

Zion National Park March 31 – April 03, 2016

Zion is an impressive place. It is a place of steep cliffs, narrow canyons, and unpredictable weather, although the weather was perfect while we were there. You see the massive straight up sides of the canyon on either side of you, and you feel small. The Indians called this place “straight up Canyon”. Zion is full of amazing views everywhere you look.



We arrived after three in the afternoon on Thursday. We did not have a camping reservation inside or outside the park. This was part of the adventure. By 5 pm we found ourselves in a town called Kanab Utah. We were still without a campsite, and without any ideas of what to do. We stopped by a gas station to ask someone where we could camp. The guy told me, that a mile down the road there was a place to camp. So we took his advice and checked it out. What we found was an aging RV/camping park, called “Crazy Horse”.



Crazy Horse
campground Office

This place was funky. It had a grassy area where we pitched our tents. It also had a bathroom with sinks, flush toilets, and a shower, which we did not use. It also had an old pool that had no water.



They also had a run down play ground area that the boys made the most of. That's the thing about boys; they have a way of making the best out of a situation.



So we stayed the first night, and since we did not have any other options for our other nights, and did not know the area, we decided to stay at Crazy Horse the rest of the weekend.

Day 2, we hit the park

We got up on Friday, enjoyed our backpacking food. We packed as light as we could to save space, so we only used backpacking stoves to make our food. The boys did just fine, and ate pretty well. The oatmeal they made was the driest I have ever seen, but they ate it up. It was fun to see the boys work with the food they brought and had no problems.

We got on the road, and drove about 45 minutes to the park. As you drive through the park on the way to the parking lot, there are some tunnels that you go through. One of them was very long, and seemed to go through the entire mountain. It was impressive. The boys attempted to hold their breath in the tunnel. Luckily there were opening cut into the side of the mountain to give the tunnel some venting. The boys used those opening as they were holding their breath and releasing their breath. I thought they were going to hyper ventilate. We arrived about 10am and found plenty of parking. We jumped on the free shuttle, and headed for our first hike, the emerald pools.



Scouts at the trail head of the Emerald Pool Hike

The Emerald Pools Trail leads to three pools, the lower, middle and upper pools. The trail is paved and not strenuous. We came upon a cool misty water fall that falls right over the trail. The scouts loved it.



Misty waterfall falls over the trail to the right

It was very refreshing. We came across the first pool, the lower pool.



Scouts enjoying
the lower pool

We kept walking to the middle pool. At this pool I showed the scouts how to retrieve the fresh flowing water and drink it. They really enjoyed this. For some of them they experienced fresh flowing water for the first time.



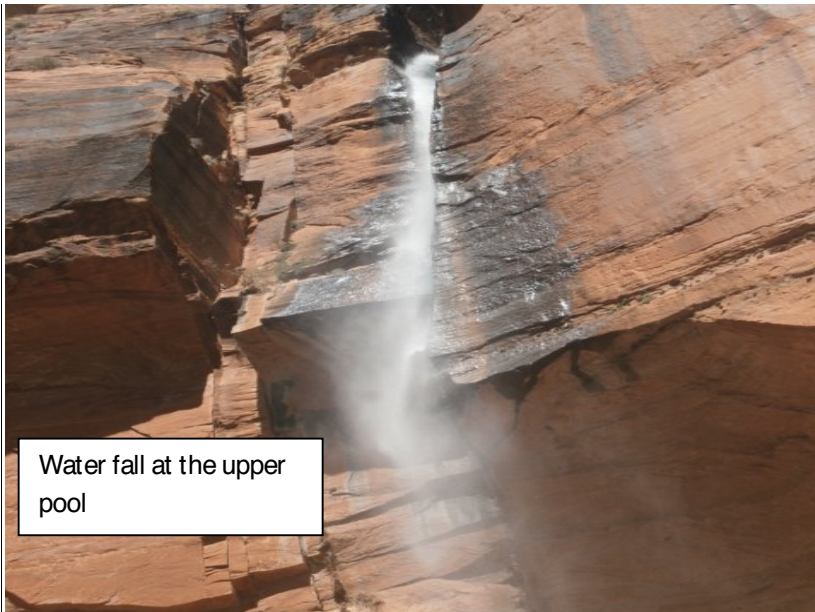
A couple scouts filling their
bottles, enjoying the cool fresh
flowing water

Scouts take a break at the middle pool



After the middle pool we moved on to the upper pool. This was a larger pool with another misty water fall on the far side. Now that the scouts experienced pure fresh water flowing over the rocks at the middle pool they wanted to do the same thing here. All the scouts took the challenge of climbing and moving across the red rocks to the area where the water fall was hitting on the far side of the upper pool. As the waterfall was getting the scouts wet, they collected more of that pure fresh water. We also ate lunch there at the upper pool.

Water fall at the upper pool



Scouts walking across
the red rocks away
from the water fall
on the right



Scouts enjoying the misty
waterfall hit their faces





After some time at the upper pool, we then came back down the trail and we made our way to the shuttle stop.

