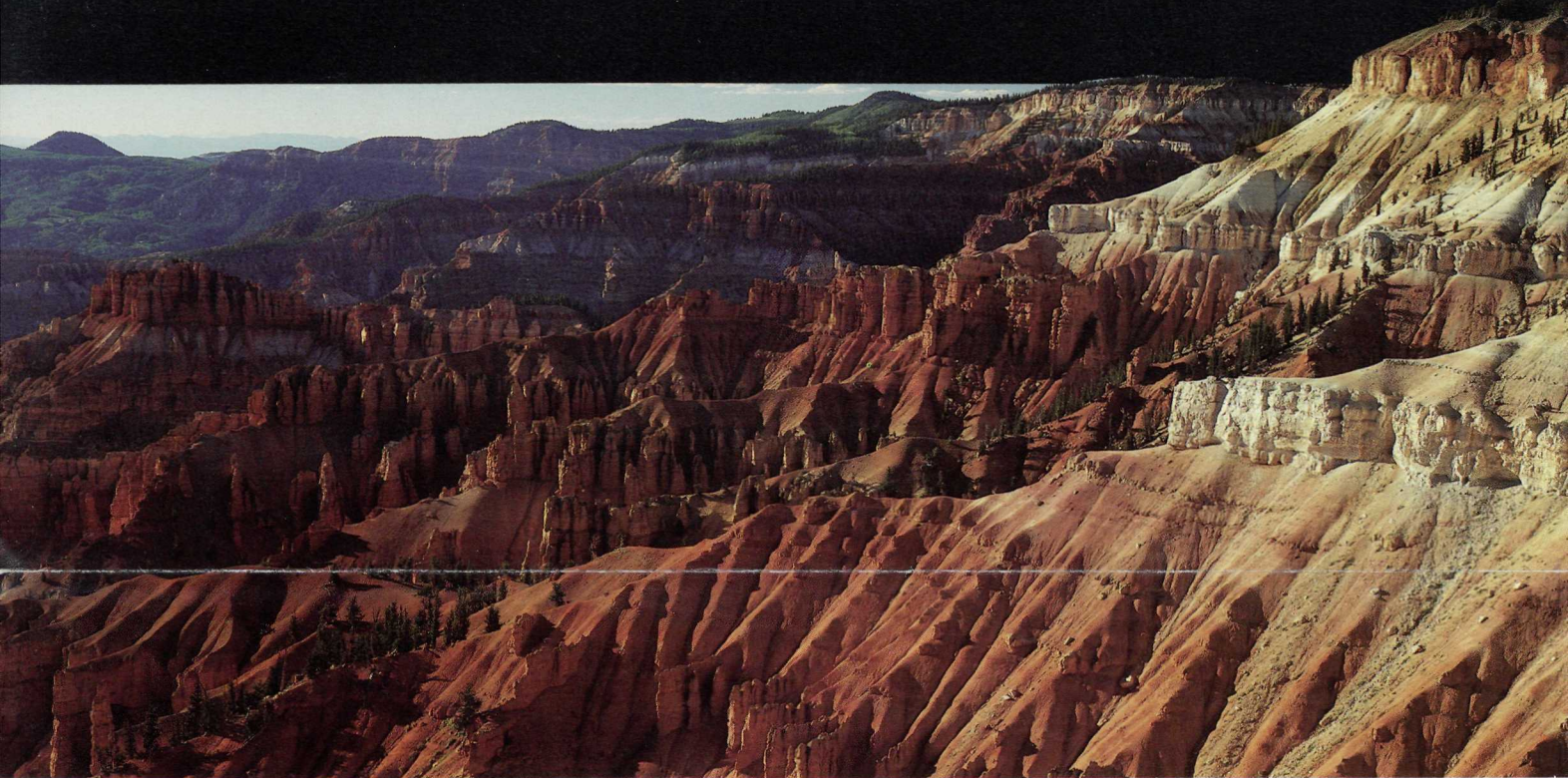


Cedar Breaks

Cedar Breaks
National Monument
Utah

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Glenn Van Nimwegen

The Amphitheater

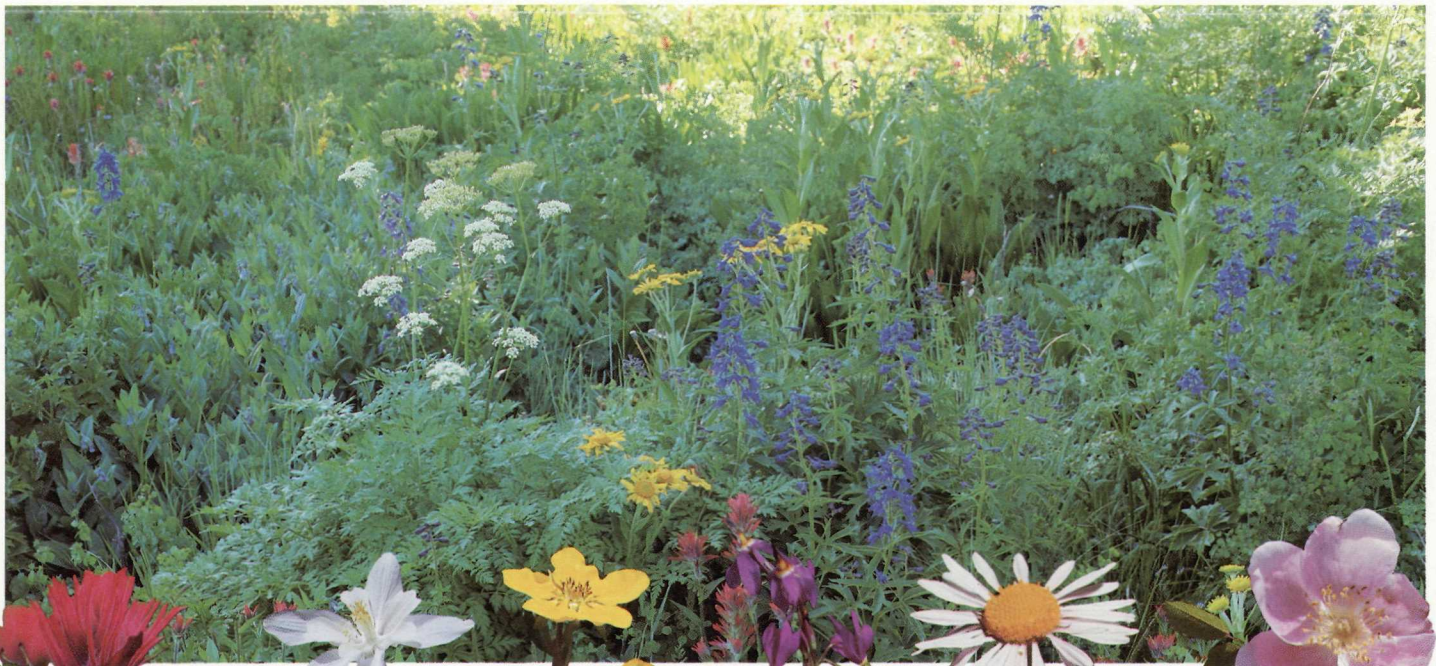
There is nothing subtle about the great natural rock amphitheater of Cedar Breaks. It is a spectacle of gigantic dimensions full of extraordinary forms wrapped in bold and brilliant colors. Once you see it for yourself you may agree with the observer who said, "If Cedar Breaks were anywhere but in this region, it would be picked as one of the world's greatest scenic wonders." The Cedar Breaks amphitheater is a product of many of the same forces that created the Southwest's other great landscapes, including the Grand Canyon, Zion Canyon, and the Bryce amphitheater. It is, however, an original work of nature not quite like any other. Shaped

like a huge coliseum, the amphitheater is more than 600 meters (2,000 feet) deep and more than 5 kilometers (3 miles) in diameter. Millions of years of uplift and erosion carved this huge bowl in the steep west-facing side of the 3,000-meter- (10,000-foot-) high Markagunt Plateau.

Exhibited like statues inside this natural gallery are stone spires, columns, arches, and canyons of intricate design and seemingly infinite variety. The many forms are time-worn sculptures of rain, streams, ice, and wind. Saturating the rock throughout is a color scheme as striking as any found on

the Colorado Plateau. Varying combinations of iron and manganese give the rock its different reds, yellows, and purples. Impressed with the artistic shading, early Indians called the amphitheater the Circle of Painted Cliffs. Many years later early southern Utah settlers renamed the amphitheater "Cedar Breaks": "Cedar" for the cedar, or juniper, trees that grew nearby, and "Breaks," another word for badlands. In 1933 Cedar Breaks National Monument was established, calling nationwide attention to the spectacular amphitheater.

Kathleen Norris Cook



Margaret Littlejohn

1. Indian paintbrush
2. Blue columbine
3. Cinquefoil
4. Shootingstar
5. Fleabane
6. Wild rose

The Highcountry

Atop the Markagunt Plateau is the highcountry of Cedar Breaks. It is a world every bit as rich in color and as delicate in form as the rock amphitheater below, yet it is a very different place. Here you can immerse yourself in the lushness of the scenery, breathe in the intoxicating fragrance of spruce-fir forests, and tread softly through subalpine meadows of grasses and seasonal wildflowers. In this sanctuary of clean, cool air, abundant rainfall, full sunlight, and fertile soil, nature exhibits its full irrepressible potential.

