



Topic
Better Living

Subtopic
Travel

The Wonders of America's State Parks

Course Guidebook

Joe Yogerst

Journalist and Travel Writer



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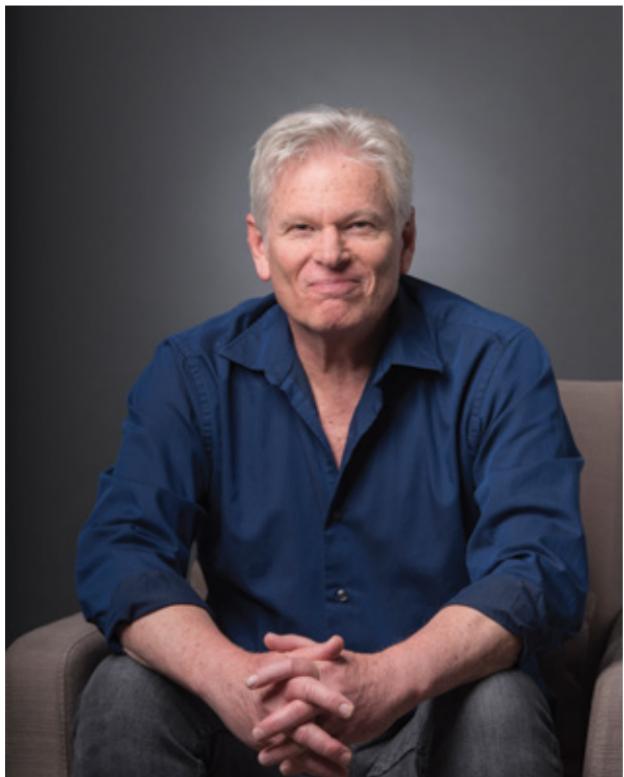
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Mr. Yogerst's portfolio includes investigative journalism for *The Washington Post*, celebrity profiles for *Prestige* magazine, and 35 book projects for National Geographic. He is the author of National Geographic's *50 States, 5,000 Ideas: Where to Go, When to Go, What to See, What to Do*, a national travel best seller. He is also the author of two additional books in the series: *100 Parks, 5,000 Ideas* and the upcoming *100 Drives, 5,000 Ideas*, which covers the best road trips in the US and Canada.

Mr. Yogerst's other books include his account of a modern-day journey through Vietnam, *Land of Nine Dragons: Vietnam Today*, which was named the best travel book in the annual Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Competition. His book *Long Road South: The Pan American Highway*, which covers his four-month journey between Texas and Argentina, was named one of America's top travel books by the Society of American Travel Writers. Mr. Yogerst's articles on travel, business, culture, and sports have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The San Francisco Examiner*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Vogue*, *Travel + Leisure*, *USA Today*, CNN Travel, BBC Travel, *TIME*, *Newsweek*, and *Forbes*.

Mr. Yogerst maintains a website at www.joeyogerst.com. ■

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THE WONDERS OF AMERICA'S STATE PARKS

COURSE SCOPE

When it comes to America's state parks, the numbers are staggering. There are more than 8,000 state parks nationwide, and they protect more than 18 million acres of countryside, historical landscapes, and wilderness. These parks see nearly 800 million visitors each year. The parks harbor nearly a quarter of a million campsites and 52,000 miles of hiking trails. Add in 300 marinas, 140 ski slopes, 390 stables, and hundreds of pools, golf courses, and other amenities, and it is easy to see why state parks are so popular.

While national parks deserve much of the credit for safeguarding America's national wonders, state parks have played an equally important role in preserving the nation's natural and human heritage. There was only one national park—Yellowstone—when the first state park was founded in the 1880s. The state park movement grew at a much faster pace than the federal system, and the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the establishment of some of the nation's most beloved state parks.

These parks were largely responsible for saving the bison from extinction. State parks also preserved the coastal redwoods from the axe and the chainsaw long before the federal government stepped in. State parks permanently enshrined American landmarks like Plymouth Rock and the spot where the Jamestown colonists first stepped ashore in the New World. A state park is where the sport of mountain biking was born, and a state park is where the world-record sockeye salmon was landed.

As those feats imply and as this course's content shows, the variety of America's state parks is truly astounding. This course begins its tour of America's state parks in the northeastern part of the country with one of the world's geographical icons: Niagara Falls, America's oldest state park and a template for many that followed.

From there, the course treks through state parks in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Adirondacks of Upstate New York, where the American love affair with nature—and the outdoor adventure vacation—was born in the early 19th century. Next, the course turns to state parks along the coast of New England and in the Tidewater region of Virginia and Maryland. Here, America's long and lively history is the main attraction.

Venturing into the South, the course then explores state parks that harbor the incredible nature of the region. Attractions here include the barrier islands off the coast of Georgia and the Carolinas, the rugged southern Appalachians, and the deep canyons of West Texas.

After that comes a visit to the Midwest. This region boasts an amazing array of historic and nature-oriented state parks, from Great Lakes islands and Minnesota's northern woods to the places where Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln were born and raised.

To the west, where the course turns next, state parks protect national treasures like the Black Hills, Colorado's Front Range, Lake Tahoe, and the Anza-Borrego Desert. State parks also safeguard huge chunks of the Alaska wilderness and the dramatic Napali Coast along the north shore of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands, which is where the course concludes. ■

Niagara Falls:

America's Oldest State Park





Established in 1885 to protect one of the world's great natural wonders for future generations, Niagara Falls State Park attracts around 10 million visitors each year. From honeymooners and tightrope walkers to movie stars and landscape painters, people have long been drawn to Niagara Falls. It is a wet, wild, and thunderous divide between the United States and Canada. The massive cascade is both a scenic wonder and cultural phenomenon that reflects mankind's ongoing quest to triumph over nature—a clash that the falls have won more often than not.

Three Separate Falls

Niagara Falls is actually made up of three separate falls: American Falls, Bridal Veil Falls, and Horseshoe Falls. These are arrayed across a 3,400-foot stretch of the Niagara Escarpment between Upstate New York and the province of Ontario in Canada.

American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls are completely within US territory. Horseshoe Falls is technically shared between the two countries, but almost all of it belongs to Canada. It is also known as Canadian Falls.

Even though the Niagara River tumbles over the escarpment at the same elevation, the three cascades are different heights because rock debris at the bottom varies from fall to fall. At 188 feet, Horseshoe Falls is the tallest of the three. American Falls is 110 feet tall, and Bridal Veil Falls is just 87 feet in height. Horseshoe Falls is also the widest at 2,700 feet. American Falls is about a third of that width at 950 feet, while Bridal Veil Falls is just 56 feet across.

Islands are also part of the equation. Heavily wooded Goat Island divides Horseshoe Falls from Bridal Veil Falls. A tiny sliver of land called Luna Island separates Bridal Veil Falls and American Falls. More than a dozen other islands—all of them part of the state park—are in the Niagara River just above American Falls.



Plants and Animals

While the main focus of Niagara Falls State Park is the falling water, the park also seeks to preserve and showcase indigenous plants and animals. The area's flora and fauna are surprisingly rich and diverse.

More than 600 plant species have been recorded just on Goat Island, including 140 of the 170 trees native to western New York. Downstream from the falls, the Niagara Gorge provides a habitat for more than a dozen species of rare and endangered plants that grow along the rim, directly on the cliff faces and amid the rocky talus slopes.

The state park also provides a safe and secure environment for hundreds of thousands of birds that live there year-round or migrate through the region. Among these are the peregrine falcon and American bald eagle, 19 gull species, and three different types of warbler.



Experiencing the Park

Niagara Falls State Park is split into mainland and island sections. Goat Island generally offers better waterfall viewing, but there are far more attractions on the mainland.

The Niagara River is the only outlet to the ocean for all but one of the Great Lakes. An average of more than 750,000 gallons of water tumble over Niagara Falls ever second.

Everyone should start their visit at the official State Park Visitor Center at the foot of Old Falls Street in the city of Niagara Falls, New York. In addition to information, exhibits, books and souvenirs, the center includes the Niagara Adventure Theater, which screens a 30-minute film on the natural and human history of the falls.



Located just west of the visitor center is the Niagara Falls Observation Tower—a 282-foot-tall steel, concrete, and glass structure. Built in 1961 on the site of a 19th-century industrial area, the tower renders outstanding views of American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls as well as a partial glimpse of Horseshoe Falls on the other side of Goat Island.

The tower's elevators whisk visitors to the bottom of the gorge, where they can walk riverside paths to more viewpoints or

board the *Maid of the Mist* boat tour. From the visitor center or observation tower, the Niagara Gorge Rim Trail meanders six miles through the state park along the American side of the gorge.

There are a number of great viewpoints along the way and other Niagara Falls landmarks. One example is the Rainbow Bridge, which connects the cities of Niagara Falls, New York, and Niagara Falls, Ontario.



Beyond the Rainbow Bridge, the Rim Trail continues to the state park's Niagara Gorge Discovery Center. This is an interactive museum that revolves around the natural and human history of the falls and gorge.

A pedestrian bridge leads between the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center and the Aquarium of Niagara, which is also located in the state park. While much of the aquarium focuses on marine life in other parts of the world, it also affords a chance to see creatures like the sturgeon that inhabit the Niagara River.

Stunts

The Frenchman Charles Blondin—the greatest tightrope walker of the 19th century—became the first man to cross the Niagara River gorge on a wire in 1859. The first woman was the Italian Maria Spelterini, who upped the ante during a series of crossings in 1876 by walking the high wire with peach baskets strapped to her feet, then blindfolded, and finally with her ankles and wrists bound with chains.



In the wake of several tragic deaths, tightrope walking and other stunts such as barrel plunges were eventually outlawed, although illegal attempts to survive the falls in a barrel continue to this day.

Other Trails and Sites in the Park

The Niagara Gorge Discovery Center is also home to the Niagara Gorge Trailhead Center, which is both an information source and jumping-off point for a network of hiking and biking trails that runs all the way down the American side of the gorge between Goat Island and Lake Ontario. Scattered along the Niagara River are five other New York state parks: Whirlpool, Devil's Hole, Joseph Davis, Artpark, and historic Fort Niagara on the shore of Lake Ontario.



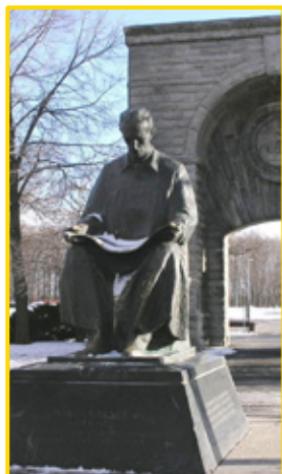
The eight hiking and biking routes range from the paved Robert Moses Trail to more challenging hikes like the Whirlpool Rapids Trail, which features riverside boulder hopping. You can explore the trails on your own. Another option is the guided hikes along the gorge offered by the Niagara Gorge Trailhead Center between May and October.

Venturing south from the visitor center and American Falls, another waterfront trail runs about a mile and a half up the Niagara River. This trail goes past a series of whitewater rapids called Hell's Half Acre, which are illuminated at night by underwater lights. Along the way is the pedestrian bridge to Goat Island, which you can also reach by driving over the American Rapids Bridge.

Goat Island offers some of the state park's best viewpoints and adventures. For instance, a vertigo-inducing view is available at Terrapin Point, which perches beside the American edge of Horseshoe Falls.

There is a monument honoring Nikola Tesla, the Serbian-American scientist and inventor. In the 1890s, he figured out how to transmit alternating current from Niagara Falls to the city of Buffalo. This was first time that alternating current had traveled over a long distance anywhere in the world.

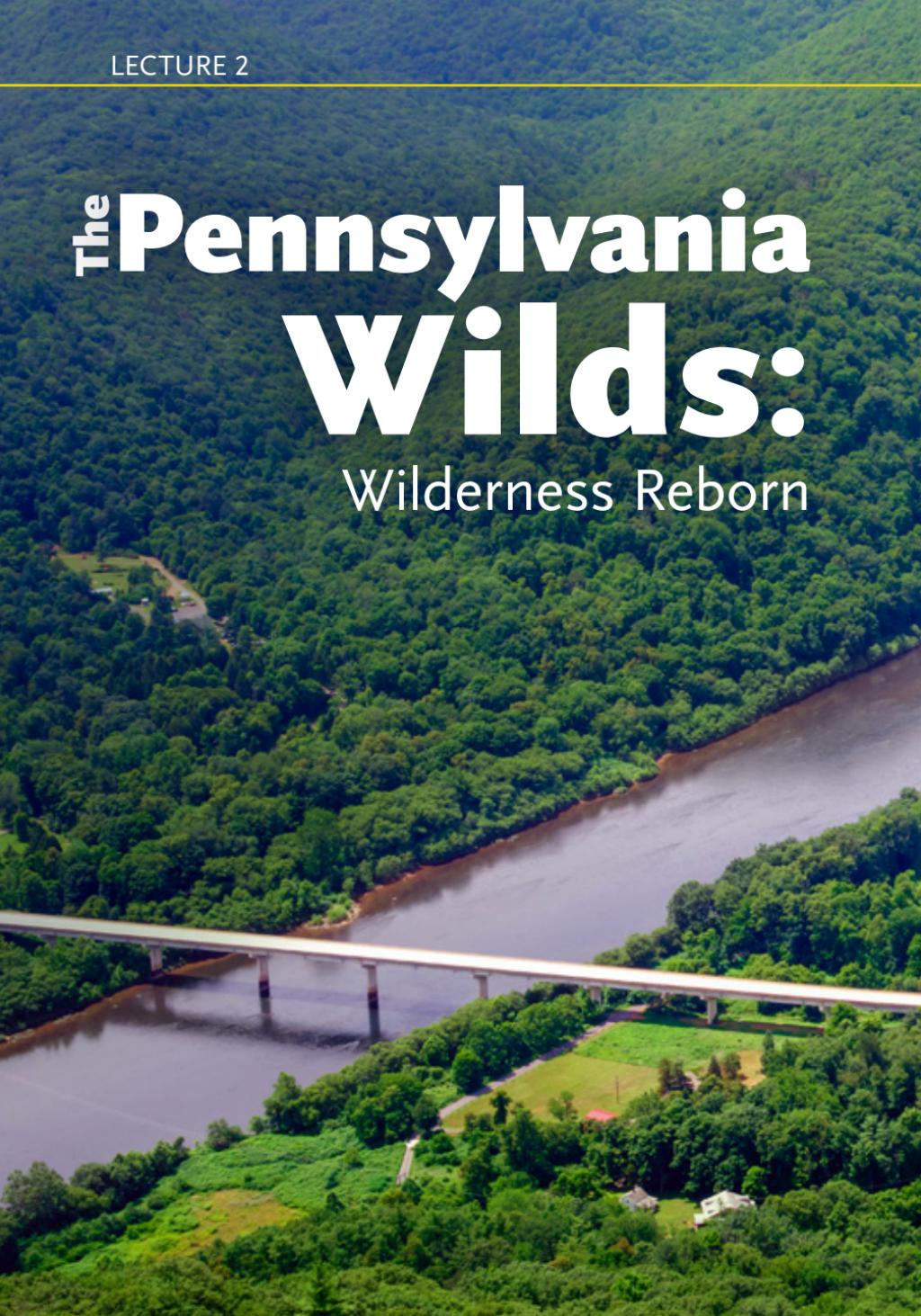
Another feature is the Cave of the Winds, one of Niagara's oldest commercial attractions. The original guided tour, launched in 1841, took visitors into a large cave beneath Goat Island. A rock fall blocked the cave entrance in 1920. After that, the tour became a wet-and-wild journey into the mist zone at the bottom of Bridal Veil Falls.



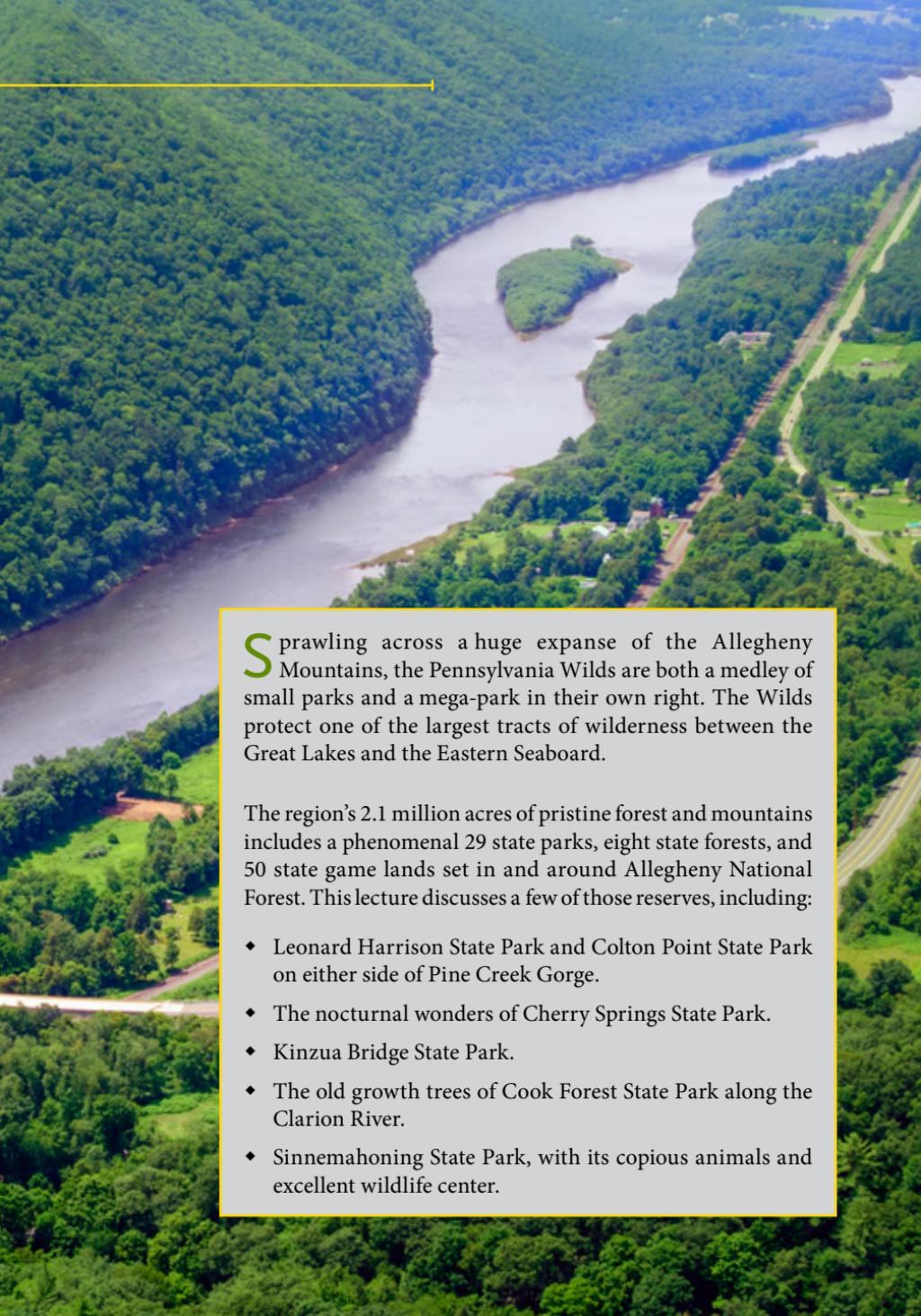
Planning Your Visit

While you can easily explore Niagara Falls State Park in a couple of hours, you need two days to truly take advantage of everything that is available in the park. This is especially if you're going to do any hiking along the gorge.

There is no place to stay overnight inside the state park. Not even camping is available. However, the city of Niagara Falls offers plenty of hotels, bed and breakfast inns, and vacation rentals within walking distance of the park.

The background image shows a wide river curving through a lush green forest. A long, light-colored bridge spans the river, supported by several pillars. In the foreground, there's a mix of dense green trees and some cleared land with small buildings. The overall scene is one of natural beauty and human-made infrastructure.

The Pennsylvania Wilds: Wilderness Reborn



Spawling across a huge expanse of the Allegheny Mountains, the Pennsylvania Wilds are both a medley of small parks and a mega-park in their own right. The Wilds protect one of the largest tracts of wilderness between the Great Lakes and the Eastern Seaboard.

The region's 2.1 million acres of pristine forest and mountains includes a phenomenal 29 state parks, eight state forests, and 50 state game lands set in and around Allegheny National Forest. This lecture discusses a few of those reserves, including:

- ◆ Leonard Harrison State Park and Colton Point State Park on either side of Pine Creek Gorge.
- ◆ The nocturnal wonders of Cherry Springs State Park.
- ◆ Kinzua Bridge State Park.
- ◆ The old growth trees of Cook Forest State Park along the Clarion River.
- ◆ Sinnemahoning State Park, with its copious animals and excellent wildlife center.

Leonard Harrison State Park and Colton Point State Park

This lecture begins with Pine Creek Gorge and its twin state parks. The gorge cuts a rut in the Allegheny Plateau that stretches 45 miles from end to end. It dives nearly 1,500 feet at its deepest point.

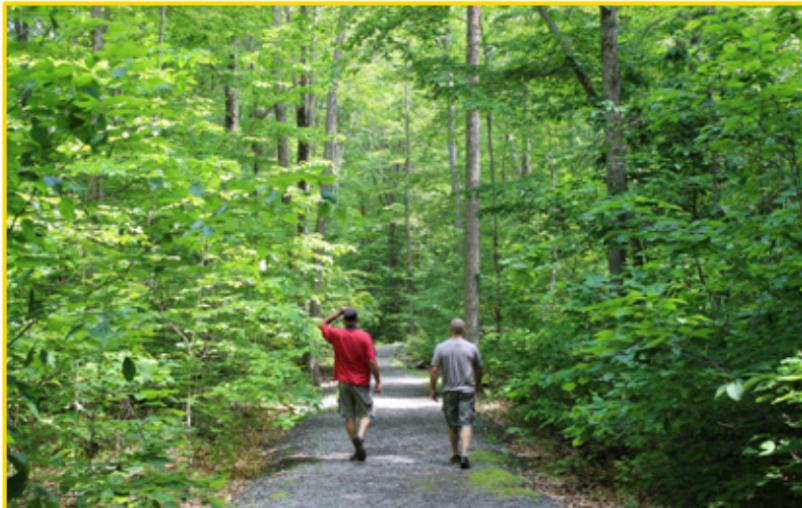
Leonard Harrison State Park on the east rim and Colton Point State Park on the west rim are the best places to gaze into the belly of this geological beast. The two parks are essentially treated as a single conservation unit run out of a joint office at Leonard Harrison. The east rim is home to the Visitor and Environmental Interpretive Center that offers interpretive walks and talks from April through October.

The main activity of this area, especially during the warm weather months, is hiking. The Overlook Trail in Leonard Harrison State Park is by far the most popular walk in the parks. There is a similar trail along the west rim of the gorge in Colton Point State Park. The West Rim Trail continues outside of the state park at both ends. It covers a grand total of 30 miles, much of the route through Tioga State Forest.

Leonard Harrison

Leonard Harrison was a lumber baron who decided later in life that he could make more money from tourists visiting Pine Creek Gorge than he could from cutting down the few trees that remained.

In the early 1920s, not long before he died, Harrison donated much of the land that would become his namesake park to Pennsylvania.



The only way down into the gorge from either rim is the Turkey Path on either side. This is a steep, difficult, three-mile round trip to the bottom and back. If you're thinking about walking the Turkey Path from rim to rim, be aware that it's only safe to cross Pine Creek at extremely low water. Check with the visitor center or rangers before deciding to make this crossing.

The longest route is in the gorge bottom: the Pine Creek Rail Trail, which stretches about 62 miles along an old railroad right-of-way.



Cherry Springs State Park

Thirty miles away is Cherry Springs State Park. Cherry Springs is renowned for its stargazing. The park features amazingly clear skies, and as many as 10,000 heavenly bodies can be seen on any given cloudless night at this certified International Dark Sky Park.

Cherry Springs offers ideal conditions for stargazing between two and three months per year. Special overnight star parties hosted by prominent nonprofit astronomy clubs take place twice each year. The park is open every evening for those who want to watch the stars and planets.

A short-term night-sky public viewing area is available for those who only want to stay a couple of hours. It features information kiosks, benches, and a backlit electronic sky map that shows the constellations and planets of the summer sky above Cherry Springs.





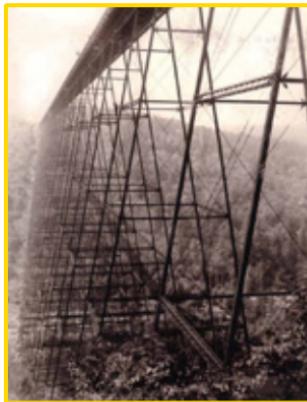
During the summer, park rangers and guest speakers present astronomy talks at a small amphitheater in the public viewing area. More hardcore stargazers flock to the observation field on the grounds of an old airport. Here, people can camp overnight.

Kinzua Bridge State Park

Roughly 50 miles to the west of Cherry Springs is Kinzua Bridge State Park. The centerpiece of this park is the feat of engineering that is Kinzua Bridge, a Victorian-era railroad viaduct.

Unveiled in 1882 as the world's tallest and longest railway viaduct, the stupendous span was originally fabricated with wrought iron. However, Kinzua Bridge was soon judged unfit for the ever-larger trains that needed to use it. In 1900, the bridge was pulled down and rebuilt with steel. It was 2,052 feet in length, and it hovered 301 feet above the Kinzua Gorge.

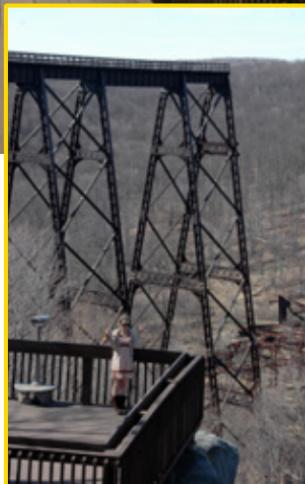
However, in 1959, regular railroad freight service stopped. But the owner of the salvage company charged with dismantling Kinzua Bridge and recycling the steel decided the structure was just too special to destroy. Working with local historical and conservation groups, the salvager persuaded Governor William Scranton and the state legislature to purchase the span and create Kinzua Bridge State Park.





In 2003, a very rare tornado knocked down half of the bridge's support towers. Pennsylvania decided the bridge was too expensive to rebuild. However, someone came up with a bright idea: Why not reinvent the bridge into something that reflects the ingenuity of the Industrial Revolution and the incredible force of nature?

The result was the 600-foot-long Sky Walk. It features glass floors that provide a bird's-eye-view of the valley far below. As a stark reminder of nature's fury, the 11 blown-over towers were left where they fell. A trail leads down into the valley and to a picture-taking platform. The trail crosses the area's creek on a small bridge and continues beside the debris field caused by the tornado.



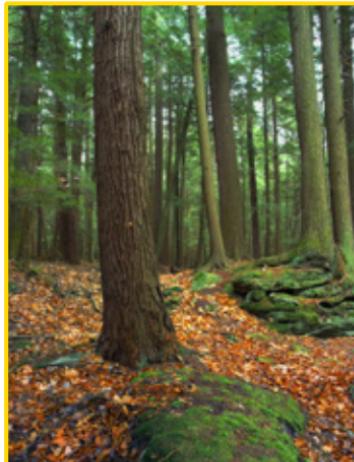
The state park christened a visitor center in 2016, which is a two-story structure with exhibits on the bridge and local nature. The center is also the focus of the park's guided walks, informative talks, and other interpretive programs.

Kinzua Bridge also has its own festival: a weekend jamboree in late September that features food, music, and local arts and crafts.

Cook Forest State Park

From Kinzua Bridge State Park, an hour-long drive through the heart of Allegheny National Forest brings visitors to Cook Forest State Park on the Clarion River. Cook Forest is all about trees, featuring one of the largest stands of unlogged hardwoods in the Northeast.

The park features an area called the Forest Cathedral that you can only enter on foot via nine short, easy trails. Many of the oldest trees are said to date from around 1644, when a forest fire swept through the area followed by new trees that sprouted from seeds that escaped the inferno.



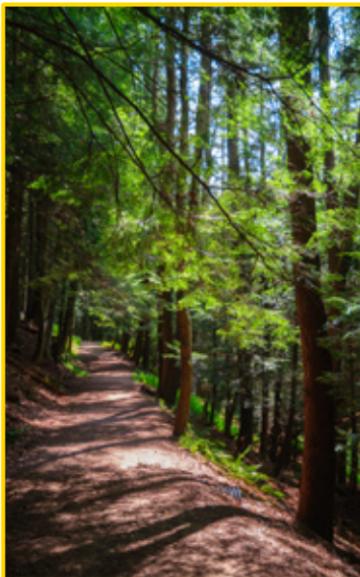
The state park boasts more than 40 miles of trails, including paths for hiking, biking, horseback riding, skiing, and even snowmobiling. There are another 32 miles of trail in the adjacent lands near the Clarion River, which are also managed by the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks.

The 13 miles of the Clarion River that flow through the park are ripe for canoeing, kayaking, tubing, and fishing. There are several rental facilities to provide the necessary equipment if you don't bring it yourself. During winter, a frozen-over pond beside the river is converted into an outdoor ice-skating rink.

There are plenty of ways to spend the night inside the park. More than 200 campsites are present, and rustic cabins are available for rental between April and December. The park also has a bed and breakfast facility.

The park's Log Cabin Environmental Learning Center renders exhibits on local logging, rafting, and nature as well as a wide variety of interpretive programs. The park is also home to the Sawmill Center for the Arts, which features a craft market from May through December and a wide range of classes.

The center also organizes special events throughout the year. Most notable is the Verna Leith Sawmill Theater. From May through mid-September, locally based thespian groups stage Broadway musicals and comedies, murder mysteries, and children's plays in a small, hexagon-shaped theater.



Sinnemahoning State Park

Sinnemahoning State Park is a short drive east along Interstate 80, off of Exit 111. Reaching the top of the exit ramp, hang a left onto State Route 153 toward Penfield. This is the start of the 127-mile Elk Scenic Drive through the south-central part of the Pennsylvania Wilds.

As the name suggests, this is elk country. The big beasts have bounced back nearly a century after they were hunted to extinction in much of the Alleghenies.

There are a couple of wildlife-centric stops along the scenic drive before it reaches Sinnemahoning. The new Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette offers a good take on the region's natural and human history as well as three nature trails where elk are often seen. Behind the visitor center is the Winslow Hill Elk Viewing Area.

The best time to see and photograph elk is during the September–October mating season. It is dangerous to approach them, so keep your distance.

Just north of the town of Sinnemahoning, the state park offers almost 2,000 acres of wildlife-rich woods. In addition to the region's iconic elk, coyotes, bobcats, and bald eagles are among the animals you are most likely to see. Black bears, groundhogs, white-tailed deer, turkeys, and waterfowl are also present.





