SALT LAKE
# CITY WEEKLY
UTAH'S INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER
CITYWEEKLY.NET | JULY 30, 2020 | VOL. 37 | NO. 30

## YOUR GUIDE TO GET OUTSIDE NOW

If Utah's mountains and deserts are calling, a new book from a Utah author tells you how to answer.

BY JASON STEVENSON

Local outdoor author Jason Stevenson says a pandemic may be the best time to enjoy Utah's great outdoors

COURTESY PHOTO

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In these pandemic times, maybe you want to go camping in the west desert but don't know where. Or you want to try backpacking in the Uintas but aren't sure what to bring. Perhaps you're just terrified of bears.

In this issue, we cherry-pick the best advice from *Outdoor Adventure Guides: Backpacking & Hiking*, a new book by Salt Lake City-based author Jason Stevenson. As a former staff editor at both *Backpacker* and *Outside* magazines, Stevenson knows which skills matter. Plus, he's willing to enhance his advice with real stories of his own mistakes and lessons from 20 years of backcountry adventure—from climbing high peaks to taking his children on their first backpacking trip.

This exclusive excerpt for *City Weekly* represents just a fraction of this book. If you want to learn more, pick up a copy of *Outdoor Adventure Guides: Backpacking & Hiking* at your local bookstore or order it online.

## HOW TO GO CAMPING

Day hiking is loads of fun, but if the sun begins to set while you're still on the trail, you could end up like Cinderella at the prince's ball—racing to finish the final miles before the last light is gone. What if you didn't need to rush? What if you could stay and enjoy the vivid sunset, the starry sky and a roaring campfire?

If any of those options sound appealing, then you're ready for the next step in outdoor adventure—camping overnight. Just like hiking, camping enables you to dial in the right balance of comfort and adventure. For instance, car-campers drive up to a campsite, park their cars, unload their gear and set up a tent, a trailer or an RV. Backpackers, on the other hand, hike into the woods to pitch a tent at a campsite far from any roads or cars. No matter how you camp, you can enjoy spending the night outdoors.

## SPENDING THE NIGHT OUTSIDE

The biggest fear most people have about camping is abandoning their familiar beds. Without a plush mattress, sheets, and blankets, they worry sleeping will be too cold, bumpy and rough. It's true that changes to your nighttime routine can disrupt your ability to sleep. The key is to make camping as relaxing, comfortable and fun as possible. Here are some comfort-focused tips to help first-time campers enjoy a restful night:

- Pack a comfortable travel pillow.
- Go to bed with a full stomach but not with a full bladder.
- Don't try to fall asleep immediately; drift off by reading a book or a magazine or by telling stories.
- Bring warm clothes for sleeping; long underwear or sweatshirts and pants work best.


Ready for dinner

COURTESY OF JASON STEVENSON


Car-camping cuisine


Save room for s'mores

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## TYPES OF CAMPGROUNDS

The familiar scenes of picnic tables, fire pits and pine trees make all campgrounds look the same at first glance, but there are as many types of campgrounds as there are kinds of campers. From the kid-friendly activities of private campgrounds to the seclusion of a shady glen in a national forest or to a rocky shelf perched on the edge of a canyon, you can find the ideal overnight spot to make your outdoor adventure complete. The secret is matching your desires to the right type of campground.

## PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS

National chains like KOA, along with thousands of independent operators, make up the world of private campgrounds. While these campgrounds exist everywhere, they are often clustered near the entrances to national parks and other popular recreation areas. Campers seeking an outdoor experience surrounded by nature won't find it at these densely packed and noisy establishments. They cater more to families seeking an inexpensive, action-filled vacation. Still, private campgrounds provide a predictable, affordable and enjoyable outdoor experience to millions of campers each year, at nightly rates below what you'll pay for a motel room.

## PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS: STATE & LOCAL PARKS

The pristine forests, lakes and rivers that make state and county parks so attractive also appeal to campers looking for an escape. These publicly owned campgrounds are often smaller than private establishments like KOA campgrounds, and sites are clustered to preserve more open space for hiking, viewing wildlife and other outdoor activities.

Tents are the most common form of shelter at public campgrounds, although many places can accommodate RVs and trailers with larger parking spaces. Individual campsites often include picnic tables and fire pits, while several sites will share access to potable (i.e., drinkable) water, basic toilets, and sometimes hot-water showers. Dogs and other pets are permitted at state and local parks and nearby trails more often than at national parks and recreation areas.

## PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS: NATIONAL PARKS & FORESTS

Campgrounds located inside national parks and forests offer an authentic and low-frills overnight camping experience that is closer to the main attractions than private campgrounds outside the park or forest boundaries. These public campgrounds can also run the gamut from super luxurious to super primitive. At Grand Canyon National Park, for instance, car-campers and RV drivers can stay overnight at Mather Campground, a sprawling tent and camper village with a full-size grocery store and hot showers, while backpackers can pitch their tent rock slab halfway down the canyon.

Whether you camp on the canyon's rim or at the bottom, all campgrounds inside national park boundaries require permits and have a fee. Be sure to check with individual parks prior to booking your trip. Look up campground details for each national park on its website, all of which can be accessed through the National Park Service (NPS) website, nps.gov/findapark.

National forest campgrounds are generally smaller, less developed and less crowded than those at national parks. These campgrounds are often located at lakes, reservoirs, trailheads or along hiking trails and are designed for a mix of car-campers, backpackers and RVs and trailers. [Note: All campsites in the Uinta Mountains are on national forest land.] You can find a list of national forests by state at the U.S. Forest Service website, fs.usda.gov, under the "Visit Us" menu or make reservations for specific sites at the website recreation.gov.

*[The above excerpt is from Chapter 3 "Camping Overnight"]*

## LEARN HOW TO GO BACKPACKING

Choosing to backpack rather than day hike amps up the adventure level of any trip. After a day or two on the trail, you will forget about email, cell phones and appointments. Instead, you'll be thinking about what you need to do during the next hour, day and night. After all, with backpacking, there is no 4WD car, convenience store or motel to fall back on.

These are just a few of the major challenges that differentiate backpacking from day hiking:

- Carrying enough food and water for the duration of the hike
- Finding and setting up a campsite
- Navigating trail turns and junctions
- Remembering to pack all the essential gear

Once you've picked a trail—or at least know the general area where you want to hike—the next step is to plan your trip. You need to decide where to start, where to camp and how many miles to cover each day. As you begin the process, keep these route-planning principles in mind:

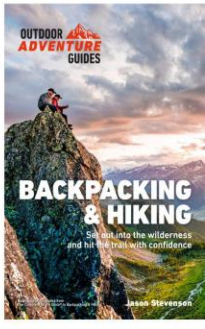
- If you're new to backpacking, hike with an experienced friend or in a group.
- Avoid planning too many miles for the first or last days of a trip.
- Factor elevation gain and loss into your mileage. Going up and down will slow your pace.
- If the trail goes above 6,000 feet of elevation, add more time to account for acclimatization.
- Keep mileage low on days with significant elevation gains and losses.

## JUDGING DISTANCE AND TERRAIN

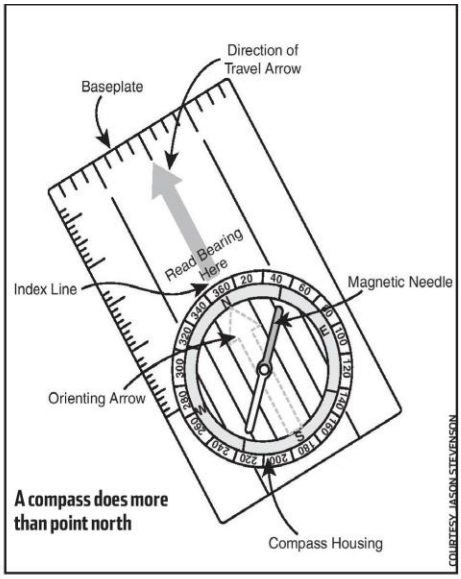
How many miles do you think you can hike in a day? Five, 10 maybe 15? Not only does it depend on your physical fitness and how much weight you're carrying, but it also depends on the terrain.

Most guidebooks and online trip reports assign trails a difficulty rating, either a numbered scale or descriptive words like "strenuous," "moderate" or "easy." Your best strategy is to know your hiking strengths and weaknesses and be conservative in your expectations.

Most backpackers travel at an average speed between 1 and 2 mph, including rest breaks. More experienced hikers can move at 2 to 3 mph, but you've got to be trucking to go that fast consistently. Beginning backpackers should limit themselves to trails rated as "easy" or "moderate" and cover a maximum of 6 to 9 miles per day, or about 5 to 7 hours of hiking. As you become more experienced, you can increase both the difficulty and mileage of the trails you hike.




