



Foundation Document Overview

Cedar Breaks National Monument

Utah



Contact Information

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Park Description

Cedar Breaks National Monument (hereafter referred to as the monument) was established in 1933 by proclamation of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to preserve the spectacular cliffs, canyons, and features of scenic, scientific, and educational interest at the Cedar Breaks amphitheater. Colorful layers of rock and geologic formations such as fins, windows, arches, and “hoodoos” have been shaped by weathering and erosional processes. Hoodoos (tall spires of rock) are of special interest due to their irregular forms and alternating hard and soft sediment layers. The multicolored natural amphitheater that displays these hoodoos, 2,500 feet deep and nearly 4 miles wide, is composed of variegated pink cliffs eroded from the Claron Formation. Cedar Breaks forms the western escarpment of the Markagunt Plateau, delineating the boundary between the Colorado Plateau and the Basin and Range physiographic provinces. Some deposits in and adjacent to the monument demonstrate that this location was on the edge of the Markagunt Gravity Slide, the largest known feature of its kind on Earth. The monument encompasses 6,155 acres.

Elevations at the monument vary from 8,100 feet in the Ashdown Gorge on the western boundary to 10,662 feet in the northeastern section above the amphitheater. The majority of the area below the amphitheater’s rim (4,830 acres of the monument) is managed as recommended wilderness and designated as a research natural area. Because the monument is at elevations over 10,000 feet, the weather can change dramatically and turn inclement at any time.

A large variety of plants and animals exist in the monument due to the wide range in elevation and micro-habitats. Mule deer and marmots are common, as well as porcupines, red squirrels, golden-mantled ground squirrels, long-tailed weasels, and chipmunks. Mountain lions, bobcats, elk, and other mammals live in the area but are seldom seen. The bristlecone pine can also be found in the high country, with some local specimens known to be more than 1,600 years old. The largest diameter bristlecone in the state of Utah is found near Spectra Point. Subalpine meadows dot the canyon rim with beautiful wildflower displays during the summer.

The monument lies within the traditional homeland of the Southern Paiutes, a land area that spans southern Utah, Nevada, and northern Arizona. According to their oral traditions, they have always been here. Archeologists have documented sites of ancestral American Indians or their habitations within and surrounding Cedar Breaks dating back more than 10,000 years.

