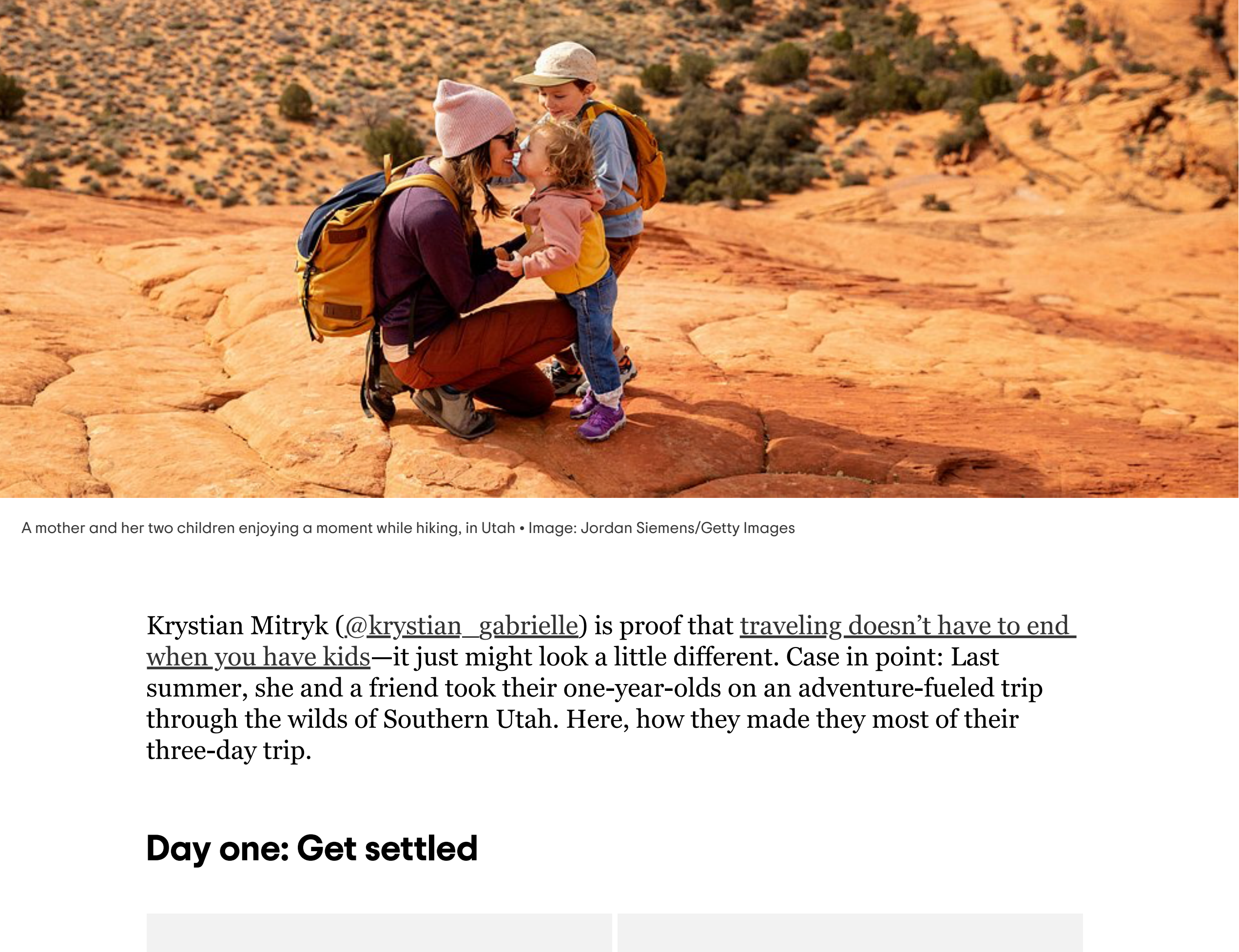


A family-friendly guide to Utah's national parks

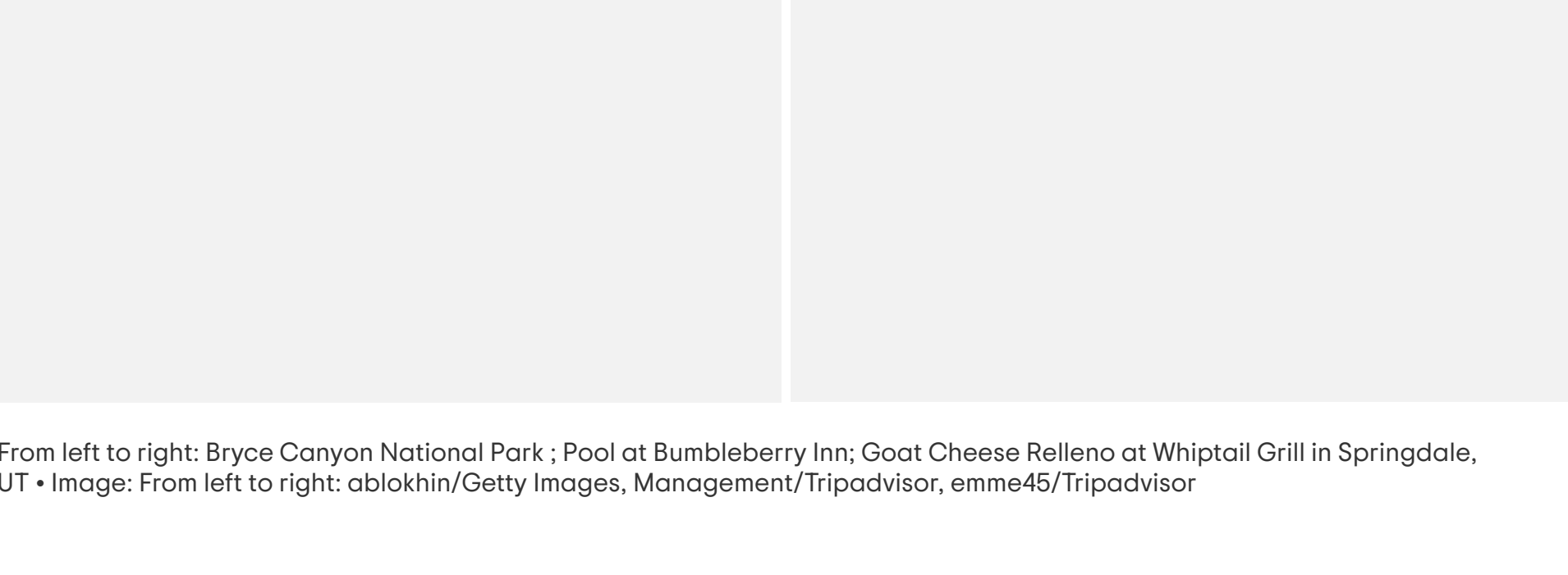
How to tackle Bryce Canyon and Zion national parks with toddlers in tow.



By Tommie Ethington • Mar 19, 2024 • 3 minutes read



Day one: Get settled



From left to right: Bryce Canyon National Park ; Pool at Bumbleberry Inn; Goat Cheese Relleno at Whiptail Grill in Springdale, UT • Image: From left to right: oblokhini/Getty Images, Management/Tripadvisor, emme45/Tripadvisor

The hour drive from the St. George Airport to Springdale, UT, feels like something out of a science fiction novel with its scenery of other-worldly landscapes and colorful rock formations. Set against a backdrop of red cliffs, the Travelers' Choice Award–winning [Bumbleberry Inn](#) is an ideal home base for exploring the nearby national parks. Kids will love the heated outdoor pool and large lawn, while adults will appreciate the guest laundry facility and gift shop with hiking gear that makes packing and last-minute buys easier. Have dinner at the [Whiptail Grill](#), a Travelers' Choice Award–winning Mexican restaurant with a Route 66 motif and plenty of outdoor seating. Word to the wise: There's a reason they're famous for their goat cheese chile relleno.

