

# South West National Parks of the USA

Trip Code: USA

Version: USA 2024 Itinerary



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



LEISURELY



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Walk the best day hikes in Joshua Tree, Mojave, Zion, Bryce Canyon and more as we seek out quiet trails with amazing views.
- Explore natural wonders from Death Valley to the Grand Canyon.
- Experience unique Americana with visits to famous restaurants, abandoned ghost towns and iconic Western film locations.

## AT A GLANCE

- Join at Las Vegas

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 10 Breakfasts
- 9 Lunches
- 7 Dinners
- 2 nights Hotel
- 10 nights Campground

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

Welcome to the enchanting realm of the South West National Parks of the USA, a breathtaking collection of natural wonders that beckon adventurers, nature enthusiasts, and curious souls alike. This remarkable region boasts a tapestry of diverse landscapes, from the arid deserts of Joshua Tree to the majestic sight of the Grand Canyon, and from the mystical hoodoos of Bryce Canyon to the iconic sets of timeless Western films. Each park is a testament to the raw beauty and geological wonders that have been carved by time, wind, water, and the hand of nature itself.

This adventurous walking holiday takes us beyond the main tourist spots as we delve into the nature, history and culture of the American South West. Starting from Las Vegas we head west into California to explore the desert environments and unique geological formations of Death Valley, Joshua Tree and Mojave National Preserve. Next we head back east and to the higher ground of Nevada and the Colorado Plateau. With a landscape that ranges from sculpted red rock canyons to captivating towering mesas we enjoy daily walks throughout the National Parks, taking in the stunning highlights of Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon and, of course, the Grand Canyon itself.

Whether you seek stunning hikes amidst towering sandstone monoliths, peaceful moments of reflection while gazing into vast chasms, or a chance to marvel at the fiery hues of a desert sunset, the South West National Parks offer a remarkable escape into the heart of untamed beauty.

## Is this holiday for you?

This touring adventure is designed to explore the best of the US South West's National Parks, with a mix of walking, sightseeing and history along the way. Taking in parks in Arizona, Nevada and California. We get around the parks by private minibus taking in a lot of the main sights as well as some lesser trod walking trails and unique experiences. The selected walks are designed to be achievable for anyone of reasonable fitness, although some walking experience will go a long way to increase your enjoyment of the holiday. The longest walking days are around 4-6 hours and include some steep sections such as the Kelso Sand Dune and climb to Scout Lookout, however any of the day walks can be sat out if you prefer to rest and meet the group after the walk.

Driving times between the parks are generally around 2-3 hours, but stops for rests and additional visits

are made along the way.

During this holiday we will be using the well-appointed national park campgrounds, staying in tents. The campgrounds have good shared facilities such as toilets, showers and kitchen facilities and are a splendid way of spending time in the great outdoors.

# Itinerary

Version: USA 2024 Itinerary

## DAY 1

### Arrive Las Vegas.

Arrive Las Vegas. Make your own way to the hotel. You will meet your guide and the rest of the group the next morning.



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 2

### Drive to Death Valley; Explore by car and on foot; Drive to Lone Pine and set up camp.

This morning we leave the bright lights and glitz of Las Vegas behind as we head out on our adventure into the US Southwest. After meeting our guide and the rest of our group in the morning we drive out to the eponymous Death Valley (approx. 2hr30). Straddling the border of California and Nevada, this below-sea-level basin is a land of extremes and wonder, thought to be the hottest place on earth in summer, yet home to a surprising array of life and unique natural formations. We explore the National Park by car and on foot, taking in scenic sites such as Zabriskie Point and the Badwater Basin. Later in the afternoon we travel (approx. 2 hrs) on to our campground for the next two nights at Lone Pine.

Meals: **L D**



**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
1 - 2 hours walking

## DAY 3

### Lone Pine and Museum of Western Film History.

This morning we visit the Museum of Western Film History that collects, preserves, and exhibits a broad and diverse collection of film memorabilia associated with the American Western film genre including the landscapes that served as a canvas for their stories. After visiting the museum we hit the road on a short tour through these landscapes. The Alabama Hills are a formation of rounded rocks and eroded hills set at the base of the jagged peaks of the Sierra Nevada. We travel a up long dirt path with stellar

views of Mount Whitney and the other Sierra Nevada peaks soaring above. More than 400 films have been captured in this scenery. Along the road we make multiple stops for short walks on Shark Finn trail, Mobius Arch and many more. Return to campground at Lone Pine.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
1 - 2 hours walking

#### DAY 4

### Walk the Manzanar Trail; Visit Calico Ghost Town; Drive to Joshua Tree National Park.

This morning we take a ranger's walk at Manzanar historic site (25 min drive) and walk the Manzanar trail (4km, 1 hr). We then drive to Calico (approx. 3hrs30) to visit an old West mining town that was abandoned in the mid-1890s after silver lost its value and have lunch along the drive (not included). After our visit to Calico, we drive to our campground just outside Joshua Tree National Park (2hrs) where we set up camp.