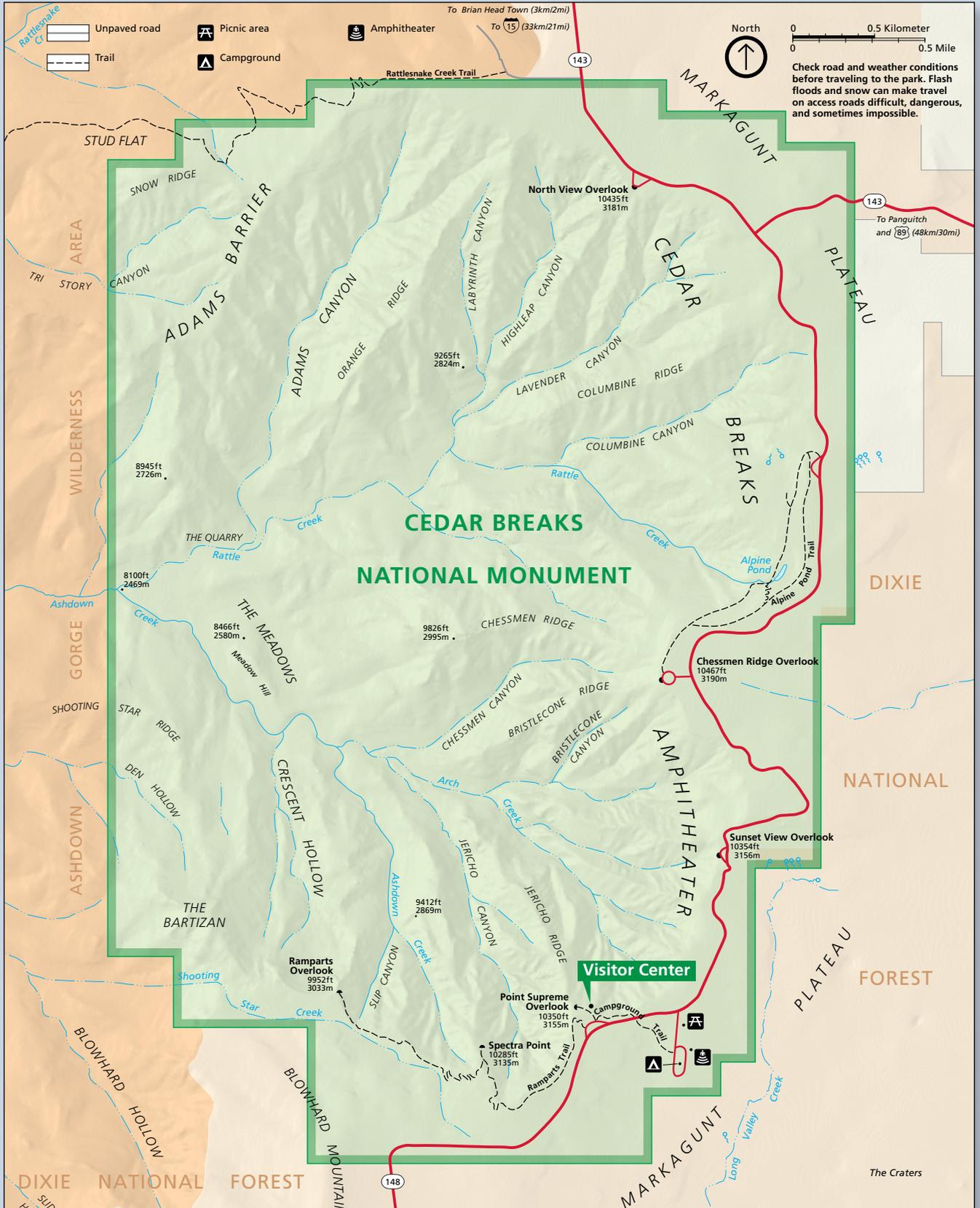


More recent history is represented in the monument’s visitor center and ranger caretaker cabin, which demonstrate classic NPS rustic architecture. These structures are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and were built in the late 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a program that provided work for unemployed men during the Great Depression.

The monument attracts approximately 595,000 visitors each year. The monument’s visitor facilities, all of which are on the rim, include a visitor center, campground, picnic area, overlooks, and trails. Most visitors recreate during the summer months and hike the trails, sightsee along the scenic monument highway, participate in interpretive programs, camp, and picnic. In the summer, the wildflowers come alive and are celebrated with the annual Wildflower Festival. The fall colors are stunning, while the southern Utah winters attract outdoor enthusiasts who like to ski, snowshoe, and snowmobile on designated routes. The main scenic drive closes to vehicular traffic after the first deep snowfall, usually in late November, and becomes the route for the groomed snowmobile trail. More than 167,000 visitors, or 25% of the monument’s annual visitation, enjoy a variety of winter recreational opportunities from mid-October through May.

The region surrounding the monument is a popular year-round vacation destination, offering a variety of exceptional recreational opportunities. Nearby gateway communities of Brian Head, Parowan, Cedar City, and Panguitch host tourists from around the world as they visit the monument and the adjacent Dixie National Forest. The monument is managed as one of the three NPS units of the Zion Park Group, including Zion National Park and Pipe Spring National Monument. The efforts of many partners and volunteers are essential to protecting and sharing the stories of the Cedar Breaks National Monument and its outstanding resources.