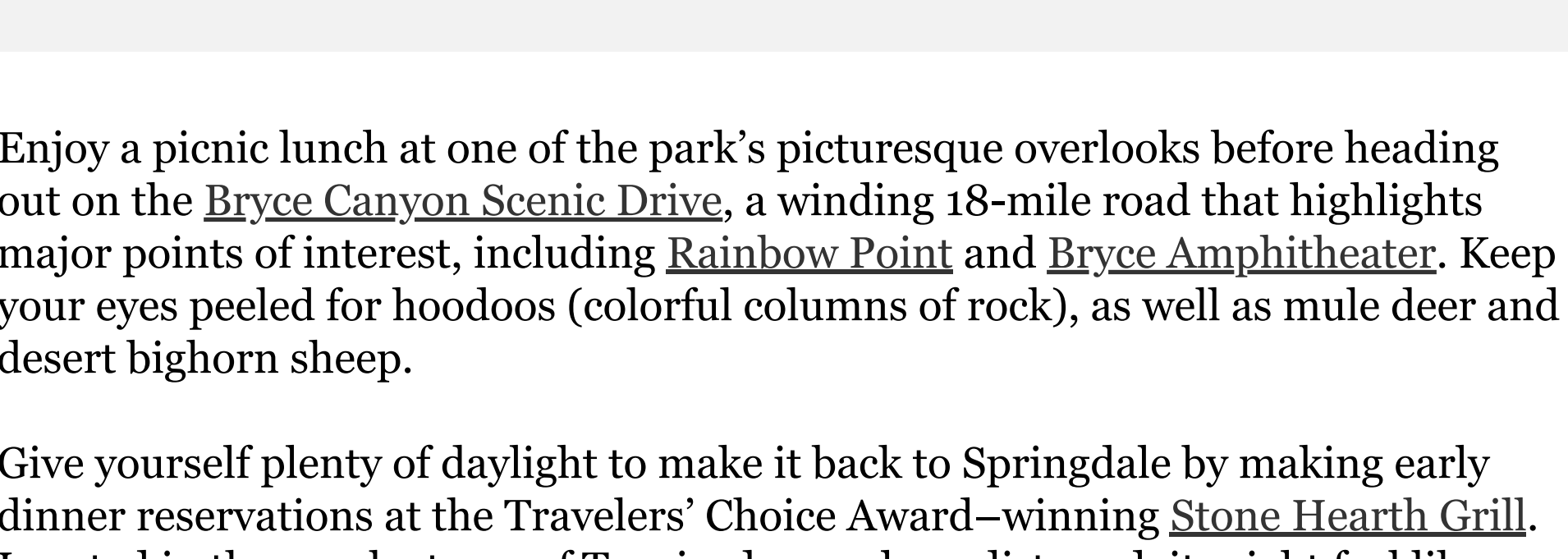
Day two: Experience the beauty of Bryce



Navajo Loop Trail in Bryce Canyon National Park, UT • Image: Nico De Pasquale Photography/Getty Images

Rise early for a complimentary breakfast—think Belgium waffles, biscuits and gravy, or a Rocky Mountain omelet—at [Porter's](#), the hotel's on-site restaurant. On your way out of town, stop for picnic supplies at the [Sol Foods](#) artisan market and deli.

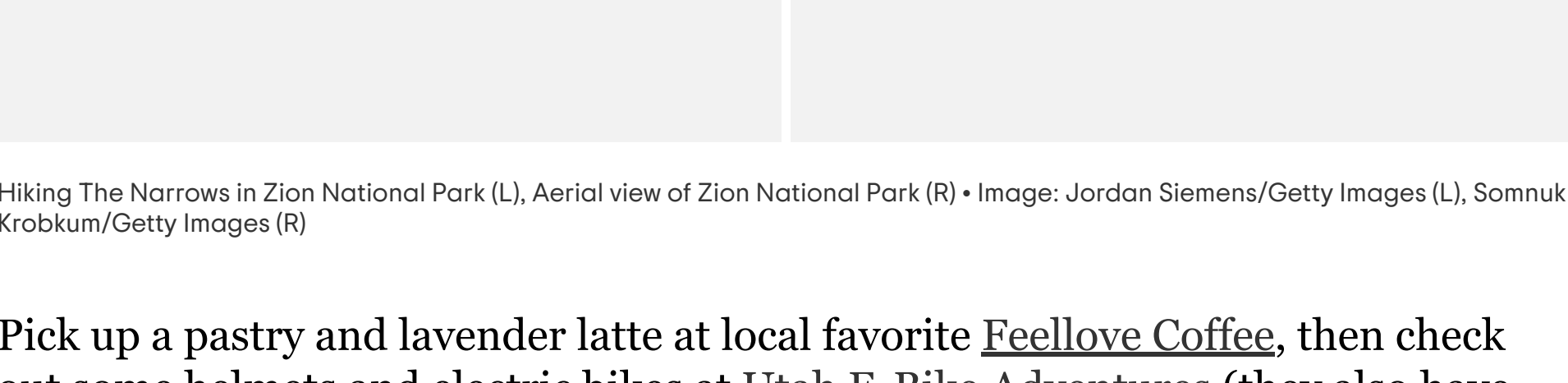
After making the roughly hour-and-a-half drive to [Bryce Canyon National Park](#) (another Travelers' Choice Award winner), waste no time getting outside. There are several easy, yet rewarding hikes: From the one-mile [Bristlecone Loop](#) through spruce-fir forests to the [Queen's Garden Trail](#), a steeper 1.8-mile trek into the canyon with a rock formation said to resemble Queen Victoria. The [Mossy Cave Trail](#) also packs a punch in just under a mile. Go between May and October to experience a small waterfall.