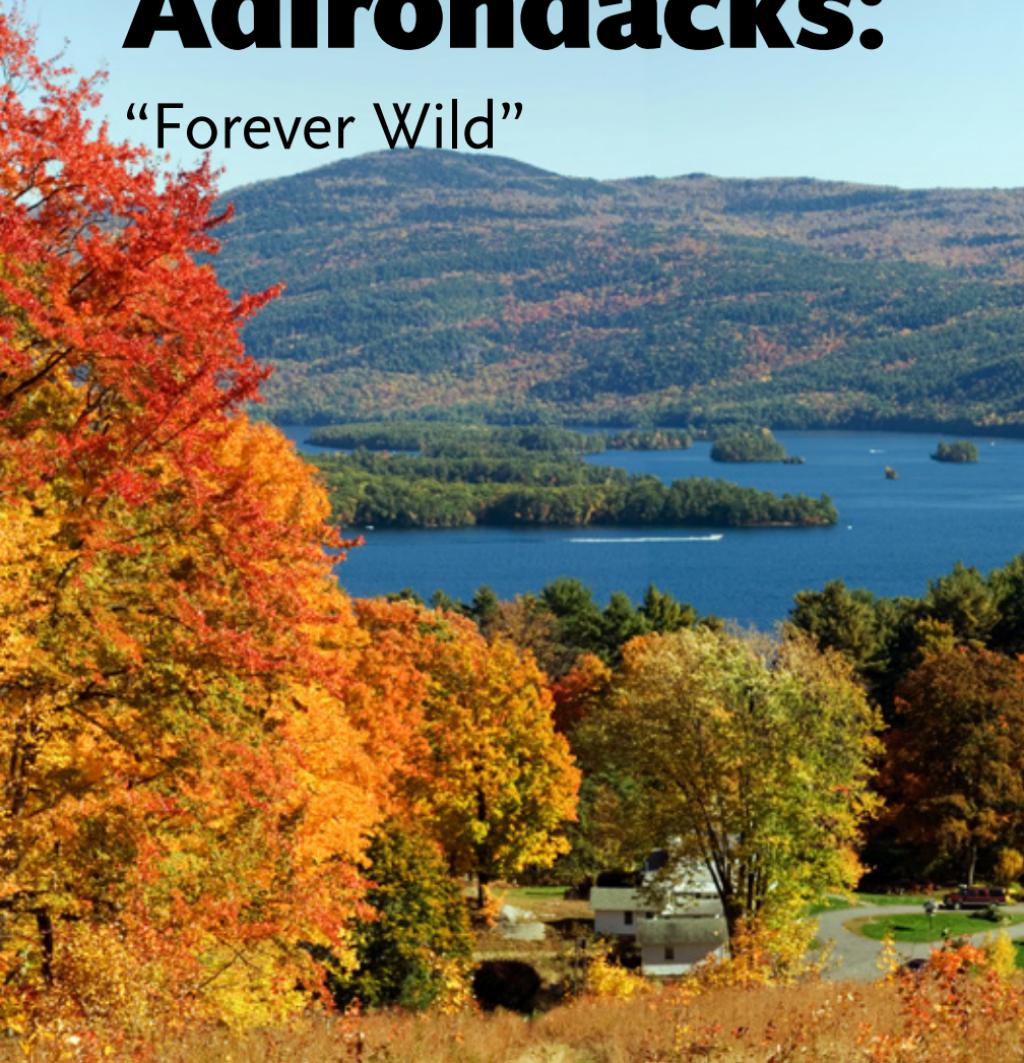
The park's modern, state-of-the-art Sinnemahoning Wildlife Center is the place to learn more about these creatures as well as nature and conservation in the Pennsylvania Wilds as a whole. In addition to wildlife viewing platforms and blinds, the state park features a riverside campground, rental cabins, a public bathhouse, and an amphitheater for ranger activities and campfire programs.

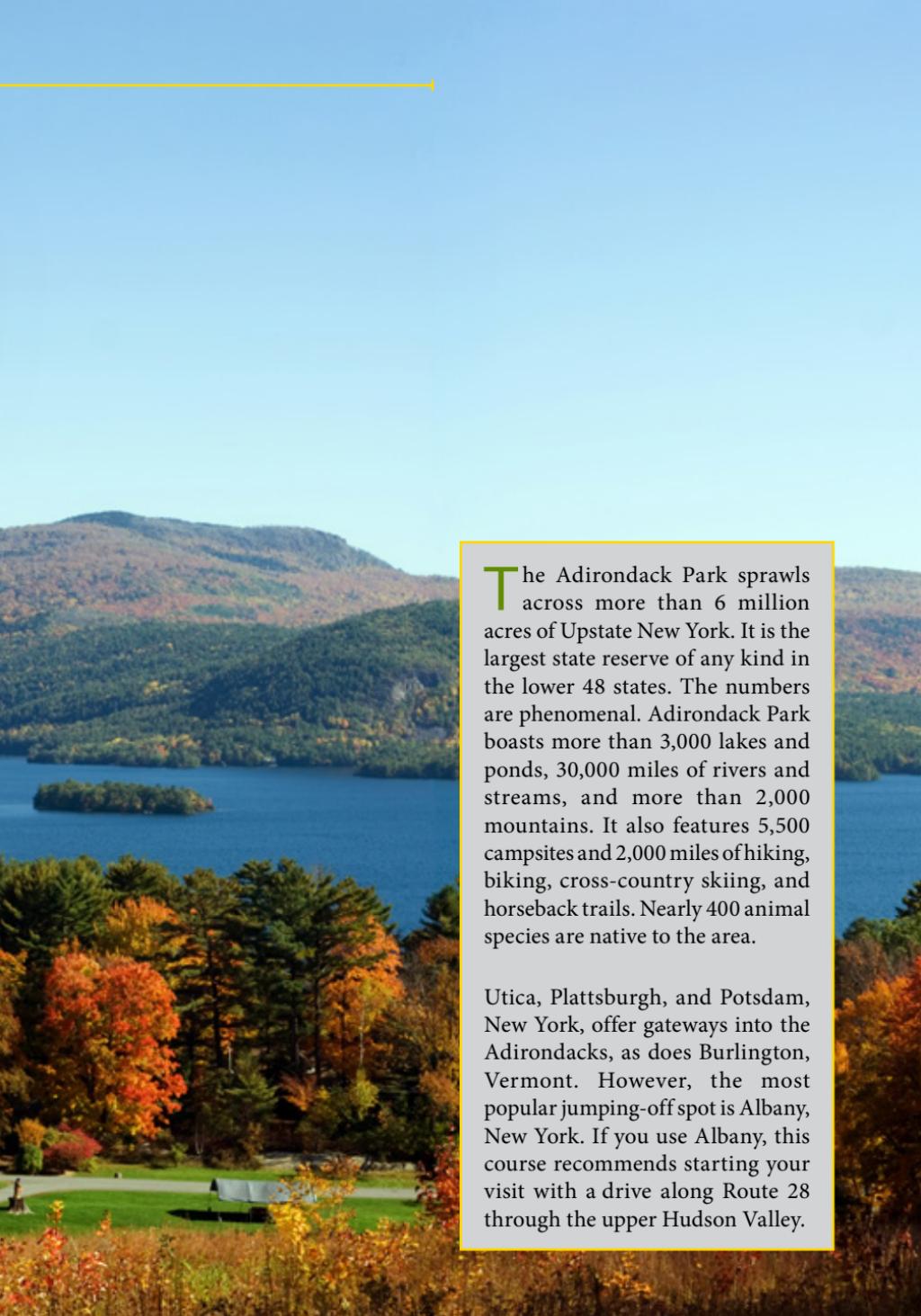
From spring through fall, Sinnemahoning runs guided paddling and biking programs. Throughout the year, visitors can join outdoor photography workshops and guided wildlife-watching safaris. The biggest event at the park is the First Fork Festival in October, which showcases authors, artists, and artisans from around the region against a backdrop of dazzling fall colors.



New York's Adirondacks:

“Forever Wild”



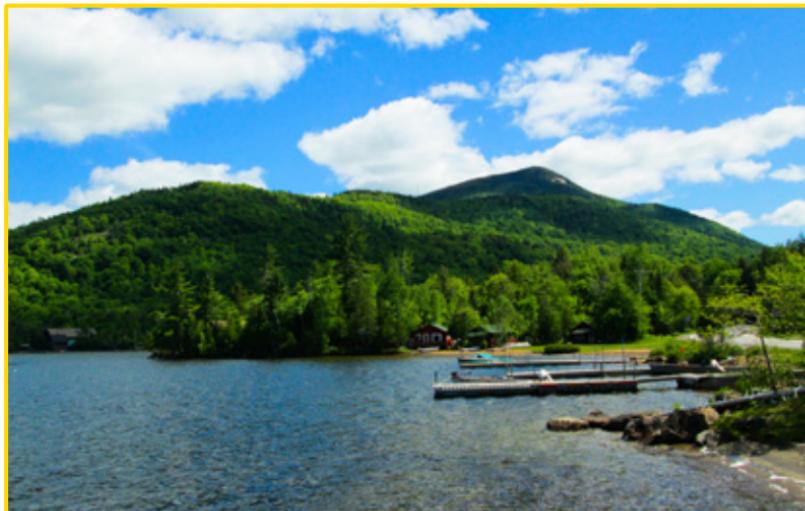


The Adirondack Park sprawls across more than 6 million acres of Upstate New York. It is the largest state reserve of any kind in the lower 48 states. The numbers are phenomenal. Adirondack Park boasts more than 3,000 lakes and ponds, 30,000 miles of rivers and streams, and more than 2,000 mountains. It also features 5,500 campsites and 2,000 miles of hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and horseback trails. Nearly 400 animal species are native to the area.

Utica, Plattsburgh, and Potsdam, New York, offer gateways into the Adirondacks, as does Burlington, Vermont. However, the most popular jumping-off spot is Albany, New York. If you use Albany, this course recommends starting your visit with a drive along Route 28 through the upper Hudson Valley.

Aquatic Activities

The scenery along Route 28 is drop-dead gorgeous. It also highlights one of the Adirondacks' strengths: boating on the park's numerous rivers and lakes. The Hudson Gorge Wilderness Area—a subdivision of the state park—boasts 12 miles of whitewater river with rapids. The town of Indian Lake is the main base camp for rafting outfits that organize float trips down the wild Hudson. The rafting season runs from April through October.



Just up the road from Indian Lake and the Hudson Gorge is a long string of glacial lakes.

Raquette Lake, Blue Mountain Lake, and Long Lake offer a very different take on Adirondack aquatics. These feature fishing, sailing, canoeing, kayaking, and windsurfing.

There are also on-the-water adventures that are unique to the region. For instance, you can take a cruise on the *W. W. Durant*, a reproduction steamboat that plies Raquette Lake between June and October.



The Great Camps

The *W. W. Durant* is named for William West Durant. He was the son of railroad magnate Thomas Durant, the infamous robber baron who built the eastern half of the Transcontinental Railroad. William West Durant is so honored because he designed many of the Adirondack Great Camps, which were vacation destinations for the Gilded Age's super-wealthy New Yorkers.

Families that made use of the Great Camps included the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, Guggenheims, and Carnegies. The so-called camps featured rustic mansions or capacious cottages.



By the 1960s, however, the Great Camps had become too expensive to maintain. Some were sold to the state and subsequently torn down as part of the park charter. Others were deeded to universities or the Boy Scouts. Others still were saved by nonprofit groups that wanted to preserve their unique American architecture and history.

Forever Wild

In the 1870s, the state of New York commissioned topographic engineer Verplanck Colvin to survey and map the Adirondacks. The report he brought back was deeply disturbing: Erosion caused by clear-cut logging was devastating the Adirondack watershed.

Colvin further opined that degradation of the watershed would eventually threaten the Erie Canal. He recommended that the entire region be turned into a state forest reserve where logging would be eliminated or strictly supervised.

His recommendation went unheeded for more than a decade, until New York City's population boom prompted a need for more fresh water. The city needed fresh water from the Adirondacks, but it had to be pure.

The only way to ensure that was making the Adirondacks into a state park, which finally occurred in 1892. Two years later, the state's constitution was amended to include permanent protection for the Adirondacks, stating the park "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands."

The onetime summer retreat of the Vanderbilt clan, Great Camp Sagamore near Raquette Lake, is one of those saved. The sprawling waterfront compound features an antique bowling alley, playhouse, tennis court, and a house. It is open to the public for guided tours throughout the summer and overnight stays on arts and crafts weekends.



Another Great Camp the public can visit is White Pine, near Paul Smith's College in the northern Adirondacks. Visitors can stay overnight at White Pine in the cozy waterfront cabins or tour the grounds with a naturalist guide.



The Adirondack Experience

If you want to learn more about the history of the Great Camps or the region's lakes—or more about the Adirondacks in general—spend an hour or two at the Adirondack Experience. Located beside Blue Mountain Lake, the museum packs exhibits on local culture, nature, and history into 23 buildings.

The Adirondack Highlands

The Adirondack highlands are rocky peaks that attract hikers from around the world and that provide the slopes for winter snow sports. Among the Adirondacks' peaks, the High Peaks are a major draw. Until recently, it was thought that 46 of these peaks were more than 4,000 feet high. For decades, avid hikers who call themselves 46ers have endeavored to summit each and every one.

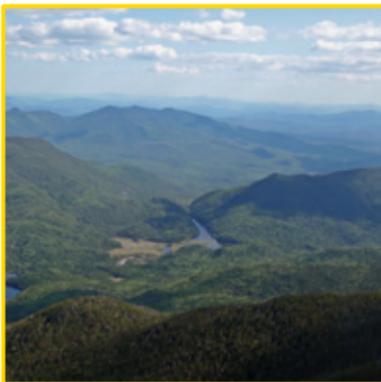
Modern surveying techniques have shown that four of those peaks are actually less than 4,000 feet. However, the 46ers and their quest are still alive and well. Those who complete it are eligible to join the Adirondack 46ers club.



Long Lake is the southwestern gateway to the High Peaks. You can also access the High Peak trails from Keen Valley, Lake Placid, and the Axtion Landing area near Upper Saranac Lake.

The ADK High Peaks Information Center near Lake Placid has information on all the trails and summits. They also rent trekking poles, bear-proof food canisters, snowshoes, crampons, and other essential equipment for summer or winter trekking.

At a bit more than 5,300 feet in height, Mount Marcy is the highest peak in the entire state of New York. The most popular route to the top is the Van Hoevenberg Trail, a 15-mile round trip that starts from the information center's parking lot. If you decide to tackle that or any of the other peaks, keep in mind that they are challenging.



Saranac Lake and Lake Placid

The state park is also unique because of two cities within it: Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. Saranac Lake started life as a timber town in the 1820s, but it gained worldwide renown and lasting fame because of an ailment: tuberculosis.



When New York City physician Edward Trudeau was diagnosed with tuberculosis in the 1870s, he moved to Saranac Lake, hoping the fresh mountain air would cure the disease.

Dr. Trudeau eventually regained his health. He established a laboratory and hospital dedicated to the treatment and research of tuberculosis. This institution survived into the 1950s. Today, the Saranac Laboratory Museum spins the full tale.



You can also visit the places where author Robert Louis Stevenson and composer Béla Bartók stayed during their sojourns in Saranac to treat the disease. Additionally, Saranac Lake is renowned for its long-running Winter Carnival—a cold-weather extravaganza of ice castles, outdoor sports, fancy balls, fireworks, and a grand parade down the main street.

Just down the road is Lake Placid, where the Winter Olympics were staged in 1932 and 1980. Lake Placid revolves around winter sports. When they're not being used for tournaments and competitions, Lake Placid's world-class sports facilities are open to the public. Lake Placid is also a great place to take off into the Adirondack wilderness on a network of long-distance hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing trails maintained by the Barkeater Trails Alliance (BETA).

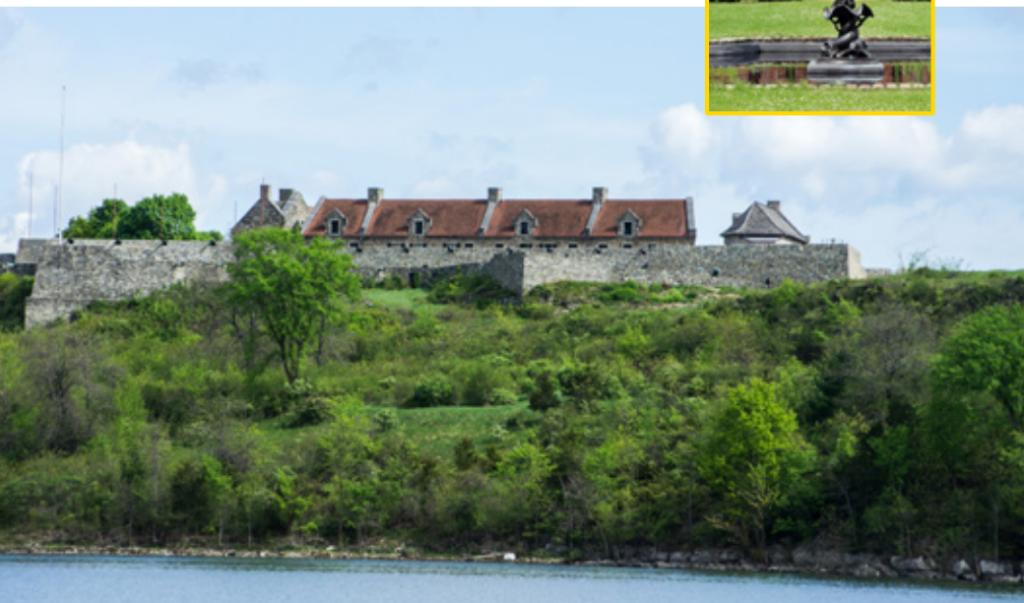


Lake Champlain and Lake George

The eastern boundary of Adirondack Park is defined by Lake Champlain and Lake George, two of the nation's most attractive and historical water bodies. During the French and Indian War of the 1750s and the American Revolution that followed two decades later, the corridor of these lakes offered a natural invasion route for British, French, and American armies. Some of the most significant battles in American history, like the battles of Ticonderoga and Saratoga, were waged along the corridor.

Famous forts dot the area. Crown Point is the most northern, a state historic site inside the Adirondack Park that preserves the remains of a colonial-era fort. You can retrieve maps and information on water activities at the nearby Lake Champlain Visitors Center.

Seventeen miles to the south is one of the great American bastions: Fort Ticonderoga, which dominates the lofty peninsula jutting into Lake Champlain. Today, the fort hosts guided tours and cannon and flintlock demonstrations. The fort also offers scenic boat cruises on Lake Champlain, an immaculate English garden, canoe rentals, and even a corn maze.



Last in the string of historic citadels along Adirondack Park's eastern edge is Fort William Henry, which overlooks the waterfront in the town of Lake George.



Created as the British command center for the Champlain-George Corridor during the French & Indian War, the fort was the scene of a famous siege and the infamous massacre that followed when British troops and their families surrendered to French forces in 1757.

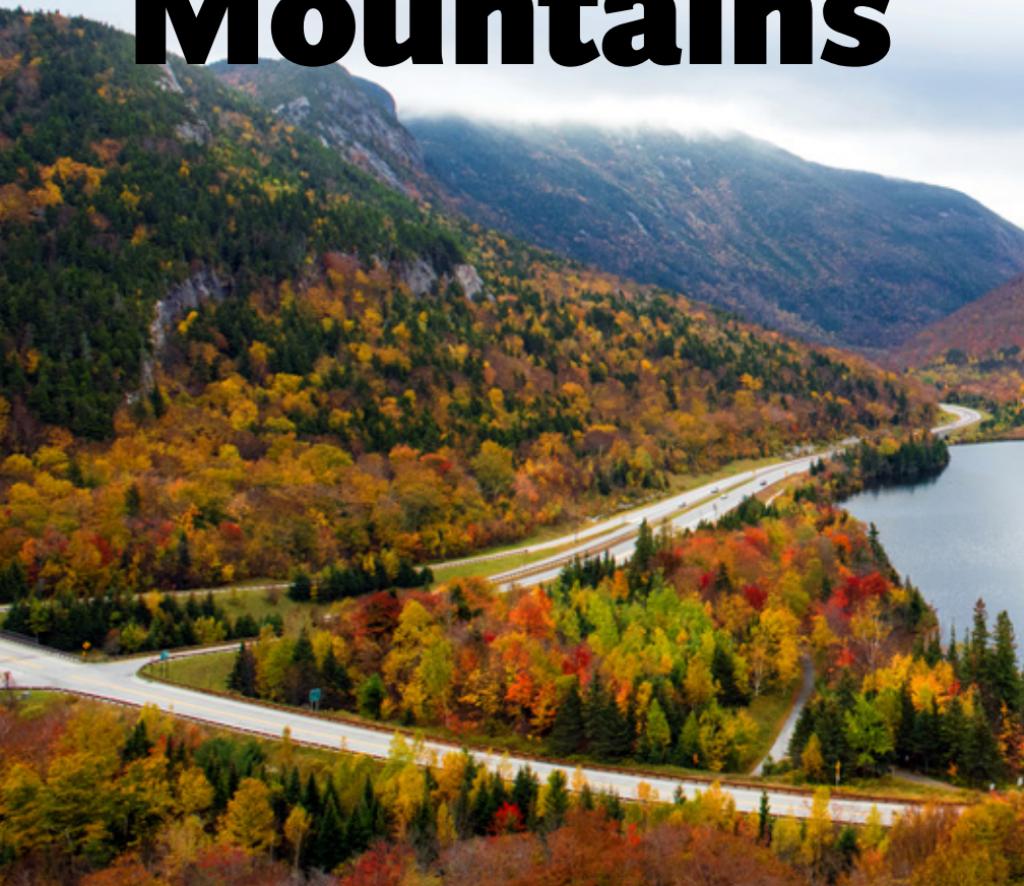
A literary version of the siege—which blends fictional and real-life characters—provides a backdrop for the aforementioned *Last of the Mohicans*, which makes an excellent book for reading when you're in the Adirondacks.

Planning Your Visit

From Lake George, it's easy to hop back into Interstate 87 for a one-hour drive back to Albany. If you're going to linger in the Adirondacks, base your stay in towns like Saranac Lake, Lake Placid, Lake George, and Warrensburg. These offer a range of accommodation, dining, and other amenities. Certain Great Camps take overnight visitors, including Sagamore and White Pine.

As for timing, it does not truly matter when you go. Adirondack is a park for all seasons.

Exploring New Hampshire's White Mountains





The White Mountains of New Hampshire tower over the rest of New England. Most of the range falls within the confines of White Mountain National Forest. This land is home to three very special state parks: Franconia Notch, Crawford Notch, and Mount Washington.

Franconia Notch State Park

This lecture begins with Franconia Notch State Park. Located on the east side of the range, Franconia Notch is a massive granite gap that cleaves the White Mountains between Lincoln and Franconia, New Hampshire. The notch is also the divide between watersheds that feed into the Connecticut and Merrimack—two of New England's major rivers.

Many of the activities here revolve around the state park's prominent water features. Options include hikes along the Pemigewasset River, swimming in Echo Lake, and trekking an elevated wooden walkway up a narrow, waterfall-splashed granite gorge called the flume.

Kayaks, canoes, and pedal boats are available for hire at Echo Lake's general store from late May through early October. With a state license, you can fish for trout on Echo Lake and nearby Profile Lake. Live bait and other angling supplies are available at that same store. A nine-mile hiking and biking path runs the length of the notch. Bike rentals are available at Exit 34B.

Along with the main path, the state park offers many hikes, both short and long. There is also a hiker shuttle to get you up and down the valley. One of the most rewarding is the trail to Artists Bluff, which overlooks Echo Lake and the Notch. It's a loop trail of 1.5 miles in length, but it is fairly steep in places.



For serious hiking, pick up a trail map and ask about current trail conditions at the visitor center at the Lafayette Place Campground. This is also a stop on the new hiker shuttle.

Another attraction is the Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway, which slowly rises to the summit of the 4,080-foot peak that rises above the west side of the valley. On a clear day, you can see four states and one Canadian province: Quebec.

Additionally, there is the New England Ski Museum, which illuminates the history, equipment, and legends of the sport. Skiing was introduced to the region in 1933, when the Wildcat Mountain ski area opened at the foot of Mount Washington.

The legendary rock formation known as the Old Man of the Mountain no longer keeps watch over the notch. It hovered 1,200 feet above Profile Lake, but suddenly collapsed in 2003. To keep its memory alive, the state park created the Old Man of the Mountain Memorial, a roadside stop at Exit 34B.



Perched at the lower end of Franconia Notch, the town of Lincoln boasts several other attractions, including Loon Mountain winter sports area, the White Mountains Visitor Center, and the wintertime Ice Castles theme park.

Lincoln is the western end of the Kancamagus Scenic Byway, which meanders more than 30 miles along the southern edge of the White Mountains. It is the fastest way to transit between the Franconia Notch and Crawford Notch state parks. At the eastern end of this road is Conway, New Hampshire.



Crawford Notch State Park

From north Conway, it's just 15 miles up the Saco River valley to Crawford Notch State Park and a welcome return to the great outdoors. Founded in 1918, Crawford Notch is the oldest of the three state parks.

The pass was originally called White Mountain or Great Notch. When tourism began to blossom in the 1820s, a local family called the Crawfords, who operated a guiding service, renamed the Notch after themselves.

One of the Crawfords, Ethan, rented a 30-year-old log cabin called the Old Notch House as a place where their clients could spend the night. Others also erected lodging in the Notch, including Samuel Willey, his wife, and five children.

The White Mountains are one of the northernmost parts of the Appalachians. They cover about a quarter of New Hampshire and spill over into a small part of western Maine.



In August of 1826, during a torrential storm, the Saco River overflowed and the granite wall behind the house began to crumble. Fleeing both the flood and avalanche, the entire Willey family and two hired hands perished in the disaster.

The tragedy made headlines around the nation and sparked the morbid curiosity of visitors who ventured to Crawford Notch to see where the Willey family was swept away by rock and water. Ethan Crawford cashed in by quickly building a new inn and guiding visitors to the site of the tragedy.

The place where the Willey House once stood is marked by a granite monument near the visitor center along Highway 302 in the middle of the park. In addition to information and maps, the center also offers a post office and small general store.

Willey House is a great jumping off spot for various hikes around the park. Three short, easy trails start right across the road from the visitor center: the Pond Loop, the Sam Wiley Trail, and the Saco River Trail. You can follow the river trail (or the road) downstream to the place where it intersects with one of the White Mountains segments of the Appalachian Trail near the Ripley Falls parking lot.

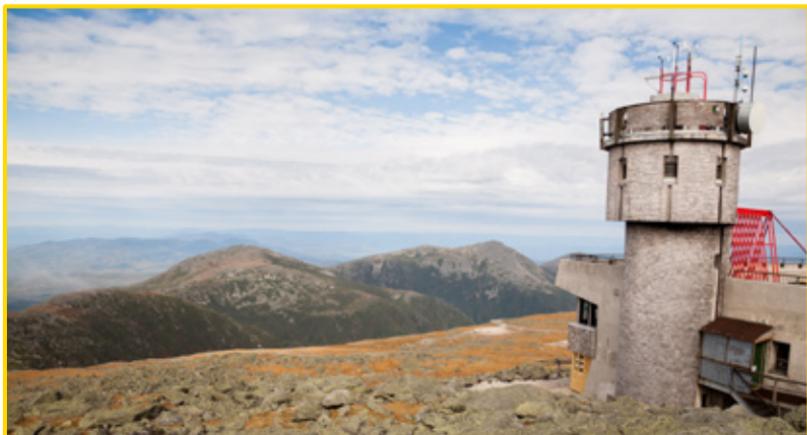
Ripley is one of 10 falls in and around the state park. The most spectacular of the Crawford Notch cascades is 140-foot-high Arethusa Falls, located in the park's southwest corner.

If you don't feel like hiking or even driving yourself, another option is the Conway Scenic Railroad, which runs the entire length of Crawford Notch. The railway's Notch Train operates June through October. Its round-trip journey takes between five and six hours.



Mount Washington State Park

Highway 302 through Crawford Notch is part of the White Mountains Trail National Scenic Byway. This is an auto tour route that meanders 100 miles through the highlands between Conway and Lincoln. The scenic byway also runs down the middle of Franconia Notch and through the town of Bretton Woods, which lies at the base of Mount Washington—the last of this lecture’s three state parks.



The peak of Mount Washington endures hurricane-force gusts more than 100 days each year. It also endures extremely low temperatures in winter. This means visitors should take extra care, especially in winter. There are multiple ways to reach the top: the Mount Washington Cog Railway, the Mount Washington Auto Road, and several hiking routes, including the Appalachian Trail.

Rising from a station in Bretton Woods on the western side of the peak, the historic railway runs from April to November. Over on the eastern side of the peak is the road. It snakes its way around eight miles to the summit via a seemingly endless series of switchbacks. Visitors can make the drive in their own vehicle or join a guided van tour.

The summit of Mount Washington features 60 acres of state park. It blends boulders and tundra-like vegetation in a landscape reminiscent of Arctic climes. Despite the barren-looking landscape, there is much to do in the little state park at the top.

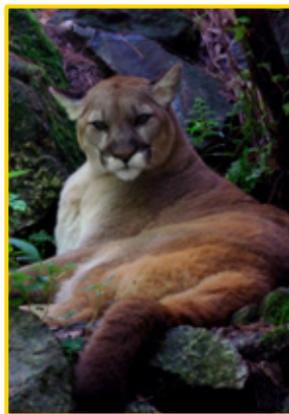
With its indoor cafe, shop, restrooms, and hiker's info desk, the Sherman Adams Summit Building is usually the first place that people head. People can also take refuge here when the wind gets too stiff. The roof of the building doubles as an observation platform with 360-degree views of the White Mountains and far beyond.



Down in the basement is the new Extreme Mount Washington, an interactive museum created as a fun way to educate visitors about the peak's extreme weather. Additionally, on one end of the Sherman Adams Summit Building is occupied by the Mount Washington Observatory and its round tower. Advance reservations are required for the behind-the-scenes tour of the working weather station.



Additionally, many short hikes can be taken around the building. The Alpine Garden Trail takes hikers through a plateau-like area just east of the visitor center and train station. This is an area where native plants like the mountain sandwort and Alpine azalea somehow manage to thrive despite the harsh climate. If geology is more to your liking, take a hike along a portion of the Gulfside Trail, which heads north from the Summit Building across the boulder-strewn mountaintop.



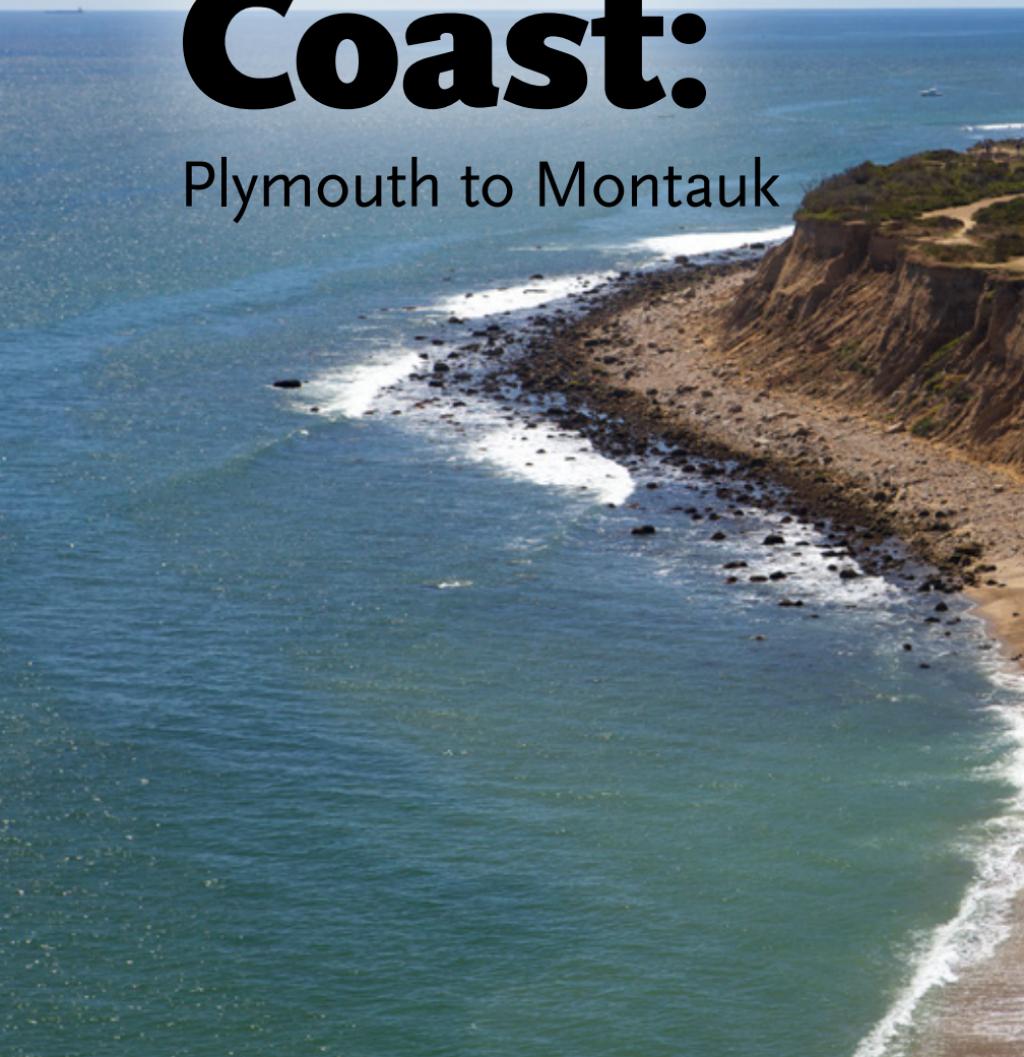
Planning Your Visit

There are dozens of towns in and around the White Mountains. However, for a base camp, this lecture recommends the historic Bretton Woods area, which lies at the bottom of the Mount Washington Cog Railway and the top of Crawford Notch. Another good option is the scenic Squam Lakes area, nestled in the foothills on the south side of the White Mountains.