Monument Map



Purpose



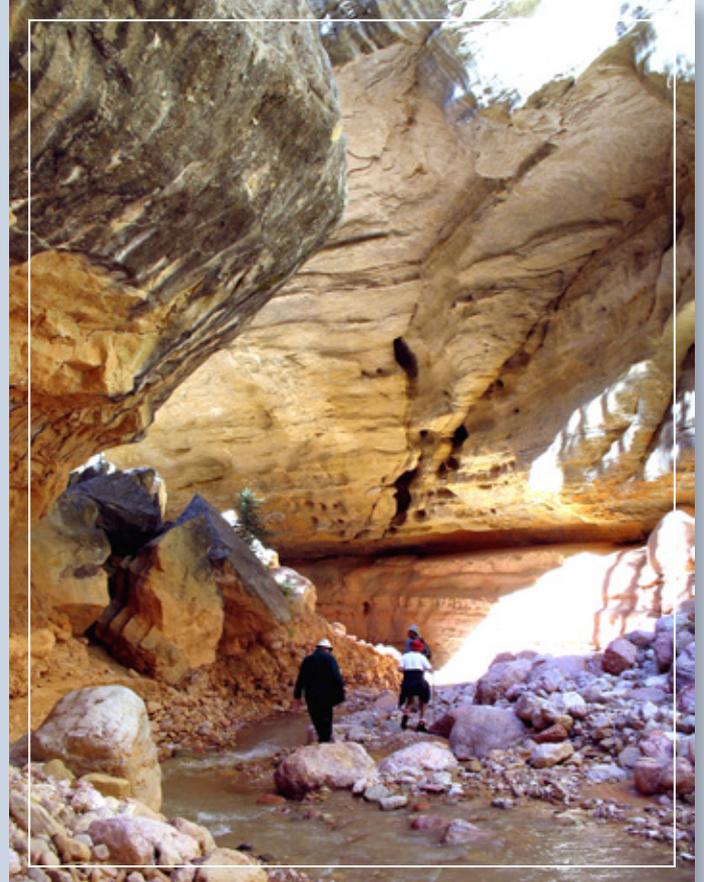
At 10,700 feet on the western edge of the Colorado Plateau, CEDAR BREAKS NATIONAL MONUMENT preserves the multicolored geologic spectacle of the Cedar Breaks amphitheater, scenic vistas, and natural and cultural resources of scientific interest for public appreciation, education, recreation, and enjoyment.



Significance

Significance statements express why Cedar Breaks National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- **Geology.** The rugged escarpment or “breaks” for which the Cedar Breaks National Monument was named are the result of recent tectonic uplift in highly erosive limestone strata that continues to shape this striking landscape and its features. Geologic strata exposed in the monument represent some of the youngest, and therefore the highest and last, in a sequence of sedimentary rocks that characterize the Colorado Plateau and that accumulated over 600 million years to a thickness of 15,000 feet.



