



Winter in Southwest Utah's Desert Offers Multitude of Year-round Outdoor Adventures

St. George, Utah – November 15, 2021 – Greater Zion, located in southwest Utah where the Colorado Plateau, Great Basin and Mojave Desert converge, provides a distinctive environment for year-round adventure. A popular destination for summer visitors, fewer people are privy to the gems that winter provides in the area. As the seasons change, so does the landscape with dramatic red rock contrasting with snow at higher elevations and waterfalls occasionally appear off the canyon's cliffs in Zion National Park. However, mild weather mainly can be found throughout the winter, allowing for year-round golf, hiking, mountain biking, canyoneering and some of the best off-highway vehicles trails in the country and so much more.

"The diverse landscapes, terrain and elevations in the region provide a wide range of outdoor adventure activities to take place within close proximity. Winter months provide for snow activities in the higher elevations and beautiful golf weather in the valleys on the same day," said Kevin Lewis, director of the Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office. "Winter is definitely one of the signature seasons in Greater Zion. The temperate desert climate provides unique recreation opportunities that celebrate a landscape that was crafted for outdoor recreation."

The average high temperature in December and January is the upper 50s with weather getting warmer and warmer as the season progresses. February temperatures creep into the 60s with March offering warm 70-degree weather. Snow is rare near St. George but can be found on the other side of the county near Springdale and Zion National Park from time to time. Rain falls an average of three or four days per month December through March. The moisture makes Greater Zion's desert landscape come to life in a way that isn't visible in the hot summer climate.

"It's the only time of year that you can see certain desert flowers that truly light up the landscape," added Lewis. "The scenery also has a softer hue that's perfect for photographers."

Winter provides a great setting for exploring the hundreds of miles of hiking trails that can be found throughout the region. There are some trails that are only accessible in the winter, such as the Johnson Canyon Trail in Snow Canyon State Park that is open from Sept. 15 to March 14, due to wildlife propagation. The easy, two-mile roundtrip hike reflects the topography in the region as the trail passes through a lava flow field, dry stream bed and into a canyon. In the middle of the hike, there is a red rock arch spanning 200 feet before hikers meander to the end of the canyon where water may be visible.

Mountain bikers can use the winter months to demo some of the best rental equipment that shops like Over the Edge Sports in Hurricane and Red Rock Bicycle Co. in St. George have to offer. Bike shops have more availability in winter to demo a new bike on trails throughout Greater Zion. Some winter recommended trails include those in Paradise Canyon just north of St. George in the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. Trails such as Chuckwalla, Turtle Wall, Black Rocks and Cougar Cliffs can be ridden as a loop or out-and-back options. These trails provide little climbing and are technically intermediate difficulty. For a more challenging winter ride,

providing views of Zion National Park, there's Gould's Rim Trail to J.E.M. Trail and Hurricane Loop for a day-long, 21-mile outing. The singletrack trail runs along the cliffs above Hurricane, beside Gould's Wash and then links to the top of J.E.M. Trail for an optional loop using the Hurricane Rim Trail. There is gradual climbing, but the narrow twisting singletrack makes this a more expert-oriented ride, with a fun, twisted downhill section to finish.

Off-road vehicles offer another opportunity to explore Greater Zion. Drivers can access some distinctive terrain during the winter months ranging from the higher-altitude Pine Valley Mountains with pine trees and mountain air to the desert landscape of Sand Mountain at Sand Hollow State Park. Toquerville Falls Trail is in its element during cooler months with spectacular waterfalls in their prime. The 12-mile, out-and-back ride has an elevation gain of 1,984 feet and features a set of two, horseshoe-shaped waterfalls along La Verkin Creek, which feeds the Virgin River. For a bonus ride, travel up to Toquerville Towers for panoramic views of the Kolob Terrace area of Zion National Park, Sand Mountain, Hurricane Cliffs, Silver Reef and Pine Valley Mountains in the distance.

Greater Zion's landscape also is dotted with 13 world-class golf courses within a 20-mile radius. The region offers six of the top 10 "Courses You Can Play" in Utah, as ranked by *Golfweek* magazine with Sand Hollow Resort's Championship Course ranked No. 1 in the state. Copper Rock Golf Course in Hurricane is the newest offering, while nearby Coral Canyon Golf Course in Washington just completed a major renovation of its fairways and greens.

Golfing is just one of the many activities in Greater Zion that's more accessible in the winter with canyoneering and climbing guides offering more availability to scale the region's red rock or travel deep into its canyons. And, if water adventure is more of interest, the season provides opportunities for fishing and boating on the area's three reservoirs. Visitors also can get a bird's eye view of the region by booking a scenic hot-air balloon ride or helicopter tour.

To plan a visit to Greater Zion or for more information, visit GreaterZion.com.

Conveniently located in Southwest Utah, Greater Zion is easily accessible with major access points along the I-15 corridor. The region is located approximately 100 miles north of Las Vegas and 300 miles south of Salt Lake City. St. George Regional Airport (SGU) is located six miles southeast of St. George and offers daily roundtrip flights via United Airlines, American Airlines and Delta Air Lines. The airport offers non-stop flights to and from key hubs such as Salt Lake City, Denver, Phoenix, and Dallas/Ft. Worth (resuming March 2022). Another option to access the Greater Zion region is McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, a short 90-minute drive from the destination.

About Greater Zion

Greater Zion is a destination that offers more than 2,400 square miles of adventure and inspiration. Zion National Park, the third most visited National Park in the United States, is the premier attraction, but Zion is only the beginning. Four state parks and a multitude of year-round recreational lands set the stage for a burgeoning mountain biking scene, some of the best off-highway vehicle riding in the country, scenic and challenging play at 13 top-rated golf courses, world-class cultural performances at Tuacahn Center for the Arts and so much more. The vibrant communities of St. George, Springdale, Hurricane, Ivins and towns in between offer a wide range of lodging options, dining experiences and access to outdoor pursuits through local outfitters and tour companies. Home to the 2021 IRONMAN World Championship and 2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, Greater Zion also is a world-class destination for sporting events, conferences and meetings. The Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office is a transient-room-tax-funded entity of Washington County, Utah. For more information, please visit GreaterZion.com.

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Media Contact:

Kristin Yantis and Amanda McNally, Malen Yantis Public Relations, kyantis@myprco.com or
amcnally@myprco.com, (970) 949-7919