Meals: **B D**



**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
1 hour walking

#### DAY 5

### Joshua Tree National Park

Full day to explore Joshua Tree National Park by car and on foot. We start our day at Cholla Cactus Garden, walking a loop to admire thousands of densely concentrated, naturally growing cholla cactus (30 minutes) we then walk the Arch Rock (1 hour) and Skull Rock (1-2 hrs) trails, a couple of short and easy hikes to explore desert washes and boulder piles including the striking Skull Rock. We finish this walking day at Ryan Ranch (1 hour), with an easy hike along an old ranch road where you can see historic adobe structures. Keys View offers round-the-clock breath-taking vistas where visitors are treated to sweeping views of the Coachella Valley, Palm Springs, and the surrounding peaks that stretch all the way to Mexico. This evening, we take an opportunity to go out for dinner (not included) in the area. Pappy & Harriet's Pioneertown Palace in nearby Pioneertown is a truly unique experience. Part honky tonk, part music-biz museum, part premier venue, the 'Palace' is a great place to grab a bite, kick back, and possibly even catch some live music.

Meals: **B L**



**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
3 - 5 hours walking

## DAY 6

### Mojave National Preserve; Kelso Sand Dune hike; Barber Peak Trail.

Drive to Mojave National Preserve (approx. 2 hrs), where we hike to the top of the most popular sand dune, Kelso Dune. The short but steep hike is fairly strenuous, taking 2-3 hours for most people, but the views from the top are well worth it. This afternoon we undertake our first longer hike, where we hike the Barber Peak Trail, a ten kilometre loop encircling Barber Peak. We pass the impressive Opalite Cliffs before returning to Hole-in-the-Wall via the Banshee Canyon. We set up camp at Hole-in-the-Wall at the basic campground for the night.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
5 - 6 hours walking



**Distance**  
11KM

## DAY 7

### Short hikes in Valley of Fire State Park; Drive to Zion; Hike the Watchman Trail.

Transfer to Valley of Fire State Park (approx. 3hrs30). Here we undertake a couple of shorter hikes taking in interesting points and scenery. Firstly, we hike the White Domes Trail loop, a popular hike in the park thanks to its ever-changing scenery and terrain. On the 1.8km trail we hike through a sandy desert with tall colourful sandstone formations, through narrow slot canyons and even get to see old 'ruins'. We then hike the Mouse tank Trail (1.6km) to view petroglyphs and explore the rocks of this natural basin. After these walks we drive to Zion (approx. 3 hours) where we take a 5km hike on the Watchman trail as an ideal introduction to Zion's magnificence and beauty. Tonight we set up camp at our campground and head out to eat at a local restaurant (not included).

Meals: **B L**



**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
4 - 5 hours walking.



**Distance**  
9KM






## DAY 8

### Zion Canyon hikes.

Today we have a full day to enjoy Zion. Again we split the day into 2 shorter hikes to see the best

highlights of the park. We start by hiking to Emerald Pool (4.8km, 260m), after gaining a modest amount of elevation the trail contours above the Virgin River for a few hundred metres, yielding great views of the fertile oasis formed from the flowing water. After lunch we take on the slightly more challenging hike climbing 'Walter's Wiggles', a series of 21 switchbacks, to Scout Lookout (5.8km, 340m), a flat saddle with incredible views of Zion Canyon. We return to our camp to enjoy a camp meal and our last evening in the park.

Meals: **B L D**

 <b>Accommodation</b> Campground	 <b>Ascent</b> 600M	 <b>Descent</b> 600M	 <b>Time</b> 4 - 5 hours walking	 <b>Distance</b> 11KM
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## DAY 9

### Drive to Bryce Canyon; Hike in the canyon.

This morning we drive (approx. 2 hours) to Bryce Canyon. The best way to see the canyon is combining the main trails (Queens Garden, Peek-a-Boo, and Navajo Loops) for an extraordinary day walking through a maze of multi-hued rock formations eroded into fantastical shapes. Overlooks along the rim and ridges on route feature jaw-dropping views of seas of colourful hoodoos, pinnacles and fins. After our day of walking we return to our campground on the edge of Bryce Canyon City.