Seasons of Color
Cedar Breaks flaunts its natural flair for life most dramatically with an annual show of spring and summer wildflowers. The floral display begins late in June, as sprays of mountain bluebell, pale pink spring beauty, lavender fleabane, beardtongue and other penstemons, and other early bloomers appear. In late July the display begins to peak, and the rolling meadows fill to overflowing with larkspur, lupine, penstemon, columbine, Indian paintbrush, and a variety of other flowers. For the next few

brief weeks, until about mid-August, the open fields are stages where the flowers of Cedar Breaks improvise one spontaneous show of color after another.

Ancient Trees of Life
In sharp contrast to the flowers, which rush through their lives in months, is the bristlecone pine. This native of the Cedar Breaks highcountry is the Methuselah of trees; one gnarled and weather-beaten individual at Spectra Point on the plateau rim has already lived more than 1600 years. In other south-

western states 4,500-year-old specimens have been discovered. That the bristlecone lives at all is something of a miracle considering that it grows only in forsaken spots where water is scarce, soil is thin, and fierce winds blow unchecked.

A Place of Refuge
Elsewhere in the highcountry are luxuriant forest retreats, like the one at Alpine Pond. This spring-fed backcountry pool lies in a shady grove of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and quaking aspen. Interspersed among

the trees are luxuriant meadows of grasses and wildflowers. Here, and throughout the park's fields and forests, various kinds of wildlife roam. As you drive along a road or walk a trail, you are likely to encounter many birds, including the neighborly Clark's nutcracker, the violet-green swallows that fly along the plateau rim, and the common raven. You also may see or hear mule deer, pikas, marmots, porcupines, red squirrels, golden mantled ground squirrels, and chipmunks. Rarer, harder-to-find animals,

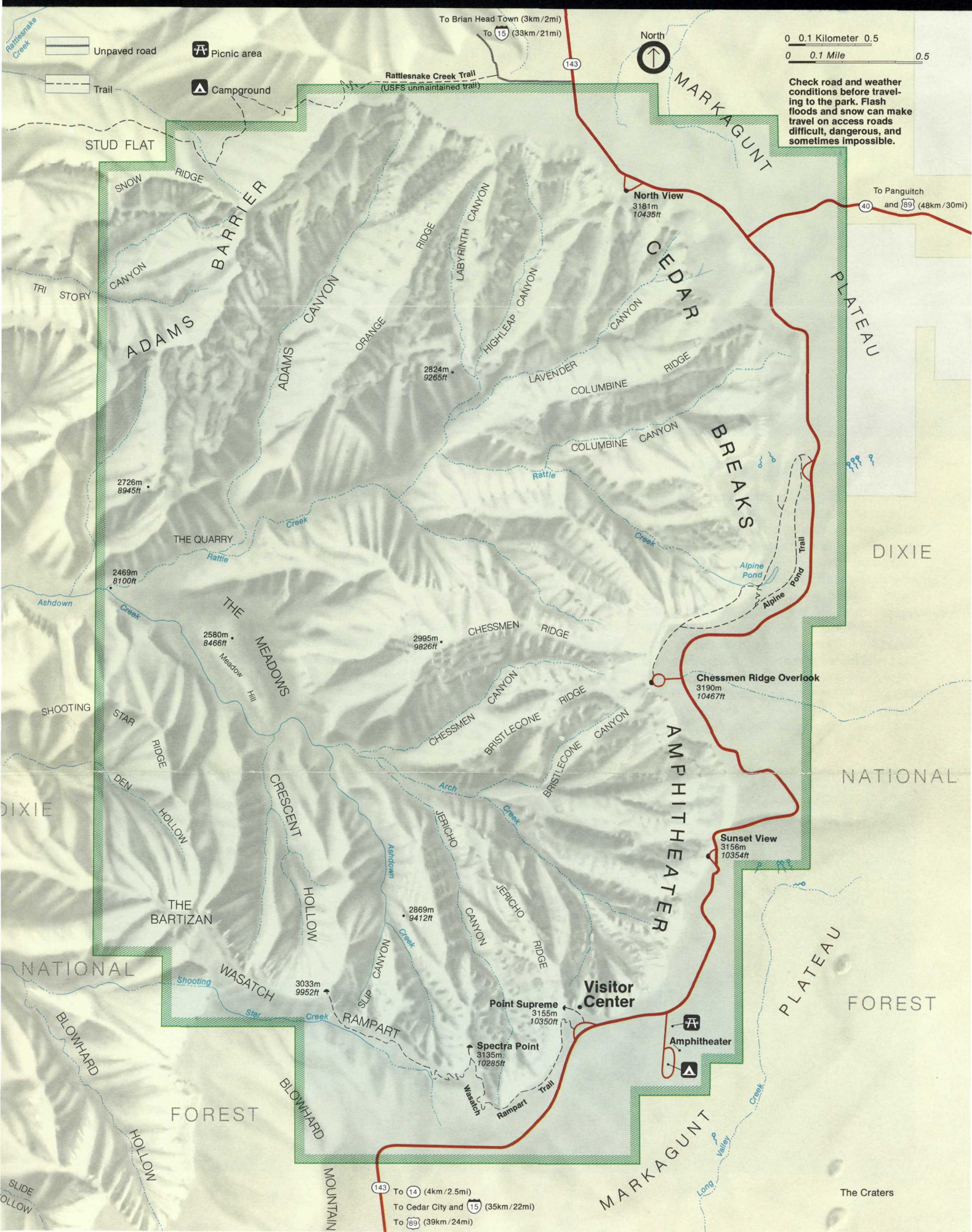
such as mountain lions, also inhabit this protected area.

