About the West Rim Trail, Zion National Park

For our annual Zion Xtreme Hike, 10 lucky hikers will get to hike the beautiful West Rim Trail. This is a 16.2 miles hike with a 3600-ft total descent, including a few ups and downs along the way.

Starting from Lava Point, the trek down the West Rim Trail to the Grotto in Zion Canyon is a great adventure. While most of the trail is level or downhill, it is still a long journey and should be considered strenuous.

As the highest point in Zion, the view from the lookout is a great teaser that hints at the great scenery in store. To the southwest, you can see Wildcat Canyon and the Great West Canyon in the distance and to the southeast, you can see the White Cliffs above the Zion Narrows and the main canyon. The West Rim Trail takes us south along the plateau between those two large canyon systems.

At three miles, the first notable viewpoint is the "SGA teaser viewpoint" that gives a view straight down the Left Fork of North Creek to the majestic South Guardian Angel peak in the distance. Over the next two miles, the trail makes a gradual descent into the valley known Potato Hollow.

Beyond Potato Hollow, we have our first short stretch of uphill hiking that takes us 400 feet up and then down again to the "Hammerhead Viewpoint," a perfectly framed photogenic spot. Another uphill push takes us to the top of Horse Pasture Plateau and the junction with the Telephone Canyon Trail. This is where the scenery starts to become magical, showing clear views of all of the amazing formations of the Great West Canyon: the Right Fork, Greatheart Mesa, Ivins Mountain, Inclined Temple, etc.

The trail slowly descends as it heads east, now offering amazing views of Heaps Canyon, Castle Dome, Behunin Canyon, and Mount Majestic to the south.

Now it is time to say goodbye to the pleasantly forested upper plateau. The last four miles of the West Rim Trail are nothing short of dramatic as the exposed trail, chiseled right out of the near vertical walls, zigzags its way down through the White Cliffs.

After two switchbacks, the trail will pass the saddle and head of Behunin Canyon, offering great views down into Behunin to the west and lower Telephone Canyon to the east. The West Rim Trail then heads down to the east through a section known as "Little Siberia" before crossing a small hiker's bridge that marks the start of a short uphill section.

After passing the saddle above Refrigerator Canyon, the trail starts another long descent, offering non-stop amazing views down to the bottom of Zion Canyon with Angels Landing coming more prominently into view.

From Scout's Lookout, it is roughly only one more hour of hiking down to the Grotto Trailhead. The trail heads down the famous Walter's Wiggles switchbacks that take down you into Refrigerator Canyon, and then a final set of switchbacks lands us on solid ground by the banks of the Virgin River.