

Cedar Breaks

NATIONAL MONUMENT • UTAH

A gigantic multicolored amphitheater is here being slowly scooped from the western edge of the rolling green alpine meadows atop southern Utah's high country. Your first impression in this 25-square-kilometer (10-square-mile) national monument is that nature is an inspired artist.

Within the steep-walled ravines of the natural amphitheater, rain and wind, snow and ice have eroded the limestone into many fantastic shapes. Added to this are sweeping vistas of forests and mountain wildflowers.

The name "Cedar Breaks" is derived from the early settler's use of the term "breaks" for badlands and their erroneous use of "cedar" for the junipers growing near the base of the cliffs.

THE ROCKS

Rock layers that compose the amphitheater walls originated some 55 million years ago as limy ooze deposited in shallow freshwater lakes near sea level. During the last 13 million years, the area was slowly uplifted to the present elevation of more than 3,000 meters (10,000 feet). This produced the steep westward-facing escarpment of limestone that is exposed to the elements of erosion. Gradually water, aided by frost and wind, eroded softer parts of the limestone. The more resistant parts remain as spires and ridges of countless shapes.

Lifting of the land was accompanied by volcanic eruptions. Lava from more recent eruptions may be seen along the road between Cedar Breaks and U.S. 89. Many of these lava beds still do not support vegetation.

Pure limestone is white, as the band near the rim; the many colors of the breaks result from oxidation of impurities, mainly iron and manganese, in the rock.

PLANTS

The wildflower display begins as soon as the snow melts and reaches its peak during July and early August.

The monument contains majestic stands of pine, fir, spruce, and quaking aspen, interspersed with mountain meadows. Tree line is at about 3,400 meters (11,200 feet) in this part of southern Utah.

Bristlecone pine is of special interest. Small stands grow on the relatively poor limestone soil that is within and along the rim of the amphitheater. The oldest dated pine at Cedar Breaks is about 1,600 years old. It may be seen from the Wasatch Ramparts Trail near Spectra Point.

In order to help preserve this magnificent setting, please do not disturb wildflowers, trees, rocks, or any other natural feature.

ANIMALS

Mule deer, the only large animals in the monument, graze in the meadows along the Rim Drive almost every morning and evening.

Marmots make their dens among the rocks near the amphitheater rim and are commonly seen along the Wasatch Ramparts Trail. Ground squirrels, chipmunks, and red squirrels gather spruce cones for their winter food caches.

"The conies [pikas] are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks . . ." (Proverbs 30:26). The pikas are also a clever folk. They cut and cure grasses in summer and store them for winter. Watch for the small, short-eared, stubby-tailed creatures on the high rocky slopes; they are there but are not often seen. The pika is related to hares and rabbits.

You will see many birds in the monument. One of the most easily identified, and a regular guest at your campground table, will be the Clark's nutcracker, a handsome bird with a light-gray body and conspicuous white patches in its black wings and tail. Birds that fly along the rim, never seeming to land, are the violet-green swallow and the white-throated swift. Other birds of special interest include the golden eagle, the blue grouse, and our national symbol, the bald eagle.

Wildlife is protected here, as in other units of your National Park System. Trapping and the use of firearms are not allowed.

Please do not feed the animals. Human food is not suitable for wild animals, and it may even impair their health. Those who insist on feeding wild creatures are being cruel to the animals and risk getting a painful and dangerous bite.

HISTORY

Early exploration of this area began in 1851, when Mormon pioneers settled in Parowan and Cedar City. In 1852, church leaders explored the headwaters of the Sevier and Virgin Rivers, which rise on the Markagunt Plateau, but they made no reports concerning the cliffs known today as Cedar Breaks.

Both the Wheeler and Powell Surveys of 1872 made extensive topographic records of the area, as well as plant, animal, and geologic observations. For more than three decades following these scientific surveys, use was made of the grazing and timber resources.

In 1905, the area was included as a part of Sevier (now Dixie) National Forest, administered by the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. It was established as a national monument on August 22, 1933, under the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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Please think about safety while driving or hiking the trails. Watch for wildlife on the road, and be cautious in stormy weather—exposure to lightning, slippery trails and roads, and high crosswinds.

ADMINISTRATION

Cedar Breaks National Monument, P.O. Box 749, Cedar City, UT 84720, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent of Zion National Park, Springdale, UT 84767, is in charge of the park.

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The travel season extends from mid-May to late October, depending on the weather. At other times, check road conditions before driving to the monument.

The visitor center is an excellent focal point for your visit. It has exhibits about plants and animals and the formation of the amphitheater. From early June through Labor Day, a park ranger is on duty here daily to answer your questions about the monument and suggest places to see and things to do. Park rangers enforce regulations; consult them if you are in any difficulty. Park naturalists help you to understand the geology and other natural history of the park. All park personnel welcome your observations and inquiries.

Pets must be kept on leash at all times. They are not permitted on trails or in public buildings.

The Rim Drive. This 8-kilometer (5-mile) road winds through forest and wildflower fields of the rim and offers many panoramas of the breaks and high country. Four major viewpoints are on this route. Please stay on the roadway, use the parking areas, and obey speed limits. The roads are built for enjoyment of the scenery. Alpine vegetation is fragile and may require a human lifetime or more to recover from human damage. Do not drive on meadows.

Trails. Be sure to seek the advice of a park ranger before climbing or taking long hikes. Do not shortcut trails. There are no trails to the bottom of the amphitheater. Thunderstorms may result in slippery, hazardous trails and roads. When lightning is observed, exposed points should be avoided. Descriptions of park trails follow:

Wasatch Ramparts Trail, starting at Point Supreme, runs for 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) along the rim through forests and fields of wildflowers to a stand of bristlecone pine on Spectra Point.

Alpine Pond Trail is a short self-guiding nature trail near the rim drive. Wildflowers bloom on the pond's shore, and Bristlecone Pine are found near Chessman Ridge Overlook.

Brianhead Peak. You may wish to visit 3,449-meter (11,315-foot) Brianhead Peak, 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) north of the monument's boundary. From a shelter on this lofty point, you can see forests and meadows, with colorful cliffs cutting into the green carpet of vegetation.

Caution. If you are used to lower altitudes, and you experience a shortness of breath, slow down and rest frequently.

ACCOMMODATIONS

A campground and a picnic area near Point Supreme have water and sanitary facilities. Groceries and gasoline are not available at the monument, but can be secured at Brian Head Resort, 13 kilometers (8 miles) north. Weather permits comfortable camping from late June to Labor Day; at other times, freezing temperatures are common at night. House-trailers are allowed at the campground, but there are no utility connections.

Motels are located in Cedar City, Parowan, and Brian Head Resort. You may wish to consult a road map for locations of other communities where you can get accommodations.

HOW TO REACH THE MONUMENT

Cedar City is a point of arrival for scheduled buses and airlines. There are car rental agencies here also.

Approach the monument via Utah 14 from I-15 at Cedar City, or from U.S. 89 at Long Valley Junction. Another way is from Parowan via Utah 143, or from Panguitch on a paved county road. Distances are: from Cedar City 37 kilometers (23 miles), from Long Valley Junction 43 kilometers (27 miles), from Parowan 23 kilometers (14 miles), and from Panguitch 53 kilometers (33 miles). See the map for distances to Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks.

