



Utah's Mighty National Parks to Remain Open Amidst Shutdown

State officials are prepared to deploy a contingency plan to keep Utah's National Parks open for visitors and residents alike

SALT LAKE CITY — SEPT. 29, 2023 — With the government shutdown imminent, Utah State Officials are prepared to deploy a contingency plan to keep **Utah's Mighty 5® national parks open.**

"Our first priority is watching out for visitors who have traveled from all over the world to have once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Our National Parks will remain open," said Vicki Varela, Managing Director of the Utah Office of Tourism. "We are also mindful of the communities that rely on the visitor economy, and of course, protecting the natural environment of these beautiful places."

Utah plans to provide earmarked funds to cover basic operating expenses to various National Parks foundations affiliated with the national parks. The foundations will not operate the parks, but will transfer state funds to the parks to underwrite basic operations. Essential services that will be covered include visitor centers, permitting, trash pickup and bathroom cleanup. Discussions are also underway with the Department of Interior to ensure plans are in place for shuttle operations in Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks.

"In Utah, we have the best economy in the United States, arguably in the nation and we intend to keep it that way," said Ryan Starks, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity. "We have encumbered \$5 million to ensure the state's National Parks remain open, despite the government shutdown."

The Utah Office of Tourism is proud to support Utah's [Mighty 5® national parks](#). Below are just a few statistics about the powerful impact of visitation to the state's National Parks on tourism:

- According to US Travel, the shutdown will cost the U.S. travel economy as much as \$140 million a day and impact access to our national parks and federal lands.
- According to the 2022 National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report, Utah is among the top three states for total economic output from national park visitor spending, with an astounding \$2.6 billion contribution to our economy.
- Utah also ranks among the top three states for jobs supported by national park economic output, with 23,300 livelihoods depending on the visitor economy. These are not just numbers; they represent the livelihoods of our friends, family members, and neighbors.

In addition, Utah's 46 State Parks are open, staffed, and ready to welcome visitors. "Tourism plays a vital role in sustaining Utah's rural economies, and our state," said Utah State Parks Director, Jeff Rasmussen. "Our parks take pride in facilitating visitor experiences. Our doors are always open."

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About the Utah Office of Tourism:

The Utah Office of Tourism's (UOT) mission is to elevate life in Utah through responsible tourism stewardship. We do this through marketing, stewardship, and development. Marketing: UOT curates messaging that inspires visitation, supports local businesses, and builds the Utah economy. Stewardship: UOT manages visitation statewide and supports the responsible discovery of Utah. Development: UOT partners with local communities to enhance and develop their visitor economies to benefit residents and visitors. Learn more at visitutah.com and travel.utah.gov.