



Photo Courtesy of Red Mountain Resort

## GIRLFRIEND GETAWAYS

### A Red Rock Weekend in St. George

By Jenny Willden

A classic girls' trip means plenty of poolside lounging, pampering, and even the occasional pillow fight. But if you want to get more out of your getaway, take your lady squad to St. George for a soul-searching, heart-pumping, gourmet-food-eating weekend so good...you may want to stay forever.

Despite a lifetime of living in Utah, I'd never visited St. George before. Sure, I'd passed through on our way to Mesquite (our family vacations were fancy like that), but I'd skipped the vibrant red rock cliffs and lava rock-strewn trails of beautiful Snow Canyon State Park. To remedy it, we traveled 4.5 hours south, trading SLC's mountain views for St. George's colorful landscape on a girls' getaway to **Red Mountain Resort**.

The resort was quiet, but full of adventurous people: solo travelers, friends, couples, and even mother-daughter duos, all here fusing outdoor recreation with relaxation—some hoping to find themselves in the process.

The welcoming campus blends with the natural surroundings and boasts three pools, fitness center, spa, outfitter gear store, and a restaurant serving three gourmet meals per day. After one delicious dinner of vegetarian cauliflower korma and the fresh salad bar—I knew we wouldn't miss a meal during our weekend here. But there's more to Red Mountain than incredible eats.

#### CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Red Mountain is an all-inclusive health retreat, though it's not based on deprivation or strict schedules. Some classes require a sign up or fee, but most are drop-in and included so you can schedule your days on the fly. From Zumba to chakra balancing to yoga to barre to fitness drumming, you could fill every day and still not do it all.

But that's not necessarily the point, part of the ethos at Red Mountain is that after a few days, doing all the things won't seem so necessary—maybe you'll just want to lounge in a hammock instead.

We never quite reached that level of Zen, instead exhausting ourselves with group hikes, tough core workouts, and paddling an oversized unicorn floatie through the outdoor pool—tougher than it looks. Soon our FOMO kicked in, and we lamented missing an underground hike to the Lava Tube Caves and a Pound Puppies hike to walk shelter dogs—that was canceled (happily) because all the pups were adopted.



Photo Credit: Melissa McGibbon

Walking the Labyrinth.





Hiking the Hidden Pinyon Trail.

It makes sense why so many people come back each year, there's so much to do in one visit.

We sought quiet on the resort's peaceful *Inspiration Trail*, which wraps through sandy desert and past black lava tubes to The Labyrinth. Here, you walk a circular path to its center with a rock in hand—leaving it behind as a symbol of the things in life you no longer want to carry.

#### GET A SPAHH TREATMENT

While we're all about finding our inner peace, it wouldn't be a girls' trip without a spa visit, right? At **Sagestone Spa**, big windows overlook the colorful cliffs, and treatments range from the recovery bliss of the **Red Rock Hiker's Massage**, designed to rejuvenate weary legs, to the unique **Red Rock Revitalizer**, where a Vichy shower rains over you during a massage.

#### RED ROCK HIKING AT SNOW CANYON STATE PARK

After you've maxed out on spacationing, head to **Snow Canyon State Park**—just a quarter-mile from Red Mountain Resort. Snow Canyon seems a misnomer for this sunny, red rock wonderscape, but it was actually named for early Utah settlers, Lorenzo and Erastus Snow—not the weather.

Preserved petroglyph panels in the park showcase evidence of earlier inhabitants, Ancestral Puebloans, who hunted and gathered here from 200-1250 A.D. Since their day the park's become a recreation hot spot, and even the backdrop for Hollywood blockbusters like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

Today, you won't find outlaws hiding in these hills, but the red Navajo sandstone partnered with ancient black lava rock makes for breathtaking hiking and biking. The vibe is similar to Zion, but without the crowds and shuttle buses. Knowing where to start in the



park's 7,000 acres and 40+ hiking trails is daunting, but Red Mountain Resort makes it easy by offering a different hike every day of the week.

Our all-girl group took the 1.5-mile *Hidden Pinyon Trail*, a short but slightly strenuous trek that crosses sandy desert and travels up steep slickrock fins to a panoramic overlook of the park. It's named—quite literally—for a tough-to-see pinyon tree visible from the overlook growing at a higher-than-typical elevation. After taking in the view, duck into a short, non-technical slot canyon for a different kind of trekking.

Not a hiker? Bring your road bike and pedal the 18-mile protected bike loop through the park past towering white and red Navajo sandstone formations. Bike riders also save \$2 on the \$6 entrance fee.



Sunset at Quail Creek State Park.

#### SUNSET PADDLING AT QUAIL CREEK STATE PARK


Post-trekking, cool off with a paddle and swim at **Quail Creek State Park**—a seemingly undiscovered desert oasis adjacent to the busy I-15 freeway. The juxtaposition of colorful rock walls against this lake's brilliant blue water makes for a scenic, serene setting that's stellar for a sunset paddle.

At this hour, the boaters are mostly gone, so you'll have the colorful sky and glassy waters all to yourself. Put in your kayak or paddleboard at the park's north end and make your way up the small tributary of Quail Creek. Here lush overhanging tree branches, diverse waterfowl, and the narrow waterway make you forget you're at a reservoir. Paddle all the way back to a pair of rope swings, and don't be afraid to jump in—the water is some of the warmest in Utah.

Go with Red Mountain Resort on a scheduled sunset tour for \$120, or DIY it and rent a kayak or stand up paddleboard for \$25 for two hours at **Dig Paddlesports** waterside shop at Quail Creek State Park.

#### IF YOU GO

Getting to Red Mountain Resort and Snow Canyon State Park is easy; take I-15 south for about 300 miles to St. George, Exit #6. Follow Bluff Street for four miles and turn left on Snow Canyon Parkway. Look for the Red Mountain Resort sign, or continue into Snow Canyon State Park.

Save by bringing your lady friends here during the low season (June–early September). Yes, it will be hot, but there are plenty of pools, unlimited indoor fitness classes, and early morning hikes to keep you cool. 



Jenny is a Utah native and Managing Editor of *Outdoor Sports Guide*. She studied journalism at Seattle University and is an avid traveler, snowboarder, and runner. A believer in the transformative power of distance running, Jenny also volunteers as a coach for Girls on the Run. Follow her adventures on Twitter @jennywillden and Instagram @jwillden.