Significance

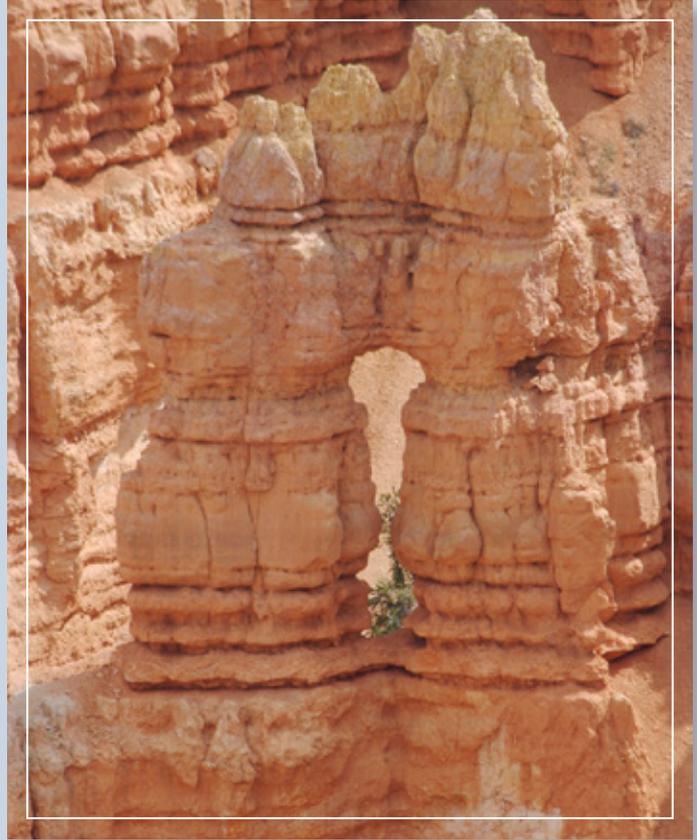


- **Physical geography.** The 2,500 foot westward-facing escarpment of the Cedar Breaks amphitheater presents a magnificent scene in brilliant colors of towering hoodoos, terraced cliffs, arches, bridges, deeply cut canyons, and exposed strata. The combination of an exceptional rate of erosion, high elevation, and brilliantly colored formations is distinctive among NPS units.
- **High-elevation flora and fauna.** Cedar Breaks National Monument protects a variety of distinctive flora and fauna, including intensely beautiful wildflower displays, ancient bristlecone pines more than 1,600 years old, and subalpine wildlife. These species have adapted to the severity of climate and weather on the high elevations of the Markagunt Plateau, contributing to the resilience and integrity of the greater subalpine ecosystem.
- **Peoples' use of the land.** Cedar Breaks protects evidence of some of the highest elevation prehistoric sites within the national park system, representing the astonishing ability of humans to adapt to extreme and at times harsh environments.
- **Visitor experience.** Located at over 10,000 feet, Cedar Breaks offers opportunities to experience one of the most easily accessible high elevation units in the national park system. Visitors experience a diversity of recreational and educational opportunities within the quiet solitude, colorful beauty, dark night skies, and endless vistas of the monument, through cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling, viewing the spectacular summer wildflowers and watchable wildlife, backcountry hiking red rock canyons and streams below the amphitheater, or appreciating the changing colors of autumn. The designated research natural area within the monument provides an important venue for researchers to study a relatively pristine area of the rapidly developing American West.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Geologic Resources.** Millions of years of sedimentation, followed by uplift and rapid erosion produced the exquisite landscapes of Cedar Breaks and continues to carve out the giant 2,500-foot-deep amphitheater that spans nearly 4 miles across. Visitors are drawn by the myriad spectacular rock shapes including columns, spires, hoodoos, windows, pedestals, bridges, alcoves, and canyons carved into the red, orange, and white fluvial and lacustrine strata of the Claron Formation. The processes that formed the breaks are continuing, fueled by tectonic uplift and the erosive forces of water, ice, and wind. Cedar Breaks is linked to other parks and monuments in the region by providing a bookend to the accumulation of sedimentary rock on the Colorado Plateau with the complementary bookend found at the bottom of Grand Canyon. The geologic processes illustrated at the edge of this plateau are an important piece of the larger geologic landscape of southwest Utah to which the monument's many stories and features are tied.
- **Plant and Animal Communities.** The protected environment at Cedar Breaks provides a relatively undisturbed area for plants and animals. Visitors have the opportunity to view wildlife typically found in subalpine ecosystems. The rim and geologic amphitheater display a broad array of flora in a relatively small area, ranging from ancient bristlecone pines to rare and endemic high-elevation plants. Lush meadows present an annual explosion of colorful wildflowers.
- **High-Quality Scenic Vistas, Dark Night Skies, and Soundscapes.** Clean air and largely undeveloped viewsheds allow visitors to find beauty year-round in the vivid colors of the amphitheater, dramatic rock formations, stunning vistas of towering Brian Head Peak and the more distant ranges. On the high plateau, alpine meadows brimming with wildflowers and ancient forests provide a stark contrast with the ruggedness found in views of the breaks. The dark and brilliant night skies and natural soundscapes at Cedar Breaks are of superb quality in part due to the high elevation and remote location of the monument.



