



9 of the Best State Parks in Utah

Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park

[Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park](#) is located just outside of Kanab in southern Utah. What makes this park unique is that you'll find rolling sand dunes that stretch approximately 2,000 acres across the desert landscape.

The dunes are estimated to be around 15,000 years old and are made of soft, coral-colored sand formed by the eroding Navajo sandstone cliffs.

My kids love this park and spend hours sandboarding and sledding down the hills. You can rent sandboards at the visitor center or bring your own.

One of the best ways to experience Coral Pink Sand Dunes is with a guided [ATV tour](#). On the tour, you'll get your adrenaline pumping as you soar up and over the dunes. You'll also be able to visit a hidden slot canyon, and equipment is provided for sandboarding and sledding down the hills.

Other highlights include a viewing platform, a nature loop trail, and informational displays at the visitor center. If you want to wake up to the glow of sunrise over the dunes, then be sure to reserve a campsite in advance.

For more information and recommendations for things to do in the area, see our guide, [14 Amazing Things to Do in Kanab, Utah](#).

Dead Horse Point State Park

Moab draws millions of visitors each year, but many people skip [Dead Horse Point State Park](#) about 40 minutes away. This underrated gem is one of my personal favorites for the dramatic canyon views.

From the main overlook, you'll see the Colorado River winding through deep red rock canyon 2,000 feet below.

Honestly, the panoramic views rival anything you'd see in Canyonlands or Arches National Park. You can even see the vibrant Potash Ponds in the distance that have made the rounds on social media.

This park is also known for its mountain biking trails, particularly the epic Intrepid Trail System, which offers incredible views.

Dead Horse Point is particularly stunning at sunset when the cliffs light up in shades of orange and purple. Campgrounds and yurts are available for overnight stays if you want to experience those unforgettable sunsets.

Because of its elevation, mornings and evenings can be windy and cool even in summer, so bring extra blankets and a jacket if you are planning to spend the night.

While you're in the area, see our [Moab Travel Guide](#) for more recommendations.

Goblin Valley State Park

If you've ever wanted to explore a landscape that looks like something out of a sci-fi movie, [Goblin Valley State Park](#) is for you! This park is located between Green River and Hanksville where you'll find otherworldly landscapes as well).

Goblin Valley State Park is filled with hundreds of strange, mushroom-shaped rock formations that have been nicknamed "goblins". My kids had the best time wandering through the maze of "goblins", climbing, exploring, getting lost in their imaginations, and playing on nature's playground.

It does get hot in the summer, so plan to explore earlier in the morning or later in the evening.

Goblin Valley is also a designated Dark Sky Park, making it an excellent spot for stargazing. I highly recommend spending the night in a yurt or camping, so that you can experience the incredible night sky.

For a unique experience, take a guided canyoneering tour to explore the [Goblin's Lair](#). We also love hiking through a slot canyon at the nearby Little Wild Horse Canyon.

For more details and recommendations, see our [First Time Guide to Visiting Goblin Valley](#).

Goosenecks State Park

[Goosenecks State Park](#) is a little off the beaten path and remains a bit of a hidden gem. It is located about 40 minutes from [Monument Valley](#), and is worth the extra drive.

This park is a geological wonderland and offers one of the most striking river views in Utah. It sits high above the San Juan River, which winds its way through a series of tight, dramatic

bends known as "goosenecks."

The view reminds me of [Horseshoe Bend](#) in Arizona, but with far fewer people. It's quiet, remote, and absolutely breathtaking!

The only downside is that there isn't as much to do at this park. If you're up for the challenge, you can hike the 4-mile Honaker Trail that leads 1,500 feet down to the river and back up. The trail was originally constructed in 1893 to give gold miners access to the river.

Primitive camping is available right on the rim where you can wake up to this view right out of your tent! Sunrise and sunset are incredible, as the soft light really brings out the textures in the rock.

Keep in mind that it is pretty remote with limited cell coverage. There are no stores nearby, and no water source, so come fully prepared. Vault toilets are located at the lookout point.

Great Salt Lake State Park

[Great Salt Lake State Park](#) is such a unique park. The Great Salt Lake is one of the saltiest bodies of water on Earth, and is one of the few places in the world where you can float on water! It's a unique experience, and my kids were shocked at how effortlessly they could float.

I'm always amazed at the sheer size of this lake, and the sheer beauty as it is surrounded by wide-open skies and mountains in the distance.

Our favorite spot at this park is the pink lake at Stansbury Island, a lesser-known gem on the south shore. There is also a pink lake on the northern bay by the Spiral Jetty, but it's a little more well-known.

