

1

The Best of Utah

From its desolate red rock canyons to its soaring pine-covered peaks, Utah is spectacular. There aren't many places in the world where the forces of nature have come together with such dramatic results, creating a magnificent outdoor playground. This is also a land of cultural discovery; all the peoples who have settled here, from the ancestors of today's Pueblo Indians to Brigham Young's Mormons to mountain men and Wild West bandits, have left their distinctive mark, contributing to a wild, colorful history.

With so much to see and do, how to choose? It can be bewildering to plan your trip with so many options vying for your attention. We've made this task easier by scouring the entire state from top to bottom and choosing the very best that Utah has to offer—the places and experiences you won't want to miss.

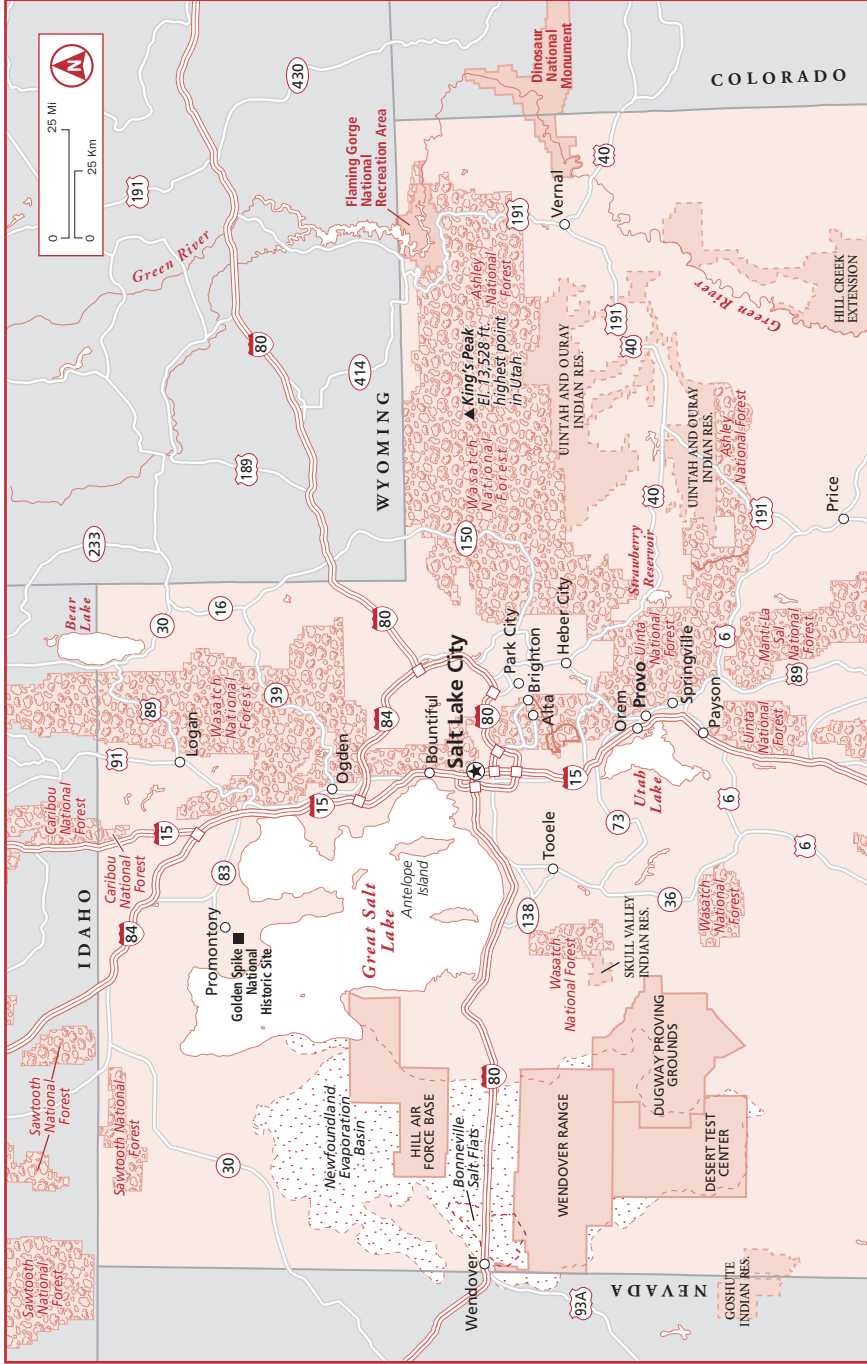
1 The Best Utah Travel Experiences

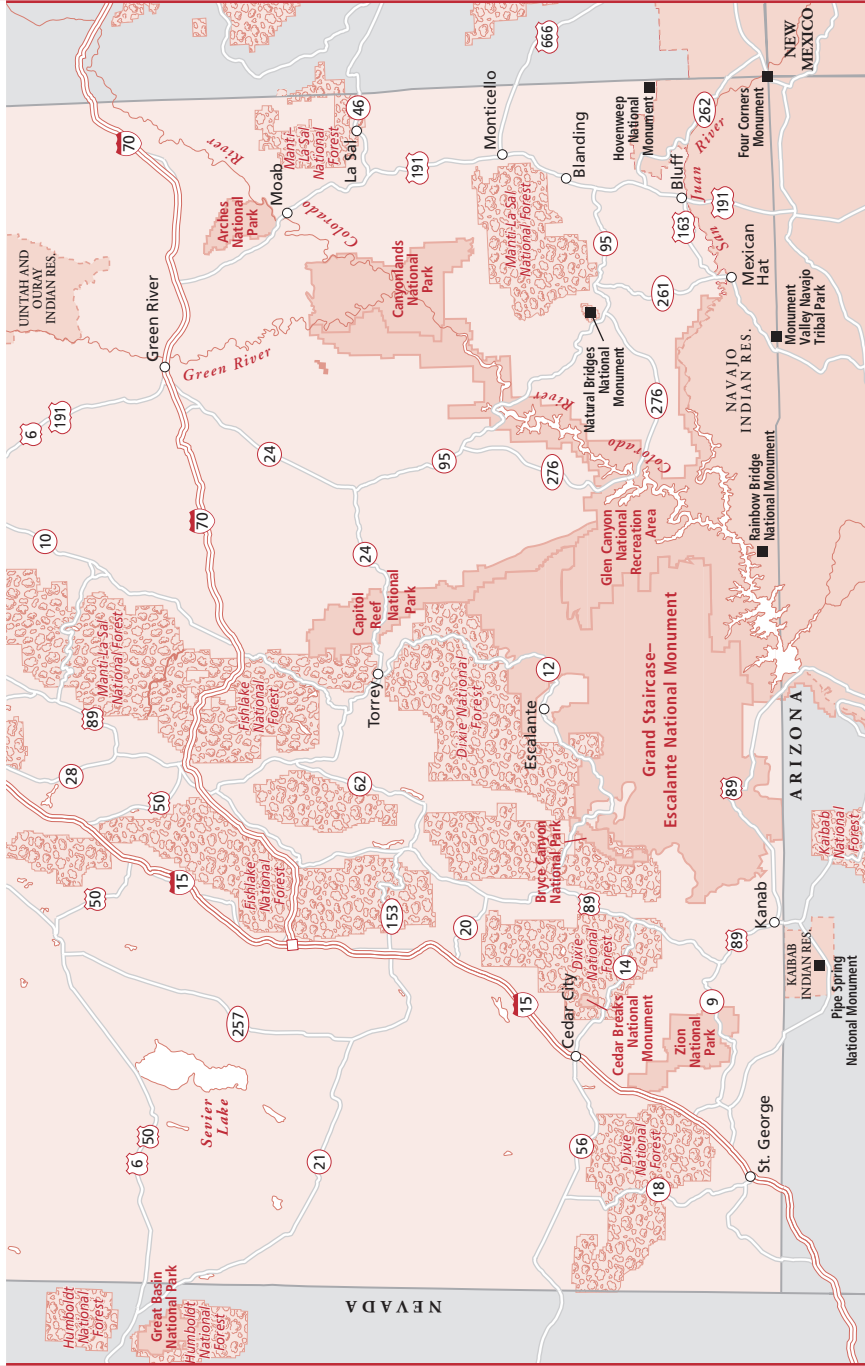
- **Exploring Bryce Canyon National Park:** Among Utah's—and maybe the nation's—most scenic parks, Bryce Canyon is also one of the most accessible. Several trails lead down into the canyon—more like walks than hikes—so just about everyone can get to know this beautiful jewel up close. Part of the Rim Trail is even wheelchair accessible. The colorful rock formations are impressive when viewed en masse from the rim, but they become enchanting and fanciful works of art as you walk among them along the trails. See chapter 12.
- **Enjoying Capitol Reef National Park:** This tranquil park isn't as popular as Bryce or Zion, but it has a subtle beauty all its own. And it's not too demanding, either: Wander through the orchards of Fruita, hike to Cassidy Arch, stroll up the Grand Wash, or just sit under the stars roasting marshmallows over your campfire. See p. 255.
- **Houseboating on Lake Powell:** Kick back and relax while floating on the deep blue waters of Lake Powell, with towering red rocks all around and an azure sky above. This is the life—no telephone to answer, no meetings to attend, no deadlines to meet. Feeling warm? Slip over the side for a dip in the cool water. Want a little exercise? Anchor yourself at one of the canyons and hike a bit. See p. 271.