*[The above excerpt is from Chapter 4 "Backpacking Basics]*



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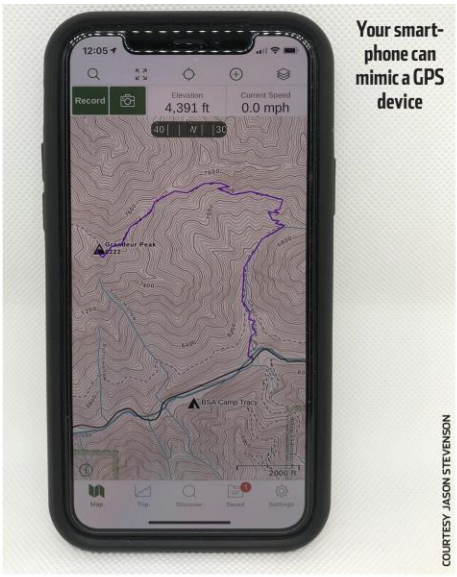

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## WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET LOST

Every hiker gets in trouble. No matter how skilled or careful you are, sooner or later, you're going to make a mistake. When it happens, you're going to pause, look at your surroundings, stare at your phone or map again and start to get worried. Then, you're going to make one of two choices.

The first choice, and the one I wouldn't recommend pursuing, is to make hasty poor decisions that will cause you to become frustrated, cold, wet and more distant from a potential solution. The second choice is to make smart decisions that enable you to regain your bearings; stay warm, dry and optimistic; and increase your chances of solving your problem. In this chapter, I'll teach you how to make the right choices to turn a potentially perilous experience into a great story you can tell your friends.

## TURN YOUR PHONE INTO A GPS DEVICE

Modern smartphones contain GPS chips that can pinpoint your location even when you're outside of cell phone coverage. This means your smartphone can mimic a GPS device—especially if you download navigation apps like Gaia GPS, AllTrails or ViewRanger that let you to track your route on detailed topo maps you download from websites before a hike.

## HOW TO GET LOST

The division between knowing exactly where you are and being lost isn't a big, bold line that you cross on a trail. Instead, getting lost is a gradual process. This exact scenario recently happened to me. While descending an 8,000-foot peak in Utah, my wife and I missed a 90-degree turn in the trail (and a giant X of crossed logs designed to warn hikers about the direction change) and began scrambling down a steep gully. Even though I said, "I don't remember hiking up this part" several times, and the terrain was much more challenging than anything we'd encountered on the ascent, we kept going. Despite all the hints we passed along the way, we didn't recognize our predicament until the terrain became impassable and we almost started a rockslide. That brief but scary episode is a good reminder how tunnel vision can escalate one mistake into a dangerous situation.

## COMMON CAUSES

The process of becoming lost also can start long before you arrive at the trailhead. A bad decision made at home—like failing to notify anyone of your route or forgetting a detailed map—can later snowball into big trouble. According to the search-and-rescue (SAR) statistics from national parks, "errors in judgment" were the primary reason (22.3 percent) people needed rescuing in national parks, followed by fatigue (16.8 percent) and insufficient gear (15.6 percent). In fact, the thousands of hikers who become lost on trails each year generally make the same half-dozen errors:

- Carrying improper maps or no maps at all and forgetting a compass, GPS or cell phone with a navigation app
- Starting a hike too late in the day
- Being ill-equipped for bad weather like rain, ice or snow, or not being aware of obstacles like high water at river crossings
- Splitting up a group on the trail
- Leaving a known trail to take a shortcut
- Ignoring obvious signs to turn back

## DECIDING WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE

The best defense you have against getting lost is spotting the early signs of danger. This means being observant about the trail, talking about what you're seeing and thinking and connecting the various dots of information. By the time you realize you're lost, you'll have already passed dozens of visual clues indicating something is wrong. Here is what to look for:

- A previously clear trail dwindles to a barely traveled path.
- You are retracing your steps and the trail and scenery don't look familiar.
- Blazes, signposts and other markings disappear or change.
- The trail climbs when it should be descending, or vice versa.
- The sun is positioned in the wrong part of the sky for the direction you should be hiking.
- The trail is blocked by two sticks or logs crossed like an X—meaning "Not the way."
- You reach a river crossing or trail junction that shouldn't be there.
- Footprints and other indications of other hikers disappear.

