

## **Top 5 Utah County Day Hikes**

The desert mountain climate of the Wasatch Mountain range provides many wonderful landscapes for many compelling hiking trails. Here's what to expect when you try these five hikes and one bonus—a spectacular walk—this Spring, Summer, or Fall.

### **One: Hiking Timpanogos**

Perhaps the most popular hike in Utah is hiking Mount Timpanogos. This hike has something of everything and something for everyone. Prepare for the greater part of a day to make this trip, but it can be done in half a day. The sheer distance of stretches that are continually rising more and more to its peak, is not for the first time hiker though. It is a formidable expanse for only being 6 ½ miles each way, because the elevation gain is 4,490 feet. There are plains and valleys and great rock faces to see among aspens, conifers, and streams of waterfalls around and in your hike. I didn't spot many animals. People are hiking this trail throughout the night or from early sunrise throughout the day. There isn't a higher peak around and it is a great accomplishment to reach the saddle alone, kind of a holding area for those of us whose legs were too tired to traverse to the summit. Maybe I'll try that next time. You can see people around the side of the peak sliding down an ice face. I didn't try that either. Mine was a quick hike in, a nice picnic at the summit where I could see in all directions, and a quicker hike out. I wasn't camping there like some who made a real event of their Mount Timpanogos hike. Whatever you do, hiking in and around Mt. Timpanogos is a memorable feat. One side of the mountain has a great walk-in cave with formations to see. Make a plan to visit Mount Timpanogos if you spend anytime in Northern Utah during the warmer months.

### **Two: Hiking Shingle Mill Peak**

Look East up Rock Canyon, the canyon North of "Y" Mountain, there you will find possibly the newest hiking trail in the valley. A well-marked path was created to slow down erosion being caused by hikers who were attempting to follow equestrian paths to the summit. Hikers are needed to firmly establish the path. The hike is approximately 4 ½ miles each way, with a vertical elevation of 3,530 feet. Second only to Mount Timpanogos the trek is slightly shorter, with lesser vistas, but possibly greater areas to see. Shingle Mill Peak "abounds with various types of fascinating wildlife and mountain flora...long-tailed weasels, wild turkeys, moose, elk, mule deer, yellow-bellied marmots, blue grouse, red-tailed hawks, swifts, hummingbirds, gray jays, and woodpeckers...wild raspberries, chokecherries, elderberries, Englemann spruce, limber pine, sub-alpine fir, and a wide variety of mountain wild flowers grace the trail." From the summit you can see Mount Timpanogos, Cascade Mountain, Heber Valley, the Jordanelle Reservoir, the Uintas and Strawberry Basin, Provo Peak, Spanish Fork Peak, "Y" Mountain, Utah Valley, Utah Lake, Kennecott Copper Mine, and the Stansbury Mountains. (For more details see <http://www.ontargetbsa.org/utcopeaks.htm#squaw>)

### **Three: Hiking "Y" Mountain**

The famous “Y” on the mountain is a beacon to BYU campus. You can’t miss it. The hiking trail provides a nice lookout point of campus and the valley. The trail is well worn and zig-zags up the face with a dozen or more switchbacks. The climb is only a little more than a mile but the increase in elevation is significant. Hikers of all levels can make it to the “Y” painted onto a rocky surface. Some may need encouragement from one switchback to the next. Don’t hike hungry, but also don’t eat a lot of food right before you hike a large change in elevation like this one. You want to enjoy the day without a sick stomach. There isn’t much shade to this hike either, so the earlier the better to stay out of the sun. I like this hike when you have an hour or two and want to enjoy an invigorating walk with someone. The view is worth it at the top. And the way down is much easier than the way up, which provides for a brisk ending to a quick enjoyable hike. For the exercise minded, “Y” mountain is a nice jog. The BYU soccer team uses it for tryouts to weed out walk-ons and others. The football team uses it for a race for the smaller guys and camaraderie for linemen just trying to join the team atop the “Y” in a decent time. This is also a very popular activity and you can see people dotting the “Y” from the ground below on any given warm weather Saturday. Hiking the “Y” is a fun group activity especially since the days of whitewashing it in assembly line fashion are over.

#### **Four: Hiking Squaw Peak Trail**

If you park in the parking lot of Rock Canyon park and hike East into the mouth of Rock Canyon then go 1.5 miles up Rock Canyon, there is a side trail that heads North. This hike is not as traveled and takes a little longer than hiking the “Y” but is far shorter than the first two mentioned and you still get a good sneak peak of some of the best things any hike in Utah offers. If you like green mountains accented by white aspens and different wildflowers this is the hike for you. The one-way distance is about 3 miles and gets tougher as you go. If you are in shape you can run the whole way, but don’t be surprised if you deal with shortness of breath with the ever-increasing elevation. It is wise to take a moment to drink some water and keep from getting dehydrated. The views along the trail are at least as pleasant and memorable as the peak that ends up overlooking the valley that you will have likely seen from other peaks before this one.

#### **Five: Hiking Stewart Falls**

The best falls to see in Utah County are Bridal Veil Falls. But the best falls to hike to, is Stewart Falls. Bridal Veil can be seen along the highway off the cliffs of Provo Canyon on your drive in to the Stewart Falls hiking trail. Drive up to Sundance Ski resort and then look for signs. There is a parking area at the foot of the trail. This trail smells of and is shaded by evergreens most of the way. It is a well walked path but is never overwhelmed by hikers. It is a perfect hike for all ages. There are plenty of wild plants to see, and birds to hear. Then you come to a nice waterfall with a good view above as well as below. It serves as an easy hike that can be done in an hour or two depending on how long you want to relax. Nice picnic areas are available at the front of the hike.

#### **Bonus: Hiking Cascade Springs**

Awe, the hike you've been waiting for—more like a walk in the park. Stewart Falls happily trickles around and bubbles up over mossy rocks underneath a well placed wooden walkway and bridges. The path completes a couple circles where you may just meander about and watch for fish and flora among these peaceful waters surrounding you. It is not a lengthy trail, just an enjoyable jaunt up in the mountains. There are lots of trees for shade, and different signs to read about wildlife that can be seen.

If you see and do these five diverse hikes you will have a great appreciation for the outdoor life of Utah County that is ever so close to always be enjoyed. With Summer fast approaching I look forward to getting a nice day trip backpack, some other essential gear, and hitting the trails. Maybe I'll see you up there.

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