2 The Best Views

- **The Narrows, Zion National Park:** The sheer 1,000-foot-high walls are awe-inspiring and almost frightening, as they enclose you in a 20-foot-wide world of hanging gardens, waterfalls, and sculpted sandstone arches, with the Virgin River running beneath your feet. The Narrows are so narrow that you can't walk beside the river. Instead, you have to wade right through it—but the views are

Utah





6 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF UTAH

worth getting your feet wet. See p. 226.

- **Boulder Mountain Viewpoints** (between Escalante and Torrey): The panoramas from the roadside along the crest of Boulder Mountain are extraordinary. You can see majestic Capitol Reef, miles to the east, and any number of valleys and lakes nestled in between. It's like a tiny fairyland—we almost expected to see a little steam train chugging along or a horse-drawn carriage passing through. See p. 254.
- **The Queen's Garden, Bryce Canyon National Park:** Presided over by majestic Queen Victoria herself, carved in stone by Mother

Nature, these thousands of colorfully striped spires present a magnificent display when viewed from the rim. From the trail below, they dazzle as the early morning sun throws them into stark relief. See p. 238.

- **Monument Valley Buttes at Sunset:** These stark sentinels of the desert are impressive at any time, but they take on a particularly dignified aura when the setting sun casts its deep colors over them, etching their profiles against a darkening sky. Although the park generally closes before sunset, you can arrange a sunset tour—it's well worth the cost. See p. 312.

3 The Best Family-Vacation Experiences

- **Camping at Cherry Hill Camping Resort** (Ogden): This fun-packed park offers something for everybody: a water park with slides, pools, and even a pirate ship, plus miniature golf, batting cages, and aeroball (it's kind of like basketball). It's like staying in a theme park—a kid's dream come true. And you're not likely to find a more immaculately groomed and well-run campground anywhere. See p. 119.
- **Taking a Ride on the Heber Valley Historic Railroad:** Take a railroad trip back in time on the "Heber Creeper," so called because of the way this historic steam train inches its way up the canyon from Provo. This once-proud passenger and freight branch line will let you experience travel the way it was in your grandparents' day. Kids of all ages, from 6 to 80, will love it. See p. 156.
- **Exploring Northeast Utah's Dinosaurland:** This is the real *Jurassic Park*—no special effects here. Stop first at Vernal's Utah Field House of Natural History State Park, where you can stroll around the Dinosaur Garden and admire the 17 life-size dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures in a delightful garden that simulates the dinosaurs' actual habitat. Then head to Dinosaur National Monument to see and touch—yes, touch—real fossilized dinosaur bones. See p. 176.
- **Discovering Zion National Park:** The Junior Ranger Program, available at most national parks, is really extensive here, with both morning and afternoon activities all summer geared toward teaching kids about what makes this natural wonder so special. They'll have so much fun, they won't even notice they're learning something. See chapter 11.

