
Packing checklist

Capitol Reef Country, Wayne County, Utah — high desert at roughly 7,000 feet, under a certified International Dark Sky Park.

Always, whatever the season

High desert at 7,000 feet. Dry air and a wide day-to-night swing year round.

- ☐ Moisture-wicking base layers — merino or synthetic, never cotton
- ☐ A mid layer: fleece, wool sweater or packable down
- ☐ Weatherproof outer shell
- ☐ Broken-in walking or hiking boots
- ☐ Wool or synthetic socks, more pairs than you think
- ☐ Sunglasses and high-SPF sunscreen
- ☐ Lip balm with SPF — the air here is very dry
- ☐ Reusable water bottle
- ☐ Any prescriptions; the nearest pharmacy is not close

For the night sky

Capitol Reef is a Gold-tier Dark Sky Park; Torrey is a certified Dark Sky Community.

- ☐ Red headlamp — white light destroys night vision for 20–30 minutes
- ☐ An insulated pad or camp chair; the ground holds no heat after dark
- ☐ A warmer layer than the daytime suggests, even in summer
- ☐ Binoculars — they show far more than people expect
- ☐ Tripod and a wide, fast lens if you want photographs
- ☐ A moon-phase check before you book: aim for the new moon

Winter (roughly November to March)

The longest, driest, clearest nights of the year — and the coldest.

- ☐ Insulated, waterproof boots
- ☐ Waterproof shell jacket and trousers
- ☐ Warm hat that covers the ears
- ☐ Insulated gloves plus thin liner gloves for dexterity
- ☐ Neck gaiter or balaclava
- ☐ Hand and toe warmers
- ☐ Moisturiser and eye drops for the dry air
- ☐ Sunscreen — snow reflects a surprising amount of UV

Summer and shoulder season

Hot days, cold nights, and afternoon thunderstorms at altitude.

- ☐ Sun hat with a brim
- ☐ Lightweight long sleeves — better than sunscreen alone in open desert
- ☐ A rain shell for afternoon storms
- ☐ Sandals or camp shoes for the evening
- ☐ Electrolytes; dehydration arrives faster at elevation
- ☐ A warm layer anyway — nights drop sharply

For the park and the trails

There is nowhere inside Capitol Reef to buy a meal.

- ☐ Day pack
- ☐ More water than the hike seems to need
- ☐ Packed lunch and snacks
- ☐ Paper map — the Park Service advises against relying on GPS here
- ☐ Trekking poles if you are doing anything with real elevation
- ☐ First-aid basics and blister plasters

If you are soaking — planned for 2027

The sauna, cold plunge and open-air soaking tubs are not built yet. Pack this only if the place you are staying already has them.

- ☐ Swimsuit
- ☐ Robe for the walk between room and tub
- ☐ Sandals or water shoes
- ☐ Hair tie
- ☐ Dry bag for wet clothes afterwards