This, then, is the world of Cedar Breaks' highcountry atop the Markagunt Plateau. Small in size but great in what it has to offer, this land of meadows and forests is a gentle and glorious expression of wild America.

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Check road and weather conditions before traveling to the park. Flash floods and snow can make travel on access roads difficult, dangerous, and sometimes impossible.

A Park Guide

Planning Your Stay A good starting point for your tour of the park is the visitor center. This building is packed full of books, brochures, and exhibits on Cedar Breaks and its geology, history, wildlife, and wildflowers. Rangers can help plan your stay and suggest things to do. The center is open daily from early June to mid-October. The rest of the year information is available at park headquarters, located 69 kilometers (43 miles) southwest of Cedar Breaks at the Kolob Canyons Contact Station in Zion National Park just off U.S. 15. Throughout your travels, be aware that high altitudes may cause shortness of breath and tiredness.

Slow down and rest often. Also, remember that everything here—even the tiniest flower—is protected and should be left undisturbed. Feeding wildlife, hunting, and carrying firearms are prohibited.

The Scenic Drive An 8-kilometer (5-mile) road through the high-country of Cedar Breaks is the main route to the park's scenic attractions. Scenic overlooks, trailheads, and all visitor services are located along this road or on short side roads. The roads are designed for sightseeing, not speeding; observe posted speed limits. Don't drive into easily damaged meadows; use designated roadside parking areas.

Scenic Overlooks Four overlooks, where you can view the massive Cedar Breaks amphitheater, are located along the scenic drive. Stop at each viewpoint, for no two give you quite the same perspective. Stay behind overlook fences and away from the edge where the rock is loose and crumbly. Don't throw rocks or other objects off the rim. Keep a close eye on children. During thunderstorms avoid overlooks and other exposed areas where lightning may strike.

Trails Cedar Breaks has two high-country trails. The circular 3.2-kilometer (2-mile) *Alpine Pond Trail* leads to a picturesque forest

glade and pond. A trail guide is available at the trailhead or the visitor center. The 3.2-kilometer (2-mile) *Wasatch Ramparts Trail* along the plateau rim passes a stand of ancient bristlecone pine at Spectra Point and ends at a viewpoint overlooking the Cedar Breaks amphitheater. Pets are not permitted on these trails. Experienced hikers may want to explore Rattlesnake Creek Trail, just north of the park. Before attempting this hike talk to a ranger about the hazards of the steep terrain and flash floods.

Camping, Picnicking The 30-site park campground is open on a first-come, first-served basis from June to mid-

September. Daytime temperatures are commonly in the 10s and 20s°C (60s and 70s°F) while nighttime lows are near 0°C (30s and 40s°F). The campground has water, restrooms, tables, fire grills, and an outdoor amphitheater where evening programs are given. Near the campground is a picnic area with water, tables, and grills. Fires are permitted only in campground and picnic area grills.

Winter Activities Services and roads are usually closed from mid-October through May because of heavy snow accumulations, but the park is open for cross-country skiing and snowmobiling (only on unplowed roads).

Nearby Accommodations Cedar City has lodging and other major visitor services. Closer by, smaller towns, including Brian Head just to the north of the park, have year-round lodging, restaurants, gasoline, and groceries. These services are not available in the park.

Information and Emergency Assistance For more information, write: Superintendent, Cedar Breaks National Monument, P.O. Box 749, Cedar City, UT 84720; or call (801) 586-9451. In an emergency come to the visitor center or contact any park employee.