

# The Best of Utah

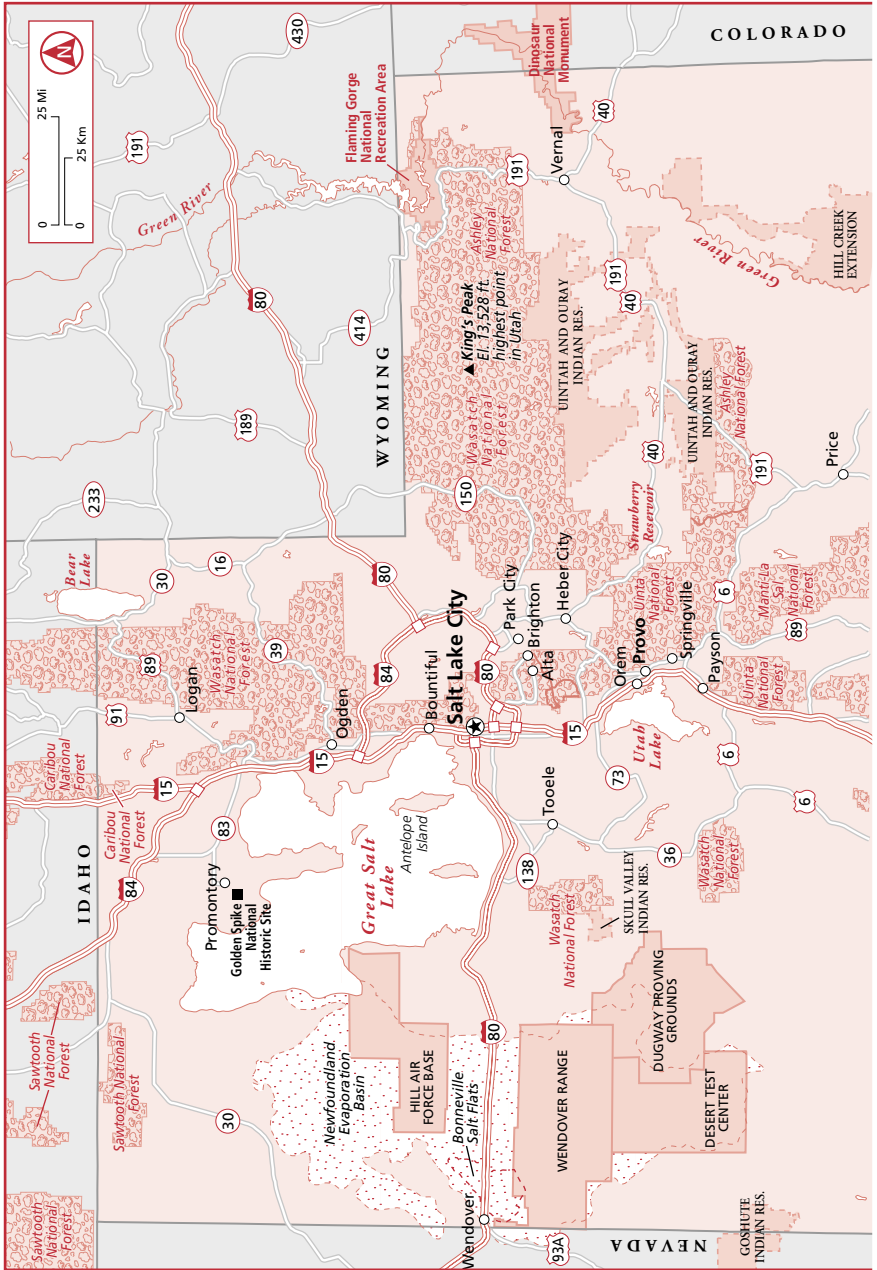
**N**ot only is Utah home to unfathomable natural features like Canyonlands and Zion national parks, but it is also a showcase of manmade wonders: Besides the centerpiece Mormon Temple, Salt Lake City's architecture includes other highlights, such as the striking Grand America Hotel. The combination of the natural and manmade at Utah's terrific ski resorts and jewel-like reservoirs—Lake Powell is one of the most-visited bodies of water in the country, Jordanelle Reservoir is a lesser-known gem— aids visitors in understanding the state's complicated and interwoven history of the Utes, Mormon pioneers, rough-and-tumble mountain men, and many others. In recent years, the state has boomed, meaning more and more people are seeing that Utah's best attractions hold a bright candle to their cream-of-the-crop peers in other Western states.

