



48 HOURS IN

Salt Lake City

HIGH DESERT · HIGH COUNTRY

48 Hours in Salt Lake City

Salt Lake City sits in a bowl ringed by the Wasatch Range, a compact downtown grid with the mountains visible from nearly every street corner. It's an easy city to underestimate — a quick layover stop for most travelers — and an easy one to enjoy alone: flat, walkable streets, a light rail line that reaches the airport and the ski canyons alike, and a food and coffee scene that's grown well past its reputation.

DAY ONE — DOWNTOWN · TEMPLE SQUARE · 9TH & 9TH

8:00 AM

The Rose Establishment

A downtown coffee shop with an old-school approach to espresso and a menu strong enough to justify sitting down rather than grabbing to go.

Insider tip: Sit inside rather than on the patio — the indoor seating is simply more comfortable.

9:30 AM

Temple Square

The global headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the visual center of the city — the Salt Lake Temple, Tabernacle, and Joseph Smith Memorial Building are all free to view from the grounds.

Insider tip: Check current access before visiting — parts of the Square rotate through renovation phases.

11:00 AM

Utah State Capitol

A short walk uphill from Temple Square, with a rotunda worth the climb and one of the better free skyline views in the city from its front steps.

Insider tip: The walk up Capitol Hill is the best free overlook of the valley and the Wasatch Range together.

1:00 PM

Lunch: The Copper Onion

A farm-to-table bistro with bar seating built for a solo diner — the ricotta dumplings are the dish regulars order on repeat.

Insider tip: \$16–28. The bar seats fill fast at lunch; arrive by noon on weekdays.

3:00 PM

9th & 9th neighborhood

A walkable, independent-shop district that helped define the city's more recent identity — bookstores, a gelato counter, and a genuinely different feel from downtown proper.

Insider tip: Dolcetti's gelato is worth the short walk from the main strip on 900 East.

6:30 PM

Ensign Peak

A short half-mile trail just north of downtown with a full panoramic view of the valley, the Wasatch Range, and the Great Salt Lake beyond — the city's best sunset spot.

Insider tip: Only 0.9 miles round-trip and roughly 30 minutes total — easy to fit in even after a full day.

8:00 PM

Dinner: Red Iguana

The city's best-known Mexican kitchen, famous for its mole sauces — ask for the mole sampler if you can't choose.

Insider tip: \$16–26. Expect a wait at peak dinner hours; a solo diner often gets seated faster than a group.

DAY TWO — LIBRARY · SUGAR HOUSE · CANYONS

9:00 AM

Salt Lake City Public Library

An architectural landmark in its own right — a curved glass wall wrapping a rooftop garden with valley views. Quiet, free, and a good spot to plan the rest of the day.

Insider tip: The rooftop garden is open to the public and rarely crowded before mid-morning.

10:30 AM

Natural History Museum of Utah

Set into the foothills with strong Utah-specific paleontology and Native American culture exhibits — the building's copper-clad design mirrors the surrounding rock formations.

Insider tip: Combine with the adjacent Living Room Trail for a short hike straight from the parking lot.

1:00 PM

Lunch: Takashi

The city's reference-point sushi counter — creative rolls, fresh sashimi, and a bar where solo diners can watch the chefs work.

Insider tip: \$20–35. Expect a wait; the bar seats are worth it if available.

3:00 PM

Sugar House Park & neighborhood

A green, relaxed park anchoring one of the city's most livable neighborhoods — good for an unhurried afternoon of coffee-shop hopping.

Insider tip: Sugar House Coffee and Tea Zaanti sit within a few minutes' walk of each other.

6:00 PM

Big or Little Cottonwood Canyon

A short drive from downtown into the Wasatch foothills — even a brief evening drive up-canyon delivers a dramatic change of scenery from the valley floor.

Insider tip: No snow gear needed outside winter; the lower canyon roads are accessible and scenic year-round.

8:00 PM

Dinner: Current Fish & Oyster

An elegant raw bar and seafood kitchen behind a historic brick façade — a strong counter-seat option for a solo diner who wants a proper final night.

Insider tip: \$30–55. The oyster selection changes daily; ask the counter staff for that day's picks.

WHERE TO EAT

Restaurant	Area	Notes
Red Iguana	West downtown	Mole sauces the city is known for; ask for the sampler.
The Copper Onion	Downtown	Farm-to-table bistro with proper bar seating.
Takashi	Downtown	The reference-point sushi counter in the city.
Current Fish & Oyster	Downtown	Raw bar and seafood behind a historic brick façade.
Pago	9th & 9th	Farm-to-table pioneer that helped define the neighborhood.
The Rose Establishment	Downtown	Old-school coffee shop, best for a slow breakfast.

WHEN TO VISIT

Late spring through early fall (May–September) brings the most reliable weather for walking the city and driving up into the canyons, with long daylight hours well into the evening. Winter turns the city into a ski gateway — Park City and the Cottonwood Canyon resorts are all within an hour — but note that Utah's liquor laws mean bars typically close by 1am regardless of season, which shapes the city's evening rhythm more than the weather does.

GETTING AROUND

Mode	Cost	Notes
TRAX Light Rail	\$2.50/ride	Connects downtown, the airport, and outlying neighborhoods.
GREENbike bike share	Varies	Flat downtown topography makes this genuinely practical.
Uber / Lyft	Varies	Best for canyon access and Sugar House after dark.

Travel Alone. Live Fully.



OPEN THE INTERACTIVE MAP FOR SALT LAKE CITY