The shuttle in Zion is cool because it is free, and it is the only way to access all the hikes that Zion offers. There are 9 shuttle stops. At each stop you have access to at least one trail head.

So after the Emerald Pools we went to the Riverside Walk. This walk follows the Virgin River through the narrow canyon, to where the canyon gets even narrower. The extreme narrow area of the canyon is called "the narrows". This is where the Virgin River has carved an awesome gorge, which is about 16 miles long. All you can do here in the gorge is walk in the water up the gorge. Hiking the narrows means hiking in the Virgin River. 60% of this hike is wading, walking, and sometimes swimming in the river. We did not do this hike, but want to come back again and take the challenge. On the river walk, the scouts really showed how they can interact with wild animals. The squirrels really liked the scouts.



A squirrel greets the scouts on the river side walk



Scouts pause along the river to the left, and at the narrowing of the gorge behind them



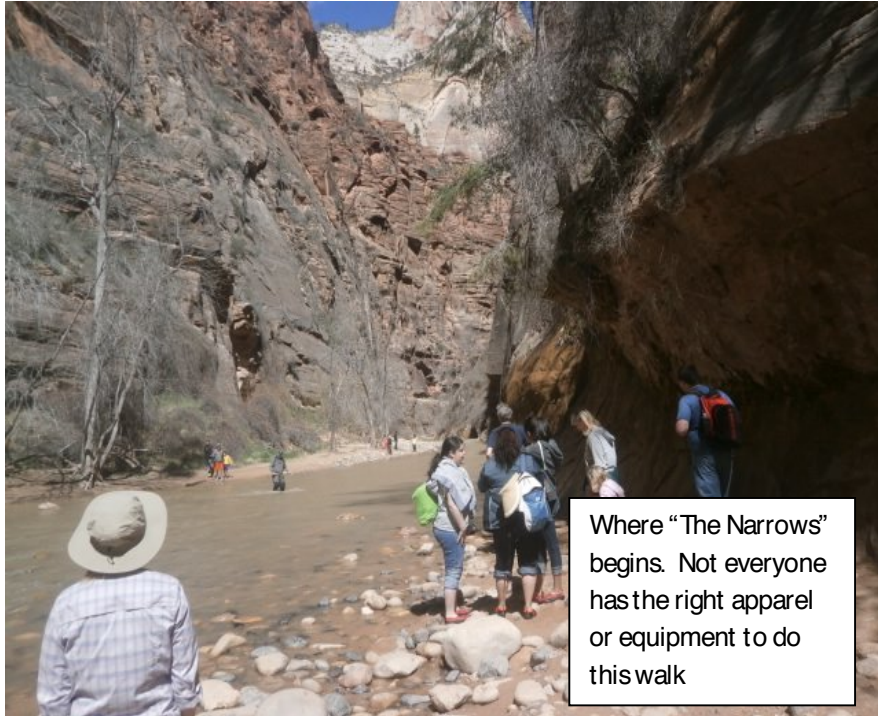
This squirrel felt very comfortable with the scouts Feeding them snacks



After feeding the squirrels, the scouts realized that was not allowed



A scout holds up a rock along the riverside walk so we can pass by safely



Where "The Narrows" begins. Not everyone has the right apparel or equipment to do this walk

After the River side walk, We hung out at the Zion Lodge for a short time, called it a day and returned to our home away from home, "Crazy Horse" camp ground for the night for some rest.



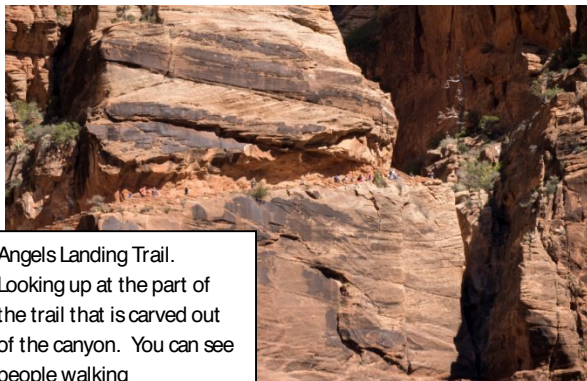
A lazy afternoon at the Crazy Horse campground

A scout holds a real sword that he borrowed from another campsite

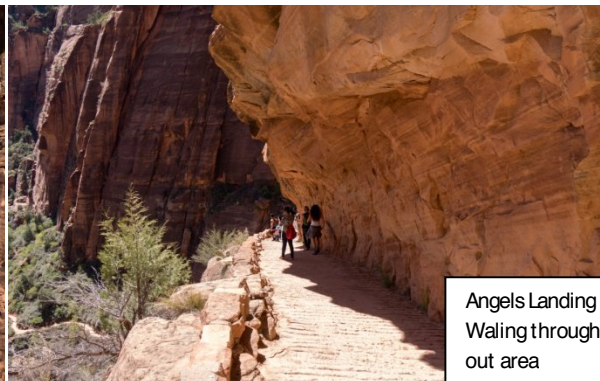


Day 2

We arose early on Day 2 to be able to get to the park early. It was hard to do because the temperature in the morning was in the 30's. After breakfast it was off to Zion for more adventure. At Zion we took the shuttle to stop #6, the Angels Landing trail. This was a long and strenuous uphill hike, but the trail was paved. There is one part of the trail where a part of the canyon is actually carved out of the side of the canyon.

