

## Spry Canyon • Zion National Park

<b>Rating:</b>	3B III
<b>Best Season:</b>	Spring, summer or fall.
<b>Time:</b>	4 to 7 hours (or more for a large or novice group).
<b>Longest Rappel:</b>	165 feet (50 m)
<b>Access:</b>	Requires a car spot or short hitchhike.
<b>Permit:</b>	Required. Available at Visitor Center.
<b>Seasonality:</b>	<b>Spring</b> —Highly variable conditions exist. Melting snow can cause high flowing water conditions. Check the flow BEFORE you enter the canyon. <b>Summer and Fall</b> —The preferred seasons. Be careful of late summer thunderstorms and expect variability in pools full of water or a dryer canyon if it has not rained recently. <b>Winter</b> —Can be fun, but VERY difficult and scary with icy conditions. Be prepared for flowing water and falling ice hampering your descent. Also expect VERY cold temperatures; watch out for flooding due to snowmelt.
<b>Equipment:</b>	Helmets, Rappelling gear, webbing and rapid links. Good, sticky shoes for the slickrock approach.
<b>Cold Protection:</b>	Variable, but wetsuits generally required. Drysuits recommended in winter or cold conditions.
<b>Drinking Water:</b>	None, bring plenty.
<b>Flash Flood Risk:</b>	Low/moderate—read note below.
<b>Anchors:</b>	Natural and bolted anchors.
<b>Skills Required:</b>	Downclimbing and rappelling.

Located in the heart of Zion - the rugged approach and a bit of spicy downclimbing give Spry a more-serious air than many canyons at the same rating. Best done in spring or fall, or with an early start in summer.

Spry has a delightful slickrock approach, though its charms can be lost if it is hot out. After the slabby first rappel, Spry has about 10 mostly vertical rappels, some interesting downclimbs and a few swims, all but one of which can be avoided. In summer, after rainstorms, wear a wetsuit so the whole canyon can be enjoyed. The one mandatory swim is near the end and short - so wetsuits don't NEED to be carried if it is hot out. Spry is RELATIVELY safe from flashfloods, as there are escape spots after MOST of the rappels, and the catch-basin is small, requiring a direct hit from a thunderstorm. In 2010, a flash caught three canyoneers and swept them over a rappel, only one receiving serious injuries. Only outstanding performance by ZNP Ranger staff allowed for a successful, timely rescue.

**Driving:** Spry starts where Pine Creek crosses Highway 9 one third of a mile (500 meters) east of the main tunnel. There is poor parking at this spot - park closer to the tunnel at a real parking spot and walk the side of the road to the crossing of Pine Creek. The FIRST canyon coming from the south, east of the Tunnel is NOT Pine Creek - it is Shelf Canyon, and it does not lead anywhere useful. Continue past this to the major canyon that proceeds north with 15 minutes of walking on flat sand. On the map it can be seen that this is Pine Creek, while the creek beside the highway is called Clear Creek.

Spry ends in lower Pine Creek, where the highway crosses the creek on a beautiful masonry bridge and starts climbing toward the tunnel. This is 1/2 mile (800 meters) east of Canyon Junction. Spot a car here.

**Approach:** The approach to the bowl of upper Spry is shared with Lodge Canyon. From Highway 9, follow social trails north into the bed of Pine Creek. Walk this wide and sandy wash about 15 minutes (1/2 mile, 800 meters) to where the canyon starts to narrow. Exit the bed of the canyon left up a 4th class slickrock watercourse and climb up and a little right several hundred feet to a bench. Follow the bench north then west into a slickrock bowl below the impressive south buttress of Deertrap Mountain. Climb the center of the bowl (4th class), then up and right to the

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top of the pass. Keep your eyes peeled for faint petroglyphs on a vertical orange wall a couple hundred feet below the pass.

From the top of the pass, looking west, left to right you see: the big peak of the East Temple; then the upper bowl of Spry Canyon; the Twin Brothers; a notch pass next to Twin Brothers; then a ridge leading up to Deertrap Mountain. From the top of the pass, traverse right and slightly down toward the slot pass and to the head of a narrow slot that cuts across the slope below. Climb into the head of the slot and, pushing through some brush, follow the slot most of the way down to the canyon floor. When convenient, exit to the right and descend steep broken slabs to easier terrain. You are now in the upper bowl.

**Canyon:** Descend the watercourse between huge, colorful walls. The canyon winds its way through trees and brush, soon arriving at a lovely slickrock bowl. Downclimb to a bolt anchor, then rappel (R1) 165 feet (50m) past a swampy pothole to the ground.

The canyon again winds its way through a delightful forest. A couple of small potholes lead to a mossy area of short drops in the canyon bottom, usually downclimbed. Stay in the watercourse. The second drop is tall, but yields easily to the "elevator" technique – staying back in the corner and using outward pressure to control one's slide. Or rappel off a tree. The last drop into a dark slot requires a rappel off the most solid of the abundant debris. The dark slot may require a little wading.

After another mellow section, the canyon gets going. Moderate downclimbing is interspersed with about 10 rappels. In one spot, a narrow slot is down-slid elevator-style, then a pool delicately stemmed over. After an interesting rappel, the canyon opens out, then a slabby slope is downclimbed by cutting right. This leads down to a bolt anchor for a 90-foot (27 m) rappel into a black slot. The edge here has been cut up badly by canyoneers' ropes – don't get your rope stuck in one.

