

This morning was the first time we had really felt cold. For the first time since we arrived in the USA, there was a moderate wind and it was COLD. The car was packed extra quickly this morning to minimise time spent in the arctic wind. Once we were on the road with the heater on, we soon warmed up again. It was -5 degrees with a cold wind chill when we left Bryce Canyon. By the time we arrived at the trailhead of our first hike in Zion National Park just over an hour later, it was 7 degrees with lovely sunshine and a gentle breeze.

Our first hike of the day was a quick mile on the Canyon Overlook trail. It took us to a viewpoint with an incredible view down into Pine Creek Canyon and the lower part of the main Zion Canyon. Zion National Park has stunning scenery, but is very different from the other parks we have visited. It still has its share of red rocks, but there are lots of trees and even grass - real grass! We haven't seen grass since Las Vegas, and most of the grass there was fake. The other big difference is you start at the bottom not the top. With most of the other parks, the roads go along the high ground and the hikes go down into the canyons. With Zion, the road goes along the bottom of the canyon and you hike up to viewpoints. Everything seems a bit upside down here, but it is nice to have the downhill on the return journey of the hike for a change.













After our short hike, we drove through the 1.1 mile Mount Carmel tunnel and into the main section of the park. We checked out the visitor centre then grabbed a quick bite to eat at Springdale, the small town just south of the main park entrance.

The main scenic drive here runs right down the main Zion Canyon. There are sheer rocks on either side, a bit like Yosemite Valley. Because of the low sun in winter there is a lot of shade in the canyon, but the low sun also gives more depth to the colour on the rocks. We drove to the far end of the canyon then worked our way back to "The Grotto", the starting point for our afternoon hike. We hiked a 3 mile loop on a series of trails that took us to the Emerald Pools. There wasn't a lot of emerald colour going on in the pools, they were mostly ice. There was still a small amount of water flowing though and the spray from the falls reminded us of the damp back home. It was a varied and beautiful hike, and a change to be hiking mostly without snow and ice.

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After the hike we checked into Cable Mountain Lodge, home for our last two nights in Utah. We have a large suite here, with beautiful views of the rocks. It was dinner at home tonight, then we finished the day with a soak in the outdoor hot tub - great for the hike-weary legs.























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