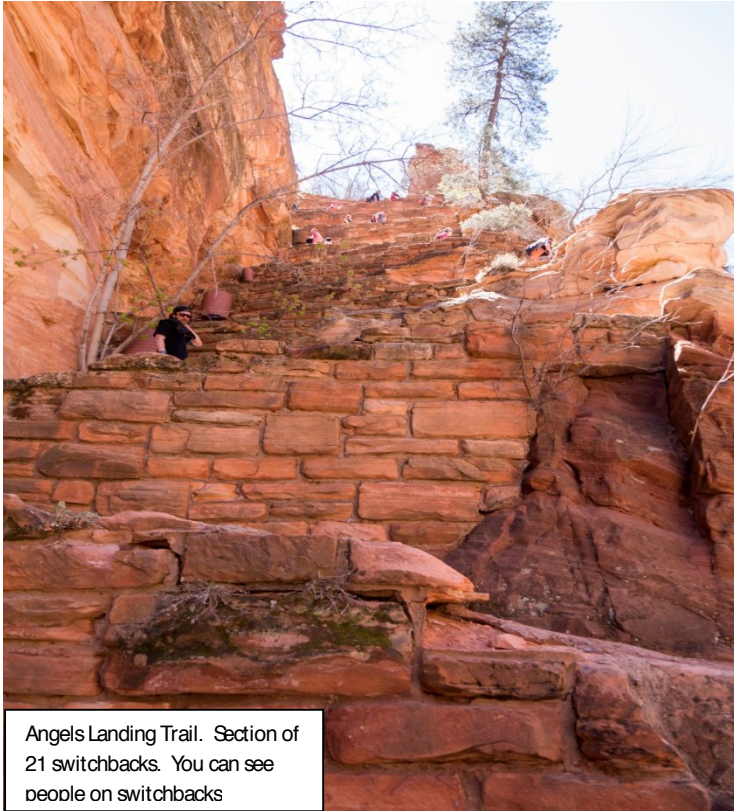


Angels Landing Trail. Looking up at the part of the trail that is carved out of the canyon. You can see people walking



Angels Landing Trail. Walking through the carved out area

Not all the scouts liked this hike. We wondered if we would ever get to the top. On the way up were very steep parts, and at one point there are 21 switchbacks, and that is at just one part of the trail.



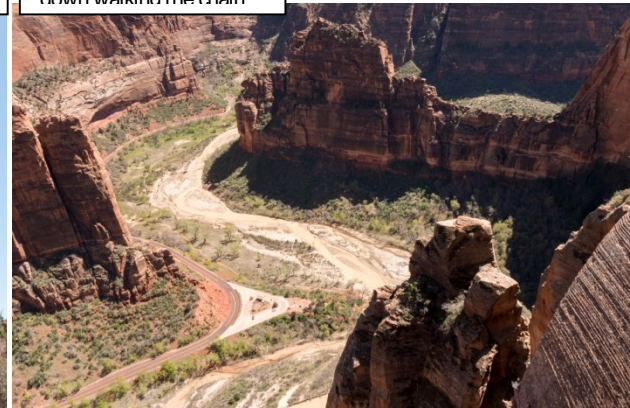
Angels Landing Trail. Section of 21 switchbacks. You can see people on switchbacks

Most of us made it to the top, or what we thought was the end of the hike. But it wasn't. When we to the top of the train, there was an area where many people were resting, eating, etc. Beyond that was more of the trail. But this part of the trail included holding on to a chain, and walking on a path about 12 inches wide at the edge of a cliff. The drop off this cliff was straight down and looked to at least 1000 feet.

People walking the chain



What you see if you look down walking the chain



Of all the scouts that started this hike only two actually completed the walk along the chain. On the other side of the chain hike, you come to a flat area that has an incredible view of the whole canyon for miles. This was called Scout Lookout. At this point I thought we had completed the Angels Landing hike. We didn't. I kept seeing people walking past us onto another path, and as I looked I realized the Angel's Landing was another ½ mile along another narrow trail to a vertical climb (using another chain) up a pinnacle. This is where Angels Landing was. I looked at that and thought "not this time". I had enough of narrow, dangerous climbing.



We rested then went back down the main trail. After four hours we completed the hike.



Once at the bottom, a couple of the scouts wanted to go back to the Middle Emerald Pool that we went to the day before. So we did go, and this gave the scouts the opportunity to get more fresh water, which is why they wanted to go back. After that we headed to the Lodge, where there is a large grassy area with shade. After resting here for a while, we got back on the shuttle to the car and headed back to Crazy Horse.

With Checkerboard Mtn. behind us, we took a photo on the way out of the park. You can tell Zion had an impact on each scout



We spent out last night around the campfire, with the boys performing impersonations, and telling jokes.

Zion is a pretty amazing place. The scouts had a good time, and I believe many memories were developed.

