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 to 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