Fundamental Resources and Values

- **Archeological Resources.** Cedar Breaks protects remnants of humanity's past. The Brian Head chert found in abundance within the monument has been an important resource for the many cultures that have utilized the landscapes of Cedar Breaks for millennia. The remnants of historic structures, prehistoric lithic scatters, tools, and other artifacts and features in the monument provide scientific value and insight into humanity's use of high-elevation landscapes from the end of the last ice age through the early 20th century.
- **Opportunities to Experience, Support, and Study the Resources.** Outstanding scientific interest as well as the opportunity for public recreation and appreciation influenced the establishment of the monument. Through vital partnerships and a variety of programs, visitors experience recreational and educational opportunities that foster invaluable connections to this place. Continued scientific research within the monument bolsters the ability to understand, interpret, and protect resources at Cedar Breaks National Monument.



Other Important Resources and Values



Cedar Breaks National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Recommended Wilderness.** Seventy-eight percent of Cedar Breaks National Monument (4,830 acres) is protected as recommended wilderness, and this high-elevation landscape strongly exemplifies the qualities that comprise wilderness character. The largely pristine and primitive landscape provides opportunities for solitude and a natural haven for flora and fauna. The monument's designated research natural area, which shares the same boundaries as the recommended wilderness, further demonstrates the special pristine naturalness of this area and its importance for scientific research and education.
- **Historic Structures.** Beginning with early 20th century tourism development through today, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Utah Parks Company, and now the National Park Service have provided facilities and access for visitors to experience the rich human history of this region. The visitor center and ranger cabin at Cedar Breaks are legacies of the Civilian Conservation Corps, still used by the monument to this day. Both structures are used daily by personnel and monument visitors during the summer months. While the small 900 square foot visitor center is often inadequate to meet the needs of over 595,000 annual visitors, it is believed to be the only CCC-constructed visitor center in the National Park Service that is still in active use today. A single shed also remains from the Cedar Breaks Lodge complex and stands as a monument to the Utah Parks Company and early 20th century tourism in the southwestern parks.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Solitude.** The juxtaposition of the subalpine environment and the geologic amphitheater affords multiple opportunities to explore a wild place of solitude, beauty, and silence.
- **Wildlife/Vegetation.** Cedar Breaks provides opportunities to explore the intense struggle for life as the flora and fauna interact with this high-elevation environment in their efforts to survive.
- **Beauty.** The vibrant palette of colors in Cedar Breaks can be found in the interplay of rock and light, the explosion of wildflower blooms, the ever-changing weather, and other dynamic natural processes that contribute to the beauty of the monument.



- **Physical Geography.** As a result of geologic processes, the high elevation of Cedar Breaks offers a stark contrast from the surrounding desert and provides visitors with a different perspective as they experience the region.
- **Peoples' Use of the Land.** Through such activities as lithic tool manufacturing, livestock grazing, recreation, and tourism, the way in which people value the land at Cedar Breaks and the surrounding region is inextricably linked to geologic and natural processes. (Possible subthemes include the roles of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Utah Parks Company, and National Park Service.)
- **Geology.** The colorfully layered mineral-imbued scenic amphitheater of Cedar Breaks National Monument provides opportunities to explore and discover the forces of erosion, uplift, deposition, and volcanic activities that have occurred over millions of years, and that uplift and erosion continues to this day.
- **Wilderness.** The remote location, solitude, natural sounds and views, and the pristine dark night sky of Cedar Breaks reveal the character and beauty of true wilderness and the benefits of preservation and stewardship.
- **Night Sky.** The dark night sky at Cedar Breaks has deep natural, cultural, and scenic importance, a vanishing resource prominent in many visitors' values.