Bretton Woods offers accommodation at just about every level. Its famous abode is the Omni Mount Washington Resort. The Squam Lakes area puts an emphasis on relaxation, peace, and quiet in historic waterfront resorts and bed and breakfast inns.

The Yankee Coast:

Plymouth to Montauk





This lecture focuses on four state parks scattered across New York and New England. Together, these parks reflect the various ways and means that people along this shoreline—referred to in this lecture as the Yankee Coast—have interacted with the deep blue sea over hundreds of years. In order, the parks are:

- ◆ Pilgrim Memorial and Schooner *Ernestina-Morrissey* state parks in Massachusetts.
- ◆ Fort Adams State Park in Rhode Island.
- ◆ Montauk Point and Camp Hero state parks on Long Island.

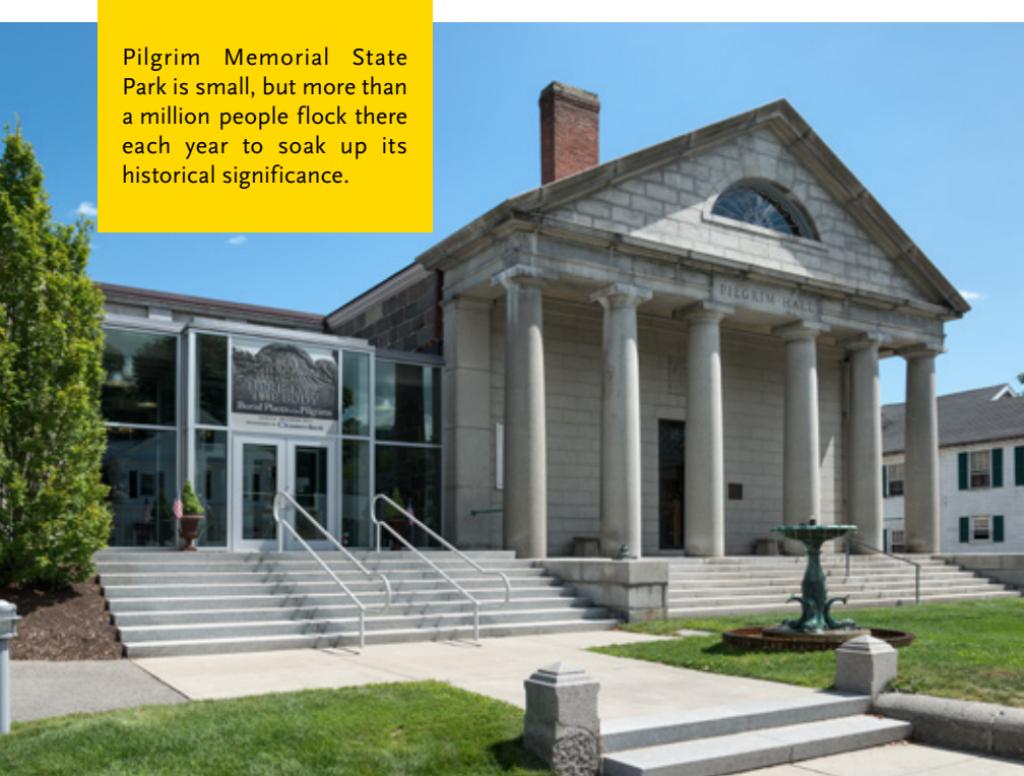
Pilgrim Memorial State Park

Pilgrim Memorial State Park contains America's most famous rock: Plymouth Rock. Inscribed with the date 1620, the rock marks the spot where the Pilgrims first stepped ashore to start their celebrated colony after the long journey from England in a ship called the *Mayflower*.

Besides Plymouth Rock, the park includes the *Mayflower II*, a fully working replica of the original ship, and waterfront walks along Plymouth Harbor. Complementing the state park, the town of Plymouth features a number of other Pilgrim-centric attractions.



Pilgrim Memorial State Park is small, but more than a million people flock there each year to soak up its historical significance.



The Schooner *Ernestina-Morrissey*

Located around the bottom end of Massachusetts on the mainland opposite Nantucket, New Bedford was founded in 1652 by settlers from the Plymouth colony. It quickly evolved into a maritime town, a place where ships were built and where a wide variety of men—particularly whalers—went to sea in those ships.

Yankee whaling developed along the coast between Long Island Sound and Cape Cod Bay in the late 18th century. Its zenith was the 1840s and 1850s, when New Bedford was the epicenter of the whaling industry and the wealthiest per capita city on the entire planet.

Those heady days are enshrined in the New Bedford Whaling Museum and New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. Another view of Yankee maritime heritage emerges aboard the schooner *Ernestina-Morrissey* in New Bedford. This is a unique state park, particularly because it is a ship—the official vessel of Massachusetts.



The *Ernestina-Morrissey* is a floating museum that is usually moored along State Pier on the New Bedford waterfront. Built in 1894, the vessel is the oldest surviving Grand Banks fishing schooner. The vessel also served as a US Navy survey ship, an Arctic exploration vessel, and a packet schooner that transported cargo across the Atlantic and moved Cape Verde whalers and their families from West Africa to their new homes in New Bedford.



In 2015, the *Ernestina-Morrissey* began undergoing a series of renovations, during which the ship shuttles back and forth between New Bedford and Boothbay Harbor, Maine. This is an entirely different part of the Yankee Coast. In between the various phases of renovation, the ship continues its educational mission.



Fort Adams State Park

Located around 30 miles west of New Bedford, Fort Adams is a massive masonry bastion constructed after the War of 1812 to protect the nation's Eastern Seaboard from future attacks. Military use of Fort Adams continued until 1965, when ownership was transferred to the state of Rhode Island. The site immediately became a state park. The fort is open to the public daily, with guided tours led by docents of the Fort Adams Trust. The tours include the walls and underground tunnels, as well as the quarters where officers and their families lived.

Visitors can also tour the Eisenhower House. This is a three-story Victorian structure originally built for the base commander but used by President Dwight D. Eisenhower as the summer White House in 1958 and 1960. There are also tours of the so-called lost fortress, which is a redoubt constructed during the Mexican-American War.



The Fort Adams Trust also runs the fort's gift shop and produces maps of the state park grounds and the Bay Walk trail. The Bay Walk trail meanders 2.2 miles around the perimeter of the park, providing an excellent short hike.

The state park is also one of the premier recreational boating centers along the Yankee Coast. The Sail Newport center on Brenton Cove provides low-cost sailing classes and boat rentals to the general public. Sail Newport also organizes an ongoing series of local sailing regattas and has served as a port-of-call on major international competitions. When tall ships visit Newport, this is where they go to dock for public tours.



Fort Adams was one of the epicenters for the sport of rugby in America. The Joseph "Jay" Kirwin Memorial Rugby Pitch is home base for the Newport Rugby club. It is also the venue for the Newport 7s rugby tournament that plays out on the field each summer.

The fort is also home to a pair of annual music festivals. The Newport Jazz Festival has been an August tradition at the fort since 1981, when the festival moved back to Rhode Island after a sojourn in New York City.



Meanwhile, the Newport Folk Festival plays out every July on four main stages around the fort grounds. The event has taken on almost mythical proportions in the folk music world, partially because of the artists who attend but also because of the gorgeous outdoor location.



Fort Adams is also busy around Halloween. Taking full advantage of a naturally spooky location, the state park features an interactive maze and a high-tech haunted house, among other attractions.

Montauk Point State Park and Camp Hero State Park

Montauk Point and Camp Hero state parks lie at the extreme eastern tip of Long Island. The parks offer raw and unencumbered nature in the form of roughly 1,300 combined acres of forest, wetlands, beaches, sea cliffs, and rocky shoreline. The marine forest is especially rich, reflecting what much of Long Island must have looked and felt like before the arrival of European settlers.

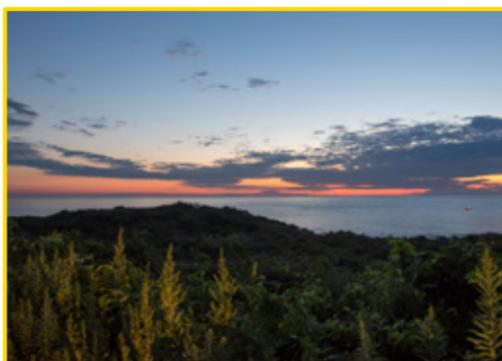
Scarlet and white oak, red maple, yellow birch, black tupelo, and hickory are among the trees that line the hiking, biking, horseback riding, and winter cross-country skiing routes. The term for this vegetation mix is coastal oak-holly forest. On both a local and global scale, this type of forest is considered imperiled or vulnerable with a high or moderate risk of extinction due to rarity or other factors.

Montauk Point and Camp Hero are also special when it comes to the sea. Swimming is banned because the water is too rough. Additionally, in 2016 researchers found the first known birthing place of great white sharks along the north Atlantic coast just off Montauk Point.

There are also harbor seals along the area's Block Island Sound shore between December and March. Park rangers lead hikes to photograph and observe the animals as a safe distance. Remember to not get too close to the seals, as is the case will all wildlife.

Additional attractions in this area include surfing and fishing.

Camp Hero takes its name from the fact the area was a military base from World War II until the 1980s. Then, it was transferred to the National Park Service before joining New York's state park system.



The three gun batteries and their concrete casemates remain one of the park's main attractions and the focus of wild conspiracy theories. These theories allege that Camp Hero was home to the so-called Montauk Project—a series of secret government experiments.

Montauk Point has its own unusual history. It was here in 1839 that a US Navy warship intercepted a Spanish slaver called the *Amistad*. The captive Africans were briefly offloaded at Montauk Point before their transport to the mainland for a series of trials that eventually reached the US Supreme Court—and secured freedom for the captives.

The 110-foot-high Montauk lighthouse towers over the point. It is the fourth-oldest active lighthouse in the United States and the nation's first public works project. The beacon was first lit in 1797. The lighthouse's museum features various relics and mementoes, including documents signed by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. There are also artifacts from Montauk's whaling days.



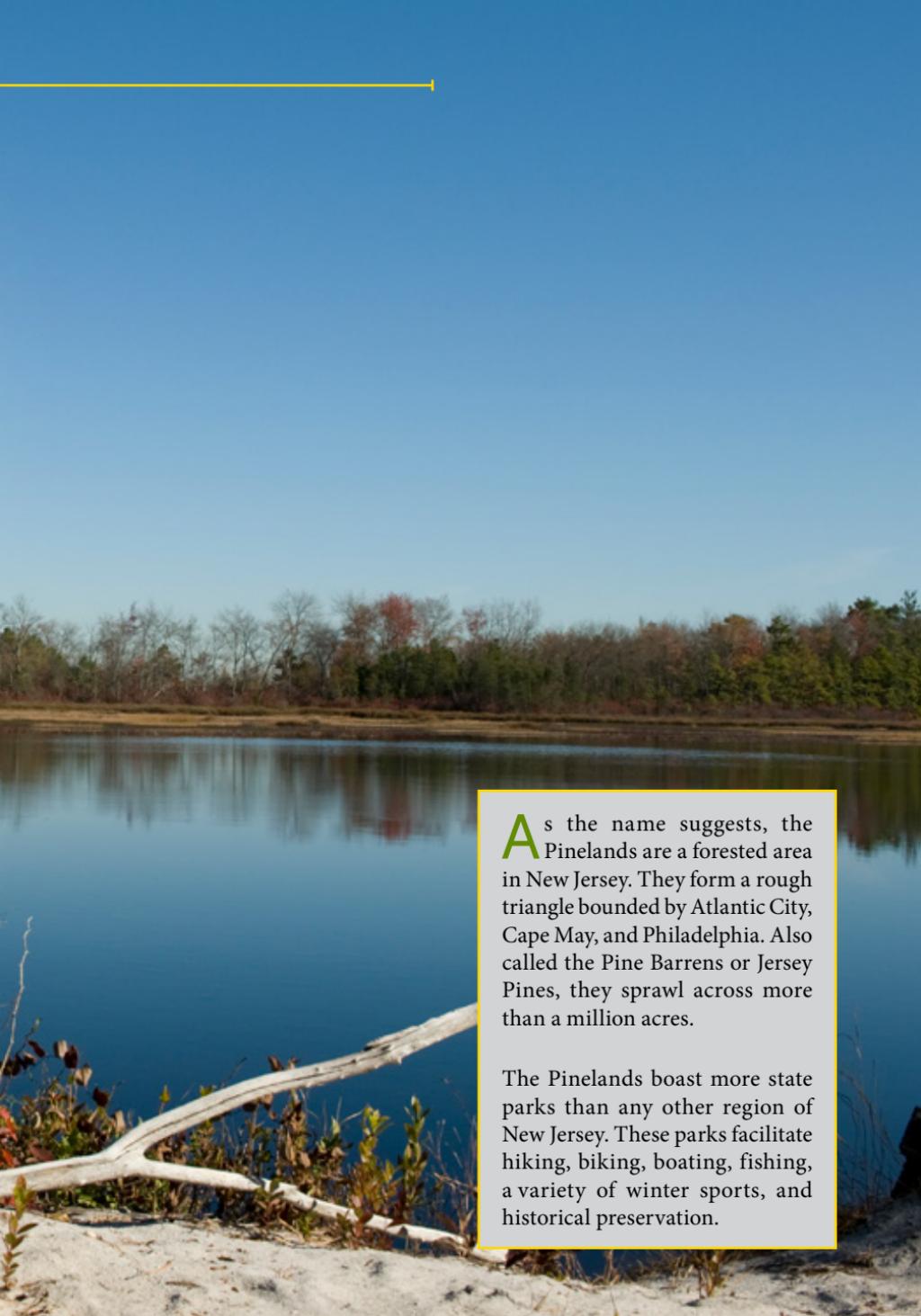
Planning Your Visit

The parks discussed in this lecture are close to one another and can be easily visited in a single trip, even over a weekend. It is only 63 miles from Plymouth to Newport via New Bedford. The driving time is just more than an hour and a half.

From Newport, you can drive down Interstate 95 to New London. Next, you can hop on the Cross Sound Ferry to Long Island and Montauk. The total distance is a bit more than 200 miles—an incredibly short distance to travel for so much American history and nature.

New Jersey Pineland Legends and Landscapes





As the name suggests, the Pinelands are a forested area in New Jersey. They form a rough triangle bounded by Atlantic City, Cape May, and Philadelphia. Also called the Pine Barrens or Jersey Pines, they sprawl across more than a million acres.

The Pinelands boast more state parks than any other region of New Jersey. These parks facilitate hiking, biking, boating, fishing, a variety of winter sports, and historical preservation.

Starting Your Visit and Wharton State Forest

If you are a first-time visitor to the Pinelands, this course suggests that you start your visit at the Pinelands Visitor Center in the township of Southampton. It's just off Highway 206 on the northern fringe of the Pinelands, around 45 minutes from Philadelphia or half an hour from Trenton.

Many of the best Pinelands state parks lie within a short drive of the visitor center, including Wharton State Forest, which is just a 20-minute drive south on Highway 206. It boasts ample hiking, boating, and fishing opportunities. Another attraction is Batsto Village, which preserves 33 historic structures, including a sawmill, gristmill, general store, post office, workers' homes, and Batsto Mansion.

Wharton is also flush with wildlife. The area's birds include bald eagles, hawks, osprey, great horned owls, herons, bluebirds, goldfinches, and purple martins. Visitors can also look for beavers and otters in the park's many rivers, ponds, and streams. Foxes and deer can be spotted in the woods.

Wharton features nine different campgrounds as well as primitive cabins. The park also offers a variety of historical and natural interpretive programs conducted by rangers and local experts.

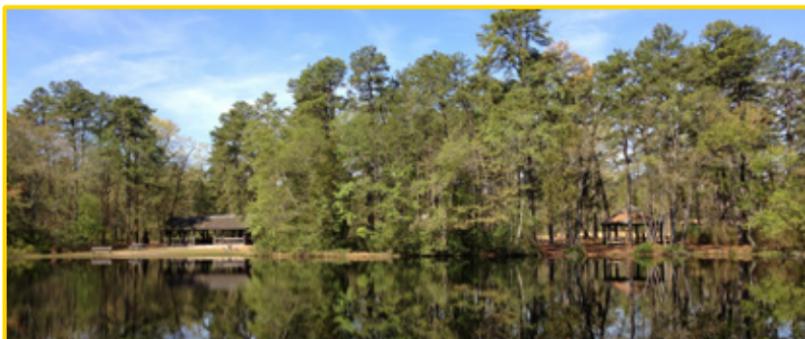
Wharton's Namesake

Wharton State Forest is named for Joseph Wharton, an entrepreneur who purchased most of the land now included in the state park in the 1800s with the intent of tapping the crystal-clear aquifer water and selling it to Philadelphia. Getting wind of the plan, the New Jersey legislature passed a law prohibiting the export of water from the state. Wharton's heirs eventually sold the land to the state, and Wharton was declared a park in 1954.



Brendan T. Byrne State Forest

Another park close to the Pinelands Visitor Center is Brendan T. Byrne State Forest, which is just 15 minutes to the east via several roads. The park is named after the governor who lobbied for Pinelands preservation back in the 1970s. Many locals still call the park by its old name: Lebanon State Forest, which was named after a glassworks facility that thrived there in the mid-1800s.



The park boasts more than 25 miles of hiking and winter sports trails. One of them is mountain bike friendly, another is available for horseback riding, and a third is accessible to wheelchairs. Additionally, a location known as the Pakim Pond Day Use Area offers fishing, picnic tables, and paddle sports. This location also features a short hiking trail through an area that is home to an incredibly colorful flower called the swamp pink.



Another notable feature of the park is the historic Whitesbog Village, which was founded in the 1870s to grow, pack, and ship cranberries and blueberries. This where the cooperative that evolved into the Ocean Spray juice company was born.



Today, this time trip back to the Pinelands' past includes a working general store that sells various berry delicacies as well as an art gallery and agricultural museum. It also features blueberry fields and cranberry bogs that still produce fruit.

A number of the historic buildings survive, including a portion of New Jersey's largest cranberry packing and storage building, the old school house, a cranberry research station, and the Suningive mansion. The mansion was the longtime home of Elizabeth Coleman White, an agricultural pioneer.



The village hosts a wide range of events throughout the year, from music jams and living history programs to the annual Whitesbog Blueberry Festival each summer. Two notable activities are the monthly, guided full moon walk through the berry bog and the winter bird walks to watch trumpeter swans and other wildlife on the park ponds.

There is no place to bunk down for the night in Whitesbog. However, Byrne State Forest offers one of the best campgrounds in the entire New Jersey state park system as well as cabins.

The campground provides a convenient overnight for anyone trekking the entire length of the 50-mile Batona Trail, which begins in Byrne State Forest. Three days is about the right amount of time for the 50-mile trek, with a first or last overnight stay at Brendan T. Byrne, another stay at one of three primitive campsites along the trail in Wharton State Forest, and a final one at Bass River near the Jersey Shore.

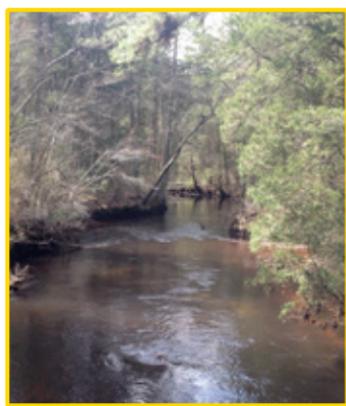




Bass River

Purchased by the state in 1905, Bass River was New Jersey's very first state forest. For more than a century, the park has stayed true to its original mandate of wildlife and timber management, water conservation, and public recreation.

Bass River boasts two special ecosystems. One is the West Pine Plains Natural Area, featuring a bizarre pygmy forest, a blend of stunted trees with a canopy that rarely reaches above four feet above the surface. The other is the Absegami Natural Area, which shelters a unique wetlands forest comprised of white cedars, red maples, and magnolia trees. The name Absegami honors an indigenous tribe that once called the Pinelands home.



Penn State Forest, Belleplain State Forest, and Double Trouble State Park

Located about halfway between Brendan T. Byrne and Bass River, Penn State Forest is fairly small compared to the others. It compensates for its lack of size with outstanding nature and outdoor recreation. The park's Lake Oswego provides one of the state's best spots for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and swimming. There is also another pygmy forest to explore.



To the south is Belleplain State Forest. It features a mix of pines, oaks, and Atlantic white cedars. Belleplain offers two-dozen hiking, biking, and winter sports trails. It also boasts a couple of lakes, with waterfront campgrounds, cabins, and boating and swimming opportunities. Other attractions include an interpretive center and a wetlands birding area.

Double Trouble State Park, situated in the northeast corner of the Pinelands, offers a blend of nature and history. The park's centerpiece is a one-time cranberry company town surrounded by the pristine Cedar Creek watershed.



State Parks along the Ocean

There are some notable state parks along the ocean, too, over on the eastern side of the Garden State Parkway. These are not in the Pinelands, but they are close enough to make them combinable on the same trip with Pinelands parks.

Barnegat Lighthouse State Park revolves around a towering red-and-white coastal light erected in 1859. In addition to climbing 217 steps to the top for a panoramic view of the Jersey Shore, visitors can explore the coastal dunes, try their luck at shore fishing, or learn more about local natural and human history at the park's interpretive center.

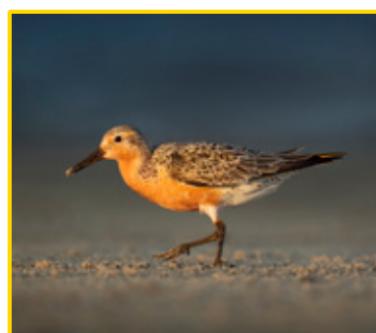
On the north side of Barnegat Inlet, Island Beach State Park safeguards one of the last undeveloped barrier islands along the Jersey Shore.

Accessible from Seaside Heights, New Jersey, the park offers 10 miles of white sand strands and coastal dunes. Among its many activities are ocean swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, biking, horseback riding, surfing, and scuba diving.

In addition to the historic and natural history displays, the park's Forked River Interpretive Center maintains a herbarium with 400 native plant species. The park's Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone, which can be explored via four different canoe and kayak trails, protects New Jersey's largest osprey colony as well as many other feathered species.

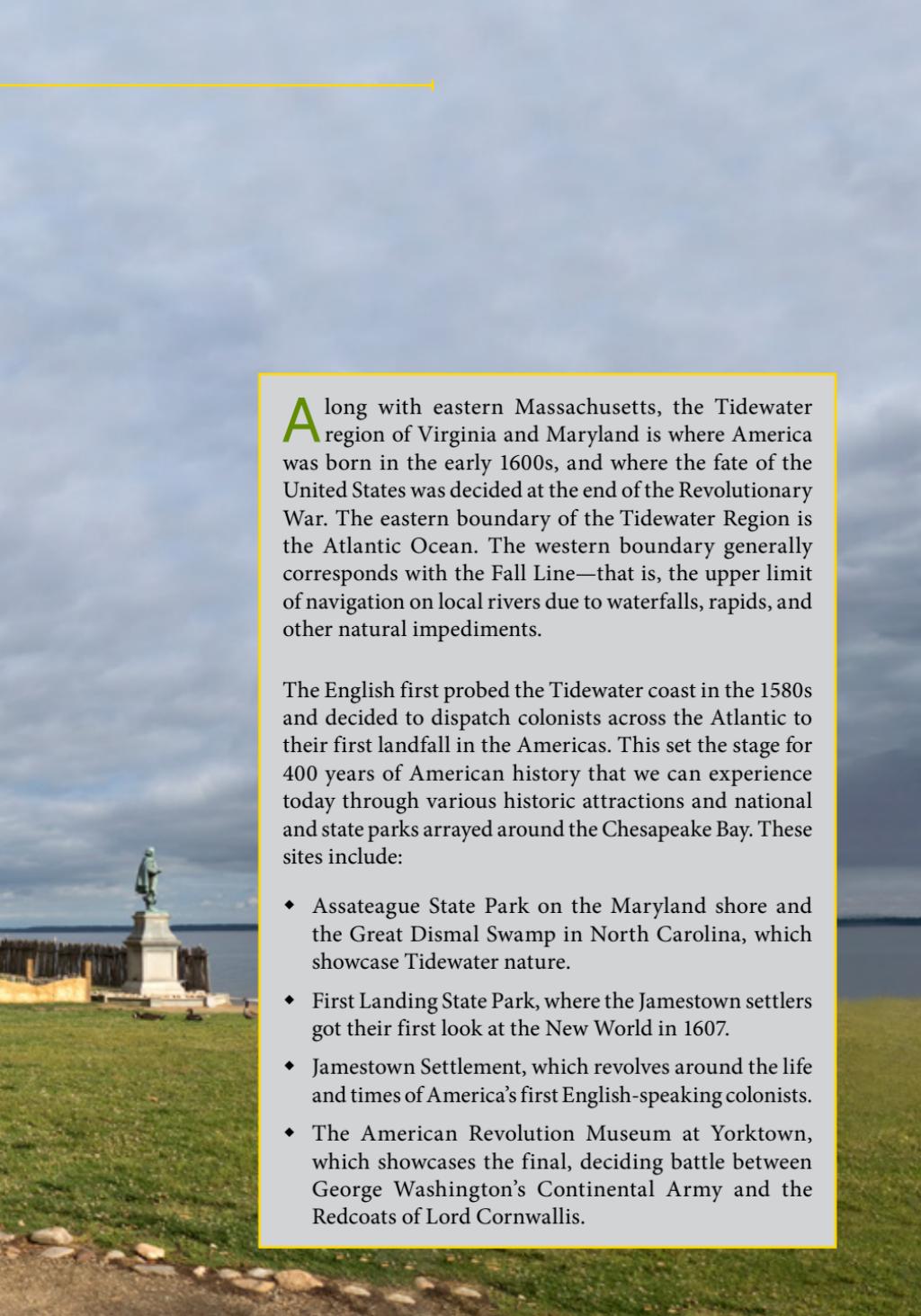
Farther down the shore, North Brigantine State Natural Area offers a slice of pristine coastline managed by Bass River State Forest. Located just 15 minutes from downtown Atlantic City, the natural area is a road-free wilderness that caps the north end of Brigantine Island. Visitors can hike or paddle into the natural area.

North Brigantine is home to a number of federally listed and state endangered species, including birds such as the piping plover, least tern, red knot, and American oystercatcher. The area is also home to plants like sea-beach sandwort and sea-beach amaranth as well as reptiles like the diamondback terrapin.



The Tidewater South: America's Birthplace





Along with eastern Massachusetts, the Tidewater region of Virginia and Maryland is where America was born in the early 1600s, and where the fate of the United States was decided at the end of the Revolutionary War. The eastern boundary of the Tidewater Region is the Atlantic Ocean. The western boundary generally corresponds with the Fall Line—that is, the upper limit of navigation on local rivers due to waterfalls, rapids, and other natural impediments.

The English first probed the Tidewater coast in the 1580s and decided to dispatch colonists across the Atlantic to their first landfall in the Americas. This set the stage for 400 years of American history that we can experience today through various historic attractions and national and state parks arrayed around the Chesapeake Bay. These sites include:

- ◆ Assateague State Park on the Maryland shore and the Great Dismal Swamp in North Carolina, which showcase Tidewater nature.
- ◆ First Landing State Park, where the Jamestown settlers got their first look at the New World in 1607.
- ◆ Jamestown Settlement, which revolves around the life and times of America's first English-speaking colonists.
- ◆ The American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, which showcases the final, deciding battle between George Washington's Continental Army and the Redcoats of Lord Cornwallis.

Assateague State Park

This lecture begins on Assateague Island on the Maryland shore. Assateague lies along the Atlantic coast, about a three-hour drive from Washington DC or Baltimore. It is one of the sandy barrier islands that protect the Maryland and Virginia shore from winds and waves.



Near the north end is Maryland's Assateague State Park. Located just across Verrazano Bridge from the Maryland mainland, Assateague State Park offers two miles of pristine Atlantic beach ripe for swimming, fishing, surfing, and oceanfront camping.

Over on the leeward side, the warren of wetlands along Sinepuxent Bay offers canoeing, kayaking, and more fishing. The boat ramp and marina area is actually on the mainland at a pocket of state park at the western end of the bridge. This is opposite the excellent Assateague Island Visitor Center.

There is wildlife, too. A variety of water birds live on the island year-round or stop off during the migratory seasons. There are also white-tailed and sika deer, possums, red foxes, and Assateague's celebrated wild horses.





First Landing State Park

This lecture's next state park is in Virginia Beach: First Landing State Park at Cape Henry. It preserves the spot where the first permanent English settlers stepped ashore in the Americas on April 26, 1607.

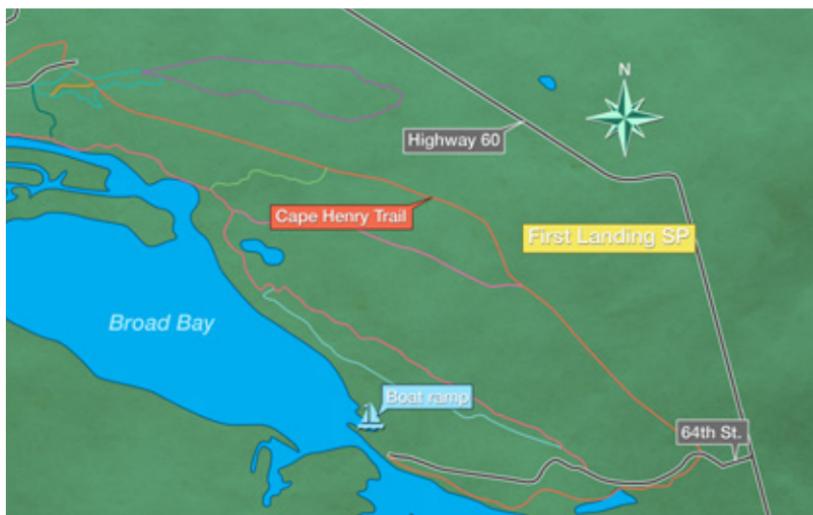
The park provides a wonderful escape to nature. Its beach stretches more than a mile down the shore, with surf that is much calmer than around the other side of the cape along the open Atlantic. Right behind the beach is a huge campground, with an eclectic camp store, an outdoor amphitheater for ranger talks and other activities, and the exhibit-filled Chesapeake Bay Center.



Nearby is a cluster of 20 cabins, all for rent. These were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The best place to gain information on the park's 10 trails is the Trail Center. The longest by far is the Cape Henry Trail, a dual hiking-biking route that runs six miles straight across the park via maritime forest, salt marsh, and cypress swamp.

A recreation area anchors the state park's east side, which is accessible via several of the park trails or driving Highway 60 around to 64th Street. The boat ramp here offers maritime access to Broad Bay, Linkhorn Bay, and the Chesapeake Bay via Lynnhaven Inlet. Additionally, the camp store rents bikes, bait, and fishing equipment.



The spot where the three shiploads of English colonists landed in 1607 is about 10 minutes outside the state park. It's at the foot of New Guinea Road on the Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek–Fort Story, which crowns the very tip of the cape. You will need to pass through Navy security at Gate 8 to reach the spot.





Dismal Swamp State Park

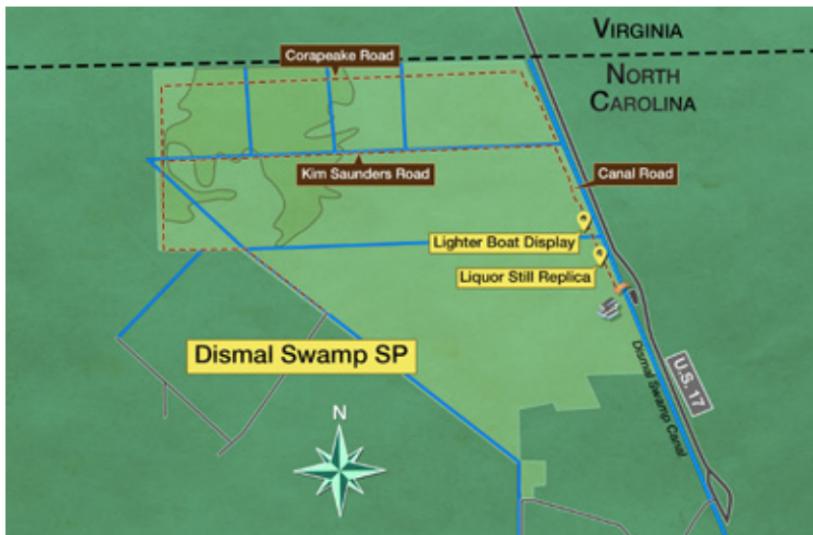
Inland from Cape Henry is the Great Dismal Swamp, made up of more than 100,000 acres of watery wilderness that straddles the border between Virginia and North Carolina.