Enjoy a picnic lunch at one of the park's picturesque overlooks before heading out on the [Bryce Canyon Scenic Drive](#), a winding 18-mile road that highlights major points of interest, including [Rainbow Point](#) and [Bryce Amphitheater](#). Keep your eyes peeled for hoodoos (colorful columns of rock), as well as mule deer and desert bighorn sheep.

Give yourself plenty of daylight to make it back to Springdale by making early dinner reservations at the Travelers' Choice Award–winning [Stone Hearth Grill](#). Located in the nearby town of Tropic, down a long dirt road, it might feel like you're lost, but keep going: The patio views alone are worth the trip and the menu has everything from local, grass-fed beef to vegan chili. Whatever you do, don't skip dessert: The hot fruit crisp is as fresh as they come.

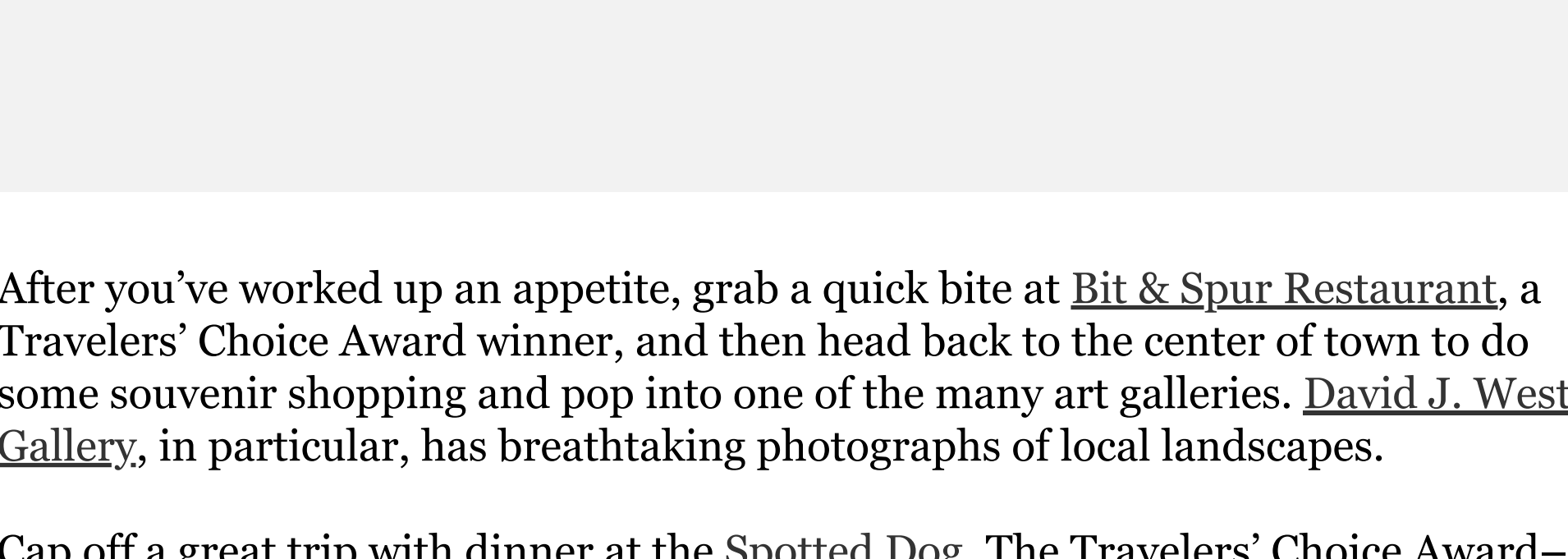
Day three: Cruise through Zion



Hiking The Narrows in Zion National Park (L), Aerial view of Zion National Park (R) • Image: Jordan Siemens/Getty Images (L), Somnuk Krobkum/Getty Images (R)

Pick up a pastry and lavender latte at local favorite [Feellove Coffee](#), then check out some helmets and electric bikes at [Utah E-Bike Adventures](#) (they also have baby seats available for use). For most of the year, Travelers' Choice Award–winning [Zion National Park](#) is closed to private vehicles and accessible only via a park-operated shuttle. Biking gives you the chance to experience the park at your own speed.

Your first stop should be the [Zion Canyon Visitor Center](#) to learn about the history of the canyon—make sure and ask the rangers for intel on the trails and weather conditions (skip the slot canyons if flash floods are even a remote possibility). On a clear day, [Emerald Pools](#) and [Riverside Walk](#) are great options for a stroll. The latter is also the gateway to [The Narrows](#), a popular stretch of canyon accessed via a shallow river. Water shoes and hiking poles are recommended and available for rent from a number of outfitters outside of the park.



After you've worked up an appetite, grab a quick bite at [Bit & Spur Restaurant](#), a Travelers' Choice Award winner, and then head back to the center of town to do some souvenir shopping and pop into one of the many art galleries. [David J. West Gallery](#), in particular, has breathtaking photographs of local landscapes.