*[The above excerpt is from Chapter 16 "How to Survive"]*

## HOW TO HANG A BEAR BAG

At many backcountry campsites, you'll need to hang a bear bag—a stuff sack filled with your food, trash and smelly toiletries—at least 10 feet off the ground. Hang a bag even when bears aren't present because this method will also protect your food from other mammals and rodents. Before you get started, you'll need to collect the following gear:

- 50 to 100 feet of 1/4-inch nylon rope or cord
- A large nylon stuff sack with a drawstring closure
- A metal carabiner clip
- A baseball-sized rock
- A hiking sock—a glove also works
- All of your food, trash and smelly toiletries

Next, you need to walk at least 200 feet from your campsite and find two tall trees at least 15 to 20 feet apart and with thick branches 20 to 25 feet off the ground. Leafy trees are better than pine trees. Once you find a good spot, follow these steps:

1. Place the rock in the sock and tie one end of the rope to the open end of the sock.

2. While holding on to the free end of the rope, throw the rock/sock over one of the branches. Watch out for ricochets and snags.

3. Tie the free end of the rope securely around the first tree trunk, and then repeat the rock/sock throw over the branch on the other tree while keeping the middle of the rope on the ground.

4. Tie the carabiner to the middle of the rope and attach it to the stuff sack.

5. Untie the sock from the rope and pull on that end until the stuff sack is raised at least 10 to 12 feet off the ground. Because the weight of the sack will cause the rope to sag, you need to pick branches much higher than 10 feet.

6. Tie the end of the rope around the second tree trunk and check to make sure all knots are secure. (Note: the image shown does not utilize the "double suspension" hang described above.)

*[The above excerpt is from Chapter 18 "Where the Wild Things Are." Excerpts are from* Backpacking & Hiking, *reprinted by permission of Alpha Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © 2020 by Jason Stevenson]*

It's cooler down by the river

COURTESY OF JASON STEVENSON

# CAMPING IN COVID TIMES

Why a pandemic may be the best time to enjoy Utah's outdoor amenities.

While the ongoing pandemic is encouraging more people to escape to Utah's recreation areas, many wonder if it's safe to go hiking and camping. The answer, thankfully, is yes.

Going outside is beneficial for both your mental and physical health, and it's safe to go with those you live with. Camping, hiking and backpacking get you outside to have fun, breathe fresh air and keep your distance from others. After all, you can't get more socially distant than pitching a tent in a forest, miles from the nearest human being.

Still, the pandemic has changed the way we plan and experience outdoor recreation. Here are tips on how to be safe while enjoying the outdoors.

## DO THE ☒COVID TURN'

When passing other hikers on the trail, one group should step aside and face away from the other group as they pass. It's not rude, it's hygienic! Trail etiquette says that hikers traveling uphill have the right of way (and descending hikers should step aside), but it all depends on which group moves first and has the widest and safest spot to move aside.

## LEAVE THE CROWDS BEHIND

The Centers for Disease Control recommends you avoid crowded recreation areas, a description that includes most national parks during a typical summer. As a result, many national parks are limiting the number of daily visitors, restricting car access and closing sites and campgrounds to keep crowds away.

So, instead of trying to camp inside a national park, consider pitching your tent in a nearby national forest that offers plenty of less-crowded campsites. For example, the easiest summertime escape from Salt Lake City are the Uinta Mountains, best approached through Kamas. These national forest slopes feature a stunning number of trails, lakes, rivers and campsites perched at a refreshingly cool elevation above the city's scorching concrete bubble. Campgrounds at these alternative places might lack amenities like flush toilets or a general store, but you can handle those deprivations. A more challenging approach is to "boondock" camp, which means finding an empty spot to pitch your tent on BLM or national forest land. You won't find any toilets or drinkable water at these unofficial campsites, but you are guaranteed plenty of solitude and open space.

## KEEP FAMILY CLOSE

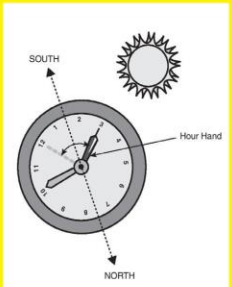
Only share a tent or shelter with people you live with—or tent alone. If this means you're suddenly in the market for a one-person tent, opt for a free-standing model like the REI Half Dome (which comes in 1,2,3 and 4-person models) so you can pitch it on rock slaps—a common terrain feature in Utah—without needing to stake it down.

