand Tetons a few years ago. I live in, what I consider, the most diverse state in the country when it comes to hiking and outdoor recreation with mountains, desert, red rock country, salt flats, ski in the mountains in the morning, sunbathing on the lake in the afternoon, as well as the most incredible National Parks: UTAH!Greg Witt gives us the best book on Utah's National Park hikes I've ever found. If you've ever been "hiking with Greg" (meaning, purchased one of his books and traveled along) it is a most extraordinary experience. From the exact specifications, to suggestions on times of day, best routes, what to look out for, even the placement of a log to sit on, Greg is a Master of Guiding and Exploration. I have used his books to enjoy the summits of every mountain on Utah's Wasatch Front, and now have found his National Parks book to be the perfect companion for my family's journeys into the great outdoors.Highly recommended, awesome read. Thank you Greg for another awesome guide to my love of hiking. I can't wait for your next book to arrive!

Highly recommend this book for those interested in taking shorter hikes in Utah's National Parks. You are able to still hike and get a nice feel for the park if your time schedule doesn't permit in-depth exploration.

Very informative and served us well when we went on vacation with an older couple not as used to hiking as we are - all had a good time.

Arrived on time, great info, cant wait to put it to use.

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