For directions and details, see our guide to visiting the [Stansbury Island Pink Lake](#).

While you're in the area, stop by the visitor center to learn about the lake's history and geology. You can also drive by the Saltair, which once stood as a ritzy resort on the shore of the Great Salt Lake in the late 1800s. The famed Bonneville Salt Flats are located about 1 1/2 hours away and are worth the drive if you have extra time.

Just be aware that the lake can have a strong smell depending on the time of year, and bugs can be a factor, especially after rain, so come prepared.

Palisade State Park

[Palisade State Park](#) is a lesser-known park, but it is one of our favorites to visit in the summer.

It offers that quintessential summer experience where kids can jump from the dock, swim in the lake, lazily float on the water, and have a picnic in the shade.

This park is located in central Utah near the town of Manti, and is a perfect summer retreat for families. The small lake is surrounded by grassy picnic areas, shady trees, and a sandy beach.

Watersport rentals are available and include kayaks, paddleboards, canoes, and paddle boats.

If you want to make a whole weekend out of it, campsites and cabins are available by the water. Just make your reservations early, as they book up quickly in the summer.

The reservoir is the main attraction, but the park also features an 18-hole golf course, hiking trails, OHV Trails, fishing, and the Iron Grill Restaurant.

For more information and recommendations, see our guide, [6 Fun Things to Do in Sanpete County](#).

Quail Creek State Park

If you're looking to escape the crowds in southern Utah, [Quail Creek State Park](#) is a great alternative to the more popular Sand Hollow State Park just down the road.

This calm reservoir is framed by red rock cliffs and is a beautiful spot to escape the summer heat.

The lake is smaller with less boat traffic than Sand Hollow, so it's the perfect spot for paddleboarding, kayaking, and jet skiing.

We rented jet skis from Mad Moose Rentals and had such a fun day on the water!

If you're interested, click the link and use code 'simplywander' to [save 10% on jet ski rentals](#).

Quail Creek State Park is located near Zion, and it's one of our favorite spots to cool off after a morning of hiking.

The water generally stays pretty warm during the summer, and there is a nice little beach that is great for swimming.

Sand Hollow State Park

As I previously mentioned, [Sand Hollow State Park](#) is located just down the road from Quail Creek. It is a more popular summer destination, but for good reason!

It offers a little bit of everything with sparkling blue water, sandstone cliffs, and miles of rolling sand dunes. The contrast of blue water against red sand is ridiculously beautiful. The

shore is lined with sandy beaches where you can set up towels and umbrellas for a full day of fun in the sun.

Sand Hollow is a hotspot for boating, jet skiing, paddleboarding, swimming, and riding ATVs on the dunes that border the lake.

They also have an awesome cliff jumping spot on the north side of the lake. See our guide, [4 Epic Things to Do in St. George This Summer](#), for the location and information.

Another one of our favorite things to do at Sand Hollow is to take a guided ATV tour with Mad Moose Rentals. We especially love the West Rim Trail with sand dunes, rock crawling, and incredible views. Once again, if you click the link and use code 'simplywander', you can [save 10% on your tour or rental!](#)

Campsites are available, but it does get hot and windy in the summer. Weekends can get busy, so plan to arrive early, especially if you're hoping to claim a good beach spot. Also, be aware that swimmers' itch is common here, so avoid sitting in the warm shallow water where it is the most prevalent.

Snow Canyon State Park

[Snow Canyon State Park](#) is located only a few miles outside of St. George, but it's a world away from the busy city.

The park isn't very big, in fact, it feels like a smaller, quieter version of Zion. Despite its size, it really packs a punch with red and white Navajo sandstone cliffs, black lava flows, petroglyphs, slot canyons, caves, arches, scenic overlooks, sand dunes, and more!

The hiking here is fantastic, with over 38 miles of hiking trails. Our favorite trail is Jenny's Canyon, a short and easy trail that leads to a small but impressive slot canyon. Other popular trails include Petrified Dunes, Lava Flow Trail, Pioneer Names Trail, and Johnson Canyon Trail.

One of the best ways to experience Snow Canyon is by [renting e-bikes](#). There is a great bike trail that takes you through the park where you can stop along the way for hiking and photos.

Just keep in mind that summer temperatures can be extreme, so plan to visit early in the morning or later in the evening. The park is open from 6 am to 10 pm in the summer.

For more information and recommendations, see our guide, [10 Awesome Things to Do in St. George With Kids](#).

Utah has 46 state parks and each one is unique with so much to offer! I hope this guide will help you discover memorable things to do in each of these 9 parks, and inspire you to get out and explore more state parks!