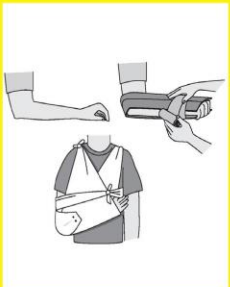
## AVOID SHARING FOOD

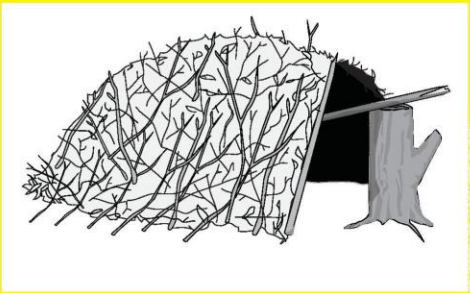
Camping encourages everyone to relax their cleanliness standards (think of the 3-second rule for dropped food). But you can't relax kitchen hygiene during a pandemic. When hiking in groups, avoid sharing cookware by marking bowls, plates and utensils with colored tape or stickers indicating someone's name. Instruct everyone to pack and clean their own gear. Use a designated serving spoon, and don't let anyone lick the pot—excluding dogs. When sharing trail snacks like GORP, pour the snacks into someone hands instead of letting them dig around for a handful.

## KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN

Pack extra hand sanitizer and antiseptic wipes and store them with your food and your toilet kit. The most important times to clean your hands are before cooking meals, eating or drinking. You should also sanitize your hands and gear after using a shared bathroom, trash bin or water spigot. Because my family loves to find a remote dispersed campsite on Utah's BLM land, I invested in a portable toilet with a built-in water tank that flushes. Set this toilet in an isolated spot, and you can boast of having a personal privy with the best view in the county.





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# THE TEN ESSENTIALS EXPLAINED

Learn why every hiker should carry these items on every trip.

**1 Map/Compass/GPS**
At some point, like at a trail junction or crossing open ground, you're going to need to know which direction to go. You can guess, or you can consult one of these. Hint: Always carry a paper map even if you navigate with a GPS device or smartphone app.

**2 Headlamp**
Why bring a headlamp on a day hike? Because a badly twisted ankle can turn a day hike into an overnight trip. Being hands-free makes headlamps more convenient than flashlights, while LED bulbs shine bright but conserve battery power.

**3 Knife or multi-tool**
There are so many uses for a sharp blade—from cutting kindling sticks to repairing gear—that you should carry one. A multi-tool adds more capability, especially one with pliers for removing splinters or picking up hot cooking pots.

**4 First-aid kit**
Prune your first-aid kit of extraneous items (SAM splint) and make sure it contains these essentials: adhesive bandages, antibiotic ointment, waterproof medical tape, pills (ibuprofen, antihistamine, anti diarrheal), antiseptic wipes and safety pins (for making a sling).

**5 Fire Starter**
Always bring two types of fire starters because the chance of both failing is extremely low. The most popular options are butane lighters, matches and magnesium strikers.

**6 Warm/dry clothes to layer**
The simple act of putting on a fleece pullover or a rain jacket can delay the onset of hypothermia, a dangerous condition when your core temperature plummets and your body can't warm itself anymore.

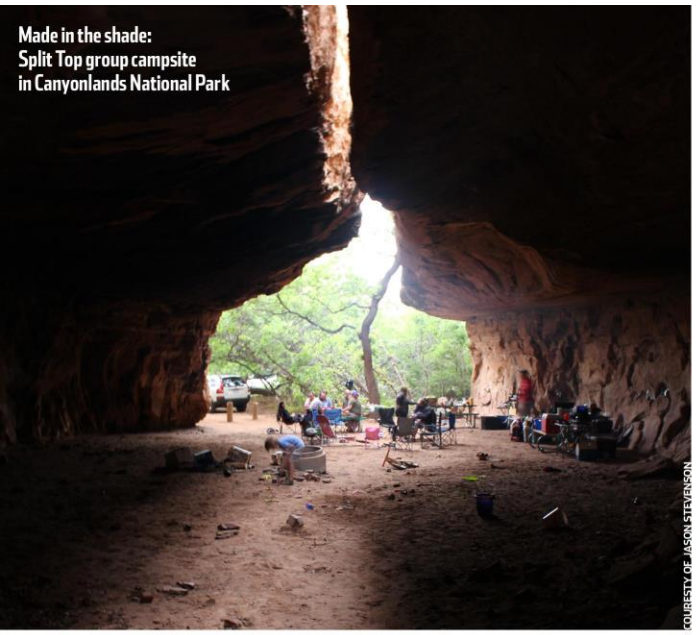
**7 Gear-repair kit**
More important for backpacking, where a gear failure can imperil your ability to keep dry, moving or on track, a gear-repair kit can be a DIY zip-lock bag filled with a few items: plastic zip ties, extra shoelaces, parachute cord, safety pins, nylon repair tape, needle and heavy thread. Plus, remember to wrap a few strips of duct tape around a water bottle or hiking pole.