4 The Best Scenic Drives

- **The Golden Spike Tour:** Heading out of Ogden on Old U.S. 89, you'll first pass through some fine fruit country (be sure to stop at a

roadside stand). At the small town of Willard, turn west toward I-15; head north on I-15 to exit 368, and turn west on Utah 83. This will take you along the north side of the Great Salt Lake through picturesque farming communities, until you reach the turnoff to the spot where, in 1869, the last spike was driven for the transcontinental railroad, connecting East and West for the first time. If you love trains as we do, you'll thrill to both the sound of the whistle and the sight of the puffing steam as the engine chugs away and back again. See chapter 7.

- **The National Parks Tour:** From the canyons of Zion, head north along U.S. 89 through majestic forests to Red Canyon, with its walls of brilliant red rock. Then drive east on Utah 12 to Bryce

Canyon, with its fascinating amphitheatres of multicolored stone. The route from Bryce Canyon to Capitol Reef along Utah highways 12 and 24 takes in some of the most spectacular scenery in a state of unsurpassed landscapes. See chapters 11, 12, and 13.

- **Moab to Monument Valley:** This may be red rock country at its finest. From Moab, U.S. 191 south takes you past huge slabs of rock—outposts of Canyonlands National Park—through one-horse towns that have few services but enough character to make up for it. At Bluff, turn southwest on U.S. 163 and drive through more ruddy desert, past the sombrero-shaped rock for which Medicine Hat was named, and finally to the solemnity of Monument Valley. See chapters 15 and 16.

5 The Best Hiking Trails

- **Indian Trail (Ogden):** Easily accessible from downtown Ogden, this 4.2-mile trail gets you out of town quickly, into a thick forest of spruce and fir, and onto a mountainside that offers spectacular views of Ogden Canyon, including a beautiful waterfall. See p. 114.
- **Hidden Piñon Trail, Snow Canyon State Park (St. George):** This fairly easy, self-guided nature trail will reward you with breathtaking panoramic views. You'll wander among lava rock, into canyons, and over rocky flatland, along a trail lined with Mormon tea, cliffrose, prickly pear cactus, banana yucca, and other wild desert plants. See p. 198.
- **Lower Emerald Pools Trail, Zion National Park:** If green is your color, you'll love this trail—algae keeps three pools glowing a deep, rich shade of emerald. The first part of the trail, navigable by wheelchairs with assistance, leads

through a forest to the Lower Emerald Pool, with its lovely waterfall and hanging garden. The small pool just above it is so still and calm that the reflections of the towering cliffs in the water seem like a photograph lying on the ground. See p. 225.

- **Navajo Loop/Queen's Garden Trail, Bryce Canyon National Park:** To truly experience magical Bryce Canyon, you should climb down into it; this not-too-difficult trail is a good way to go. Start at Sunset Point and get the hardest part out of the way first. You'll pass Thor's Hammer and wonder why it hasn't fallen, ponder the towering skyscrapers of Wall Street, and visit with some of the park's most fanciful formations, including majestic Queen Victoria herself. See p. 238.
- **Petrified Forest Trail, Escalante State Park (Escalante):** Along this steep nature trail, you'll find

8 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF UTAH

yourself walking in a stunted forest of junipers and piñons, before reaching a field strewn with colorful chunks of petrified wood.

As you progress, you'll have panoramic views of the town of Escalante and the surrounding stair-step plateaus. See p. 251.

6 The Best Mountain Biking

- **Brian Head Resort:** At 9,600 feet, there may not be a lot of oxygen, but the air is pure and clear, and the biking is great—especially when you can ride a chairlift up the mountain and bicycle down. There are trails everywhere, each with more magnificent scenery than the last. See p. 209.
- **Dave's Hollow Trail:** Situated just outside the entrance to Bryce Canyon National Park, this trail heads off into the national forest. The double track takes you through sun-dappled glades surrounded by tall ponderosa pines

and spruce trees, all the way to fishing and camping at Tropic Reservoir if you so desire. See p. 237.

- **Moab Slickrock Bike Trail:** A rite of passage for serious mountain bikers, this challenging but rewarding trail takes 4 to 5 hours to complete. Between your huffing and puffing, you'll enjoy breathtaking views of the Colorado River far below, the La Sal Mountains towering above, and the red arches of Arches National Park in the distance. See p. 281.