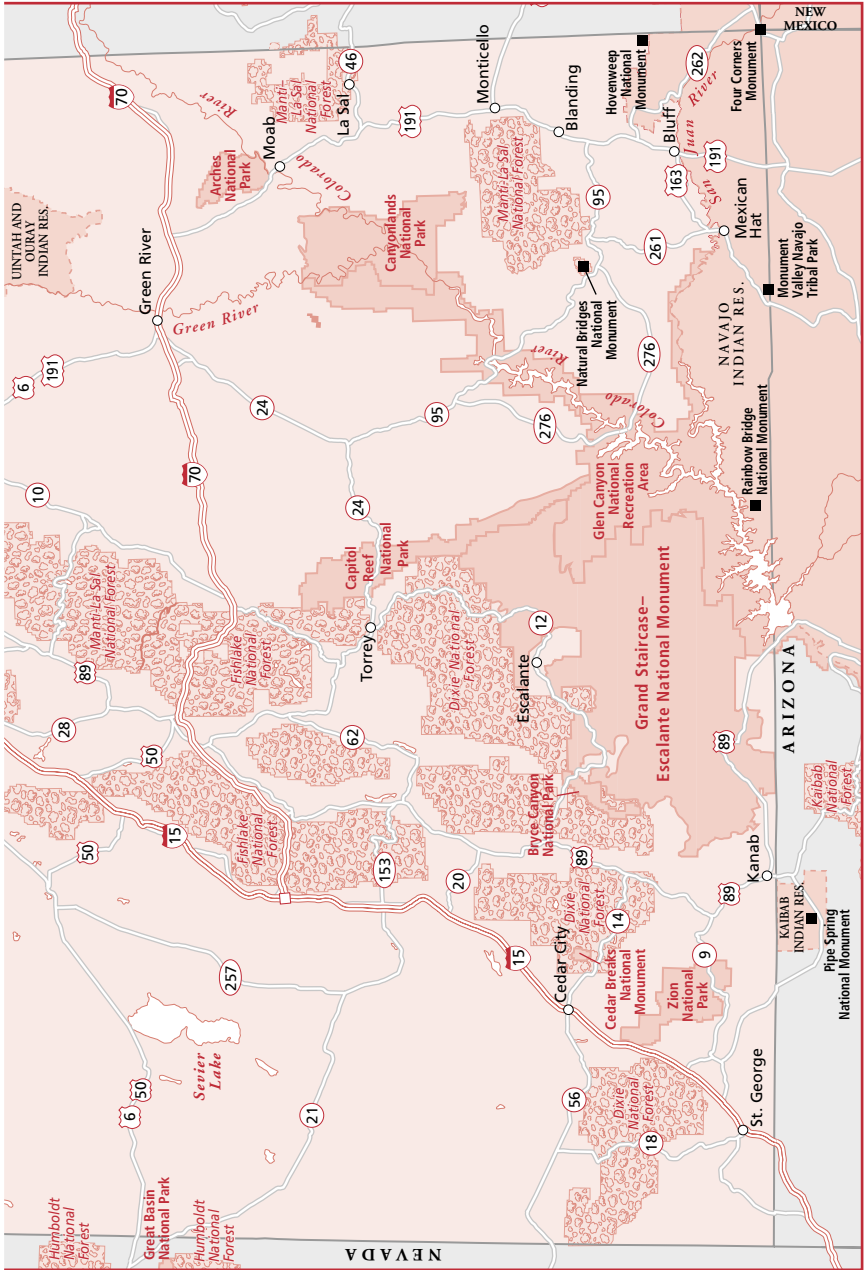
With so much to see and do, how do you choose? This chapter is the result of scouring the entire state from pinnacle to canyon and choosing the very best that Utah has to offer—the places and experiences you won't want to miss.

## 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—and are 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, and become fanciful works of art as you walk among them. See chapter 11.
- **Enjoying Capitol Reef National Park:** This tranquil park isn't as well-known as Bryce or Zion, but it has an understated beauty all its own. And it's not too demanding, either: Wander through the orchards of Fruita, hike the Capitol Gorge Trail, stroll up the Grand Wash, or sit under the stars roasting marshmallows over your campfire. See chapter 12.
- **Houseboating on Lake Powell:** Kick back and relax while floating on the deep blue waters of manmade Lake Powell, with towering red rocks all around and an azure sky above. Feeling warm? Slip over the side for a dip in the cool water. Want a little exercise? Anchor yourself, and hike to the surrounding natural beauties, such as the Rainbow Bridge. See p. 273.