**8 Signal devices**
Don't bring a signal mirror (it's too complex to use and only effective during daylight). Instead, pack a whistle, which can be heard a mile away day or night.

**9 Extra food and water**
An extra high-energy, freeze-dried food pouch is lightweight insurance against lost or spoilt food or an unexpected night in the woods. Since water is heavy, packing a water filter gives you the ability to replenish your bottles along the trail if you run out.

**10 Sunscreen and insect repellent**
Because sunscreen is the easiest essential to forget, keep a tube of 30 SPF in zip-lock bag in your car.

For bug spray, a high concentration of DEET means the repellent will remain effective for a longer period of time. Choose products with 40% DEET or more. But make sure you double-bag any containers, as DEET melts some synthetics, including clothing like spandex and rayon.



Made in the shade: Split Top group campsite in Canyonlands National Park

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## THE BEST UTAH CAMPSITES FOR..

No matter your yearning, our state has a spectacular place to camp or hike that fills it.

**Star gazing**
**White Rock Bay Campground** in Antelope Island State Park or **Natural Bridges National Monument** in the Four Corners area
—Call ahead to Antelope Island to ask about the mosquito and gnat situation.

**Escaping the summer heat**
Numerous established campgrounds along the Mirror Lake Highway (UT-150) in the Uintas.
—Try Shady Dell or Trial Lake campgrounds.

**First family backpacking trip**
Ruth Lake or Cliff Lake, Uintas
—Hike less than a mile on flat and easy trails to reach stunning lake-side campsites.

**Dispersed camping close to SLC**
White Rock, West Desert near Dugway Proving Ground
—Be sure to bring your own water. Dog-friendly, but check wind conditions.

**Red rock solitude**
Wedge Overlook, San Rafael Swell
—Don't miss the dinosaur footprint in Buckhorn Wash that's waited 100 million years for you to see it.

**Lazy river in the desert**
Boondock camping along the banks of the San Rafael River Road

**Dispersed camping near Moab**
Multiple campgrounds, including Hunter Canyon and Ledges, along Kane Creek Road, a dirt track that climbs through red-rock canyons
—The farther you travel along this gravel road, the wilder everything gets.

**Beating the heat in Southern Utah**
Te-Ah Campground, Dixie National Forest
—Located at an elevation of 9,200 feet, this campsite has water and nearby access to Navajo Lake and Cedar Breaks National Monument

**Kid-friendly day hike in the mountains**
Fehr Lake Trail, Uintas

**Camping and floating**
San Rafael Bridge Campground, San Rafael Swell

**Yurt living in the winter**
Lily Lake Touring Area, Uintas

**Exploring a canyon**
Lower Muley Twist Canyon, Capitol Reef National Park
—Drive the famous Burr Trail switchbacks to the trailhead at The Post.

**Peak bagging**
Henry's Fork Lake, High Uinta Wilderness
—The best base camp to climb Kings Peak, the highest point in Utah

**Oasis in the mountains**
Christmas Meadows, Uintas
—Reserve six months ahead of time to snag a weekend spot.

**Most unique group site**
Split Top, Canyonlands National Park (Needles District)

**Backpacking to a beautiful alpine lake**
Amethyst Lake Trail, Uintas

**Catching your dinner**
Chain Lakes Trail, High Uinta Wilderness

**Long-trail hiking**
The Highline Trail (83 miles), High Uinta Wilderness

**Getting away from it all**
Cathedral Valley, Capitol Reef National Park