



PINE CREEK - ZION MAIN CANYON



Rating: 3B

Length: 4-6 hours (or more for inexperienced groups)

Gear: Standard Technical Gear

Maps: Springdale East, UT

Rappels: 5-6 to 30 m (99 ft.)

Water: Wetsuit recommended in all conditions.

Flash Flood Danger: Moderate/High

Season: Late Spring, Summer, Fall

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12S 327819mE 4120300mN N37° 12' 48" W112° 56' 26"
Last Rappel	12S 327362mE 4120104mN N37° 12' 41" W112° 56' 44"
Exit Trailhead	12S 326268mE 4120454mN N37° 12' 52" W112° 57' 29"

A permit is required for this canyon. For permit information see this page (<https://www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/canyoneeringpermits.htm>) .

Hype

Pine Creek has to be the most popular technical canyon in Zion. It is a truly amazing canyon, and well worth the popularity it has attained. The canyon has a half a dozen rappels, but all are straight forward. It is a good introduction to Zion canyoneering, and suitable to all groups with competent leadership. The middle section is cavern-like and sublime. If you are only going to do one canyon in Zion, this is the one I would recommend. It can be busy, but offers many opportunities to pass slower parties if needed.

Note: Pine Creek can hold substantial water. **Wetsuit recommend.** It CAN be found bone dry during extended dry periods, but unless you have a reliable report from a Park Ranger it is dry, take a wetsuit. Many groups have shivered their way through the canyon without wetsuits when water levels were high. (Myself included during my first trip through years ago...)

Tags: canyon, wetsuit needed, beginner, access: paved

Trailhead

From the park entrance, follow highway 9 into the park. Continue past the junction with the main Zion Canyon. Shortly after, the highway crosses a bridge over Pine Creek canyon. Consider this switchback 1. Continue up 2 more switchbacks. (Or rather, the next switchback that is a right hand turn after the bridge.) This is the **exit trailhead**. If you have 2 cars, leave one here. Otherwise, chances are pretty good you can hitch hike back to the trailhead at the end of the hike.

For the trailhead, continue up the switchbacks and through the tunnel. Just on the other side of the tunnel is a small parking area on the right. This is the trailhead.

Route

Approach (1 minute)

From the trailhead, walk to the restroom, and follow a trail down to the floor of Pine Creek.

Canyon (3-4 hours)

Just after going under the bridge, a downclimb leads to a pool. This downclimb can be tricky, but an odd anchor quite a ways back from the drop can be used to rappel if desired. The first "usual" rappel is just after the pool. Rappel down to a pool, cross the pool, and continue the rappel. (20 m (66 ft.) total). A downclimb comes next, before the short (4 m (14 ft.)) rappel 2.

Rappel 3 is into the Great Cathedral, 18 m (60 ft.). This is the most scenic section of Pine Creek. The rappel often is into a deep pool. Be prepared to swim! Reaching the anchor is a bit exposed. Belay beginners or if conditions happen to be wet and slippery. The anchor is currently on the left, just out of sight until you can look around the corner.

Below the Great Cathedral, the canyon is deep, sculpted, and beautiful. Several log obstacles into pools can be downclimbed, or rappelled. As the canyon opens, a series of huge boulders are encountered. An anchor on the right at the end of these allows for a short 7 m (23 ft.) rappel down to the canyon floor.

Once the canyon opens up, the swimming obstacles are over. Bask in the sun!

From where the canyon opens, stay to the right as you work through boulders to rappel 4, a 20 m (66 ft.) rappel down a corner.

Walk down to an open area. There are two options for the final rappel, both are 30 m (99 ft.). The first option is to climb slabs left to the bench and down to the final rappel near a small arch. This option makes for an airy, mostly free rappel. Option 2 is a bolted anchor on the large boulder in the canyon above the final grotto. This is also very airy, and drops to the grotto, then continues a short additional drop to the canyon floor. Option 2 is my favorite, make sure to finish the second small drop before pulling the rope.

Exit (1-2 hours)

The fun is over. Continue down canyon, working your way through, around, and over the large boulders. (Large as in house size boulders.) **To minimize impacts, please stay in the watercourse.** The going gets easier the farther down canyon you get as the canyon widens a bit. Keep an eye out on the left after an hour or so for the brick wall of the third switchback. If you miss it, you will run into the Pine Creek swim hole. The exit trailhead is just up the hill from the swimming pool.