This area reflects the environment that European settlers faced when they first arrived along the mid-Atlantic shore.

The vast wetland and its surrounding forests are still home to black bears, bobcats, copperheads, cottonmouths, and many of the other creatures those early colonists would come to fear.

The bulk of the swamp is protected within the confines of Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. But North Carolina staked its claim to a 22-square-mile section of the wetlands in 2008 with the opening of Dismal Swamp State Park. The park's visitor center is just half an hour from downtown Norfolk, right off US Highway 17 and just south of the Virginia-North Carolina state line.





There actually two visitor centers. The one on the east side of the canal, beside the parking lot, is a North Carolina state tourism welcome center. This gives information on all the things you can do in the Great Dismal Swamp. The state park's visitor center—with its natural history exhibits and ranger programs—is found across the hydraulic arm bridge over the canal to the west side.

Dismal Swamp State Park is dominated by white cedars and red maples. This is the result of two centuries of logging and canal construction on this side of the swamp prior to conservation.

Many of the old logging roads—as well as the Dismal Swamp Canal—have been transformed into the park's primary recreational outlets. Originally opened in 1805, the canal is the nation's oldest continually operated manmade canal.

One of the park's biggest events is the annual National Public Lands Day paddle in late September, when hundreds of people ply the canal during a mass guided paddle. The state park also offers more than 16 miles of hiking and biking trails.



Jamestown Settlement

The Englishmen who landed at Cape Henry were not impressed with the site and soon moved on to create Jamestown, which today exists as a destination called Jamestown Settlement. From the Dismal Swamp, the fastest route to see it is taking the interstate. The more scenic route goes up the south side of the James River to Surry County and the southern terminus of the Jamestown-Scotland Vehicle Ferry.

By the end of 1607, at least 50 percent of the English colonists were dead, mostly from disease and famine. However, enough of them survived for their small colony to survive and eventually thrive.

Jamestown Settlement is a living history state park created by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Opened in 1957 to commemorate the 350th anniversary of Jamestown's founding and completion of the Colonial Parkway that same year, Jamestown Settlement revolves around replicas of James Fort, the three ships that transported its inhabitants across the Atlantic, and a Powhatan village.

Managed by a special state agency called the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation rather than the Virginia state parks authority, the settlement also features a large museum with exhibits, relics, and stories about Jamestown and early Virginia.

Additionally, history reenactors dressed in period costumes offer descriptions and demonstrations on life in early 17th century Virginia. Visitors can also board the three reproduction ships—the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery*—for demonstrations on 17th-century navigation and tales of what it was like to cross the Atlantic in those days. The settlement also hosts numerous events throughout the year.





The American Revolution Museum

The Siege of Yorktown, which proved to be the final battle of the American Revolutionary War, played out in the fall of 1781. Today, most of the battlefield falls within the confines of Colonial National Historical Park and the National Park Service.

However, Virginia also claims part of the battlefield, which runs along Water Street. This is where the state's American Revolution Museum at Yorktown is located. Much like the Jamestown Settlement, the American Revolution Museum revolves around a historical collection with hundreds of original artifacts, living history guides dressed in 17th-century garb, and an array of special events throughout the year.

Rather than zero in on just the siege, the collection covers the birth of the American nation from the 1750s through the 1790s. Among the highlights are wartime weapons, an official portrait of King George III, an early printing of the Declaration of Independence, and a first edition of the first book published by an African American writer: *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* by Phillis Wheatley.

The museum also features an orientation film and an immersive battlefield experience during which visitors are transported back to the siege via sounds, smells, film clips, and wind. The museum's outdoor areas include the re-creation of a Colonial Army encampment, manned by living history interpreters in Revolutionary War uniforms.

The museum throws a huge bash in October to mark the anniversary of the siege and the British surrender. The living history programs transition into 18th-century holiday foods and traditions during Thanksgiving and Christmas as well as tales of what it was like to be a soldier during winter.

If you feel like stretching your legs, the River Walk Trail starts just across the street. This is an easy amble along the south bank of the York River that leads half a mile into the middle of Yorktown village. Among the sights in the village are the Watermen's Museum, which pays tribute to the people who make their living on the Chesapeake Bay and Tidewater River, and the visiting tall ships that dock at Riverwalk Landing.



Planning Your Visit

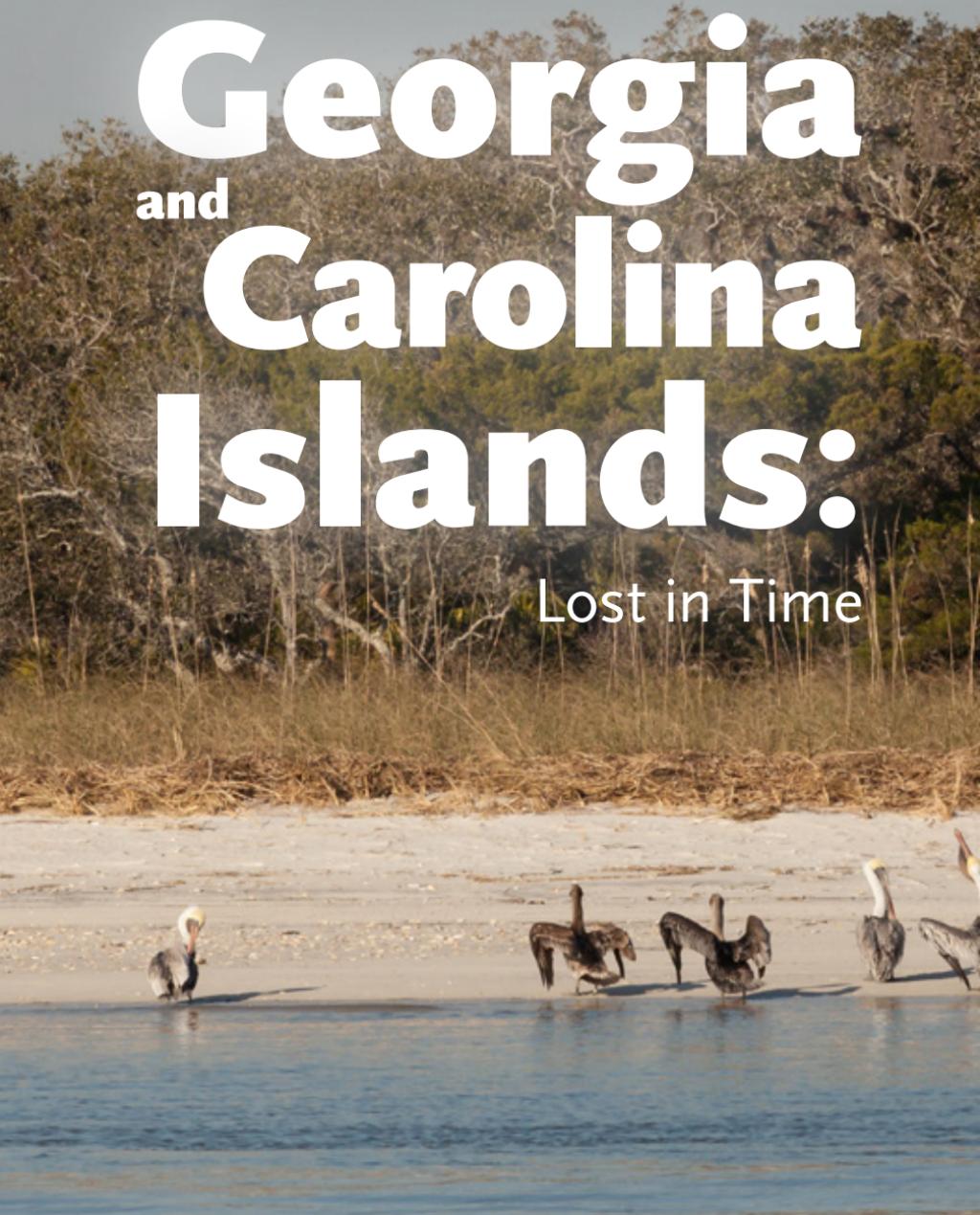
If you're not driving from home, this course's advice for visiting these five parks is flying into one of the three Washington-Baltimore area airports, renting a car, and undertaking a grand tour that starts on Assateague Island and ends at Yorktown. From there, it's easy to circle back to where you started the trip or drop off your rental car at Norfolk International Airport. The total driving distance is around 600 miles if you do the whole circle or 450 if you end the trip in Norfolk.

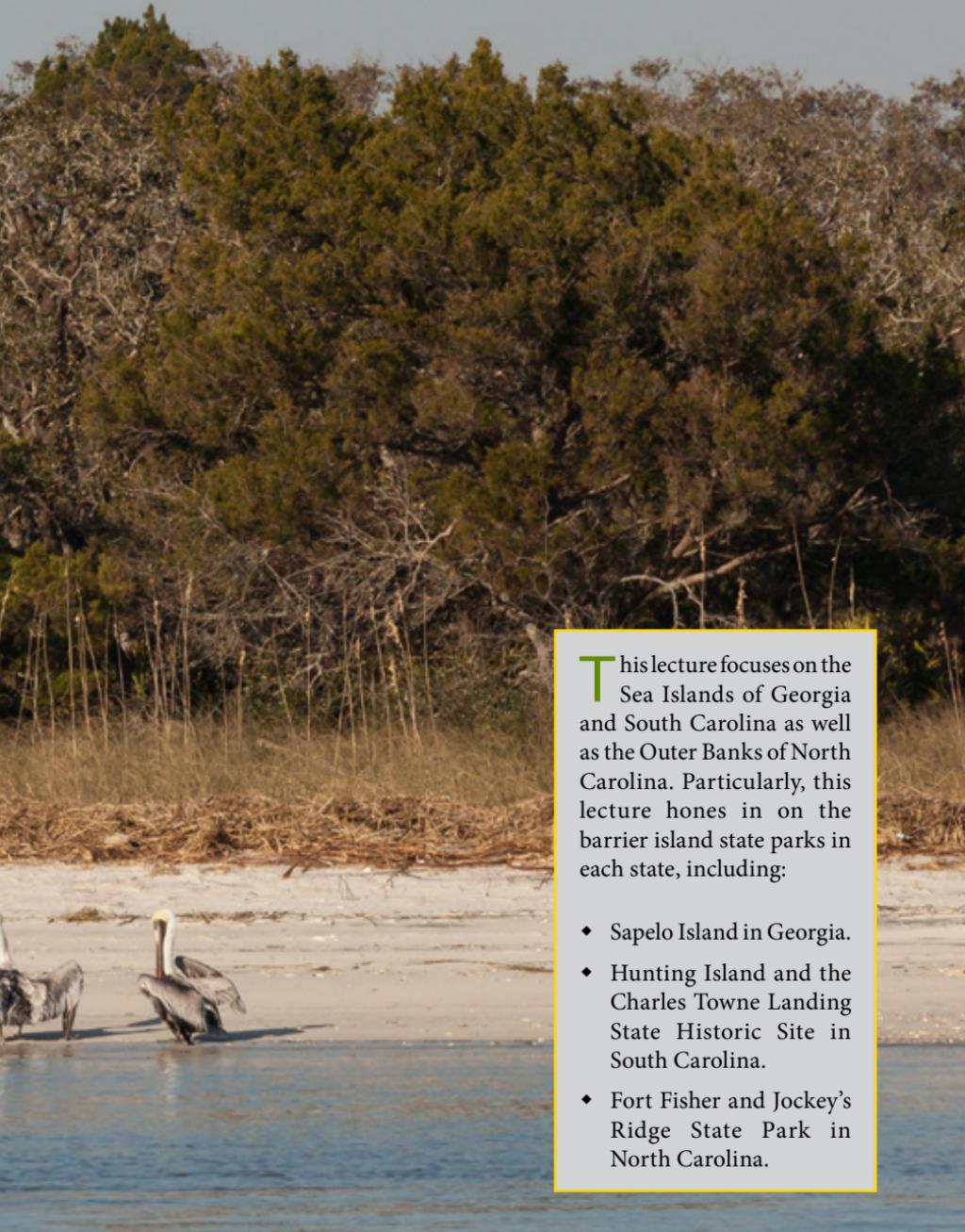
Additionally, there are many other state parks in the Tidewater region, especially along the long and deeply indented Virginia shore. Among them, this course recommends:

- ◆ False Cape State Park, which is a stretch of wild coast south of Cape Henry and Virginia Beach that you can only reach by hiking, biking, or boating.
- ◆ Caledon State Park on the Potomac River near Quantico, Virginia, which is renowned for its old growth forest and resident bald eagles.
- ◆ Chippokes Plantation State Park on the south bank of the James River opposite Jamestown, which is one of the nation's oldest continuously farmed plantations. It is also home to a number of historic buildings, including antebellum homes and slave quarters.
- ◆ Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park, which is near the spot in Dorchester County, Maryland, where the famous abolitionist was born, raised, and escaped slavery.

Georgia and **Carolina Islands:**

Lost in Time





This lecture focuses on the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina as well as the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Particularly, this lecture hones in on the barrier island state parks in each state, including:

- ◆ Sapelo Island in Georgia.
- ◆ Hunting Island and the Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site in South Carolina.
- ◆ Fort Fisher and Jockey's Ridge State Park in North Carolina.

Sapelo Island

Georgia's Sapelo Island is home to two different state reserves: Reynolds Mansion and the Sapelo Island Wildlife Management Area. Together, they protect more than 95 percent of the 16,500-acre island. The small remainder is taken up by Hog Hammock, which is a small, historic town completely surrounded by state land and an integral part of the park experience.

Hog Hammock has about 70 year-round residents. It is the most pristine example of a traditional Geechee settlement anywhere along the Georgia coast, and the people who live there are striving to make sure it stays that way. The Geechee of Georgia and the Gullah people found in the Carolinas are the descendants of the slaves who once worked cotton, rice, and indigo plantations on the Sea Islands.

At one point, there were scores of Gullah-Geechee communities up and down the coast. Sapelo is the only such place that endures in anything like its bygone form. That is what makes this state park unique: It is a blend of nature and culture that exists nowhere else on planet Earth.



Visiting Sapelo Island

The adventure actually starts on the mainland, at the Sapelo Island Visitor Center in Meridian, Georgia. Exhibits on the island's cultural and natural history are a great orientation for taking the 20-minute ferry ride down Doboy Sound to Sapelo.

The visitor center offers van tours of the island's south side twice a week throughout the year. This tour lasts around four hours. For those who want to see more of Sapelo, there is also an extended tour that includes both the north and south ends on the last Tuesday of the month between March and October.

Outside of the visitor center tours, you need to be sponsored by a Sapelo Island resident in order to set foot on the island. This is a way to protect both the fragile ecosystem and extraordinary culture.

You can join private day tours of the island, but they need to be reserved ahead of time. The guides are Geechees, most of them lifelong island residents who know Sapelo Island well.

You can also arrange to overnight on Sapelo at one of the lodgings in Hog Hammock. Those who stay multiple days also have the option of renting a golf cart or vehicle to explore the island. You can also hike and bike the island's back roads and wilderness trails.

What to See on Sapelo Island

There is much to see in the area, starting with Reynolds Mansion. The mansion served as the main plantation house from 1810 until the Civil War. Damaged during the war, it was abandoned for more than half a century before it was restored by a series of wealthy owners from off the island.

The last of those owners was tobacco heir Richard Reynolds, an eccentric millionaire who decorated his island home in a mishmash of styles. After Reynolds's death in 1964, Georgia purchased the mansion and most of the island, marking the genesis of today's state park and wildlife management area.



The main visitor activity is touring the mansion. Groups can actually sleep there overnight, including the suite where President Calvin Coolidge and his wife stayed during a 1928 sojourn on Sapelo Island. Beyond the mansion, the state park offers a number of other activities including guided kayak tours, beach walks, sunset strolls, and nature hikes.



Hunting Island

To the north of Sapelo Island, Hunting Island is the most popular state park in South Carolina and one of the most visited along this entire coast. More than a million people each year comes for the beaches, oceanfront camping, and nature trails.

Hunting Island's sandy strand offers ocean swimming at your own risk, because there are no lifeguards. Other activities include beach volleyball, kayaking, paddleboarding, and board surfing. Fishing is also huge, with surf fishing along the beach, pier fishing at the island's south end, and lagoon fishing behind the shore. Bait is available at the state park store. As part of the state's loaner program, rods and reels are available at the park visitor center.

The Hunting Island Nature Center next to the fishing pier offer natural history exhibits and live reptiles. It also provides educational programs and guided ranger tours throughout the year.

Looming high above the beach is Hunting Island Lighthouse. The black-and-white tower is no longer operable, but this is the only lighthouse along the entire South Carolina coast that visitors can climb.

The woodlands are best explored on more than eight miles of trails that meander through the park, including the Maritime Forest Trail, Magnolia Forest Trail, and Diamondback Rattlesnake Trail.



As that last trail's name suggests, there are eastern diamondback rattlers in the park as well as alligators in the freshwater ponds. Deer, raccoons, squirrels, and other creatures also make a home on Hunting Island.

If you've brought along a boat, canoe, or kayak, there's a boat ramp at Hunting's southeast corner that provides access to the 3,000-acre salt marsh on the island's leeward side. Other than the short Marsh Boardwalk Trail, this is really the only way to explore the park's west-side wilderness.

Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site

Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site offers a whole different take on the South Carolina coast. While it's on the mainland rather than a barrier island, the park offers powerful insight into the cultural and historic forces that shaped the Sea Islands. Located across the Ashley River from modern Charleston, this is where English colonists first stepped ashore in 1670 to found a colony named after English monarch Charles II.

At the heart of the park is a trail that meanders through the original English settlement area, with reconstructed fortifications, protective palisades, and crop gardens along the way. Nearby is the Animal Forest Trail, where wildlife such as black bears, mountain lions, and bison live in natural habitats.

Beyond the core area are seven miles of paved and unpaved trails that visitors can hike or bike through forest, marsh and manicured gardens.

Scattered around the state park are a visitor center museum with interactive exhibits, African American-related and Native American-related sites, active archaeological digs, and the *Adventure*—a reproduction 17th-century sailing ketch.





Fort Fisher

The past is also the focus at Fort Fisher on Pleasure Island, at the bottom end of North Carolina's Outer Banks. Fort Fisher offers three state attractions within a mile of one another along Fort Fisher Boulevard.

Fort Fisher State Historic Site preserves the remains of a huge Confederate Civil War fort. The place to start here is the visitor center, with its wartime artifacts and audio-visual program. There are also exhibits on barrier island ecology, hurricanes, lighthouses, and pirates. Outdoors, there is a historic trail with 15 wayside exhibits.

Meanwhile, the nearby Fort Fisher State Recreation Area revolves around six miles of beachfront and a salt marsh along the Cape Fear River. Here, surf, sea, and sand are the focus. Lifeguards are on duty from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Surf fishing is also popular. Between September and March, you can cruise the beach in four-wheel drive vehicles.

The park's Basin Trail runs about one mile into the salt marsh along the park's western shore. This is the best way to see the wildlife that gathers around this lower end of the Outer Banks.

The North Carolina Aquarium is located right beside the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area. This marine menagerie includes the massive Cape Fear Shoals Exhibit that showcases local sharks, rays, eels, and other fish.



Jockey's Ridge State Park

Jockey's Ridge State Park is near the upper end of the Outer Banks. It is located on Bodie Island, which is actually part of a long, thin peninsula that connects to the North Carolina mainland. Bodie Island was a true island until 1811, when natural forces closed the inlet separating it from the mainland.

Jockey's Ridge presents yet another take on the state park adventure in the Barrier Islands. It contains the tallest active dune system on the East Coast, towering to heights of 60 feet.

This natural phenomenon nearly didn't make it to the 21st century. Proposed residential development in the early 1970s sparked one of the biggest environmental battles in North Carolina history, spearheaded by a local woman famed for standing in front of a bulldozer to prevent the destruction of a dune.



Jockey's Ridge was spared beachside condos and vacation homes when authorities declared it a state park in 1975, making it one of the newer state parks covered in this course. Jockey's Ridge is now the single most visited state park in North Carolina.

Along with guarding the sand dunes, the park safeguards two other Barrier Island ecosystems. One is maritime thicket forest characterized by stunted oaks, pines, cedars, and other trees. This is an ideal habitat for deer, fox, raccoons, and other animals. The other ecosystem is estuarine shoreline. There, a variety of birds and fish thrive amid the cattails and sawgrass.



Unlike many other coastal dunes around the country, off-road vehicles are banned at Jockey's Ridge. This protects both the fragile ecosystems and human ears from the noise pollution spewed by ATVs and dune buggies.

However, there are plenty of other activities, including walking on self-guided nature trails and boardwalks through the dunes and along the shore of Roanoke Sound. Other options include kayaking, windsurfing, and swimming on the sound as well as sand boarding down the dune faces.

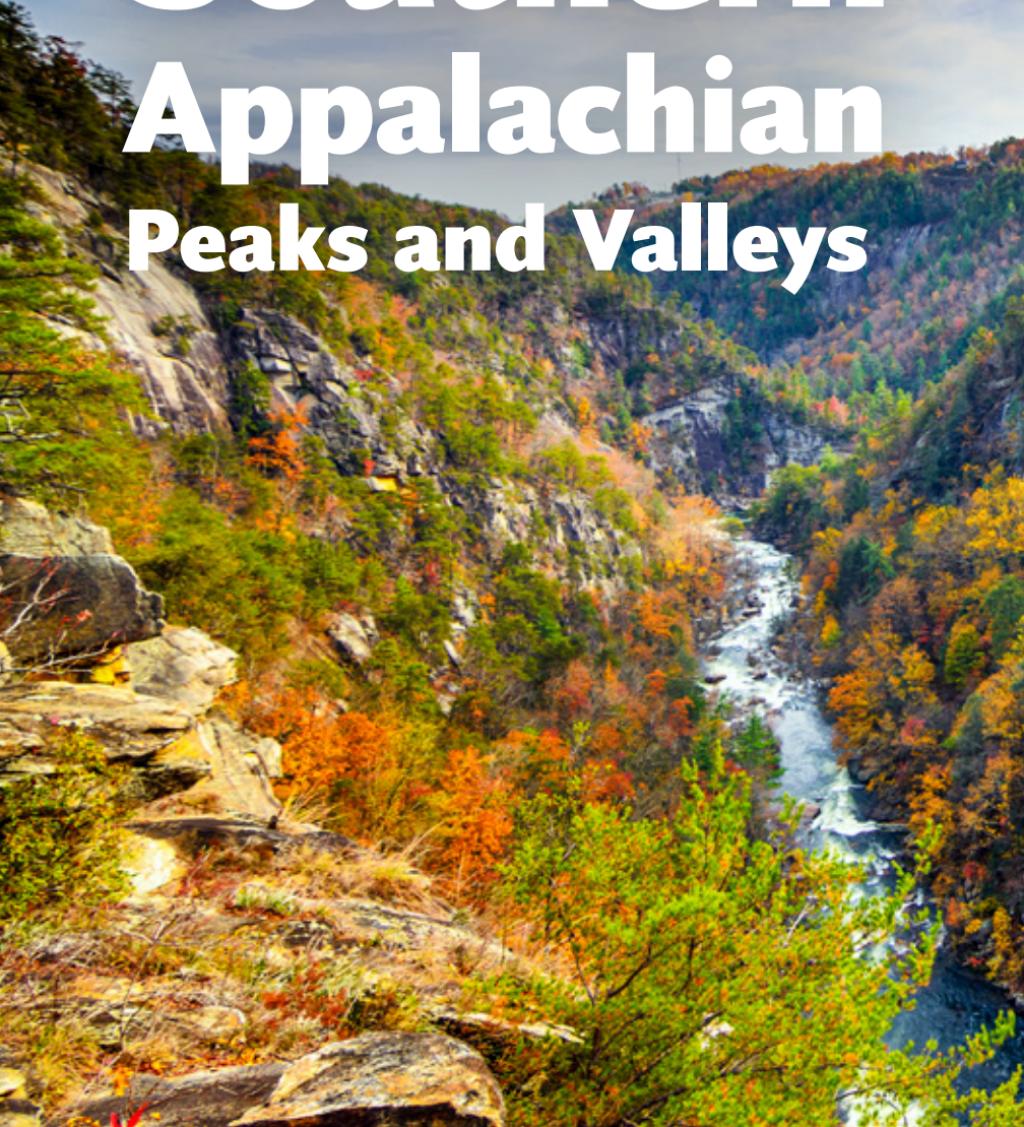
The park also has an aerial-activity side, featuring model airplanes, kite flying, and hang-gliding. There is a hang-gliding school right next to the Jockey's Ridge visitor center.

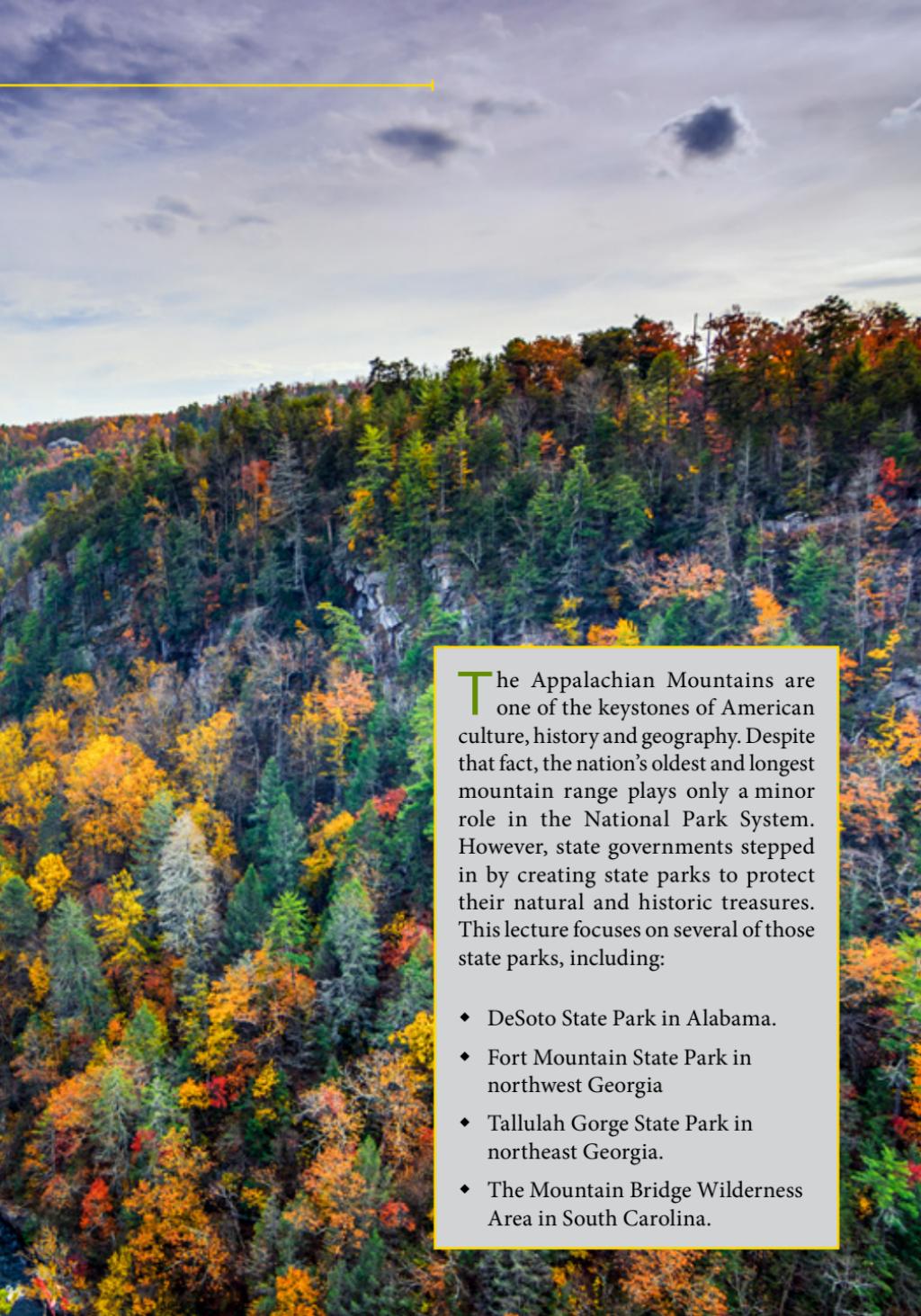


The visitor center also offers a number of ranger-led interpretive programs.

For anyone with a keen interest in aviation history, hang-gliding, or flying model planes, Jockey's Ridge is an ideal location. Less than five miles from the isle is the location where Wilbur and Orville Wright staged their historic first flight in 1903.

Southern Appalachian Peaks and Valleys





The Appalachian Mountains are one of the keystones of American culture, history and geography. Despite that fact, the nation's oldest and longest mountain range plays only a minor role in the National Park System. However, state governments stepped in by creating state parks to protect their natural and historic treasures. This lecture focuses on several of those state parks, including:

- ◆ DeSoto State Park in Alabama.
- ◆ Fort Mountain State Park in northwest Georgia
- ◆ Tallulah Gorge State Park in northeast Georgia.
- ◆ The Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area in South Carolina.

DeSoto State Park

DeSoto State Park is named for the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto, who passed through the region in 1540 during a wide-ranging expedition.

The state park is divided into two units. One is a small parcel near the town of Mentone that protects DeSoto Falls. At 104 feet, it is the highest waterfall in Alabama. The other, much larger tract is upstream along the Little River. It harbors more than 3,000 acres of forest, rock formations, and smaller waterfalls.



The Civilian Conservation Corps

DeSoto State Park was Alabama's largest state park when it opened in 1939. This was after four years of trailblazing, cabin building, and other development by the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC. Many of America's state park facilities were built with help from the CCC.

The CCC was a federal employment program that came about as part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to combat the problems of the Great Depression. It created 300,000 unskilled manual labor jobs for unemployed young men between 1933 and 1942, ultimately offering meaningful work to about 3 million young men. Many states built their own organizations based on the CCC model, including Vermont, Texas, and California.

Much of their work is still standing more than 80 years after it was built. You can still see structures that exemplify this work, including:

- The rustic lodge at DeSoto State Park in Alabama.
- The Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center at Custer State Park in South Dakota.
- The petite visitor center at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in northern California.
- The CCC bathhouse at Deception Pass State Park in Washington State.

There are many other examples across the country. When visiting your favorite state park, keep an eye out for the distinctive rustic stone-and-timber buildings. This is the architectural hallmark of the CCC.

The DeSoto-Lookout Mountain Parkway runs straight across the state park, providing quick and easy access to a country store and information center, a campground and picnic area, and the historic DeSoto Lodge. The lodge offers accommodation in motel-style rooms, log cabins, rustic cabins, and mountain chalets.

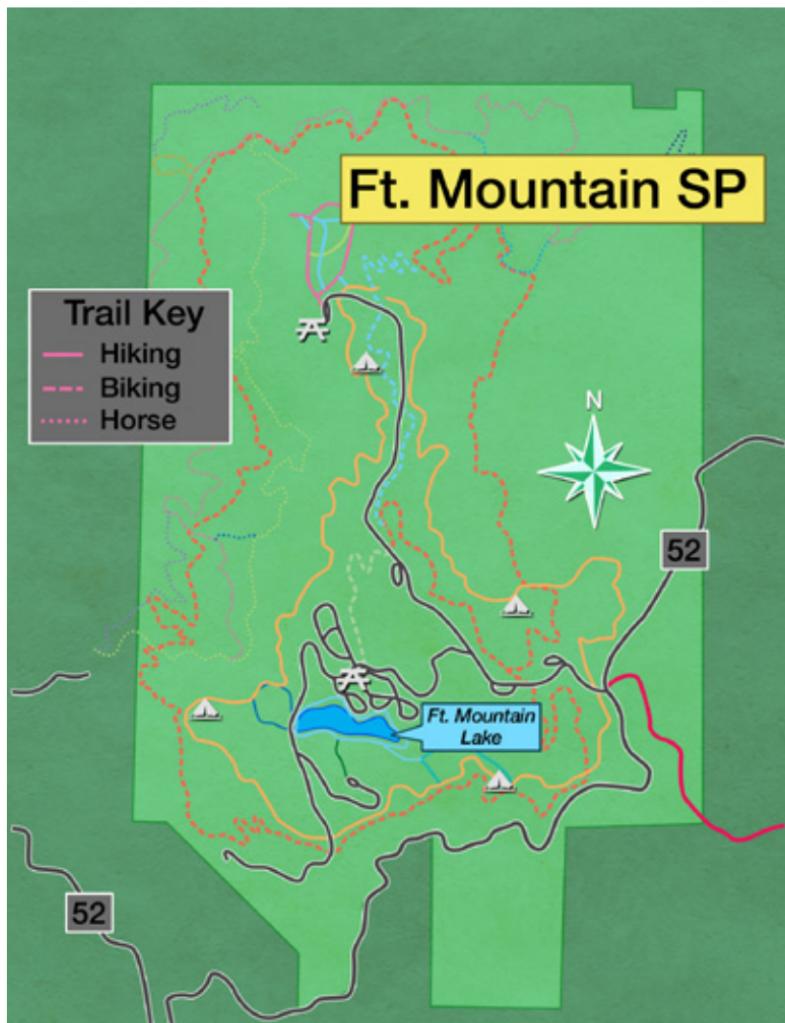
This state park offers 30 miles of hiking trails. Over on the park's western edge is the CCC Museum, which is dedicated to the Civilian Conservation Corps workers who developed DeSoto and many other state parks.