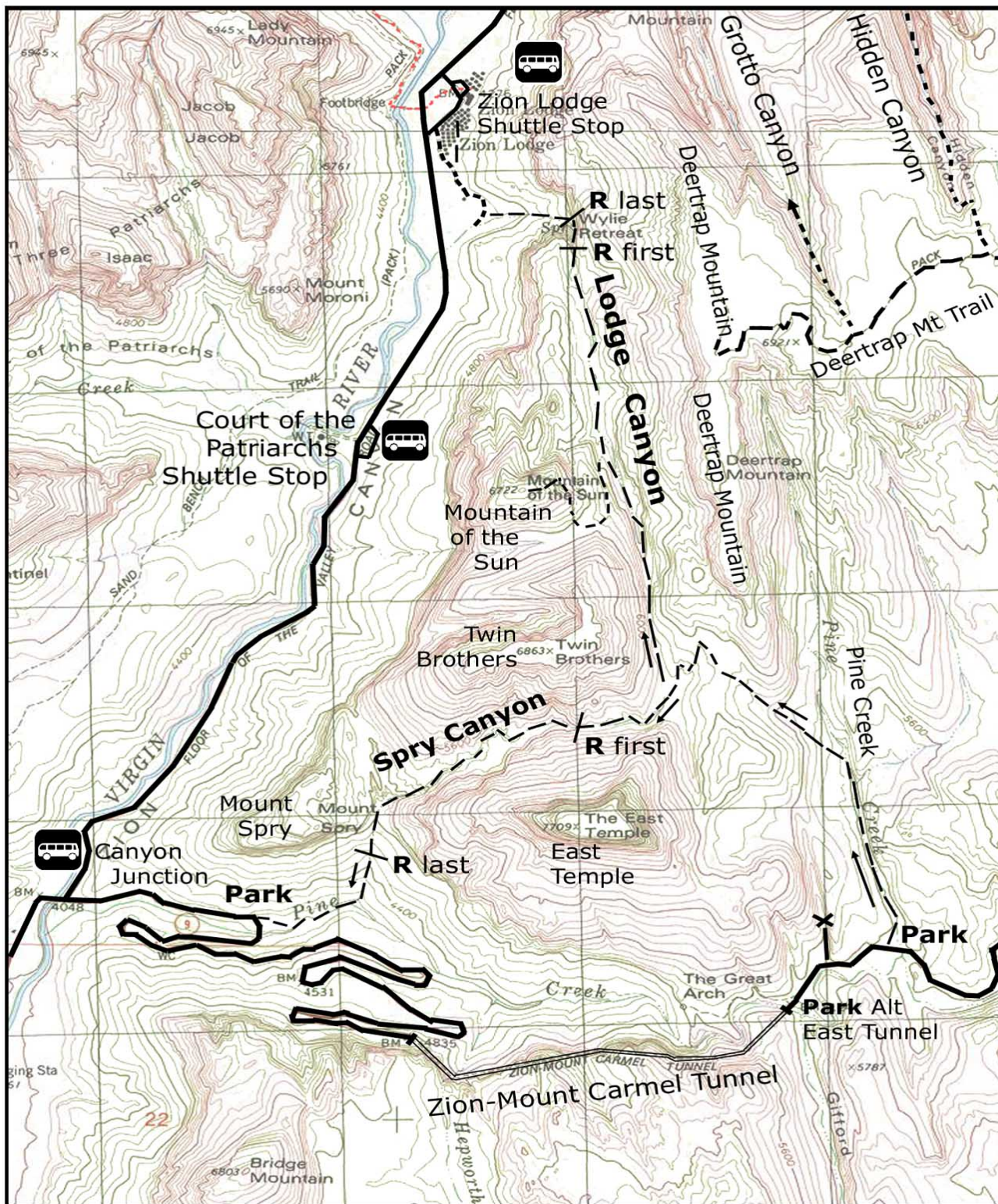
Soon after, a block allows rappelling into a mysterious pool in a slot. This is not to be missed. Swim the pool, then continue the rappel (total 30 m or 100 feet) down a second drop. (Var: those wishing to avoid swimming can rappel off a large tree directly to the large sandy area below. A trail leads past the large tree to a really ugly rappel down a dirty slot.)

Toward the end, a diagonal rappel is made to gain the top of a flute, thus avoiding dropping into a skanky pool. Most of the anchors are bolted - certainly no more bolts are required.

Finally, the canyoneer downclimbs (4th class) a scary-looking, narrow slot (easier with pack off) into a pool (ankle to nose deep, depending) to a 100 foot (30m) rappel to a ledge. The final rap is made by climbing up and left onto a shelf, and rapping off a tree to the top of the talus.

**Exit:** Work your way directly down the watercourse (large blocks) to a big ledge with a 90-foot (27 m) drop, the Lambs Point Tongue layer of Navajo Sandstone. Rappel or follow the ledge right to a landslide, then back to the watercourse under the drop. Descend to Pine Creek. Turn right and walk out Pine Creek to the bridge.

# SPRY CANYON & LODGE CANYON



↑ North

Scale of Miles

