



MORNING HIKES NEAR RED MOUNTAIN RESORT IN ST. GEORGE, UTAH

HIKING

TRAVEL

By Kühl Editor on 11/21/22

This year we enjoyed a late summer wellness getaway at Red Mountain Resort near St. George, Utah. The red rock cliffs and canyons are a beautiful backdrop for this full-service adventure retreat.

We took advantage of the Red Mountain Essential Retreat Package that includes all meals, a morning hike, a selection of fitness classes, use of the indoor and outdoor pools, and access to the Sagestone Spa and Salon for a la carte treatments. Before booking this package, keep in mind that the list of daily activities and classes includes numerous items that are not part of this package and require an additional fee.

Our late August visit coincided with daytime temperatures hovering near 100. During the hottest parts of the day, we took classes indoors, exercised in the fitness center, indulged in a spa treatment, or swam in the pool adjacent to our accommodations. Before breakfast and after dinner, we enjoyed strolls within the perimeter of the resort and hikes in the nearby terrain.



Sandy and Ira in Snow Canyon State Park

Each morning, we started our day with either a challenge or an explorer hike. When asked to describe the difference between the hikes, Tracey Welsh, the general manager, stated, “the challenge hike is more difficult than an explorer hike by terrain, pace, and elevation, but also dependent on the individual’s experience and ability.” While the resort has access to a variety of nearby trails, the exact trails used throughout the year are regulated by the Bureau of Land Management. During our three-day stay, we participated in two challenge hikes and one explorer hike.

Gila Trail

On our first morning, we boarded a van heading to 7,400-acre [Snow Canyon State Park](#) (SCSP) inside the 62,000-acre Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. This state park is known for its lava flows, Navajo sandstone cliffs, and fragile desert ecosystem.

Since SCSP is located at the intersection of the Mojave Desert, the Great Basin Desert and the Colorado Plateau, the park has a selection of flora and fauna that have adapted to an average annual rainfall of 7.5 inches. Some of the vegetation that we saw cannot be found elsewhere in Utah.



Gila Trail, Snow Canyon State Park

We followed one of our guides through the deep red sand on the Gila Trail while the other guide trailed slightly behind the group. Trudging through sand on rolling terrain provided an intense workout for our legs. Occasionally, the path shifted to a rockier surface with steeper inclines. Sunshine beamed down from the cloudless sky as we trekked toward our main objective, a slot canyon inundated with well-preserved petroglyphs.



Slot canyon to petroglyphs

Occasionally, there was a bit of confusion between our two guides as they tried to figure out the best route when the trail markers became scarce. If we were hiking on our own, it would have been challenging to find the entrance to the slot canyon without assistance. Once inside, we enjoyed a respite from the heat and admired the handiwork of an indigenous people.

Butterfly, Petrified Dunes and Lava Flow Trails

The following day, we signed up for another challenge hike. This one took us to another spot inside Snow Canyon State Park to hike on the Butterfly, Petrified Dunes, and Lava Flow trails. This early morning hike was considerably more challenging than the first hike. Instead of navigating through deep sand, we briskly tackled steep sandstone slopes with uneven surfaces that revealed swirls and cracks in the expansion joints of the rocks.



Hiking on petrified dunes in Snow Canyon State Park

On the Lava Flow trail, we trekked over the remains of a volcanic eruption and passed a sign identifying an adjacent lava tube. One of our guides mentioned that segments of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Conqueror, the Electric Horseman, and Jeremiah Johnson were filmed in the park.

The guide leading our hike geared the pace to the younger participants who were more interested in racing up the steep surfaces than taking time to record their experience with photographic images. I preferred to tackle the trail at the same tempo as the day before. At that rate I could both enjoy the immense beauty and take pictures. Since I was unable to maintain the group's quicker pace, I was not able to scale all four peaks.

Paradise Loop Trail

On our last day, we signed up for an explorer hike led by Morgan, a biologist, so we could learn more about the region. Morgan periodically stopped along the Paradise Loop Trail in the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve to point out noteworthy flora and fauna and to explain some of the geological features we encountered. Her explanations occasionally included information regarding how Native Americans used Utah's indigenous plants in their daily life.



Sandy and Ira on Paradise Loop Trail. Pictured in [KÜHL Sun Hats](#)

We walked at a much slower pace on a shorter and relatively easy looped trail above a residential neighborhood. By walking on a partially shaded trail with a gradual incline, it was considerably easier to deal with the rising temperatures. Along our route, time was allotted to take pictures of the geological formations, as well as St. George from a designated overlook. While we enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the region, we felt that this hike was not as interesting as the previous hikes and significantly less challenging.

Unfortunately, we did not encounter any tortoises, Gila monsters, rabbits, roadrunners, or coyotes during any of our treks. We did see lizards darting past the trail and desert birds flying overhead.

My hiking pictures capture the essence of the wide spectrum of colors and textures of the surrounding rock formations, but these beautiful images only reveal part of our experiences. To fully appreciate the amazing geological wonders found adjacent to the trails, it is necessary to take your own journey through Snow Canyon State Park.

Disclosure: Red Mountain Resort hosted The Traveling Bornsteins 3-day stay at the resort.

When Sandy Bornstein isn't trekking in Colorado or writing, she's [traveling with her husband Ira](#). After living as an international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy published an award-winning book, [May This Be the Best Year of Your Life](#), as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. For more information on Boulder, check out Sandy's second book, [100 Things to Do in Boulder Before You Die](#).



Kühl Editor

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