7 The Best Destinations for Fishing & Watersports

- **Strawberry Reservoir:** The number-one trout fishery in Utah for both cutthroat and rainbow, this gem of a lake is magnificently set among tall pines. You're really out in the woods here: The nearest town of any size is 30 miles away. So pick your spot, out in the middle of the reservoir or tucked away in a quiet nook, and cast your line for dinner—you can't beat fresh-caught trout cooked over an open fire. See p. 160.
- **Jordanelle Reservoir** (in Jordanelle State Park, near Park City): This boomerang-shaped reservoir offers a wide area at the dam that's perfect for speedboats, water-skiers, and personal watercraft. The southeast end of the boomerang is designated for low-speed boating. Wherever you go, you'll have the beautiful Wasatch Mountains on all sides. See p. 157.
- **The Green River through Dinosaur National Monument:**

The best way to see this spectacularly desolate country is from the river, the way explorer John Wesley Powell did in 1869. Crave excitement? Run the foaming rapids. Are peace and quiet your thing? Float mindlessly in the placid waters, leaving your troubles behind. See p. 184.

- **Lake Flaming Gorge:** Smaller and more intimate than Lake Powell, and located in a gloriously colorful setting, Lake Flaming Gorge is one of Utah's real hidden treasures. You can skim the water on skis or just doze off on the deck of a houseboat. As for the fishing, if you feel like the big ones always get away, this is the place for you—they're all big here. See p. 187.
- **Lake Powell:** This sprawling lake has what seems like zillions of finger canyons reaching off the main watercourse of the Colorado River. You could spend weeks—maybe even months—water-skiing,

swimming, fishing, exploring the myriad side canyons, and just loafing about in the sun. See p. 271.

- **The Colorado River near Moab:** Tackle the placid stretches on your

own in a canoe or kayak, or sign up with one of the many outfitters and shoot the rapids. Whatever you choose, a trip down the spectacular, scenic Colorado River is an adventure you won't forget. See p. 284.

8 The Best Wildlife Watching

- **Rock Cliff, Jordanelle State Park** (near Park City): More than 160 species of birds either live here or pass through. This is an especially good place to spot eagles and other raptors who nest in the area. Boardwalks and trails throughout the riparian wetlands reduce the environmental impact of your visit, and give you a great chance to watch wetland life doing their thing. See p. 158.
- **Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area:** Take a boat trip to see bighorn sheep here. The imposing beasts are sometimes seen on Kingfisher Island and near Hideout Canyon, on the north side of the reservoir, in spring and early summer. And keep your eyes peeled for the lovely osprey and rare peregrine falcon, occasionally spotted near their nests on the high rocky spires above the lake. See p. 187.
- **Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park** (near Kanab): If you climb

the dunes early in the morning, you're sure to see the footprints of jackrabbits, kangaroo rats, and even an occasional mule deer or coyote. But the real fun comes after dark, with the late-night scorpion hunt: You can follow a park ranger out onto the dunes and, using a black light, spot the luminescent creatures as they scurry across the sand. See p. 212.

- **Escalante State Park** (Escalante): Willows and cottonwoods line the banks of the reservoir, one of the few wetland birding sites in southern Utah. This area is home to a wide variety of ducks, plus coots, grebes, herons, and swallows. You might also see eagles, osprey, American kestrels, and other raptors. Small creatures of the furry variety, including cottontail and blacktail jackrabbits, ground squirrels, and beaver, inhabit the area as well. See p. 250.

9 The Best Downhill Skiing

- **Snowbasin** (Ogden Valley): Families love Snowbasin because there's something for everyone here, no matter what your ability. The resort is particularly popular with intermediates, who love the long, easy, well-groomed cruising runs. Experts have plenty to keep them happy, too, including an abundance of untracked powder and the state's third-highest vertical drop. See p. 127.
- **Beaver Mountain** (The Northern Wasatch Front): Visiting this

small, family-oriented ski area is like going home to see the folks—it's just plain comfortable. There's no glitz, no fancy anything, just lots of personal attention, plenty of snow, and great terrain with beautifully maintained trails. See p. 128.