Beyond the park is the rest of Lookout Mountain, a long ridge that rises to almost 2,500 feet above sea level as it stretches across parts of Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. The mountain offers several other reserves: Cloudland Canyon State Park, part of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, and the Little River Canyon National Preserve.

Fort Mountain State Park

Fort Mountain State Park is located in the highlands near Dalton, Georgia. People go there for the view: a dreamy panorama that includes far-off Lookout Mountain, the Piedmont Plains, and the broad Coosa Valley. The state park also features more than 25 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails, 27 miles of mountain biking routes, and a lake where you can swim, fish, paddle, or camp.



For those who want to stay overnight, the state park offers RV, platform, and primitive camping as well as 15 cottages. A variety of hotels are available in nearby Chatsworth and Dalton. Just up the road from the park, the tiny mountain town of Hasslers Mill offers bed and breakfast and rental cabin options.

Tallulah Gorge State Park

This lecture's next stop is Tallulah Gorge State Park, near Georgia's border with South Carolina. The park's namesake gorge is a 1,000-foot-deep trench carved over thousands of years by the swift-flowing Tallulah River.

There are six waterfalls along the way and scenic lakes at the top and bottom ends of the gorge. All of this is framed by lush forest that bursts into a dozen different colors come fall. Tallulah Gorge's unique geography sustains a number of different ecosystems as well as a number of plants and animals rarely found beyond the gorge. Among the park's protected species are the persistent trillium plant, monkey orchid, and green salamander.



You can drive up to a couple of the viewpoints, including Tallulah Point Overlook on the South Rim and the Interpretive Center viewing area on the North Rim. Another option is to take off on foot along trails that wind along both rims, down into the gorge bottom, and into wilderness areas along the shore of Lake Tugalo.

The Hurricane Falls Trail is the most sought-after hiking route, but it is not for anyone with weak knees or who is prone to vertigo. Another option is the Sliding Rock Trail, which starts from the South Rim.





If you want to make either of these canyon hikes, it is necessary to obtain a free permit from the Interpretive Center before starting. A limited number of these permits are issued per day, which is a precaution to make sure the gorge trails are not overused. Given the nature of the terrain, no hiking in the gorge is allowed on rainy days.

If you want an option that is less strenuous, there are plenty of other paths along both sides of Tallulah Gorge. The South Rim and North Rim trails are around three quarters of a mile (one way) with only moderate inclines. Both feature scenic overlooks for gazing down into the void. The state park's longest route—available to both hikers and mountain bikers—is the 10-mile Stoneplace Trail, which leads to a backcountry campsite and boat ramp on the edge of Lake Tugalo.





The gorge's 1,000-foot walls are a magnet for experienced rock climbers. The park also offers camping, picnic areas, an archery range, tennis court, and swimming or fishing in Tallulah Falls Lake at the top end of the gorge. Kayaking is available, but only at certain times of year for very experienced paddlers.

Water is released from the dam at Tallulah Falls on weekends in the spring and fall. About a dozen of these are aesthetic water releases. They are done so that visitors can experience what the gorge is like when the river is running at full capacity. Another 10 days fall on whitewater boating weekends, during which veteran kayakers can test their paddling skills on one of Georgia's wildest rivers.

Finally, with exhibits on the park's flora, fauna, and geology, the park's interpretive center is well worth your time.

The Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area

The upstate region of South Carolina includes foothills and the Blue Ridge Escarpment. Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area sprawls across a dramatic portion of that escarpment along the boundary with North Carolina.

Created in 1996, the wilderness area includes two older and already popular state parks: Jones Gap and Caesars Head. This area covers 13,000 acres of forest, granite outcrops, waterfalls, and remote valleys that seem little changed from the days when the Cherokee people roamed this land. US Highway 276 runs straight across the wilderness area between the towns of Cleveland and Cedar Mountain, providing easy access to some of the location's best viewpoints and most popular trailheads.

The state parks at the heart of the wilderness area flaunt very different personalities. Caesars Head State Park is all about stone, and includes some of the highest points in South Carolina, particularly its namesake peak. Caesars Head offers more than 60 miles of trail, leading to primitive backcountry campsites and five waterfalls.



Caesars Head is also a great place to view and photograph raptors. This is especially true in the fall, when as many as 6,000 hawks in one day fly across the park during their annual migration to warmer climes.



Over on the eastern side of the wilderness area, Jones Gap State Park offers a valley experience along the Middle Saluda River. The park is named for Solomon Jones, a 19th-century pioneer who built the first road over this area in the 1840s.

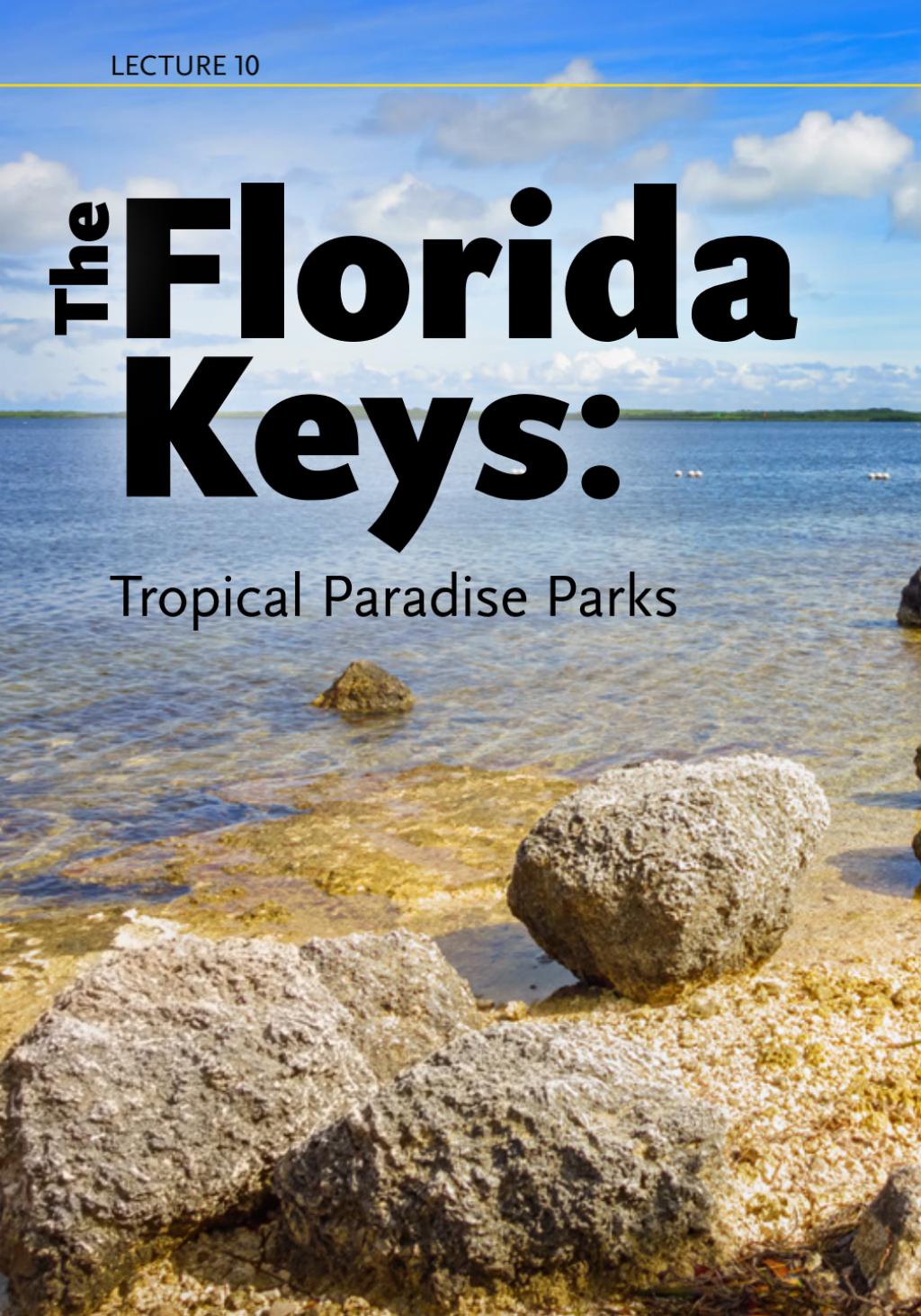
Jones Gap is renowned for its biodiversity. It features more than 600 kinds of wildflowers, 160 songbird species, and 60 different types of mammal. The park's variety of trees is also astounding.

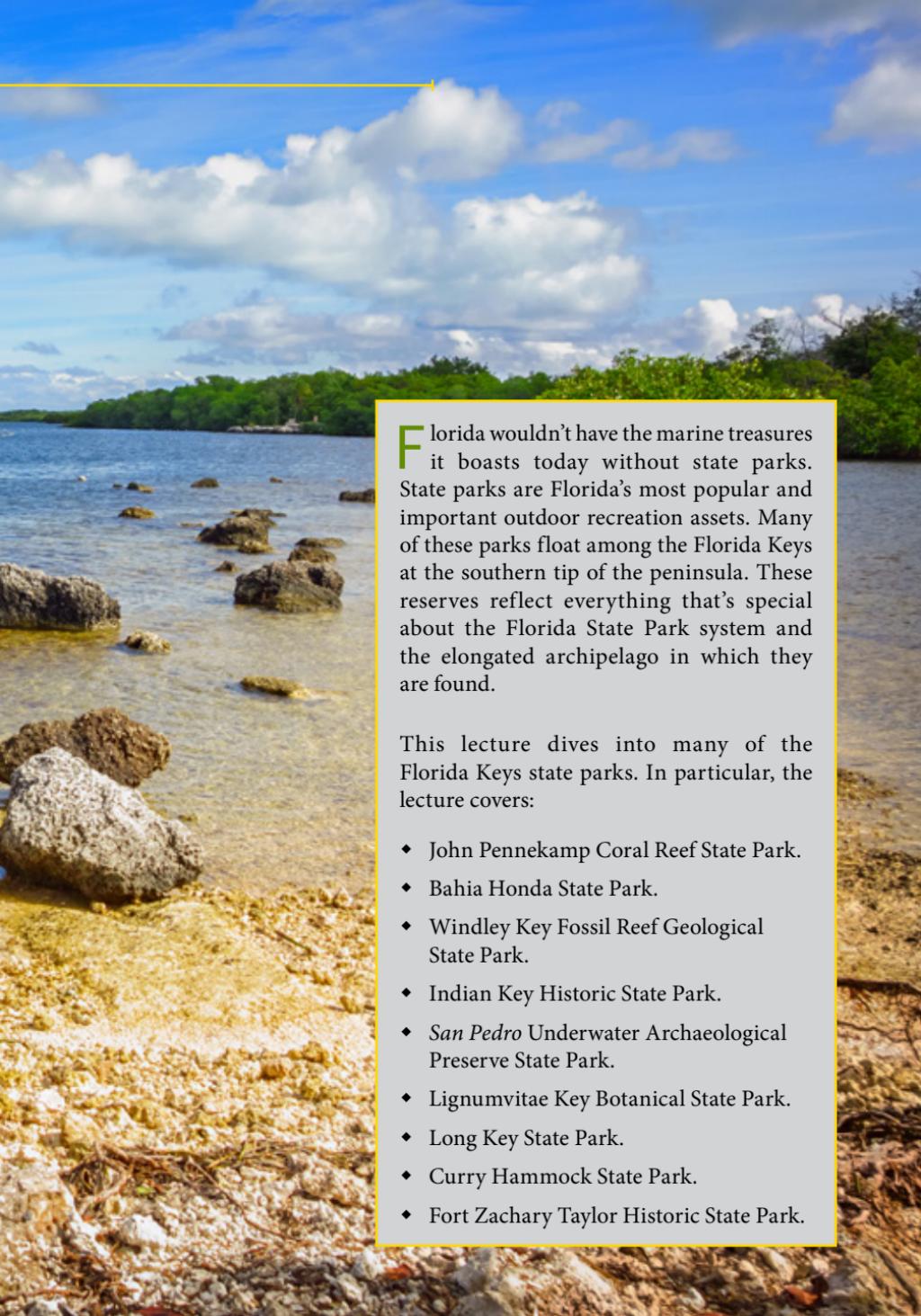
Visitors can explore this incredible range of flora and fauna on 30 miles of trails. This end of the wilderness area also boasts some spectacular cascades, such as the 100-foot-tall Rainbow Falls. Other activities include visiting the Cleveland Fish Hatchery, angling for trout in Lake Rotary, and taking in the view from the deck behind the chapel at the top of Standing Stone Mountain.



The Florida Keys:

Tropical Paradise Parks





Florida wouldn't have the marine treasures it boasts today without state parks. State parks are Florida's most popular and important outdoor recreation assets. Many of these parks float among the Florida Keys at the southern tip of the peninsula. These reserves reflect everything that's special about the Florida State Park system and the elongated archipelago in which they are found.

This lecture dives into many of the Florida Keys state parks. In particular, the lecture covers:

- ◆ John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.
- ◆ Bahia Honda State Park.
- ◆ Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park.
- ◆ Indian Key Historic State Park.
- ◆ *San Pedro* Underwater Archaeological Preserve State Park.
- ◆ Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park.
- ◆ Long Key State Park.
- ◆ Curry Hammock State Park.
- ◆ Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park.

John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park

John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park was originally called Key Largo Coral Reef Preserve. In 1960, Florida governor Thomas LeRoy Collins suggested that the name be changed to honor Pennekamp, an environmentally conscious figure who worked long and hard to make the park a reality.

Its amenities include two little white-sand strands, picnic areas, beach volleyball, and a waterfront campground. The park's visitor center includes an aquarium that revolves around creatures that live in the waters just offshore. There are also short hikes you can take through the mangroves and woodland behind the shore.

No visit to the park is complete without venturing out to the fabulous reef, home to around 600 fish species and 40 different types of coral. There are three main ways you can accomplish that task: guided snorkeling tours, scuba diving tours, and glass-bottom boat tours.



Bahia Honda State Park

Founded in 1961, Bahia Honda State Park sprawls across a 524-acre island of the same name near Marathon Key. Bahia Honda revolves around fun in the sun. Its two-and-a-half-mile white-sand strand on the Atlantic side of the island is ranked occasionally as the best beach in the entire nation.

You can easily snorkel or even walk-in scuba dive off Bahia Honda's beaches. The park's twin harbors feature boat docks, and rental boats are available for exploring local waters or circumnavigating the island.

A paved road along the island's south shore expedites cycling, hiking, and skating. For those who want to spend multiple days at the park, Bahia Honda offers campsites, rental cabins, and overnight boat slips. The park's visitor center features exhibits on sea turtles, key deer, local history, and other topics.

Bahia Honda is also a popular stop on the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. It is home to many birds, including herons, egrets, ibises, and hawks.



Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park

Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park, which is near Islamorada, revolves around a limestone quarry originally used to provide building blocks for the Overseas Railroad and later for decorative keystone. The park's visitor center spins tales of the trains that once chugged across the Florida Keys. Other exhibits illuminate local geology and tropical hardwood hammocks.

Short nature trails weave around the area. You can explore the trails on your own using a guidebook available at the visitor center. Another option is to walk the grounds with a ranger on interpretive tours offered between December and April.



Indian Key Historic State Park

On the western side of Islamorada is a cluster of three very different state parks. A boat is required to visit any of them. In the early 1800s, Indian Key was one of the most important settlements in southern Florida. Positioned almost dead center in the archipelago, it was perfectly positioned for fishing, turtling, and salvaging the many wrecks scattered along the reef.

Indian Key Historic State Park recalls those heady days with an interpretive trail that meanders through the ruins of that long-ago town. Beyond history, the state park also offers a variety of outdoor recreation for those who make the short voyage over from Islamorada or Lower Matecumbe Key. The waters around the island swarm with tarpon, bonefish, Spanish mackerel, and snapper. In other words, it is great for fishing.



Dolphins and manatees are just a few of the creatures you can see while canoeing or kayaking around Indian Key. There is also snorkeling, with guided trips offered from the nearby Robbie's, a marina on the Overseas Highway.



San Pedro Underwater Archaeological Preserve State Park

Just off Indian Key is the *San Pedro* Underwater Archaeological Preserve State Park. The park revolves around the wreck of the *San Pedro*, an 18th-century Spanish treasure ship that wrecked along the Florida Keys with more than a dozen other ships from the same armada during a 1733 hurricane.



Because the preserve is located 18 feet beneath the surface, scuba, snorkel, and glass-bottom boats are the only ways to explore it. In addition to the 18th-century ballast stones and anchor, the site includes a modern dedication plaque, seven replica Spanish cannons, and resident tropical fish.

Treasure hunting is strictly forbidden inside the archaeological preserve, but visitors can still search for Spanish relics in the waters outside the state park boundary. You can visit the *San Pedro* with your own watercraft or partake in guided scuba, snorkel, and glass-bottom boat trips based around the area.

Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park

The last of the trio of reserves in this area is Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park, which preserves a pristine tropical hardwood hammock. The island owes its amazing state of preservation to the fact that it has been fully protected since 1919, when Miami businessman William Matheson purchased the island with the express purpose of saving it from development.

Rangers lead guided tours Friday through Sunday during the December to April cool season. Otherwise, trail access is restricted to protect the fragile ecosystem.

Long Key State Park

A couple of islands down the chain is Long Key State Park, where Henry Flagler—the oil magnate, hotel developer, and founder of the Overseas Railroad—created a flamboyant fishing camp for the rich and famous in the early 20th century. However, in 1935, a hurricane on Labor Day destroyed the camp, the Overseas Railroad, and much of the rest of the Florida Keys.

The camp was never rebuilt, and nature reclaimed the site. Today, it is an outdoor recreation paradise with swimming and snorkeling in the warm waters of the Florida Straits, various paddle sports, short hiking trails, geocaching, and saltwater fishing. There is also a fairly large campground as well as boat rentals in the town of Layton, which occupies the other half of Long Key.

What Is Geocaching?

Geocaching is an activity found at Long Key State Park as well as other state parks. Geocaches are small, waterproof containers stuffed with logbooks, pens, and sometimes trinkets. Volunteers hide them in interesting locations and leave hints online so others can find them using GPS-enabled devices.

All you have to do to join the hunt is create an account at www.geocaching.com and use your smartphone or other GPS device to look for caches near you. When you find a cache, sign your name in the logbook, mark the cache found on your own personal log, and take or leave a trinket if available. Finally, put the cache back where you found it, and bask in the thrill of victory.

Geocaches can be found in urban, suburban, and rural locations. There could be one—or thousands—right in your own neighborhood. And hunting for caches is also a fun way to explore America's state parks, especially with kids.



Curry Hammock State Park

Curry Hammock State Park, which is 15 miles down the highway from Long Key, preserves one of the archipelago's largest tracks of undeveloped land. Among all of the state parks along the Florida Keys, Curry Hammock is the only one that encompasses more than one island. In this case, it includes Little Crawl Key, Long Point Key, Deer Key, and Fat Deer Key.

Most of the visitor facilities—including the campground, beach, and ranger station—are located on Little Crawl Key. This stretch of coast faces the Florida Straits.

Curry Hammock is another stop on the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. The park hosts the Florida Keys Hawkwatch each fall. Staff and visitors count the hawks, falcons, eagles, and other raptors winging their way around the island.

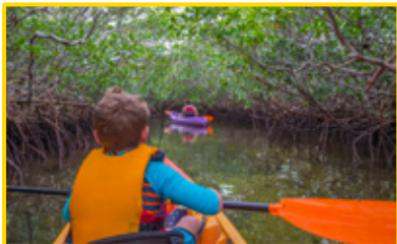
Curry Hammock is one of the best places in the isles to spot the rare Key Vaca raccoon. It is lighter in color than the common raccoon, and it is smaller than its mainland cousins.

This is also the best of the Florida Keys state parks for canoeing and kayaking. For hikers and bikers, a long stretch of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail passes through the middle of the park.

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park is located along the waterfront in Key West. As the name suggests, this was once a military bastion. Fort Zachary Taylor was built over a 20-year span starting in 1845. It was one of a series of fortifications to protect the Eastern Seaboard from enemy attack.

There's no visitor center per se, but a series of interpretive panels tell the fort's story as you stroll around. Guided tours are offered daily. Once each month, living history forces demonstrate the weapons, lifestyles, and speech of the Civil War era. Beyond the walls, the state park offers Key West's best beach, as well as swimming, snorkeling, shore fishing, and short hiking and biking trails.



Planning Your Visit

While it's tempting to base your stay in the islands at Key West, if the area's state parks are your main focus, this course recommends staying on Key Largo. Another option is splitting your stay between the two places.

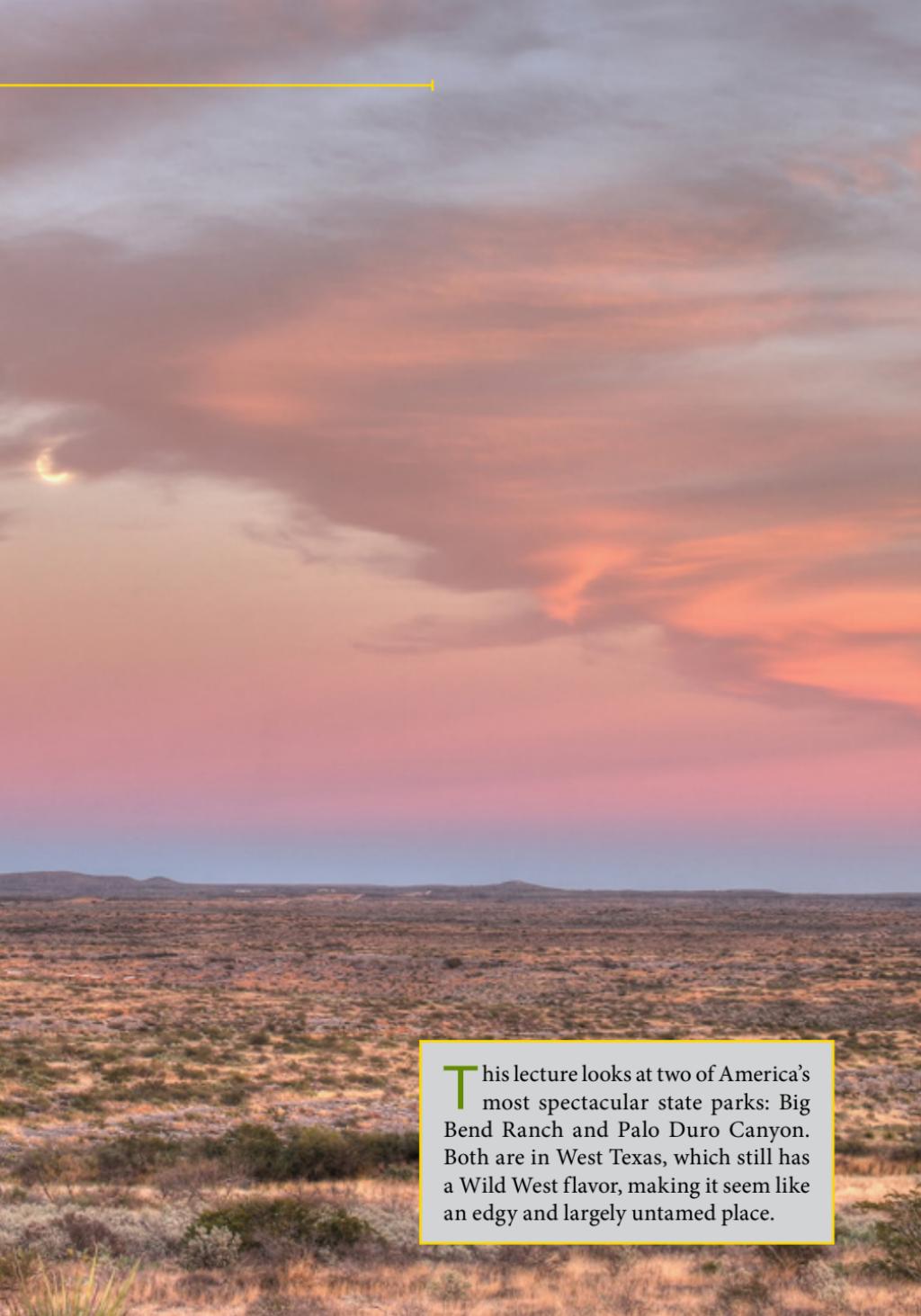


Key Largo is closer than Key West to most of the parks covered in this lecture. Key Largo features less traffic, great hotels, and a good selection of waterfront restaurants.

West Texas:

Where the West Is Still Wild





This lecture looks at two of America's most spectacular state parks: Big Bend Ranch and Palo Duro Canyon. Both are in West Texas, which still has a Wild West flavor, making it seem like an edgy and largely untamed place.

Big Bend Ranch State Park

Big Bend Ranch State Park lies adjacent to Big Bend National Park on the north shore of a large bend in the Rio Grande. With more than 300,000 acres, it's the largest state park in Texas and one of the biggest in the entire country.

The park's main theme is unrelenting desert. It is a landscape of rugged mountains, deep canyons, and high plateaus, all carved over millions of years by plate tectonics and remorseless erosion.

The flora of Big Bend Ranch is mostly mixed desert scrub comprising creosote, ocotillo, agave, and various types of cacti. These are known as xeric plants, which prosper in a parched environment. There are also grasslands and lush riparian zones along the river, where the cottonwoods provide welcome shade and a habitat for many animals.

The park's wildlife is also well adapted to the extreme environment. It is surprisingly diverse. Apex animals include black bears and mountain lions. There are also 16 bat species, 30 types of snakes, and many lizard and bird species. Additionally, bighorn sheep were reintroduced into the state park in 2010 and 2011.





Big Bend Ranch also offers a wide variety of human activities. Hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding are available along desert, canyon, and mountain routes. Another activity is stargazing, and Big Bend Ranch is a designated International Dark Sky Park.

Four-by-four touring is also available on 70 miles of primitive dirt roads that meander into the park's remote corners. People interested in this activity should always pack food and water, first-aid kits, GPS and paper maps, and digging equipment like a shovel.

Big Bend Ranch also features river access. There are places to fish, swim, and picnic beside the Rio Grande. Commercial outfitters organize rafting and canoe trips down the river. They also offer equipment rentals for those with enough experience to run the Rio Grande on their own.



Visiting Big Bend Ranch's Backcountry

Big Bend Ranch is about 260 miles from El Paso, 420 miles from San Antonio, and 650 miles from Dallas. The park has a split personality: the section along the river versus the vast backcountry.

State Highway 170, also known as the River Road, is a paved route that runs along the park's entire Rio Grande shoreline between the towns of Presidio and Lajitas. The park's backcountry, meanwhile, only features two ways to drive in. Both are unpaved desert roads.

The more common way is Casa Piedra Road near Presidio. The other option is the long and lonely Highway 169, which starts near Marfa, Texas. Either way leads to the Portal del Presidio entrance, which is the gateway to the state park's backcountry and an area that was once the heart of a vast ranch.

Planes can also land and take off by using the runway at Saucedo. However, people taking a plane in should arrange ahead of time to have a vehicle meet them on landing.

With its ranger station, bunkhouse, and campground, Saucedo is the focal point of the park's backcountry. Two short walks in the area—the Ojito Adentro Trail and the Cinco Tinajas Trail—offer a quick glimpse of the park's desert environment. You can also take a stroll around the Saucedo Historic District, where the park's namesake ranch was headquartered from 1905 until 1988.

The ranger station at Saucedo dispenses maps, brochures, weather reports, and other vital information for those lingering in the backcountry.

Other State Parks near Big Bend Ranch

If you're heading to Big Bend Ranch, two other state parks in the region beg a visit. Davis Mountains State Park on the north side of Marfa rises high above the desert. It features a lush highland environment that nurtures oaks, junipers, and other plants that need more moisture to survive. Meanwhile, Balmorhea State Park features the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool.



Visiting Big Bend Ranch's Rio Grande Section

This lecture now turns to the part of Big Bend Ranch that runs along the Rio Grande. Barton Warnock Visitor Center near Lajitas is the gateway for people coming over from Big Bend National Park on State Highway 170. Visitors approaching from the west end of the River Road should make a point of stopping at the park's other visitor center: Fort Leaton State Historic Site on the outskirts of Presidio.

The 50 miles of River Road between the two visitor centers features several spots to pull off and access the water or take in the scenery. There is a viewpoint for Colorado Canyon. There are also trailheads for the Contrabando Multi-Use Trail System.

Palo Duro Canyon State Park

Palo Duro Canyon is in the heart of the Texas Panhandle, located 25 miles from downtown Amarillo. The canyon is a 120-mile-long gouge. In some places, it is roughly 20 miles wide.

Adorned with caves, curious rock formations, and multicolored cliffs, the canyon is both a scenic wonder and an outdoor playground offering the best hiking, biking, and horseback riding in the Texas Panhandle.

History of Palo Duro Canyon

Palo Duro Canyon is the spot where the Native American supremacy over West Texas came to a bloody end. After Texas became part of the United States, Palo Duro Canyon served as a safe haven and winter encampment for the Comanche warriors and their families.

A final showdown between the Comanche and US forces occurred on September 28, 1874. This was the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon—a surprise attack that resulted in a complete rout of the Comanche forces. In the wake of the defeat, which was one of the last battles of the Texas-Indian Wars, the Comanche and their allies were forced onto reservations in Oklahoma.

They had to go without their beloved horses. More than 1,000 horses captured during the battle were shot by US forces rather than have them fall into the hands of the Comanche again.

The smoke of battle had barely cleared when Texas ranchers claimed the canyon. Matters stayed that way until 1933, when the state purchased a parcel of land below the rim to form the state park.

Visiting Palo Duro Canyon State Park

Although Palo Duro Canyon and Big Bend Ranch both revolve around fantastic geology and frontier history, the visitor experience at both parks is miles apart. For instance, Palo Duro is much easier to use.

A paved road runs right into the heart of the park. Most of the visitor facilities are located on that road along a five-mile stretch of the canyon floor. Those facilities include campgrounds, cabins, stables, trailheads, and an amphitheater.

The park receives nearly 300,000 visitors each year, a number that tops many national parks. The park boasts 30 miles of trails, which are equally open to hikers, bikers, and horseback riders.

The park's most celebrated route is the Lighthouse Trail, a 5.5-mile round trip up a side canyon leading to a large, landmark hoodoo. A hoodoo is a large, thin rock formation. Palo Duro Canyon has some grand examples of them.





The Civilian Conservation Corps left its mark on Palo Duro during the 1930s. In addition to creating the park road and many of the trails, its workers also built El Coronado Lodge near the park entrance. Today, rustic cabins are available along the canyon rim. El Coronado Lodge also serves as the park's visitor center. Maps and brochures are available here, and there are also interactive exhibits on the area's natural and human history.

The center includes an information desk where you can pick up maps, brochures, and the latest news on what's happening the park, as well as interpretive exhibits on Palo Duro's natural and human history.