# Utah





## 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 boots—literally. The Narrows are so narrow, in fact, that you can't walk beside the river. Instead, you have to wade right in it—but the views are worth getting your feet wet. See p. 225.
- **Boulder Mountain Viewpoints** (between Escalante and Torrey): The panoramas from the road along the crest of Boulder Mountain are extraordinary. You can see Capitol Reef, miles to the east, and the valleys and lakes nestled in between. It's like a fairyland; one half expects to see a gilded horse-drawn carriage passing through. See p. 256.
- **The Queen's Garden, Bryce Canyon National Park:** Carved in stone by Mother Nature, presided over by majestic Queen Victoria herself, 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. 239.
- **Monument Valley Buttes at Sunset:** Impressive at any time, these stark sentinels of the desert 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 upon request—it's well worth the cost. See p. 316.

## 3 The Best Family-Vacation Experiences

- **Camping at Cherry Hill Camping Resort** (Ogden): This fun-packed campground 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. See p. 116.
- **Taking a Ride on the Heber Valley Historic Railroad:** Take a trip back in time on the "Heber Creeper," so called because of the way this historic steam train inches up the canyon from Provo. This once-proud passenger and freight line will let you experience travel the way it was in your grandparents' day. See p. 155.
- **Exploring Northeast Utah's Dinosaurland:** This is the real *Jurassic Park*—no special effects needed. First stop: Utah Field House of Natural History State Park in Vernal. Stroll through the Dinosaur Garden to admire the 18 life-size dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures. Next, head to Dinosaur National Monument to see and touch—yes, touch—real fossilized dinosaur bones. See chapter 8.
- **Discovering Zion National Park:** The Junior Ranger Program, available at most national parks, is extensive here, with morning and afternoon activities for kids all summer. They'll have so much fun, they won't notice they're learning about what makes this natural wonder so special. See p. 221.

## 4 The Best Hiking Trails

- **Indian Trail** (Ogden): Easily accessible from downtown Ogden, this 4.3-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. 111.
- **Hidden Piñon Trail, Snow Canyon State Park** (St. George): This fairly easy, self-guided nature trail will reward you with breathtaking panoramic views. 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 makes three pools glow 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 reflection of the towering cliffs in the water looks like a photograph. See p. 224.

- **Navajo/Queen's Garden Trail, Bryce Canyon National Park**: To truly experience magical Bryce Canyon, 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 majestic Queen Victoria herself—one of the park's most fanciful formations. See p. 239.
- **Petrified Forest Trail, Escalante Petrified Forest State Park** (Escalante): Along this steep nature trail, you'll walk through a stunted forest of junipers and piñons before reaching a field strewn with colorful chunks of petrified wood. The trail offers panoramic views of the town of Escalante and the surrounding staircase plateaus. See p. 253.

## 5 The Best Mountain Biking

- **Brian Head Resort**: At 11,307 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 and bike down. The trails are 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. See p. 238.
- **Moab Slickrock Bike Trail**: A rite of passage for serious mountain bikers, this challenging yet rewarding trail takes 4 to 5 hours to complete. You'll enjoy breathtaking views of the Colorado River far below, the La Sal Mountains towering above, and the red sandstone formations of Arches National Park in the distance. See p. 286.
- **Park City**: Some 350 miles of prime trails radiate out into the sage- and evergreen-laden open space surrounding Utah's best-known ski town. See p. 139.

## 6 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 set magnificently 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, 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): The wide area at the dam of this boomerang-shaped reservoir is perfect for speedboats, water-skiers, and personal watercraft. The southeast end 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 relax topside on 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 reservoir 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 loafing about in the sun. See p. 270.
- **The Colorado River near Moab:** Tackle the placid stretches on your own in a canoe or kayak, or sign up with one of the outfitters and shoot the rapids. Whatever your style, a trip down the spectacular, scenic Colorado River is an adventure you won't forget. See p. 287.

