

to wear lightweight trail running shoes with good tread and a solid heel counter.

A trekking pole can come in handy for balance purposes, as the rocks underneath the river's surface can sometimes be slippery. As the water in the Narrows is often quite cold, sufficient clothing layers are necessary. This holds true particularly during the early morning hours, when gloves and beanies can make a significant difference to a hiker's comfort level.

The season very much affects this trek. During the winter months water temperatures can be chilly, and a wet- or drysuit might be necessary. Between March and May the hike is frequently closed because of the rising water levels caused by spring snowmelt. Fast-flowing waters or high water levels are the main dangers on this trek, and flash floods are a possibility from mid-summer onwards, so weather reports should be checked before setting out.

The Top-Down route is a spectacular trek that requires no special skills or equipment, and hikers of all ages and experience levels can follow it. Shoes with good traction and a tolerance for having wet feet for a day or two are some of the main components for an enjoyable trip. When combined with the equally impressive day hike to Angels Landing—a steep 454 m (1,488 ft.)

↓ Trekking on uneven and sometimes slippery surfaces.

This marks the beginning of the most spectacular section of the gorge. From here on in, the sometimes-murky waters of the river are a little deeper and the dark terracotta-colored walls, which are broken up by sporadic vegetation, are a lot higher.

climb that is not for those with a fear of heights—the Narrows makes for a great “one-two” combination for hiking enthusiasts visiting Zion National Park.



GOOD TO KNOW

START/FINISH

- 📍 Chamberlain's Ranch
- 📍 Temple of Sinawava

SEASON

June to October

CONDITIONS

For the most part, the hike is through water at varying heights. From mid-summer to early fall, there is a higher possibility of flash floods occurring.

TIP

Permits are required, so organize one in advance.

HELPFUL HINTS

OPTIONAL ROUTE A shorter alternative to the full descent from Chamberlain's Ranch is to take a shuttle bus to the Temple of Sinawava and then from there to do an out-and-back hike to Big Spring. The 16 km (10 mi.) round trip includes the most spectacular part of the gorge and no permit is required.



BACKGROUND

CANYON COUNTRY Zion National Park, which spans three counties in Utah, is home to high plateaus, a labyrinth of deep sandstone gorges, and Navajo sandstone cliffs that reveal the traces of ancient sand dunes in their thick layers. Humans have lived in and around the area for approximately 10,000 years, and there are various archaeological sites throughout the park. Wildlife in the reserve includes birds from peregrine falcons to broad-tailed hummingbirds, mammals from the oft-seen mule deer to the elusive mountain lion, and amphibians such as the rock-like woodhouse toad.

FLORA & FAUNA

VERDANT WALLS Zion National Park is renowned for its “hanging gardens,” or plants that grow out of the sandstone where water seeps out. These green patches can consist of mosses, ferns, and wildflowers, and tend to stay near the level of the river.