Meals: **B L D**

 <b>Accommodation</b> Campground	 <b>Ascent</b> 500M	 <b>Descent</b> 500M	 <b>Time</b> 3 - 5 hours	 <b>Distance</b> 10KM
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## DAY 10

### Bryce Canyon Sunrise; Antelope Canyon Tour; Horseshoe Bend; Drive to Grand Canyon.

Waking early we head to sunrise point for sensational views and a natural light show over the canyon as the rising sun lights up the red rock formations below. After this spectacle we drive on to Page (approx. 2 hrs) where we join a tour of the Upper Antelope Canyon, a magnificent slot canyon shaped by millions of years of water and wind erosion, led by a local Navajo guide. We then continue on towards our final natural wonder, the Grand Canyon. On the way we make a stop at the famous Horseshoe Bend for an impressive look over the horseshoe-shaped incised meander of the Colorado River. We arrive to the Grand Canyon in time to end this special day with sunset views over the canyon. We set up camp in our campground for the next 2 nights and head to a local restaurant for dinner.

Meals: **B L**



**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
1 hour walking

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## DAY 11

### Grand Canyon Visit.

Today we have a full day at the Grand Canyon. Getting around using the free shuttle service you may choose to visit the Grand Canyon Visitor's Centre, hike some of the South Rim Trail to one of many viewpoints, or join one of the ranger walks within the National Park. Alternatively you can walk down one of the marked trails to viewpoints within the canyon itself, such as 'Ooh-Aah Point' and 'Cedar Ridge' (This walk would be unguided as external tour leaders are not allowed to guide within the park - The National Park Service provide information on the available hiking routes including approximate timings and safety considerations, such as suggestions of carrying plenty of water). Your tour leader will be on hand to provide you with recommendations and assistance. In the evening we return to our nearby campground for our final camp dinner.

Meals: **B L D**

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**Accommodation**  
Campground



**Time**  
1 - 6 hours walking\*

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## DAY 12

### Drive back to Las Vegas; Stop off in Seligman.

In the morning we have our last time at the Grand Canyon before taking the road back to Las Vegas, taking in a section of 'Route 66'. After around 2 hours we stop in Seligman for lunch (not included). A quirky small town along a preserved section of Route 66 that captures a vibrant slice of Americana. After lunch we transfer back to our hotel in Las Vegas (approx. 2hrs45), where we enjoy our final dinner as a group at a local restaurant where we can reflect on our American journey.

Meals: **B**

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**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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## DAY 13

### Depart Las Vegas

Free time before your flight. Airport transfers are not included and can be arranged through your hotel.



# Holiday Information

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## What's Included

- A professional guide (+ assistant guide for groups over 8)
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as detailed in the Meal Plan
- All land transport required by the itinerary
- All activities/excursions/entrance fees mentioned except where specified as 'optional'
- National Park entrance fees

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)
- Departure Taxes (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional
- Tips
- Miscellaneous personal expenditure - drinks and souvenirs etc
- Sleeping Bag Hire

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Las Vegas.

Airport transfers are not included. There is a frequent shuttle service to/from the airport to downtown hotels (around \$20 each way) that can be used.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

## Meal Plan

Meals when in Las Vegas are not included. Outside of Las Vegas all meals are provided except for 2 lunches and 3 dinners. These meals are either in places with a choice of restaurants (Our tour leader will recommend good establishments and we can eat together as a group) or in special eateries chosen to enhance the trip, by not including the meals here you can choose from the menu yourself.

## Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single use plastic bottles.

There is a wide selection of food in the USA. In the cities you have unlimited fresh veggies, fruits, meats and fish. Once you travel in rural areas, the selection can be more limited. Whilst camping, meals will be prepared by the guide with the help of the group; you can still expect a delicious and varied home cooked dinner. Lunches are self-made, your tour leader will buy food for sandwiches (bread, cheese, cold cuts), varied salads and snacks that you can use to make your own lunches. There will also be snacks for mid morning and mid-afternoon breaks, such as nuts, pretzels, fruit. When staying in hotels in the towns and cities, where there are a wide range of dining options and budgets, evening meals are not included. The tour leader will recommend several dinner choices and you can decide where you would like to dine either as a group, or individually.

## Accommodation

The group will have one night at the start and end of the holiday in a hotel in Las Vegas where we stay in comfortable twin-bedded rooms with private bathroom. The rest of the accommodation will be on a camping basis, staying at well provisioned National Park Campgrounds.

Comfortable 3 person tents are used on a 2 person basis while camping. Sleeping mats are provided, but you must bring your own sleeping bag, travel pillow, towel etc.

If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex for the 1 hotel night. Single rooms are available for a supplementary cost for these nights. You will also be paired up to share a tent with another single client of the same sex, Single tents are also available at a supplementary cost for the nights camping.