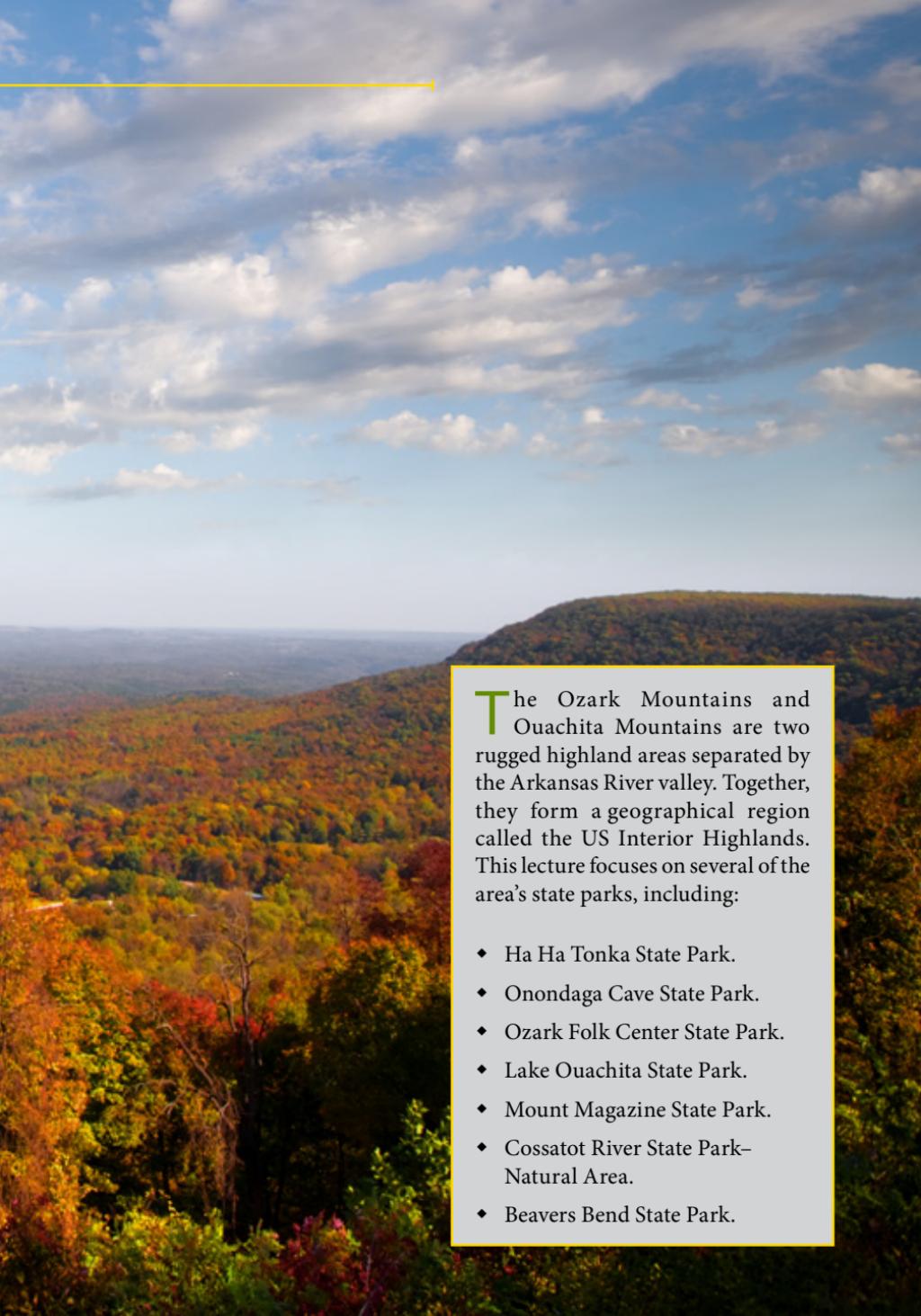
If you're in the mood to explore the canyon by horseback, Old West Stables is just up the road. Several ranches near the state park entrance and around the rim also offer guided trail rides through the Palo Duro landscape.

If you have your own mount, there is an equestrian campground where the park road ends deep in the canyon. Remember to bring a water bucket for your horse.

The amphitheater in the canyon bottom is the summertime home of an outdoor musical extravaganza called TEXAS. First staged in 1960, the show features music, dance inspired by the area's past, a barbecue, and a fireworks show. The park also offers a great slate of interpretive programs, including guided tours and stargazing sessions.

Adventures in the Ozarks and Ouachitas





The Ozark Mountains and Ouachita Mountains are two rugged highland areas separated by the Arkansas River valley. Together, they form a geographical region called the US Interior Highlands. This lecture focuses on several of the area's state parks, including:

- ◆ Ha Ha Tonka State Park.
- ◆ Onondaga Cave State Park.
- ◆ Ozark Folk Center State Park.
- ◆ Lake Ouachita State Park.
- ◆ Mount Magazine State Park.
- ◆ Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area.
- ◆ Beavers Bend State Park.



Ha Ha Tonka State Park

Ha Ha Tonka State Park is located in southern Missouri. It features a massive stone home perched on a wooded cliff above the Lake of the Ozarks. Kansas City tycoon Robert Snyder commissioned the home in 1905, and today stone ruins are all that remain.



As for the rest of the park, trails lead around the rim of a limestone gorge and through the surrounding woods. Along the way are geological landmarks like the Whispering Dell Sinkhole and an even larger sinkhole called the Colosseum. There is also a natural limestone bridge.

Farther out, the Ha Ha Tonka Oak Woodland Natural Area protects an old growth oak forest and dolomite glades with more than 500 native plant species as well as various mammals, birds, and reptiles. Visitors can explore the park's backcountry by hiking the one-mile Acorn Trail or the seven-mile Turkey Pen Hollow Trail through the natural area.

The 250-foot limestone chasm defines the park even more than the ruined manor house. To reach it, there are two options: driving around and down to a parking lot at the foot of the gorge or descending the 1.5-mile Spring Trail and its 316 wooden steps.

Onondaga Cave State Park

Onondaga Cave State Park near Leasburg, Missouri, showcases an array of underground wonders, from stalagmites and stalactites to flowstones, curtain-like formations, and cave coral. Much of the park's namesake cave is flooded, with the extraordinary formations emerging from or surrounded by water.

Public tours of the cave are offered between April and October. Tours last around 75 minutes and cover about a mile along paved underground walkways, which are illuminated by electric lights. The temperature inside hovers around 57 degrees.

The state park includes another famous cavern, Cathedral Cave, which is much longer and wilder than Onondaga.

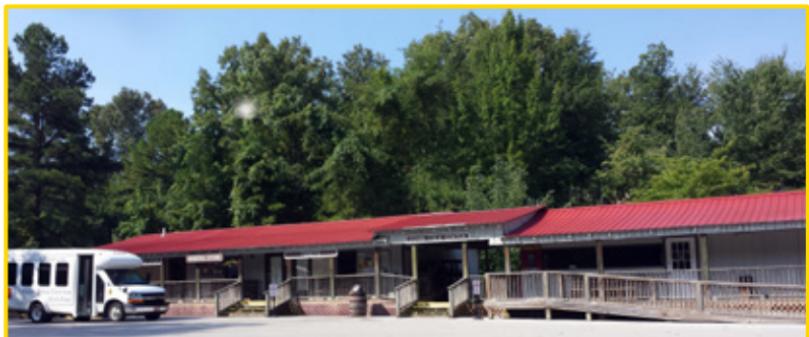
Guided tours here are more strenuous, and there aren't nearly as many of them. They occur mostly on weekends between mid-May and mid-October. They last around 90 minutes and are carried out by lantern light.

Onondaga is an outstanding state park just on the basis of its two notable caves. However, it also has much to offer above the surface. Scattered across 1,300 acres of woodland beside the Meramec River, the park facilitates hiking and biking along various trails. There are also facilities including a riverside campground and a visitor center with exhibits on underground flora, fauna, and geology.



Ozark Folk Center State Park

Where the Ozarks spill across the border into northern Arkansas, Ozark Folk Center State Park near Mountain View showcases the art, crafts, dance, food, and music of the Ozarks via live performances and artisan demonstrations. The center is dedicated to both preservation and training. Visitors can both listen to and learn how to make Ozark music. They can also learn about the various American pioneer skills featured at the park.



Ozark music is a unique American art form. Although fiddle is the iconic instrument, the Ozark sound also features banjo, guitar, and mandolin as well as the dulcimer and autoharp.

At Ozark Folk Center, a 1,000-seat indoor theater stages live concerts three or four times each week between April and November. It also hosts special events like the Arkansas State Fiddle Championships, the Old Time Fiddle Weekend, and the American Roots Music Concert Series.

The state park is also the home base for *Ozark Highlands Radio*, a weekly radio show broadcast on stations around the nation that features live music and interviews with the performers. People who want to learn how to play folk music also flock to the park for musical workshops and events like the annual Dulcimer Jamboree, String Band Week, and Autoharp Workshop.





Lake Ouachita State Park

South of the Arkansas River and Interstate 40 are the Ouachita Mountains of central Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma. Lake Ouachita State Park is the most well known and utilized of the area's state parks. It is close in proximity to Little Rock, Arkansas, and Hot Springs National Park, and it has a great reputation among fishing enthusiasts.

Created in the 1950s by construction of the Blakely Mountain Dam, Lake Ouachita is the largest lake completely within the state of Arkansas and one of the largest reservoirs in the southern United States. It boasts several types of game fish, including striped bass.



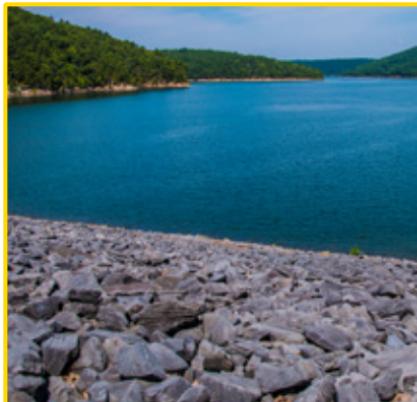
The Ozarks were largely settled by pioneer farmers. By contrast, the Ouachita range was the domain of lumbermen who came to harvest the region's abundant pine trees.



Lake Ouachita State Park occupies a peninsula near the lake's eastern end. The park's visitor center offers information and exhibits on the lake's human and natural history as well as guided hikes, kayak trips, scenic boat cruises, night sky programs, nature talks, and even snorkeling.

The park offers a full-service marina and two boat ramps for those who want to launch watercraft. You can rent boats and kayaks at the marina or purchase bait and other fishing supplies.

Just offshore is the Lake Ouachita Geo-Float Trail. This is a 16-mile water trail that takes boaters to a dozen geological landmarks around the lakeshore. On land, hikers can walk the short Dogwood Trail near the visitor center or the longer Caddo Bend Trail down to the end of the peninsula. There are also two swimming beaches, lakeside cabins, and five campgrounds for those who want to stay multiple days at Lake Ouachita.



Mount Magazine State Park

Mount Magazine State Park is located on the north side of the Ouachitas. It is one of the oldest protected areas in Arkansas but one of its newest state parks. It was established in 1998, when the long-time landmark was transferred from federal to state control.



Mount Magazine Scenic Byway crawls up and over the peak between the towns of Paris and Havana. This provides access to the spectacular Cameron Bluff Overlook and Signal Hill, which is the highest point in Arkansas at 2,753 feet above sea level.

A new lodge opened in the park 2006. There are also facilities including a campground, equestrian camp, and picnic areas near the summit. Other attractions include hiking trails and a hang-glider launching pad.



Cossatot River State Park—Natural Area

Water is the focus of Cossatot River State Park—Natural Area on the south side of the Ouachitas. This 12.5-mile stretch boasts the best white water between the Appalachians and the Rockies. Rafters and kayakers take to the river in winter and spring to challenge a series of Class III, Class IV, and Class V rapids.

Life vests are mandatory for anyone floating the river. Rangers warn that inexperienced or ill-equipped rafters or paddlers should not attempt the downstream passage.



Braving Whitewater Rapids

Whitewater rafting can be fun, but you need to be prepared and aware of what you're getting into. First, if you can't swim, don't go. Even still or flat water can be dangerous if you don't know how to handle yourself. Instead, find a nice perch and have fun watching the other rafters go by.

Second, even if you can swim, life vests and helmets are a must, especially in difficult rapids. Don't let laziness or ego lead to injuries.

Third, find a reputable guide. Most states require river outfitters to be licensed, and guides can get special certifications for skills like emergency first aid and swift-water rescue. Look for a guide with a lot of experience and a lot of education.

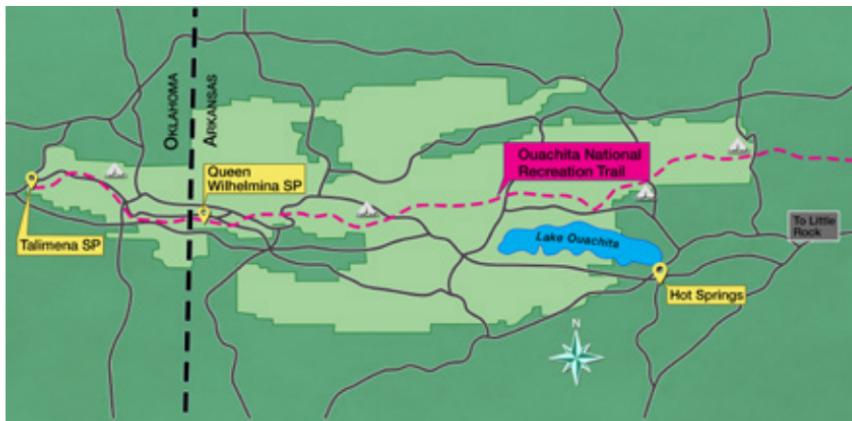
Finally, understand the International Scale of River Difficulty. Whitewater rapids are graded from Class I to Class VI, with I indicating swift but clear passage along a river and VI signaling the rapids are too dangerous for most boaters—even most experts.

Classes I and II are appropriate for pure beginners or groups that include younger kids. Class III rapids require a bit more skill and are better for experienced paddlers and strong swimmers. Class IV and V are not for beginners and should only be attempted by rafters who have built up a high level of skill. Class VI rapids are never open to commercial outfitters and should not be attempted.

Whitewater rafting has its risks, but careful preparation and a good guide can offer you an exhilarating way to enjoy America's state parks.

Beavers Bend State Park

The Oklahoma highlands harbor six state parks, most of them focused on recreational reservoirs. One of them, Beavers Bend State Park, is notable because of the wide variety of things to see and do there. Located on the banks of the Mountain Fork River at the south end of Broken Bow Lake, the park is gorgeous, especially when the trees break into their fall colors.



The park boasts hiking and biking trails, swimming beaches, tennis and volleyball courts, and an 18-hole golf course. You can camp beneath the trees, sleep in your RV, or stay in a lakeside lodge. The park also hosts a number of annual events and is home to the Forest Heritage Center, a museum that revolves around the lumbermen and other pioneers who once populated the Oklahoma Ouachitas.

The collection includes local wood art and chainsaw sculptures, an exhibit on firefighters, and another on the traveling timber towns that migrated across the region. The center's crown jewel is a collection of 14 murals painted by Harry Rossoll, the celebrated Forest Service artist who created Smokey the Bear. Starting in the mid-1970s, it took Rossoll a dozen years to complete the project, which illustrates the past, present, and future of the Ouachita forest.

Linked Parks

Three of the Ouachita state parks are linked by the Ouachita National Recreation Trail. The trail meanders through the mountains for more than 220 miles between Talimena State Park in Oklahoma and Pinnacle Mountain State Park near Little Rock, Arkansas. Queen Wilhelmina State Park is along the way.

A photograph of a river scene. In the foreground, the dark water of the Mississippi River flows from left to right, with several large, smooth stones resting on the surface. A rocky shoreline runs across the middle ground. Behind the shore, a dense forest of trees is visible, with many showing vibrant autumn colors like orange, yellow, and red. The sky above is overcast and grey.

State Parks along the Mighty Mississippi



Stretching all the way from Minnesota's north woods to the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi River is the nation's most storied waterway. It is a ribbon of liquid that flows 2,320 miles through the American heartland.

Today, state parks provide a broad view of the Mississippi River and what it means to the nation. This lecture looks at many of the state parks along the river, including:

- ◆ Itasca State Park.
- ◆ Fort Snelling State Park.
- ◆ The Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site and Mark Twain State Park.
- ◆ Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.
- ◆ Columbus-Belmont State Park.
- ◆ Delta Heritage Trail State Park.
- ◆ Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site.

Itasca State Park

This lecture starts where the Mississippi River begins: at Itasca State Park in northern Minnesota. Located around 200 miles northwest of Minneapolis, Itasca was Minnesota's first state park, established in 1891. It's also the second oldest state park in the entire nation after Niagara Falls.

The park centers around Lake Itasca, identified as the source of the Mississippi nearly 200 years ago. However, the lake is fed by a number of streams that could be considered the river's ultimate birthplace.

This state park expedites hiking, biking, fishing, and boating during the warmer months. It features activities like cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling during the winter. Camping and lodging are available, including the historic Mississippi Headwaters Hostel.

Itasca boasts two visitor centers where people can learn more about the park. The top of the 100-foot Aiton Heights Fire Tower provides a bird's-eye view of Itasca Lake and the engulfing pine forest.

The big attraction here is the designated headwaters of the Mississippi River—the place where the lake waters pour forth on the start of a long journey to the Gulf of Mexico. Several trails start from the same point.



Fort Snelling State Park

Located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, Fort Snelling State Park preserves the traditional homeland of the Dakota people and the site of a frontier outpost established in the early 1820s by Colonel Josiah Snelling.

Designated in 1961, the state park includes the old stone fort—managed by the Minnesota Historical Society—and a cluster of islands, lakes, and riverbanks in the middle of the huge Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Today, the restored fort offers museum exhibits, living history programs, activity stations, historical demonstrations, guided theme tours, and an orientation film that features the area's Native American, military, and pioneer heritage. Fort Snelling also recreates the modest quarters where slaves Dred and Harriet Scott lived in the 1830s.



The Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site and Mark Twain State Park

The celebrated writer Mark Twain was born in Florida, Missouri, 40 miles southwest of Hannibal along a tributary of the Mississippi called the Salt River. The spot is enshrined in two adjoining Missouri state parks.

Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site preserves the two-room wooden cabin where the writer was born. Downstream from the cabin, the Salt River was dammed in 1984, creating a body of water called Mark Twain Lake. That lake is now the centerpiece of Mark Twain State Park, an outdoor recreation mecca. It features boating, fishing, and hiking.

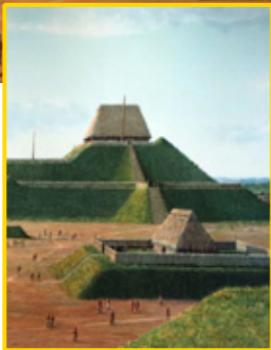




Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site

Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site lies on the eastern side of the St. Louis metro area.

Cahokia was the largest known Native American settlement of pre-Columbian times. Cahokia's grandest structure was Monks Mound—the largest prehistoric earthen structure in the Americas.



Researchers believe there was once a sizeable wooden palace on Monks Mound's flat summit. At the base was a 40-acre plaza, which visitors can walk across today. There, the entire population of Cahokia could gather for ceremonies and other events. The other mounds were used as platforms for ceremonial buildings, the palaces for other elites, and the burial places of important people.

Another intriguing structure is Woodhenge—a series of five concentric timber circles. Archaeologists speculate it was used as a calendar or astronomical observatory in a similar way to Stonehenge in England. One of the circles has been reconstructed to give visitors a feeling for what they must have been like.

Sunrise ceremonies are held at Woodhenge four times a year. They occur at the summer and winter solstices and the spring and fall equinoxes. Try to plan your Mississippi trip for visiting Cahokia on one of those dates.

Columbus-Belmont State Park

Columbus-Belmont State Park in western Kentucky harkens back to both the American Civil War and the notorious Trail of Tears. In the late 1830s, more than a thousand displaced Cherokee were ferried across the Mississippi between Columbus, Kentucky and Belmont, Missouri. This part of the trail came to be called the Benge Route after US Army captain John Benge, who led the march. The state park, which is a stop on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, marks the spot of the Benge detachment's riverside camp.



The site is also known for its role in the Civil War. Confederate troops occupied the heights above Columbus during the opening months of the war and began digging in, but Union general Ulysses S. Grant was able to overcome and dislodge them.

The museum inside the park visitor center—in a historic structure used as the Confederate hospital—details the area's role in the Civil War and the Trail of Tears.

Outside, visitors can hike the Confederate earthworks, see a giant iron anchor that secured one side of a chain across the Mississippi, and view the remains of a giant experimental cannon.



Delta Heritage Trail State Park

Delta Heritage Trail State Park is in Arkansas, and it revolves around an 85-mile rail trail between Lexa and Arkansas City. Today, the trail is a dual hiking and biking route that follows an old Union Pacific right of way along the river's west side.

The park opened in 2002, and the trail is opening in phases. Currently, the trail runs through a remarkable region of flora and fauna. Its route will eventually include moss-hung bayous, oxbow lakes that were once part of the Mississippi, and some of the last stands of hardwood forest that used to flank the entire river between Illinois and Louisiana.

Animals are abundant along the route. Deer, raccoons, coyotes, beaver, muskrats, and scores of bird species are some of the creatures that call the park home for at least part of the year. Barton Visitor Center near Lexa is the best place to get information on exploring the park.

Two other Arkansas state parks are within a short drive and easy to visit in conjunction with the Delta Heritage Trail: Louisiana Purchase State Park and Mississippi River State Park.



Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site

Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site revolves around the antebellum South. This time was dominated by two extremes: the institution of slavery and all of its ugliness, and the genteel lifestyles of the plantation owners. Both of these stories are told at modern-day Rosedown.

The plantation was started in the 1820s on lands purchased by Daniel Turnbull along the east side of the Mississippi. The plantation's name derives from a play that Daniel and his wife Martha saw on their honeymoon.



The rich alluvial soil deposited by the frequently flooding Mississippi was ideal for growing cotton. Over the next four decades, Daniel and his family grew fabulously rich on the soft white fiber.

The immense plantation house was constructed in 1835. Martha's contribution to the property was the ornamental gardens that surround the main house, developed during the 60 years she lived here. Her gardens eventually grew to around 28 acres.

At the plantation's height, around 450 slaves were working Rosedown's cotton fields, Martha's gardens, and the main house. Daniel died in 1862, and both Confederate and Union troops pillaged the plantation during the war. Rosedown and Martha Turnbull survived. She lived until 1896, and Rosedown stayed in the family until 1956.

Today, house tours are available at Rosedown. The state park also hosts many special events. For instance, each June, a weekend festival commemorates a local truce between Union and Confederate forces battling for control of Louisiana. There is also an annual myth-busting event during which members of the interpretive staff debunk myths about southern plantation life.

Presidential Parks in the Land of Lincoln



Abraham Lincoln was born and raised on the edge of the American frontier—a region that now includes Kentucky, Illinois, and Indiana. Those formative years are the focus of three state parks that trace the life of the future president before his White House days:

- ◆ Lincoln Homestead State Park in western Kentucky.
- ◆ Lincoln State Park in southern Indiana.
- ◆ Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site in central Illinois.
- ◆ Sites in Springfield, Illinois.

Other state parks in the region showcase nature the way it would have been in Lincoln's day, including:

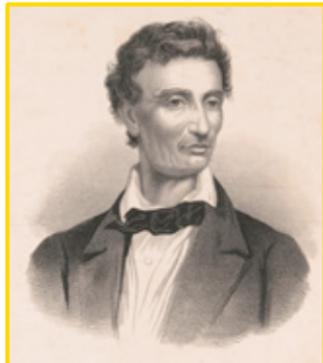
- ◆ Brown County State Park in southern Indiana.
- ◆ John James Audubon State Park in western Kentucky.

Lincoln Homestead State Park

Lincoln was born in a log cabin at Sinking Spring Farm near Hodgenville, Kentucky, on the February 12, 1809. Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park marks the spot where he spent his first two years. The national historical park also includes Knob Creek Farm, where Lincoln lived between 1811 and 1816. It sits about seven miles east of Hodgenville on US Highway 31.

Another 45 minutes to the east is Lincoln Homestead State Park near Springfield, Kentucky. This is the best of the Lincoln sites in Kentucky. Lincoln never lived in Springfield, but there's a good chance he visited while young. This was the original Lincoln family foothold in the Kentucky wilderness.

The state park preserves several original buildings. In addition to the building, the park features an 18-hole golf course, a picnic area, a playground, and a fishing pond.



Lincoln State Park

In 1816, Abraham's parents, Thomas and Nancy Lincoln, decided relocate their family to Indiana after enduring a series of title disputes. Indiana was just across the Ohio River. It had just become a state, and the process of land surveying and titling seemed more reliable than in Kentucky.

There was another reason for the move, though: slavery. The Lincolns belonged to a branch of the Baptist church that was firmly against slavery. Unlike Kentucky, Indiana's state constitution banned slavery and servitude of any kind. In addition to moving to a place where their land was less likely to be caught up in spurious court proceedings, the Lincolns also made a strong moral statement with their move to Indiana.



The Lincolns settled at Little Pigeon Creek, a pioneer settlement about 35 miles east of present-day Evansville. Two centuries later, Little Pigeon Creek forms the heart of Indiana's Lincoln State Park, another multifaceted reserve.

Abraham Lincoln lived in Little Pigeon Creek from the age of 7 to 21. He came to call Indiana his home.

The modern state park is fairly spread out, with opportunities to hike or bike rather than drive around. The visitor center near Lake Lincoln offers maps and brochures, as well as info on interpretive activities about the Lincoln clan and local nature.

However, the best place to start your visit is the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Plaza, located just beyond the park's main gate. The tree-shaded plaza features limestone columns and plaques engraved with stories about Lincoln's Indiana years.

The park maintains many sites that figured prominently in this period of Lincoln's life, including the Little Pigeon Baptist Church, the cemetery beside it (where his sister Sarah Lincoln Grigsby is buried), and the Noah Gordon Mill, where everyone in the village brought their corn to be ground into flour. It was here that 10-year-old Abraham was kicked in the head by a mill horse. He blacked out and came to the following morning.

Tucked up in the park's northwest corner is the James Gentry Home Site. Young Abraham worked as a clerk in Gentry's general store. In 1828, Gentry dispatched his son and a 19-year-old Lincoln on a flatboat journey down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans.

This trip was the first time that Lincoln came face-to-face with slavery. During the trip, Lincoln and Gentry witnessed a slave auction during which a young black woman was pinched by perspective buyers and made to trot across the auction stage like a horse.

According to Gentry, the future president was so upset by the spectacle that he vowed to "hit it hard" if he ever got a chance to end slavery. Lincoln certainly did. Thirty-five years after that auction came the Emancipation Proclamation.

Brown County State Park

For an even better idea of what southern Indiana was like during the Lincoln era, visit nearby Brown County State Park. This park contains 16,000 acres of wilderness that seems little changed since the early 19th century.

The park offers a montage of forest, fields, and fog-shrouded valleys that you can explore on 20 miles of paved roads and a dozen hiking, biking, and horseback riding trails. The park landscape is typical of what young Lincoln would have encountered as a teenager or young adult in southern Indiana.





John James Audubon State Park

John James Audubon State Park lies across the Ohio River in western Kentucky. The park revolves around the home where the renowned naturalist-artist and his family lived between 1810 and 1819.

The museum at the park features artifacts and keepsakes from Audubon's Kentucky years as well as original paintings and a complete set of his iconic *Birds of America* series. The adjacent nature center offers exhibits, classes, and guided hikes through 700 acres of forest inhabited by bald eagles, great blue herons, belted kingfishers, and many of the other birds that Audubon immortalized through his paintings.

The park also flaunts a campground and cottages, a nine-hole golf course, lakes for boating and fishing, and tennis courts.



Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site

When Abraham was 21 years of age, the nomadic Lincoln family relocated from the woods of southern Indiana to the prairies of central Illinois. They first settled in Macon County, but didn't stay long, moving to a place called Goosenest Prairie in Coles County.

A year later, Abe decided to flee the Lincoln family nest, determined to blaze his own trail into the future. He settled in New Salem, Illinois. Lincoln ran a general store, volunteered for the local militia, served as a surveyor and postmaster, studied law, and successfully ran for political office.

That period of his life endures at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, which revolves around the replica of the 1830s frontier settlement where Lincoln lived for much of his 20s. Scattered along the main road are 23 log buildings, most of them erected by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s and 40s when New Salem was resurrected.

The only original structure at New Salem is the Cooper Shop, where Henry Onstot made barrels used to ship just about everything on the American frontier in those days. All of the buildings are filled with 19th-century furnishings and everyday items. During the warmer months and over holidays, interpreters in period costumes take visitors on a time trip to the early 19th century with stories about Abraham and New Salem.

More relics await in the park's small museum. The museum also features a short movie called *Turning Point* that details Lincoln's sojourn in New Salem and how it influenced his life. Located right beside the visitor center, Kelso Hollow Amphitheater offers stage plays about Lincoln as well as other productions during the summer months. The state park also hosts a variety of special events throughout the year.



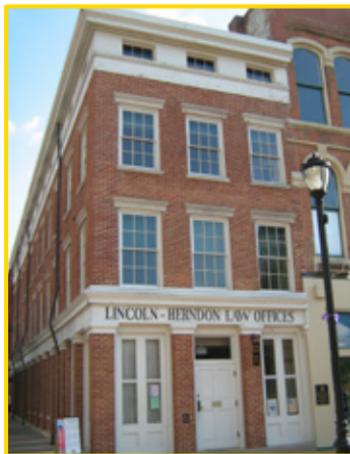
The New Salem Lincoln League runs a store that offers books about Lincoln and crafts made by local artisans. It's a wonderful place to browse even if you're not in the mood to buy.

Hiking trails fan out across the park's 700 acres. For those who want to spend the night, New Salem boasts 200 campsites.

Sites in Springfield, Illinois

For even more Abraham Lincoln history, drive 20 miles down Highway 97 to Springfield, Illinois, and its numerous Lincoln sights. The Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices State Historic Site preserves the third-floor offices where Lincoln and his partners practiced law from 1843 to 1852.

The office is a two-block walk from the excellent Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. It is also within walking distance of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site.



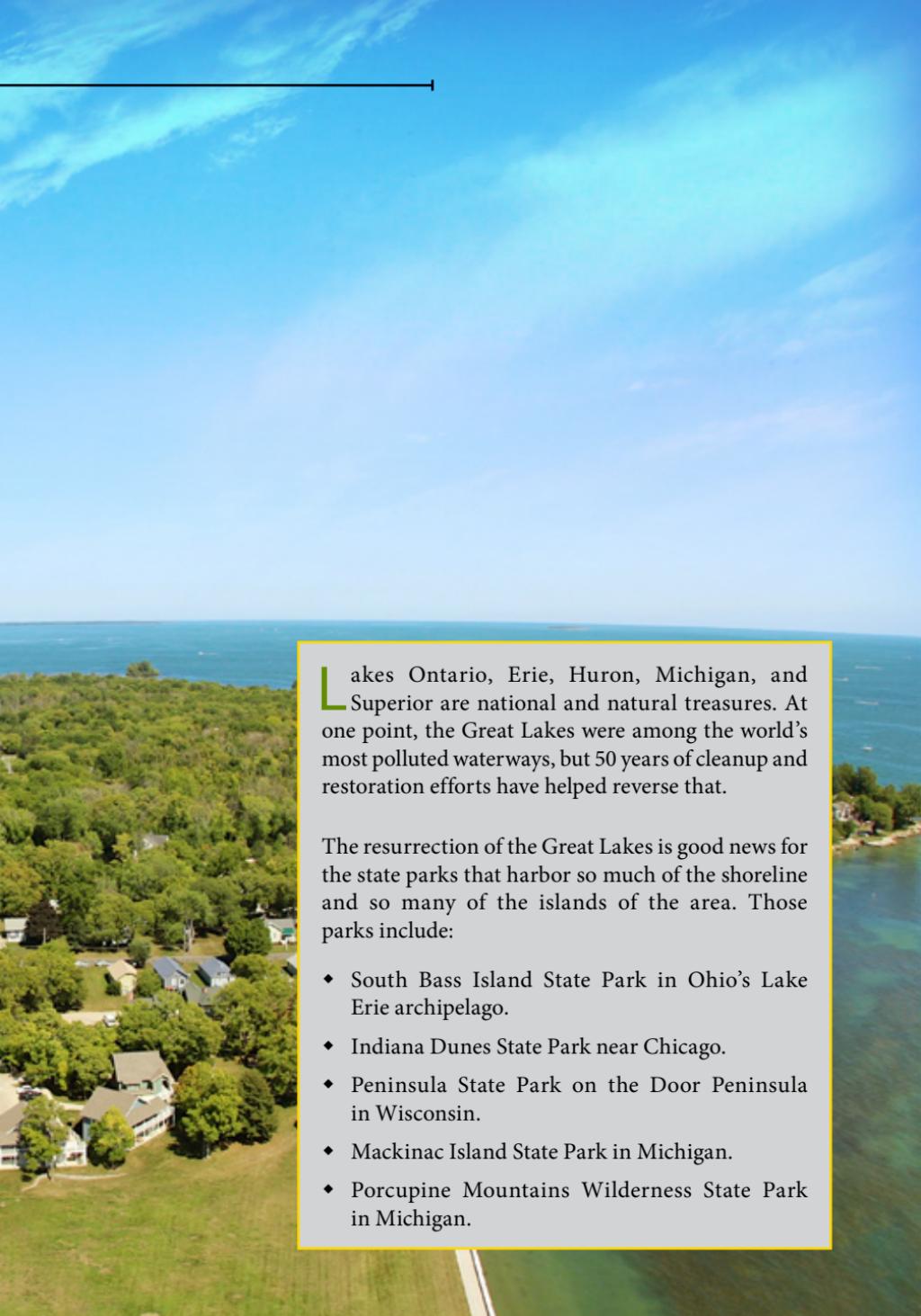
Following his assassination, Lincoln's body was brought back to Springfield and buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery on the north side of Springfield. This was declared a state historic site. The marble tomb is also the last resting place of his wife Mary Todd and three of their four sons.