Cap off a great trip with dinner at the [Spotted Dog](#). The Travelers' Choice Award–winning food (and extensive wine list) says fine dining but the atmosphere isn't fussy. Order the pasta “purses” with pear, ricotta cheese, and sage-infused butter.

Krystian's picks:

Biggest surprise: I was most surprised by how chilly it was biking through Zion National Park, even in August. It was so crisp and refreshing, like a literal breath of fresh air.

Most hospitable restaurant: The staff at the [Whiptail Grill](#) were very kind and patient and made sure to get our babies taken care of first. I'm also so glad we trusted our waiter's recommendations because the meal was divine.

Most useful piece of gear: Our Thule hiking packs. Not only did they carry the babies but we were able to carry all of the things we would need while in the parks.

Experience that energized you the most: Hiking out of Bryce Canyon was tough at points. We had to stop and take breaks but we pushed each other and we did it.

Where To

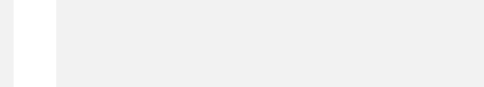
Tag along as our Travelers' Choice winners come to life in curated itineraries.

Read more



Tommie Ethington

Tommie Ethington is a Dallas-based freelance writer. Formerly an editor for Southwest Airlines' in-flight magazine, she continues to write about travel, design and interesting people for a variety of publications including Condé Nast Traveler, Rolling Stone and Texas Monthly. Find more of her work at [tommieethington.com](#).



Related Stories

SPONSORED

Into the wild: Unforgettable adventures begin with Alaska...

Mar 21, 2024 • 5 min read

Are you ready to fall head over heels for the untamed beauty of Alaska? Princess Cruises', the #1 cruise line in Alaska*, is here to sweep you off your feet. Picture this: ...

By Ami Angelowicz

The ultimate, totally doable Alaska family road trip

Oct 27, 2023 • 9 min read

Your next great family adventure in the Last Frontier is this Alaska road trip.

By Karthika Gupta

5 wine country destinations in California

Oct 21, 2024 • 6 min read

California is known for its offering unique wines and you're a wine connoisseur

By Stephanie Robalino