If you are planning on extending your holiday additional nights at the group hotel are available on request.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional guide. For groups of 8 and over there will also be an assistant guide. The guides will also drive the minibus.

## Spending Money

You will need to budget for the non included meals on this trip (meals in Las Vegas - including breakfasts, lunch on day 4 & 12, and dinner on day 4, 7 & 10). We estimate to allow around \$30 per meal. You will need to allow for tips for the local guide, together with miscellaneous items such as bar bills, souvenirs etc. Approximately \$400-\$500 should be sufficient to cover all needs, including any airport transfers you may require on arrival and departure. Your money should be carried in the form of currency (US Dollars).

## **Guidance on Tipping**

Tipping is the accepted way of saying 'thank you' for good service. It is important to remember that tipping is voluntary and should be dependent on good service. In North America it is the norm to tip for most services and we recommend that you may wish to set aside around USD\$6-\$12 per day per guide and have a few dollars to tip for meals and other services.

## **Baggage Allowance**

There is no strict weight limit on this holiday other than that imposed by your airline. We do ask you to restrict your luggage to one main bag and a rucksack/backpack. Your main bag will be transported in the support vehicle or attached trailer.

## **Group Size & Holiday Status**

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

## Visa USA

UK passport holders, in general, do not require a visa for short stays. You DO require an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), and you must get this before boarding any US-bound aircraft or ship. The fee is USD\$14 and you should apply for it at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>. With the ESTA complete, the majority of British Citizen passport holders can enter the US under the Visa Waiver Programme, VWP. Note that if you have travelled to Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since March 2011 you will have to apply for a visa rather than the Visa Waiver Programme.

## Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on a walking holiday getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. We suggest that you adopt a weekly exercise regime. Regular hiking in hill country is the best preparation but running, cycling and swimming are also good.

## Climate

The climate across the Southwestern USA is characterised by a diverse range of conditions due to the region's varying landscapes and elevations. In Death Valley you'll find one of the hottest and driest climates on Earth, with summer temperatures exceeding 40°C. Autumn and winter days are milder than this and nights can be chilly. Joshua Tree and Mojave have a similar warm and dry climate, often exceeding 30°C in summer and presenting comfortable hiking temperatures in winter. Again the nights and mornings can be chilly when camping. Zion and Bryce present cooler temperatures due to their elevation with average summer temperatures around 20°C and rarely dropping below 10°C.

For this trip our departures avoid the extreme temperatures of the summer, opting instead of the more pleasant spring and autumn climate. Most of the hiking days should be warm with little chance of rainfall, but you will still need to be prepared for some warmer days and cooler nights when camping.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

Desert Solitaire. Edward Abbey

Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water. Marc Reisner

I Am the Grand Canyon: The Story of the Havasupai People. Stephen Hirst

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum. Please take only one main bag and one rucksack/backpack.

## YOU SHOULD BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Hiking boots
- Trainers for travelling and casual wear
- Trekking trousers
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Baselayer shirt(s)
- T-shirts / casual shirts / tops
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses
- Gloves
- Daypack
- Sleeping bag (comfort rating 0 degrees Celsius)
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottle (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Travel towel
- Small padlock
- Insect repellent
- Emergency Whistle
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, insect repellent, plasters, and blister treatment.

## THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE OPTIONAL:

- Shorts
- Gaiters
- Travel clothes
- Travel pillow (inflatable)
- Trekking poles (recommended)
- Pen-knife (always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Camera
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

## Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.

[>> Find out more](#)

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary, joining at the hotel in Las Vegas.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Las Vegas. Outbound flights depart the UK in the afternoon arriving later the same day (day 1 of the Land Only itinerary) and return flights depart Las Vegas in the evening of the last day of the Land Only itinerary, arriving in the UK in the morning of the following day. Direct flights are available, please contact the office for a quote.

# Why Choose KE

## Why KE

This unique-to-KE itinerary takes in the best of the South West National Parks. Striking a balance between bucket-list sites and quieter hiking trails, we immerse ourselves in a dazzling variety of landscapes and environments - from the arid below-sea-level desert to standing atop 2000m high canyons. Putting a KE twist on a classic American road trip, we have included the best day hikes in the national parks as well as memorable experiences woven throughout the itinerary - from exploring the interesting history of the area to quirky food and cultural visits along the way. With full days of activity each day this 13-day itinerary packs a lot in and is a great way to see this magnificent region, each day is sure to include its share of jaw-dropping views and off-the-beaten track adventure.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 20/09/2024 and the trip is subject to change