- **Alta** (Little Cottonwood Canyon): All serious skiers make a pilgrimage to Alta at one time or another. It offers the best skiing in the state—and some of the lightest powder in the world—especially

10 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF UTAH

for advanced skiers willing to hike a bit for perfect conditions. If you're not up to black-diamond level yet, don't worry: Beginners and intermediates will find plenty of cruising ground, too. And at \$42 for an all-day lift ticket, Alta also happens to be one of the best skiing bargains around. See p. 138.

- **Park City and Deer Valley:** These resorts offer not only excellent powder skiing on a wide variety of

terrain, but also the best shopping, nightlife, accommodations, and dining of all of Utah's ski areas—and for that matter, in all of Utah. Park City is the party town; Deer Valley is its more grown-up, sophisticated sibling. They're less than 5 minutes apart by road, so you can take advantage of the best of both. Who says you can't have everything? See p. 142 for Park City and p. 144 for Deer Valley.

10 The Best Places to Discover American Indian Culture

- **The Great Gallery in Horseshoe Canyon, Canyonlands National Park:** In a remote and hard-to-reach section of Canyonlands National Park is the Great Gallery, an 80-foot-long panel of rock art that dates back several thousand years. It's one of the biggest and best prehistoric murals you'll find anywhere. See p. 303.
- **Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park:** For most of us, Monument Valley *is* the Old West. We've seen it dozens of times in movie theaters, on TV, and in advertisements. The Old West may be gone, but many Navajos still call this area home. A Navajo guide can give you the Navajo perspective on this majestic land and take

you to areas that are not otherwise open to visitors. See p. 312.

- **Hovenweep National Monument:** This deserted valley contains some of the most striking and most isolated archaeological sites in the Four Corners area—the remains of curious sandstone towers built more than 700 years ago. These mysterious structures keep archaeologists guessing. See p. 317.
- **Mesa Verde National Park:** The largest archaeological preserve in the country is also home to the most impressive cliff dwellings in the Southwest. The sites run the gamut from simple pit houses to complex cliff dwellings, and they're all fascinating to explore. See p. 319.

11 The Best Luxury Hotels

- **The Grand America Hotel** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 800/621-4505): The newest luxury hotel in downtown Salt Lake City, the Grand America occupies an entire city block and offers top-notch service, amenities, and decor. The marriage of superb design and deluxe furnishings has resulted in exquisitely comfortable guest rooms and suites. See p. 78.
- **The Inn at Temple Square** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 800/843-4668): This quietly elegant downtown

hotel offers beautifully appointed rooms, a lovely dining room, and an all-around aura of old-world graciousness. It may look formal, but it's actually quite relaxed and homey—come on in and set a spell. See p. 80.

- **Goldener Hirsch Inn** (Deer Valley; ☎ 800/252-3373): This place feels like a Bavarian Alps lodge, with roaring fireplaces, hand-painted furniture, windows looking out onto the ski slopes, feather-light down comforters, and

the kind of personalized service you'd expect to find in a fine European hotel. See p. 150.

- **Stein Eriksen Lodge** (Deer Valley; ☎ 800/453-1302): The Stein Eriksen is grandly elegant yet warm and welcoming, with cozy niches in the dignified lobby and

lavishly comfortable suites. Attendants in the whirlpool, sauna, and fitness room are always on hand to pamper you and see to your every need, but they're so unobtrusive that you'll feel right at home—contentedly, luxuriously at home. See p. 150.

12 The Best Bed-and-Breakfasts

- **The Armstrong Mansion Bed & Breakfast** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 800/708-1333): Housed in a four-story Queen Anne–style Victorian mansion, this elegant B&B has stained glass windows, a carved oak staircase, and replicas of the original wall stencils. Many of the 13 luxurious rooms boast whirlpool tubs. See p. 78.
- **Alaskan Inn** (Ogden; ☎ 888/707-8600): The wilds of Alaska have arrived in Utah, with this unique and fun bed-and-breakfast, where themed rooms and cabins transport you to a land of tundra, snow-capped peaks, tall pines, polar bears, and cascading waterfalls. See p. 117.
- **Snowberry Inn Bed & Breakfast** (near Ogden; ☎ 888/334-3466): This log B&B is lovingly decorated with antiques and collectibles, and each bedroom has its own personality. Although the house has a wide-open design with a broad front porch, it still manages to have a cozy, homelike atmosphere; guests gather in the kitchen to sip coffee and watch, or help, as breakfast is being prepared. See p. 119.
- **Hines Mansion Luxury Bed & Breakfast** (Provo; ☎ 800/428-5636): A Victorian mansion that