## 7 The Best Wildlife Watching

- **Rock Cliff, Jordanelle State Park** (near Park City): More than 160 species of birds, both resident and migratory, are found here. The park is an especially good place to spot eagles and other raptors who nest locally. Boardwalks and trails traverse the riparian wetlands, giving you a chance to observe wetlands life, while reducing your ecological footprint. See p. 158.
- **Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area:** Take to the water to vie for a glimpse of the majestic bighorn sheep. 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. 185.
- **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 the occasional mule

deer or coyote. But the park is also a habitat for scorpions and fascinating but poisonous (and sometimes bioluminescent) arachnids that often prey on each other. Of course, humans aren't their natural targets, but it's always best to keep your distance. See p. 211.

- **Escalante Petrified Forest State Park** (Escalante): Willows and cottonwoods line the banks of the

reservoir, one of the few wetlands birding sites in southern Utah. The park is home to a wide variety of ducks, plus coots, 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, squirrels, and beaver—inhabit the area as well. See p. 252.

## 8 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 can expect challenges, such as an abundance of untracked powder and Utah's third-highest vertical drop. See p. 124.
- **Beaver Mountain** (The Northern Wasatch Front): Visiting this small, family-oriented ski area is like going home—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. 125.
- **Alta** (Little Cottonwood Canyon): All serious skiers must make a pilgrimage to Alta. It offers the best skiing in the state—and some of the

lightest powder in the world—especially 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. See p. 135.

- **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, lodging, and dining in all of Utah's ski areas—and for that matter, in all of Utah. Park City is the party town; Deer Valley is its grown-up, sophisticated sibling. They're less than 5 minutes apart by road, so why not take advantage of the best of both? See p. 139 for Park City and p. 142 for Deer Valley.

## 9 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 dating back several thousand years. It's one of the biggest and best prehistoric murals you'll find anywhere. See p. 304.
- **Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park**: You've seen Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park immortalized in movies, on TV, and in advertisements. While the Old West may be gone, 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 not otherwise open to visitors. See p. 314.

- **Hovenweep National Monument:** This deserted valley contains some of the most striking and isolated archaeological sites in the Four Corners: the remains of curious sandstone towers built more than 700 years ago. These mysterious structures keep archaeologists guessing. See p. 319.
- **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 extensive cliff dwellings, all fascinating to explore. See p. 321.

## 10 The Best Luxury Hotels

- **The Grand America Hotel** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 800/621-4505; www.grandamerica.com): 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. 75.
- **Hotel Monaco** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 800/294-9710; www.monaco-saltlakecity.com): This hotel mixes traditional and contemporary styling in rooms that brim with an eclectic array of patterns, textures, and colors. The pet-friendly Monaco will provide goldfish to those who haven't brought Rover. See p. 78.
- **Hotel Park City** (Park City; ☎ 435/200-2000; www.hotelparkcity.com): Inspired by the grand lodges in national parks, Hotel Park City may be the poshest lodging in Utah. The masculine guest rooms—all with sublime mountain views—feature Western decor and plenty of in-room amenities. The bathrooms are superb, with big jetted tubs and separate three-headed showers. See p. 149.
- **Stein Eriksen Lodge** (Deer Valley; ☎ 800/453-1302; www.steinlodge.com): 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 on hand to pamper you and attend to your every need, but they're so unobtrusive that you'll feel right at home—contentedly, luxuriously at home. See p. 148.

## 11 The Best Bed & Breakfasts

- **Inn on the Hill Bed & Breakfast** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 801/328-1466; www.innonthehillslc.com): Two blocks from both the Utah State Capitol and Temple Square, this stately mansion atop Capitol Hill is one of Salt Lake City's greatest B&Bs, thanks in no small part to its tremendous city and mountain views. Look for original details—such as wavy and stained-glass windows and steam heat. See p. 78.
- **Snowberry Inn Bed & Breakfast** (near Ogden; ☎ 888/334-3466; www.snowberryinn.com): 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. 116.
- **Hines Mansion Luxury Bed & Breakfast** (Provo; ☎ 800/428-5636;



www.hinesmansion.com): A Victorian mansion ripe with historic ambience, this is a wonderful place to celebrate a wedding anniversary or romantic occasion, with complimentary sparkling cider and two-person whirlpool tubs in every room. See p. 171.

- **Blue Boar Inn** (Midway; ☎ 888/654-1400; www.theblueboarinn.com): Named for a watering hole in Robin Hood lore, the Blue Boar Inn is tucked into an upscale new neighborhood in historic Midway under the beautiful mountain vista of Wasatch Mountain State Park. This is a special property, with a dozen attractive and plush guest rooms named for poets and authors. See p. 161.
- **Seven Wives Inn Bed & Breakfast** (St. George; ☎ 800/600-3737; www.sevenwivesinn.com): 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. You'll love the several decks, porches, and balconies. See p. 201.