The Great Lakes:

Back from the Brink





Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan, and Superior are national and natural treasures. At one point, the Great Lakes were among the world's most polluted waterways, but 50 years of cleanup and restoration efforts have helped reverse that.

The resurrection of the Great Lakes is good news for the state parks that harbor so much of the shoreline and so many of the islands of the area. Those parks include:

- ◆ South Bass Island State Park in Ohio's Lake Erie archipelago.
- ◆ Indiana Dunes State Park near Chicago.
- ◆ Peninsula State Park on the Door Peninsula in Wisconsin.
- ◆ Mackinac Island State Park in Michigan.
- ◆ Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in Michigan.



South Bass Island State Park

South Bass Island State Park is fairly small at only 33 acres in size, but it more than makes up for its diminutive size with a large variety of activities. Most of the park is wooded. Campgrounds and picnic areas sit beneath great leafy trees.

A pebble beach provides access for those who want to take a dip in Lake Erie. The state park pier facilitates both fishing and boating. A water-sports concession rents kayaks, paddleboards, small motorboats, and jet skis between Memorial Day and Labor Day. They can also provide a rental golf cart for exploring the rest of the island.

Adjacent to the state park is the nine-hole Saunders Golf Course. On the other side of that is the Lake Erie Islands Nature and Wildlife Center, which hosts guest speakers, stargazing cruises, a summer pig roast, and other activities.

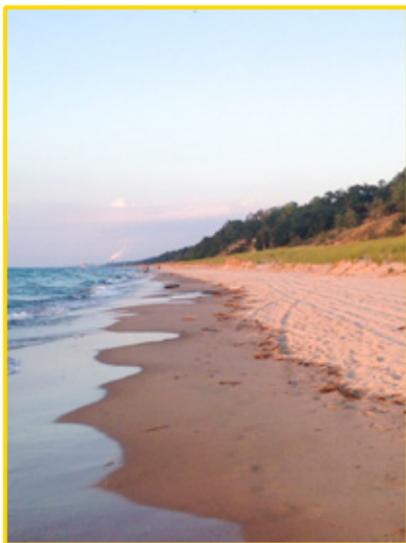
Put-in-Bay, the main town on South Bass Island, is six minutes from the state park by car and 30 minutes by foot.



Indiana Dunes State Park

Indiana Dunes State Park is located on the south shore of Lake Michigan. As the name suggests, there is plenty of sand. The park contains three miles of beaches—for swimming, fishing, and waterfront picnics—and monumental dunes that rise 200 feet above the lakeshore.

Everyone should start their visit to the park at its nature center, which offers exhibits on the park's human and natural history as well as information on interpretive walks, talks, and other activities. From there, three different trails provide access to a walk through the dunes to the beach.



You can also drive down to the shore. At the shore, there is a beach pavilion with a snack bar and a gift shop. There is also a bird observation platform overlooking Lake Michigan.



Another notable feature is the inland trails through the Dunes Nature Preserve. The state park also offers shore fishing, but for smelt only.

If you're staying for more than a day, there is a large campground sheltered in the pines behind the beach.

There is also scuba diving. Sunken ships are the main lure for those who venture beneath Lake Michigan. Located just off the state park's swimming beach, the *J. D. Marshall* Underwater Preserve is where a steam barge by that name sank during a 1911 squall.

The *J. D. Marshall* is one of around 50 vessels that are known to have wrecked in just the Indiana portion of Lake Michigan. In addition to the wreck, divers can swim with the smelt, salmon, trout, perch and other fish that frequent Indiana's small slice of Lake Michigan.

Peninsula State Park

Peninsula State Park is near Green Bay, Wisconsin. It is on the fabled Door Peninsula, and the park stretches across its own smaller peninsula that juts out into Green Bay. Surrounded by water on three sides, the park is renowned for its white limestone cliffs.



Seven miles of lakeshore along Green Bay make up the park's most alluring attraction. This coastline is lined with campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launches, a fishing pier, and sandy little Nicolet Beach.

Away from the shore, the park is crisscrossed by 20 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails, several paved cycling routes that are extremely family friendly, and two golf courses: a full 18-hole course and 6-hole learning course.

The park's White Cedar Nature Center offers exhibits and information as well as year-round talks and interpretive activities. The center also lends fishing poles and nature-activity backpacks to families camped in the park.

Peninsula's most beloved feature is probably the outdoor amphitheater, where the Northern Sky Theater troupe and its predecessors have presented locally flavored musical comedies for nearly 50 years. These are staged during the summer months.



Mackinac Island State Park

Mackinac Island State Park floats in the strait that connects Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The state park revolves around Mackinac Island Village on the south shore, reached by ferry from Mackinaw City on the Lower Peninsula and St. Ignace on the Upper Peninsula.

You cannot take a car onto the ferries. Mackinac Island is free of motor vehicles. The only ways to get around are by foot, bike, or horse. You can fetch maps and information at the Mackinac Island State Park Visitors Center near the ferry pier.

Perched on the hilltop behind the village and waterfront is Fort Mackinac. More historic structures flank Market Street in the heart of the village.

The state park covers around 80 percent of the total island, an area that includes rock formations and other fortifications, old-growth cedar forest, and a vintage golf course.

There are also history-related spots, including the location where a secret Redcoat invasion took place in 1812, the battlefield where American and British troops clashed in 1814, and Skull Cave, where a lone Englishman hid out during Pontiac's Rebellion of 1763.

You can explore the island on 70 miles of motor-less roads and trails, including a paved route that shadows the entire shoreline. Eight miles of that coast road double as the Native American Cultural Trail, which includes six interpretive panels that shed light on the heritage of indigenous people of the region.





Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park

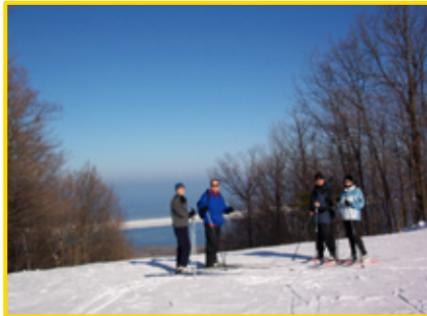
Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park is located at the western end of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This is Michigan's largest state park. It offers 60,000 acres of raw and unencumbered nature. Most of the park is inaccessible to vehicles and can only be explored by foot or boat. In winter, snowshoes and skis are an option.

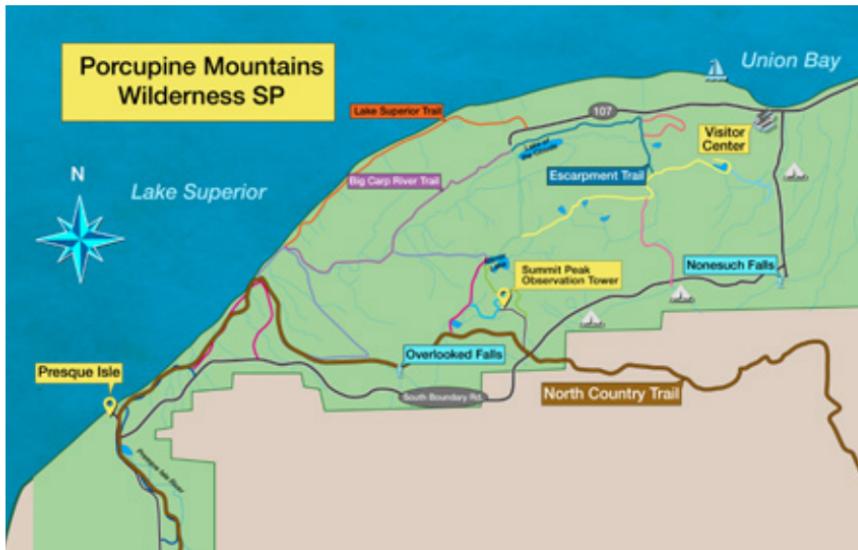


It is home to many animals that have disappeared elsewhere in the Midwest, including black bears, gray wolves, moose, lynx, beaver, river otters, and the park's namesake porcupines. It was the indigenous Ojibwa people who dubbed these mountains the *Gaag-wajiwān*, or Porcupine Mountains, because of their resemblance to a crouching porcupine when viewed from afar.

Silver City, the gateway to the park, is a pleasant lakeside town with hotels, cabins, restaurants, and wilderness equipment outlets. The heart of the park is Union Bay, about three miles west of Silver City. That's where you'll find the park's visitor center, the park's only modernized campground, and a boat ramp for forays onto Lake Superior by canoe, kayak, or small motor vessel.

Union Bay's mile-long beach is ideal for swimming during warm weather. The nearby Porcupine Mountains Ski Area is the park's primary winter sports rendezvous, with a lift to the top of a slope that features both black-diamond runs and a bunny slope. After the snow melts, the ski area transforms into an 18-hole course for disc golf.





From Union Bay, you can range out across the park by road, trail, or water during the warmer months. Highway 107 runs eight miles west to the Lake of the Clouds, the park's largest water body besides Lake Superior. You can picnic beside the lake. Additionally, several trails are available from here.

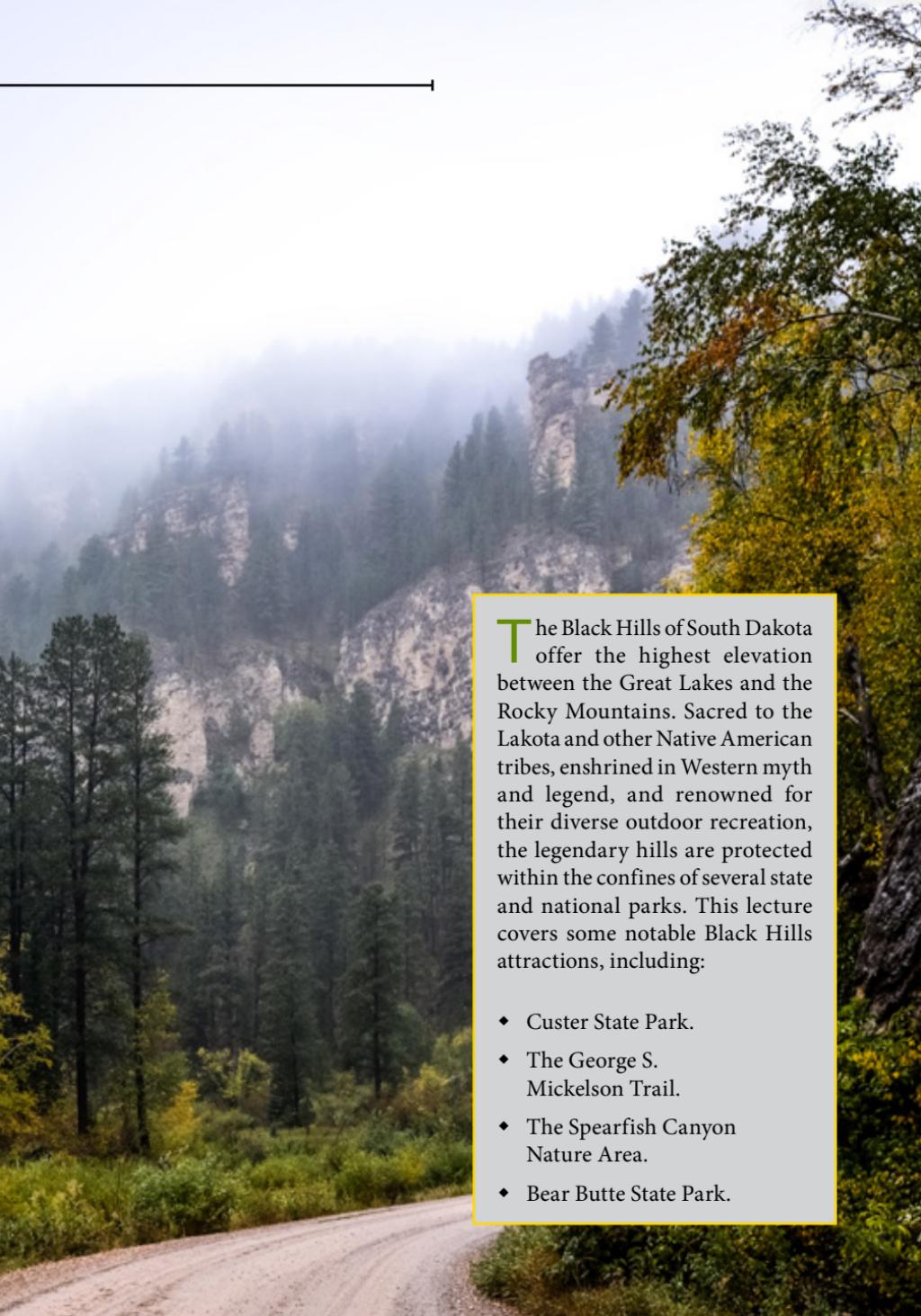
South Boundary Road meanders along the southern fringe of the state park with parking areas, primitive campgrounds, picnic areas, and trailheads along the way. Driving is a great way to see park landmarks like Nonesuch Falls, the Summit Peak Observation Tower, Mirror Lake, Overlooked Falls, and the Presque Isle River without overnight camping in the wilderness.



The **Black Hills:**

Nature and Native Heritage





The Black Hills of South Dakota offer the highest elevation between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains. Sacred to the Lakota and other Native American tribes, enshrined in Western myth and legend, and renowned for their diverse outdoor recreation, the legendary hills are protected within the confines of several state and national parks. This lecture covers some notable Black Hills attractions, including:

- ◆ Custer State Park.
- ◆ The George S. Mickelson Trail.
- ◆ The Spearfish Canyon Nature Area.
- ◆ Bear Butte State Park.

Custer State Park

Custer State Park is a mosaic of wildlife and water sports, historic stone buildings and imposing rock climbing walls, scenic drives, and assorted trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The scenery is gorgeous, but the park is most renowned for its wildlife.

Many creatures find refuge in the park, including coyotes, mountain lions, elk, deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, goats, bobcats, otters, and porcupines. Black bears have started moving back into the Black Hills after a long absence, which means they will likely migrate into the state park at some point.

The animal most closely associated with Custer State Park is the American bison. Custer State Park was one of a handful of parks that saved the noble beast from almost certain extinction.

The first bison arrived at Custer in 1914, numbering 36 animals purchased from a private herd near Pierre, South Dakota. Within a decade, the state park herd had tripled in size.



By the mid-1960s, the bison population had grown to the point where park grasslands could no longer support them, especially during the lean winter months. Overgrazing had become a real danger. Park authorities created a live buffalo auction that takes place each year, with a hundred of the animals sold to the highest bidders. Revenue from the auction helps support improvements to Custer and other South Dakota state parks.

Each September, the auction is preceded by the park's Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival. This roundup is the park's primary tool for bison management. Once the beasts are safely in the corrals, they are given a medical examination. Young ones are branded for the first time, and hundreds of bison are earmarked for auction to keep the year-round herd at around 1,000 total animals.

The Arts Festival includes arts and crafts booths, live entertainment, and a popular pancake breakfast. It takes place near the State Game Lodge in the heart of the park.

Exploring Custer State Park by Vehicle

The park's most popular drive is the Wildlife Loop Road, an 18-mile paved route that meanders through the prairies and pine-spangled hills that characterize the park's southern region. Other than attending the buffalo roundup and auction, driving the Wildlife Loop is probably your best chance of spotting wild bison in the park.

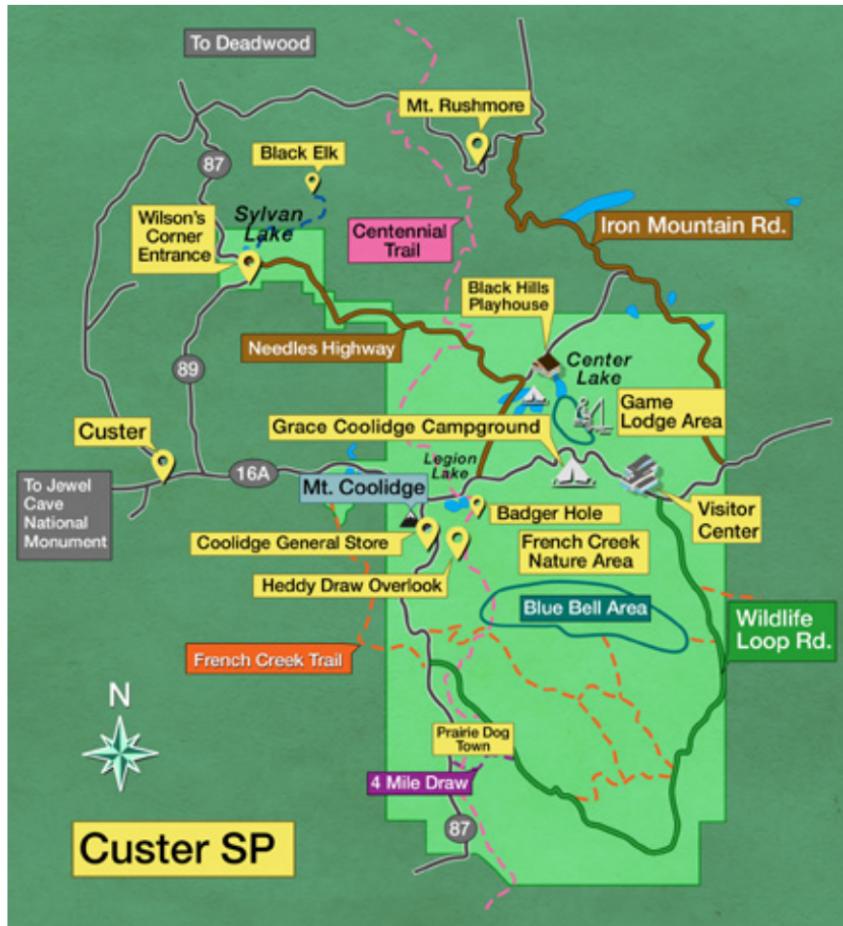
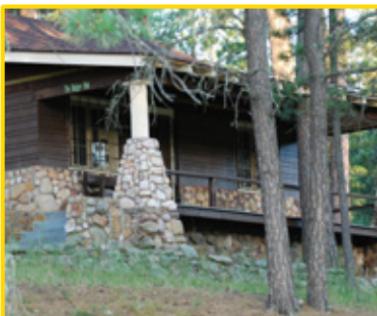
Additionally, the park's State Game Lodge offers tours through the same area. These are two-hour guided drives that include lots of interesting facts about Custer State Park and the Black Hills.



Near the southern extreme of the Wildlife Loop, an old herdsman's cottage has been converted into the Wildlife Station Visitor Center with exhibits on the creatures that call the region home.

Farther along the loop drive are the park's biggest prairie dog colony and the jumping off point for the French Creek Trail. This 10-plus-mile hike through the park's backcountry is another great way to spot wildlife.

Another popular drive is the Needles Highway, or Route 87, which twists and turns more than 14 miles to Sylvan Lake in the park's far northwest. The southeastern end of Needles Highway sits beside the Wilson's Corner Entrance Station. Nearby is Badger Hole, a cabin where South Dakota poet laureate Charles Badger Clark lived for 30 years between the 1920s and 1950s.



The George S. Mickelson Trail

Another great way to explore the Black Hills is trekking the George S. Mickelson Trail, named for the late South Dakota governor who spearheaded its creation. The trail is a state park, and it has an entrance fee. There are 14 dedicated trailheads where you can buy a day ticket or show your annual pass and take off along the trail.

The trail wanders through spruce and pine forest, across mountain meadows, and through the middle of historic towns. The route follows an old rail line built in the early 1890s to transport passengers, lumber, and gold-bearing ore.

The trail does not run through Custer State Park. The closest access points are Harbach Park Trailhead in the town of Custer, about 12 miles west of the park office, and the Burlington Northern Trailhead in Hill City, another 5 miles north of the town of Custer.

The trail can be tackled in a single day on a bike. If you're walking and want to hike the entire route, plan on three to five days, with overnight stops in places along the way. Options include the aforementioned Custer and Hill City as well as Rochford and Pringle.

At the northern terminus of the rail trail is Deadwood, the renowned boomtown and inspiration for the TV series of the same name.



The Spearfish Canyon Nature Area

Deadwood is surrounded by nature, including the Spearfish Canyon Nature Area, about a 20-minute drive west of town. The park is located in spectacular Spearfish Canyon, a deep and lushly vegetated chasm carved by a stream that tumbles down from the Black Hills.

The Roughlock Falls area of the park is renowned for its bird watching, including a rare chance to spot the American dipper. The canyon is known for its thick pine and spruce forest, its burst of fall colors, fishing along Spearfish Creek, and its geological wonders.



Bear Butte State Park

Twenty miles northeast of Deadwood is another state park: Bear Butte. Bear Butte has long been sacred to the region's Native American inhabitants, which consist of 17 different tribes. It is especially important to the Cheyenne.

The butte also has historical significance. It was here in 1857 that Crazy Horse swore to oppose further encroachment by whites in the sacred Black Hills during a summit of Native American leaders called the Great Reunion of the People.

Bear Butte is still a very active place of worship. It is not uncommon to see Native American prayer flags and offerings along the road and trail leading to the summit.

The Summit Trail, which starts near the park entrance, is about two miles in length and fairly steep in places. Along the way it passes the Bear Butte Education Center, where displays and events illuminate the mountain's geology and history as well as the spiritual beliefs of the people who worship here. A nearby ceremonial area is reserved for just such rites.

The state park's other half, over on the west side of Highway 79, encircles Bear Butte Lake and is much more recreation oriented. Fishing, boating, horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking are the main activities. There is also a lakeside campground.



Those who reach to the lofty summit of Bear Butte can gaze across the plains to the Black Hills and down on a little town called Sturgis, which is famous in its own right as host of the world's largest motorcycle rally. Spread across 10 days of August, the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally attracts around half a million people and tens of thousands of motorbikes of all shapes and sizes.



The Sturgis Rally has been happening since 1938. While it contributes an estimated 95 percent of the town's annual revenue, it does cause bumper-to-bumper traffic and overcrowded facilities.

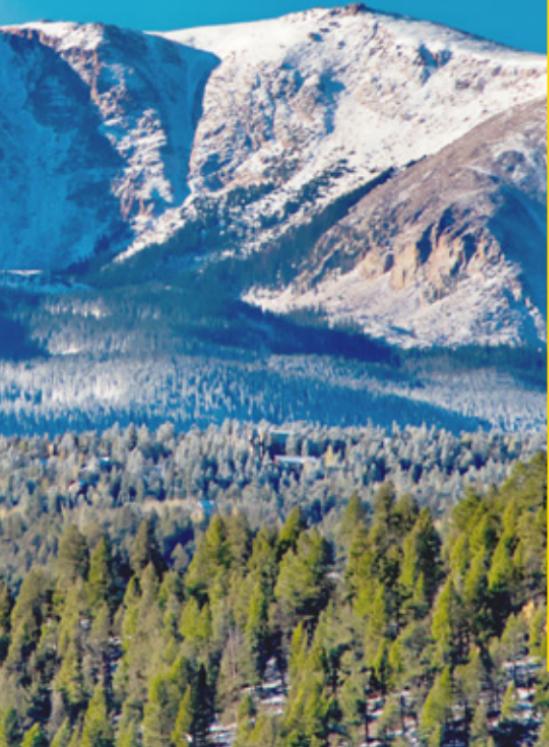
The Highway 34 strip east of Sturgis is peppered with biker bars, a drag strip, and campgrounds. They keep inching closer and closer to the butte—much to the chagrin of the Lakota Sioux and other Native American groups. In 2011, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Bear Butte as one of the “11 Most Endangered Historic Places” in America. Bear Butte State Park will endure, but the environment immediately around the park could change drastically over the next decade.

Planning Your Visit

You can learn more about the Native Americans of the Northern Plains by plotting a triangular route through the region that includes the Black Hills, Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park in North Dakota, and Medicine Rocks State Park. Other destinations include the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument and Rosebud Battlefield State Park in southeastern Montana.

Parks of the **Colorado** Front Range





The Colorado Rocky Mountains provoke a reaction of awe from anyone seeing them for the first time. They are truly one of our national treasures. A great way to discover Colorado's mighty mountains is visiting the state parks that spangle the range from north to south, including:

- ◆ State Forest State Park in the far north.
- ◆ Eldorado Canyon State Park on the outskirts of Denver.
- ◆ Lincoln Park in the heart of the state capital.
- ◆ Mueller State Park in the shadow of Pikes Peak.
- ◆ The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, between Royal Gorge and Leadville.



State Forest State Park

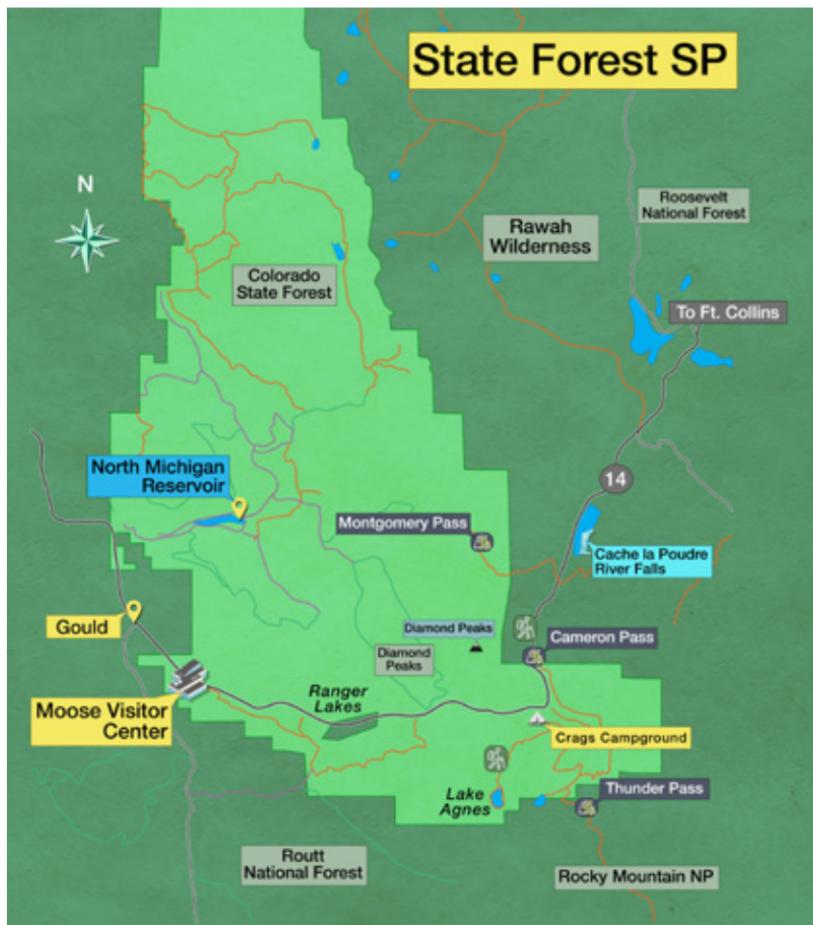
State Forest State Park is magnificent. The area boasts a local moose population of around 600 animals. The park's Moose Visitor Center is located near Gould, Colorado. In addition to exhibits on the park's flora, fauna, and geology, the visitor center flaunts a bookstore and an information desk with maps, brochures, and everything else you need to start your exploration of State Forest.



The visitor center also offers geocaching activities in the park, with GPS units available for rent if you don't have your own. Thirteen geocaches are hidden around the park.

The park offers hiking, camping, fishing and horseback riding as well as biking, boating, birding, and other wildlife watching. There are even off-roading trails for four-wheel-drive enthusiasts. If it happens to be winter, activities include snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and cold-weather camping. There are also winter full moon nights, with lighted snow trails, cookies, and hot chocolate.

The entire park lies between 8,500 and 12,500 feet above sea level, so you will likely feel the effects of altitude. The higher you get, the more you're likely to experience shortness of breath, mild headaches, and other maladies. Be prepared and be careful.



Additionally, keep your distance from the wildlife, particularly the park's beloved moose. They are notoriously bad tempered. State Forest provides a year-round home for plenty of other animals: elk, mule deer, beavers, otters, black bears, bighorn sheep, and raptors.

There is also considerable variety when it comes to vegetation. The forest offers a mixed bag of aspen, pine, spruce, and Douglas fir.



The real heart of State Forest State Park is the North Michigan Reservoir, which lies about a 12-minute drive north of Moose Visitor Center. It is the only lake inside the park that allows any kind of boating. The lake also has trout fishing, a campground, cabins, and yurts as well as trails into the surrounding mountains.



Your Hiking Safety Kit

One of the easiest ways to enjoy America's state parks is simply by walking around. It's even easier with the proper preparation. The gear you will need to enjoy a walk or a hike depends on the terrain and the time of year. However, here are some essential tips:

1. Wear shoes that are appropriate for the terrain. That usually means trail shoes or hiking boots.
2. Anticipate the weather and dress accordingly. Wear breathable clothes for summer, layers for winter, and rain gear where appropriate. No matter the season, always wear long sleeves, long pants, and a hat to protect yourself from sun, insects, and thorny plants.
3. Know where you're going and how to get back. GPS devices are great, but maps also show you park-specific details like ranger stations and campsites. Additionally, maps don't need an electric charge or satellite signal.
4. Bring water and snacks. You may only plan to be out for half an hour, but plans have a way of changing. Water and calories will keep you clearheaded and energetic.
5. Even on a short hike, there is a chance of getting lost or injured. In addition to your cell phone, bring a flashlight or headlamp and a small first-aid kit.
6. You will need a bag to carry your gear. Daypacks come in all shapes and sizes. Spend some time trying them on and examining all of the pockets to find the one that's right for you.
7. Finally, let a friend or family member know where you're going and when you expect to be back. That way, if you do get stuck on the trail, rescuers will know where to start looking.

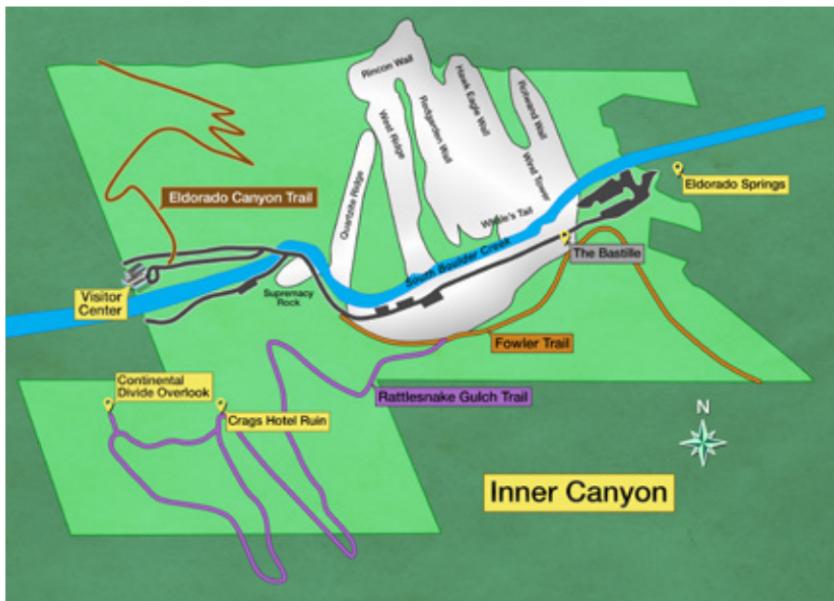
Your hike will likely go off without a hitch, but it's always best to be prepared.