oozes historic ambiance, this is a wonderful place to celebrate a wedding anniversary or other romantic occasion, with complimentary sparkling cider and two-person whirlpool tubs in every room. See p. 171.

- **Seven Wives Inn Bed & Breakfast** (St. George; ☎ 800/600-3737): This was the first B&B in Utah, and it's one of the loveliest. There are no polygamists hiding in the attic anymore (see the review), but you'll feel like you've stepped back in time. The two historic 19th-century homes are outfitted with antiques, mostly Victorian and Eastlake. We love the several decks, porches, and balconies. See p. 201.
- **Sunflower Hill Bed & Breakfast Inn** (Moab; ☎ 800/662-2786): Loaded with country charm, this delightful B&B makes you feel like you've gone back to Grandma's, where family relics surround you during the day and handmade quilts keep you warm at night. What's more, this may be the quietest lodging in Moab, and the grassy, shady grounds are especially inviting on a hot day. See p. 288.

13 The Best Lodges

- **Red Canyon Lodge** (Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area; ☎ 435/889-3759): This is not really a lodge at all, but rather a

group of delightful cabins dating from the 1930s and remodeled in the 1990s. This complex offers a range of accommodations, from

12 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF UTAH

rustic to luxurious, and all have freestanding wood stoves. The forest setting, complete with private lake, is spectacular. See p. 190.

- **Bryce Canyon Lodge** (☎ 888/297-2757): This handsome sandstone-and-ponderosa-pine lodge is the perfect place to stay while you're visiting the national park.

The several suites are outfitted with white wicker furniture, ceiling fans, and separate sitting rooms. But our choice is the snug cabins—although small, the high ceilings give the impression of spaciousness, and the gas-burning stone fireplaces and log beams make them positively cozy. See p. 241.

14 The Best Restaurants

- **The New Yorker** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 801/363-0166): Among our favorite Utah restaurants, the New Yorker offers superb service, a comfortable upscale decor, and a wide variety of excellently prepared American dishes. Desserts are magnificent. See p. 83.
- **Spencer's For Steaks and Chops** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 801/238-4748): For those of us who like top-quality steaks prepared simply but perfectly, there is no place in Utah to top Spencer's. See p. 84.
- **Lamb's Restaurant** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 801/364-7166): A

delightful and sometimes innovative restaurant with reasonable prices—how can you beat that? Sit back in one of the cozy booths, relax, and enjoy a good meal while watching the who's who of Utah parade through. See p. 85.

- **Glitretind Restaurant** (Stein Eriksen Lodge, Deer Valley; ☎ 435/649-3700): The definitive elegant restaurant of Utah, the Glitretind serves inventive, exquisitely prepared New American dishes. You'll dine in a modern, airy room with views of the spectacular Wasatch Mountains. See p. 153.

15 The Best of the Performing Arts

- **Mormon Tabernacle Choir** (Salt Lake City): Hear the glorious sounds of this world-renowned, all-volunteer choir in its home on Temple Square. When not on tour, the choir rehearses Thursday evenings and performs its weekly radio and television broadcasts Sunday mornings; both events are open to the public, free of charge. See p. 88.
- **Utah Symphony** (Salt Lake City, Park City): Who'd expect to find one of the country's top symphony orchestras in Utah? Well, here it is: an excellent ensemble

that not only tours worldwide and has produced numerous recordings, but also performs each year in schools across the state. Our favorite time to enjoy this world-class orchestra is during the symphony's summer series in Park City. See p. 102.

- **Utah Shakespearean Festival** (Cedar City): To go or not to go, that is the question. If theater's your thing, go. Four of the Bard's plays, plus two by other playwrights, are presented each summer, and they're grand entertainment. See p. 207.