- **Stone Canyon Inn** (near Bryce Canyon National Park; ☎ 866/489-4680; www.stonecanyoninn.com): Quiet seclusion, loads of charm, and absolutely splendid views are only three of the reasons why this inn is so highly recommended—it is also very upscale and the place to come to be pampered. Each of the six guest rooms is unique, with queen or king-size beds, handsome wood furnishings, and a classic Western look; and the luxurious cottages each have two bedrooms and two bathrooms, a gas fireplace, full kitchen, and a private deck with a hot tub. See p. 243.
- **Sunflower Hill Luxury Inn** (Moab; ☎ 800/662-2786; www.sunflowerhill.com): Loaded with country charm, this delightful B&B makes you feel like you're at Grandma's, where family relics surround you 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. 290.

## 12 The Best Lodges

- **Red Canyon Lodge** (Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area; ☎ 435/889-3759; www.redcanyonlodge.com): Not really a lodge at all, this group of delightful 1930s cabins was remodeled in the 1990s. Your choice of TV- and telephone-free accommodations ranges from rustic to luxurious. The forest setting, complete with private lake, is spectacular. See p. 190.
- **Bryce Canyon Lodge** (☎ 888/297-2757; www.brycecanyonlodge.com):

This handsome sandstone- and ponderosa-pine lodge is the perfect place to stay while you're visiting the national park. The suites are outfitted with white wicker furniture, ceiling fans, and separate sitting rooms. But go for one of the snug cabins—the high ceilings give the impression of spaciousness, and the gas-burning stone fireplaces and log beams make them positively cozy. See p. 241.

### 13 The Best Restaurants

- **Bambara** (Hotel Monaco, Salt Lake City; ☎ 801/363-5454; www.bambara-slc.com): An ideal setting for a romantic meal, this popular restaurant brings a host of influences to the table, from Asian to Cajun. The Utah corn bisque is delectable and the filet mignon with roasted shallot-cabernet sauce melts in your mouth. See p. 80.
- **Metropolitan** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 801/364-3472; www.themetropolitan.com): From the mountain views, to the delectable food created by a team of four chefs, it's no wonder the Metropolitan is so popular. To partake in the buzz, but go easy on the wallet, choose from the comfort foods and smaller portions of the "bar bites" menu. See p. 81.
- **Lamb's Grill Cafe** (Salt Lake City; ☎ 801/364-7166; http://lambsgrill.com): A delightful and sometimes innovative restaurant with good food and reasonable prices—how can you beat that? Sit back in one of the cozy booths, relax, and watch the who's who of Utah parade. See p. 82.
- **Glitretind Restaurant** (Park City; ☎ 435/649-3700; www.steinlodge.com): Located in the elegant Stein Eriksen Lodge (p. 148), this equally stylish restaurant is possibly the best dining experience in the entire state. The Glitretind serves innovative meals that change with the seasons, but always incorporate local game. Plus, it all comes with views of the spectacular Wasatch Mountains. See p. 152.
- **Zoom** (Park City; ☎ 435/649-9108): Gorgeous black-and-white photos of Hollywood luminaries from the Sundance Film Festival grace the walls of this classic Park City spot. And why not? It's owned by Robert Redford. Choose from the seasonal menu of salads and delicious burgers to pasta, seafood, and ribs. See p. 153.
- **Painted Pony** (St. George; ☎ 435/634-1700; www.painted-pony.com): The Painted Pony is the best restaurant between Las Vegas and Salt Lake City—though its vibe is more California than Utah: The creative menu includes subtle twists on familiar dishes, such as sesame-crust ed line-caught escolar. See p. 203.

### 14 The Best of the Performing Arts

- **Mormon Tabernacle Choir** (Salt Lake City): Hear the glorious sounds of this world-renowned choir in its home on Temple Square. When not on tour, the choir rehearses Thursday evenings and performs for TV and radio broadcasts Sunday mornings. Both events are open to the public, free of charge. See p. 84.
- **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 tours worldwide, provides the soundtrack to films in the Sundance Summer series, and has produced numerous recordings. See p. 99.
- **Utah Shakespearean Festival** (Cedar City): To go or not to go, that is the question. But if theater's your thing, go. Four of the Bard's plays, plus two by other period and contemporary playwrights, are presented each summer, and they're grand entertainment. See p. 207.