Eldorado Canyon State Park

Eldorado Canyon State Park is tucked into the foothills of the Rockies on the southern outskirts of Boulder. The park is actually split into two units: the Inner Canyon near Eldorado Springs and Crescent Meadows farther to the west. The park's oldest stone, Supremacy Rock, has been dated to 1.6 billion years of age. That means it was around before the Rocky Mountains.

When the region's ancestral mountains appeared around 300 million years ago, erosion deposited sand and pebbles at the foot of the peaks, material that compacted into the sandstone. When the Front Range pushed up around 65 million years ago, those horizontal sandstone layers were tilted at extreme angles, providing the geological conditions for the red-rock canyons and artesian wells that spangle the region today.





Starting from the resort town of Eldorado Springs, the park's entrance road runs right through the heart of Eldorado Canyon past imposing stone outcrops. You can also hike the canyon on the lofty Fowler Trail.

Eldorado Canyon's upper end fans into a broad, natural amphitheater. This feature is studded with evergreens and split by South Boulder Creek. Hidden in amongst the pines is the Eldorado Canyon Visitor Center. In addition to the usual array of maps, brochures, and nature exhibits, the center also supports programs for children as well as live music on the back patio during the summer months.

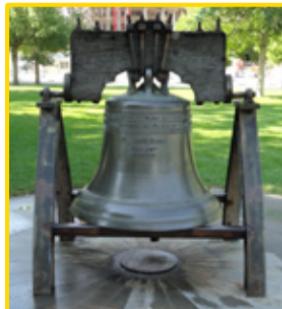


The park's toughest hike—the Eldorado Canyon Trail—starts right across the road from the visitor center. The trek from there to the park boundary and back involves seven steep miles with a 1,000-foot elevation gain. The trail keeps going outside the park, where it links up with the Walker Ranch Loop and the Crescent Meadows trail to the park's western unit.

Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park is in the middle of Denver. It is the green space that surrounds the state capitol building, and it is named after Abraham Lincoln. Its major feature—other than outstanding views of the capitol building—is a full-scale replica of the Liberty Bell.

Lincoln Park features a number of other monuments and memorials, including a grove of aspen trees that commemorates the seven astronauts that died on the space shuttle *Challenger*, a memorial to the Armenian genocide, a bronze statue of a Native American buffalo hunter, and the Colorado Civil War monument.



Mueller State Park

Mueller State Park is located roughly 100 miles south of Denver, on the western flank of Pikes Peak. Spread across 5,100 acres, the park features a mix of forest, rolling grasslands, and awesome outcrops of granite set around vintage ranch buildings and newer state park structures.



Forty-four miles of trails cater to hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders as well as cross-country skiers and snowshoe users come winter. Mueller also has three short nature trails, including one that is specially designed for kids.

You can overnight at campgrounds or cabins, and there are even equestrian campsites for those who bring their horses along. The latter includes both corrals and indoor barn stalls, but riders need to bring their own horse feed. A visitor center features exhibits on Mueller's plants, animals, geology, and ranching heritage as well as guided hikes and campfire programs.

More than 115 species of migratory and resident birds have been spotted in the park. Elk, black bears, mountain lions, mule deer, and many other species also call the park home.

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

The waterway at the bottom of Colorado's Royal Gorge is the Arkansas River. The entire run of the river upstream from the gorge is part of a unique Colorado state park called the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area. The park stretches for around 150 miles along the river.

There are no boundaries per se. Rather, the park features a series of campgrounds and recreation sites, picnic areas and boat ramps, wildlife viewing areas and fishing easements, and trails for hikers, horses, bikes, and off-road vehicles.



Following the river upstream is easy. Jump on US Highway 50 in Cañon City and head west, tracing the south bank of the river to Salida, Colorado. The road and the river bend around the South Park Hills.

There is much to see and do along the way. Parkdale is one of the main staging points for whitewater rafting trips through Royal Gorge on the Arkansas River. Many local outfitters offer this service.

Upstream from Parkdale, the river runs through Bighorn Sheep Canyon, another narrow portion of the Arkansas River valley. The canyon affords an opportunity to see bighorn sheep scrambling around. Additionally, for anglers, this stretch of river is ideal. The 100-mile stretch of the Arkansas River upstream from Parkdale features abundant trout.

The town of Salida, Colorado, marks the midpoint of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area. Salida has a pleasant riverside park with free outdoor concerts in the summer. A block away is the Arkansas Headwaters Visitor Center, where you can pick up maps, brochures, and other information. Salida also boasts a Colorado Parks and Wildlife fish hatchery. There, you can feed young trout.

If you're going to continue tracing the headwaters all the way to Leadville and the northern end of the park, US highways 285 and 24 provide a route. The total distance is around 60 miles, with scenery that keeps getting better and better.



North of Salida, the river runs through Browns Canyon, one of the most scenic stretches along the entire Arkansas River. The canyon's churning whitewater rapids makes this the most popular stretch for guided rafting. The town of Buena Vista is ground zero for float trips, with half a dozen commercial outfitters.

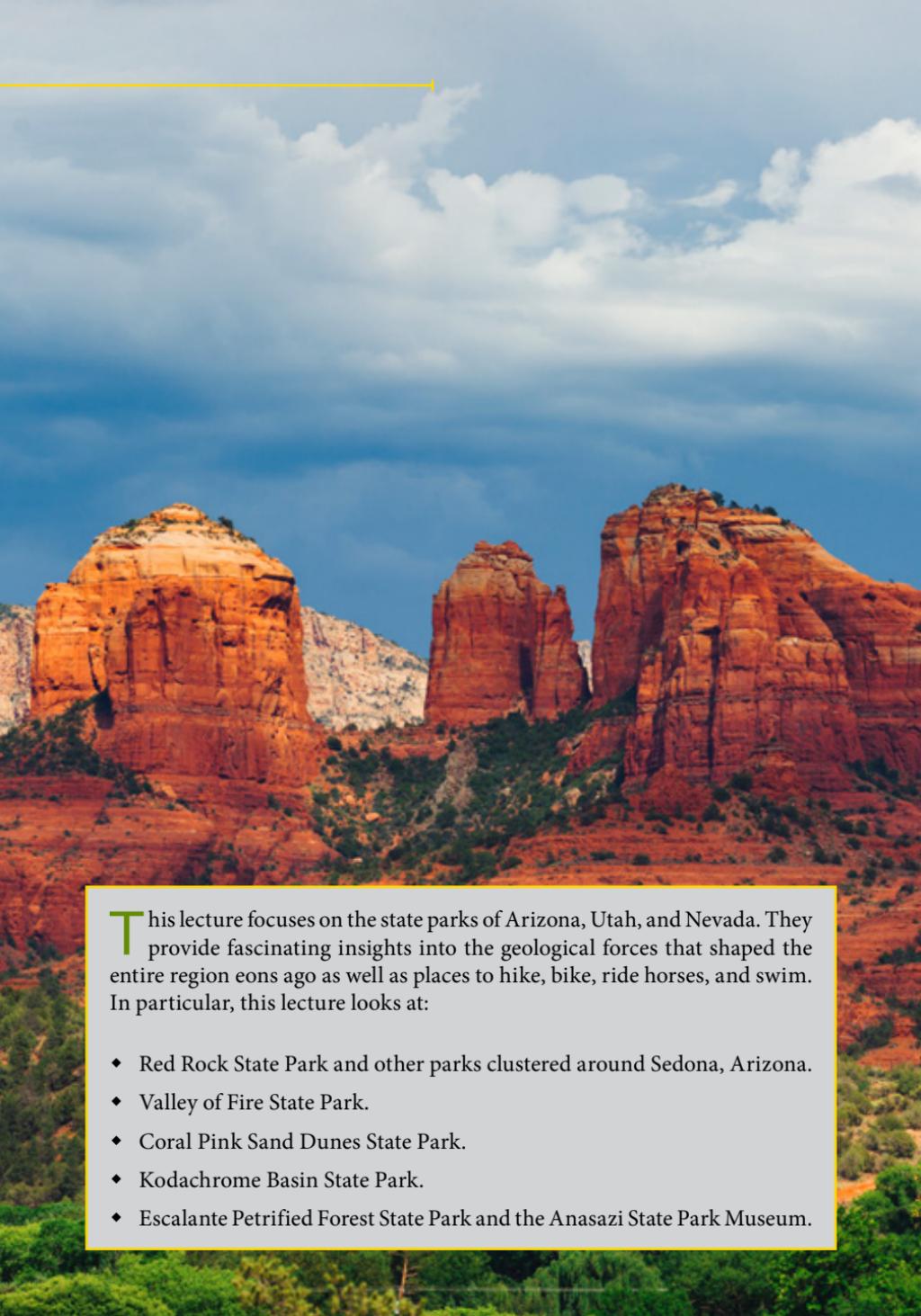
There are no roads through Browns Canyon. You can only boat, bike, ride a horse, or walk in. For those who make the effort, the area is extraordinary when it comes to scenery and wildlife along a river strewn with giant boulders.

There's also awesome whitewater north of Buena Vista, a portion of the Arkansas River called the Narrows. Veteran paddlers consider this the best Class IV run in Colorado, with six rapids on the way down.

North of Twin Lakes, the river road is part of the Top of the Rockies National Scenic Byway as it rolls across the high plains and Hayden Meadows to the old silver mining town of Leadville. If you want to follow the headwaters all the way to their source, drive up to Cooper ski area in the mountains above Leadville. There, you can ski or snowboard on snow that melts into creeks that give birth to the Arkansas River.

**Southwest
Red Rock
and Desert Canyon
Parks**





This lecture focuses on the state parks of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada. They provide fascinating insights into the geological forces that shaped the entire region eons ago as well as places to hike, bike, ride horses, and swim. In particular, this lecture looks at:

- ◆ Red Rock State Park and other parks clustered around Sedona, Arizona.
- ◆ Valley of Fire State Park.
- ◆ Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park.
- ◆ Kodachrome Basin State Park.
- ◆ Escalante Petrified Forest State Park and the Anasazi State Park Museum.

Red Rock State Park and Other Sedona-Area Parks

The town of Sedona in northern Arizona offers the state's biggest cluster of state parks. There are five in total. Two of them are based around the area's natural assets, and three feature interesting aspects of local history.

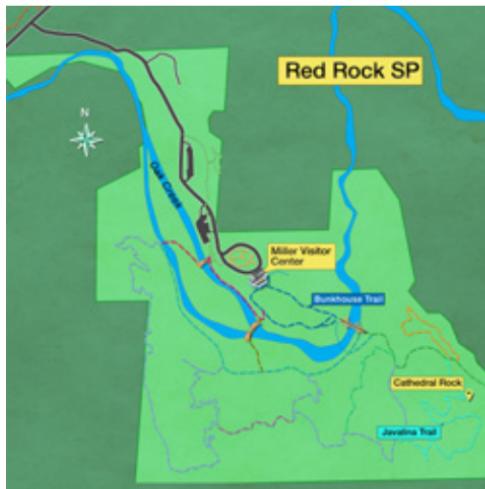


Red Rock State Park is located along Oak Creek on the west side of Sedona. It offers hiking, a creek, and interesting rock formations. The park also features iconic scenery: orange, ochre, and red rock buttes that have featured in numerous movies, paintings, and photographs over the years.

First-time visitors should start at the Miller Visitor Center, with its natural history exhibits, information desk, park store, videos about the Sedona area, and interpretive activities. Red Rock offers a wide range of events throughout the year, from daily guided nature walks and biweekly birding walks to moonlight hikes, stargazing parties, geology talks, and lectures on the region's Native American heritage.



Once you have your bearings, take the short Bunkhouse Trail across the meadow and down to the creek. You can linger along the waterfront or cross one of three footbridges to the east bank and its longer hiking trails. One of the most popular of these walks is the Javelina Trail, which ascends to viewpoints of the notable Cathedral Rock and another photogenic rock formation called the Seven Warriors.



The other parks around Sedona are worthwhile as well. Slide Rock State Park nestles in the very bottom of Oak Creek Canyon. It is surrounded by red rock walls and is renowned for its namesake—a naturally formed water slide that carries thousands of people down the creek each summer.

Fort Verde State Historic Park lies 27 miles south of the main crossroads in Sedona. The park showcases the remains of a US Cavalry outpost erected in the 1870s to protect local settlers from raids by Apache and Yavapai Indians.

Dead Horse Ranch State Park is named for a deceased beast that the last owners came across in the middle of a road when they were buying the spread in the 1940s. Dead Horse is the best of the Sedona state parks for hiking.

Jerome State Historic Park revolves around the 1916 Douglas Mansion, built by copper king James Douglas. It is now a museum filled with artifacts and tales from the area's boomtown days.



Valley of Fire State Park

From Sedona, Valley of Fire State Park is 200 miles to the northwest in southern Nevada. The park has flaming red sandstone formations and summertime temperatures that can reach 117 degrees Fahrenheit. Additionally, the park has tan and white limestone swirls and layers that blend with the sandstone to make the Valley of Fire a photographer's nirvana of various shapes and colors.



Plants and animals have adapted to the extreme environment. The vegetation here includes creosote, brittlebush, cacti, desert marigold, and other wildflowers in the spring.



The animal life includes lizards, snakes, and Mojave desert tortoises, which can live for up to 80 years in this environment. Coyotes, kit foxes, skunks, jackrabbits, ground squirrels, and birds also live in the area.

The fastest way to reach the state park is driving up Interstate 15 and heading east along the Valley of Fire Highway. You can also approach the park from Lake Mead via State Highway 167. The Valley of Fire Visitor Center should be your first stop, especially if it's your first time in the park. In addition to exhibits on the park's geology, flora, and fauna, and human history, the center offers maps and current information on park roads, trails, and weather conditions.



The visitor center is in the middle of the park. From there, roads fan out to the north, east, and west to various trails and landmarks.

Mouse's Tank Road shoots north into the heart of the park's red rock. Along the way are turnoffs for several of the park's best trails and landmarks, including Mouse Tank (a picnic area and seasonal rock pool) and Rainbow Vista Trail. Farther north is a turnoff and trail to Fire Wave, the park's most photographed and famous rock formation.



Mouse's Tank Road loops around to the parking area and viewpoint for the beige-colored White Domes. There is a short trail that takes can take you the White Domes.

Near the south are the remains of a fake hacienda built in the 1960s for a Western movie called *The Professionals*. For those who want something much more challenging, this is also the northern terminus of the rugged Prospect Trail, which runs due south through the rocky wilderness to Atlatl Rock beside the main park road. The trail is roughly five miles one way, and it requires scrambling across rocks and boulders.

In addition to both of the park's developed campgrounds, the Atlatl Rock area flaunts 2,000-year-old petroglyphs with animals, humans, trees, and geometric designs. The rock lies within short walking distance of other natural landmarks like the Beehives, Arch Rock, and the petrified logs that are also just off the main park road.

This area is also the jumping off spot for two longer trails: the 4.5-mile Pinnacles Loop out into the desert and back, and a 6.8-mile hike along a portion of the Old Arrowhead Road.





Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park

Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park is in a remote corner of southern Utah. The landscape is truly surreal, featuring rolling pink, orange, and ocher dunes set against a backdrop of red cliffs. The color constantly shifts, reacting to the cloud cover and time of day.



This is very much an active state park. About 90 percent of the dunes are open to off-road vehicles, particularly quad bikes or ATVs. A number of off-road vehicle trails meander through the dunes. You can bring your own ATV or join one of the commercial tours that last anywhere from one to three hours. In addition to the dunes, trails lead to other state park landmarks like a narrow slot canyon and dinosaur tracks in the ancient sandstone.

The dunes are also ideal for sandboarding, the desert equivalent of snowboarding. Beyond those adrenalin-spiking activities, the park offers quieter areas, including a boardwalk nature trail beside the visitor center and a 265-acre conservation area where all vehicles are banned. The conservation area protects endemic species like the area's tiger beetle, which lives nowhere else on the planet.



In addition to the campground inside the park, there are several others in the wilderness between Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park and Mt. Carmel Junction.

Kodachrome Basin State Park

Two hours north of Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park is Kodachrome Basin State Park. This is a landscape named for the famous color slide film used by so many of the world's great photographers. In fact, a story and photographs in a 1949 issue of *National Geographic* magazine exposed the basin to the rest of the world.

Long before the area became a magazine darling, this was a region where bandits and gunslingers hid out after bank heists and train robberies. The real-life Butch Cassidy was raised nearby, in a log cabin on the outskirts of Circleville, Utah.

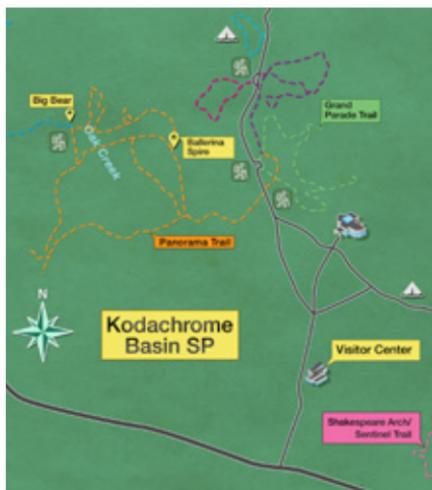
Kodachrome Basin wears a coat of many earthy colors. The most prominent is dark-red sandstone. This sandstone weathered and eroded into tall, thin formations similar to chimneys or pipes. In fact, the original name of the state park, before the Kodak agreement, was Chimney Rock.



Almost 70 of these sand pipes are scattered across the basin. The tallest soars to around 150 feet in height. Nothing else quite like these rock columns is found anywhere else in the world. The park's 12-mile trail system caters to hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders. Two of the most popular trails start on opposite sides of the main park road just north of the visitor center. The easy Grand Parade Trail runs a mile and a half across the eastern valley floor to the base of sandstone cliffs that conceal two cool box canyons. The Panorama Trail and its various offshoots offers a hike or bike ride of anywhere from three to six miles through a chimney-filled area.

In addition to the sand pipes, the area is also blessed with amazing natural arches. The Shakespeare Arch–Sentinel Trail leads around two miles from a dead-end parking lot to Shakespeare Arch and Sentinel Spire. Along the way are terrific views of the Kodachrome Basin as well as nearby Bryce Canyon and the Grand Staircase formation.

Just outside the state park is another extraordinary formation: Grosvenor Arch, which is a rare double arch named after the longtime president of the National Geographic Society. A solitary giant called Chimney Rock also lies outside the park boundary, but can only be accessed via a road that starts inside the state park. Kodachrome Basin State Park offers both campsites and cabins for those who want to spend the night.





Escalante Petrified Forest State Park and the Anasazi State Park Museum

Nearby are some other unique Utah state parks. Escalante Petrified Forest State Park safeguards the remains of ancient trees fossilized into agate millions of years ago. A short trail leads through hundreds of pieces of petrified wood, while the state park's visitor center displays locally found dinosaur bones and shell fossils.

The biggest attraction of this state park—at least for locals—is a little lake called Wide Hollow Reservoir.

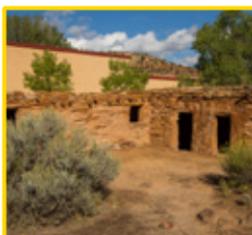
It is stocked with several species of game fish that are easy to angle from shore or a boat. You can also canoe, kayak, or swim in the lake. The shore features two waterfront campgrounds.

A little bit farther north, the Anasazi State Park Museum revolves around the ruins of an Ancestral Puebloan village occupied around 1,000 years ago. The museum includes numerous examples of Anasazi pottery, projectiles, and other artifacts found on the site.



Planning Your Visit

Starting out from either Las Vegas or Phoenix, you can hit all of the state parks discussed in this lecture during a single road trip. You can do the same even from smaller airports in Flagstaff, Arizona, or St. George, Utah. A grand loop around the Grand Canyon will take you through around 900 miles of amazing scenery and 200 million years of geologic history.



California's Badlands:

Anza-Borrego





This lecture is about Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in California. This park covers more than 900 square miles of rocky outcrops, sandy flats, mud caves, and oasis canyons in the Colorado Desert.

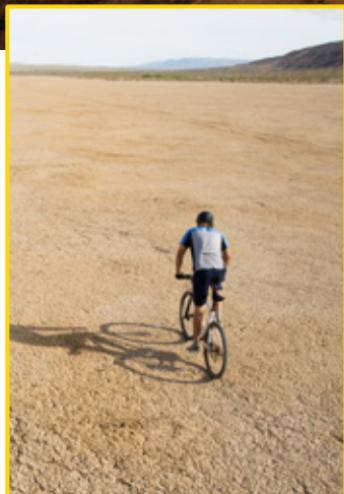


Borrego Valley and Borrego Springs

Borrego Valley and the town of Borrego Springs are completely surrounded by the state park. They are vital to the park's existence in several ways. Borrego Springs was founded in the 1920s as little more than a gas station, post office, and general store. The year-round population of the valley is still less than 4,000 people.

Many of the park's outdoor adventures and popular activities are based in Borrego Springs. Outfitters offer off-road and overnight camping trips in air-conditioned jeeps or vintage military vehicles. Some places rent bicycles for jaunts around Anza-Borrego.

As California's only International Dark Sky Community, it is also a great place to eyeball the night sky during evening tours with professional astronomers. Meanwhile, the nonprofit Anza-Borrego Desert Nature Center offers guided hikes, lectures, motor tours, and other desert-related activities.



The Borrego Art Institute features a painting and sculpture gallery, pottery studio, and a creation called the ArtFarm. Scattered around the valley are more than 100 rust-colored works by metal artist Ricardo Breceda. These are sculptures of animals, dinosaurs, and mythological creatures that seem right at home in the desert setting.



Borrego Springs is also home to the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Visitor Center. It is located at the end of Palm Canyon Drive. Most of it is located under the ground, which helps keep the premises cool and ensures that less of the actual desert is covered in asphalt or concrete.

The center offers exhibits on the park's geology, flora, fauna, archaeology, and human history as well as slideshows and interpretive talks. A store and an information desk are also here. Outside is an amphitheater for evening stargazing programs. There is also a small artificial pond that provides a secure natural habitat for one of Anza-Borrego's most unexpected creatures: the desert pupfish.



Anza-Borrego Desert Wildlife

From rattlesnakes and chuckwalla lizards to roadrunners and jackrabbits, a surprising amount of wildlife also thrives in the harsh Anza-Borrego environment. There are also mammals, including mule deer, coyotes, mountain lions, and desert bighorn sheep.

The sheep are the park's namesake: *borrego* means "big horn sheep" in Spanish. They are not easy to spot. Fewer than 300 of this rare and endangered species are left in the United States, and about two-thirds of those are in Anza-Borrego. The best time to see the sheep is during the hot summer months, when herds or individual sheep descend into the palm canyons for drinking water and shade.



The Borrego Badlands

From the visitor center, roads fan out across the Borrego Valley to other parts of the park. Just beyond the valley's eastern edge are the Borrego Badlands, a severely eroded landscape.

Weathering and erosion has exposed the remains of creatures that roamed the Anza-Borrego Desert in prehistoric times. The state park's fossil record is one of the most extensive and complete among any location in North America.

If you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle, cruise up to Fonts Point or the Vista del Malpais and eyeball the horizontal colors that mark different geological eras. There is also a 21-mile unpaved motor route called the Erosion Road that snakes its way through the landscape via sandy arroyos, alluvial fans, fault lines, and other geological features.

If you do not have a four-wheel-drive vehicle, both the Borrego Salton Seaway and Highway 78 provide places where you can pull off and consider the twisted terrain.

The north side of Borrego Valley is the best place to view wildflowers, which tend to bloom somewhere between January and April depending on the winter rains. In particular, Henderson Canyon Road and the north end of Di Giorgio Road are two places where you can get desert mountains in the background of flower photographs.



Coyote Canyon

Tucked up in the valley's northwest corner is the entrance to Coyote Canyon, home to the park's only year-round stream and a series of sandy trails that can be explored by foot, horse, or four-wheel-drive vehicles.

The Juan Bautista de Anza Trail runs right down the middle of the canyon. This is a route blazed by Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza and his men in the mid-1770s.

While it's still possible to hike or horseback ride along the route the Spanish took in the 1770s, modern-day visitors are more likely to drive the length of Coyote Canyon. Those with four-wheel drive and high clearance can drive all the way up the canyon and beyond to the small town of Anza, California and down into the Temecula Valley.

You can also explore the canyon by hiking or horseback riding. Vern Whitaker Horse Camp near the mouth of the canyon provides overnight accommodations for equestrians, their mounts, and dogs.

To the South

Yaqui Pass Road leads south from Borrego Valley to Anza-Borrego's middle and southern sections. The road drops down into Yaqui Wash, which is the location of a campground and a couple of nature trails, as well as the junction with State Highway 78.

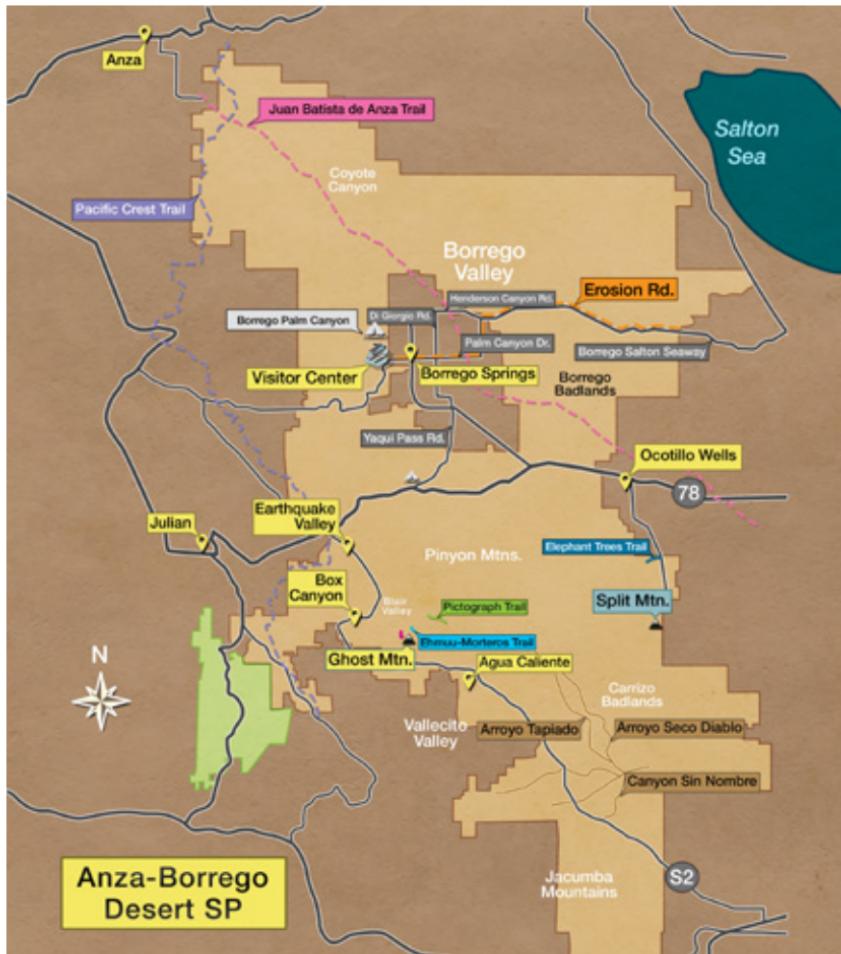
That road runs from east to west straight across the park, connecting a vast desert lake called the Salton Sea with the old gold-mining town of Julian.



The Salton Sea is the largest lake in California, and it submerges a significant portion of the San Andreas Fault.

About halfway between Yaqui Wash and the Salton Sea is a dusty crossroads called Ocotillo Wells and the turnoff for an area of the state park featuring elephant trees. A mile-long nature trail highlights many of the desert-adapted plants that dwell in this area, including the noble elephant tree. This tree gained its strange name from the fact that it stores water in a bulbous trunk. Anza-Borrego is the only place in California where the rare tree grows.

The same road continues down to another hidden corner of Anza-Borrego: a slot canyon called Split Mountain that you can hike or drive through.



Earthquake Valley and Blair Valley

Heading east, Highway 78 follows the serpentine curves of San Felipe Creek to Earthquake Valley. The name is fitting, as Anza-Borrego is renowned for earthquakes. The Pacific Crest Trail crosses the valley.

Earthquake Valley is also where you turn south onto County Road S2. This highway runs to the bottom end of Anza-Borrego. On the south side of the Pinyon Mountains is Blair Valley. Here, the rugged Pictograph Trail leads to Anza-Borrego's best and most accessible rock art gallery. This is artwork on the side of a large boulder rendered by the area's bygone Native American inhabitants.

Not far away, the 'Ehmuu-Morteros Trail meanders through an ancient food-preparation area. The rock depressions or grinding holes are where the Kumeyaay people—who migrated through the desert seasonally—ground up berries, seeds, roots, and other fare. Yet another trail leads up Ghost Mountain and to the remains of a pioneer adobe homestead where author Marshal South and his wife Tanya lived in self-imposed seclusion. This is where they raised their three children between 1930 and 1947.



The Vallecito Valley

From Blair Valley, the main road dips down through Box Canyon and a narrow route through the mountains. At the bottom of Box Canyon is the broad and relatively fertile Vallecito Valley.



Natural springs and fresh fodder made this an ideal place for an overland stagecoach station. Starting in the early 1850s—at the height of the California Gold Rush—thousands of passengers passed through Vallecito on their way back and forth across America.

By the late 1870s, the railroad had reached the southern California coast, making long-distance stagecoach travel more or less obsolete. Vallecito Station fell into ruin and was abandoned for more than 50 years. However, in the 1930s, history buffs re-created the old station on its original site.

Just up the road is Agua Caliente. Its name means “hot water” in Spanish—a reference to the warm liquid that bubbles up from beneath the earth at this place. All of that hot water is channeled into three manmade pools, with both indoor and outdoor opportunities to soothe muscles sore from hiking the nearby trails. One of the best places to overnight at Anza-Borrego, Agua Caliente offers campsites and modern cabins that feature porches with panoramic desert views.



The Carrizo Badlands and the Jacumba Mountains

The state park’s southern section is dominated by the Carrizo Badlands and the incredibly rocky Jacumba Mountains, geological features that bookend the main park road as it plunges down towards Mexico. Carrizo Badlands Overlook provides an excellent spot to view the terrain of this area.



There aren't many hiking trails in this part of Anza-Borrego; the terrain is too rugged and harsh. Like the northern badlands, Carrizo is best explored with four-wheel drive. A network of primitive roads fans out across the badlands to the Arroyo Seco del Diablo, Canyon Sin Nombre, and other remote spots.

One notable location, Arroyo Tapiado, is renowned for its mud caves. These caverns were created eons ago by water flowing through ancient silt deposits. The caves intermingle with slot canyons and sink holes to create a landscape even more contorted than the badlands as a whole. The mud caves vary greatly in size and shape. Flashlights and protective headgear are a must, and hiring a local guide is a good idea.

The south is also blessed with cool oasis canyons, especially the area between Mountain Palm Springs and Bow Willow. There, hiking trails lead to more than half a dozen groves that spangle the south end of the Tierra Blanca Mountains.



The main park road flares off to the east and out of the state park about a dozen miles north of the Mexican border. You can continue along the highway to the onramp for Interstate 8, which takes you back to San Diego and the coast. Alternatively, you can park your car and explore the southern tip of Anza-Borrego on foot.

The area is dominated by the boulder-strewn peaks and deep ravines of the Jacumba Mountains. They don't rise very high, but they're very steep and at times almost impossible to negotiate.

Hidden deep inside those highlands is one of California's long-lost architectural wonders: the Goat Canyon Trestle across the cavernous Carrizo Gorge. Constructed in the 1930s as part of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway, the towering structure is the world's largest all-wood railroad trestle.



Big Blue:

The Beauty of Lake Tahoe





A string of state parks along the California and Nevada shores showcase Lake Tahoe, North America's largest alpine lake. The iconic Tahoe state parks covered in this lecture include Emerald Bay, D. L. Bliss, Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point, Cave Rock, and Sand Harbor State Park. Emerald Bay, Bliss, and Sugar Pine Point are on the California shore, while Cave Rock and Sand Harbor are on the Nevada side.

Emerald Bay State Park

Emerald Bay State Park has all of the ingredients that make a great state park: incredible scenery, rich natural and human history, and a broad range of indoor and outdoor activities.

On top of that, Emerald Bay has one of California's most remarkable houses: Vikingsholm, which hovers above the western end of Emerald Bay. It was erected in the 1920s as the summer home of heiress and philanthropist Lora Knight. Built almost entirely of wood, stones, and other materials sourced around the Tahoe Basin, Vikingsholm is a mash-up of traditional Scandinavian design and the cutting-edge California Craftsman style that was popular at the time.



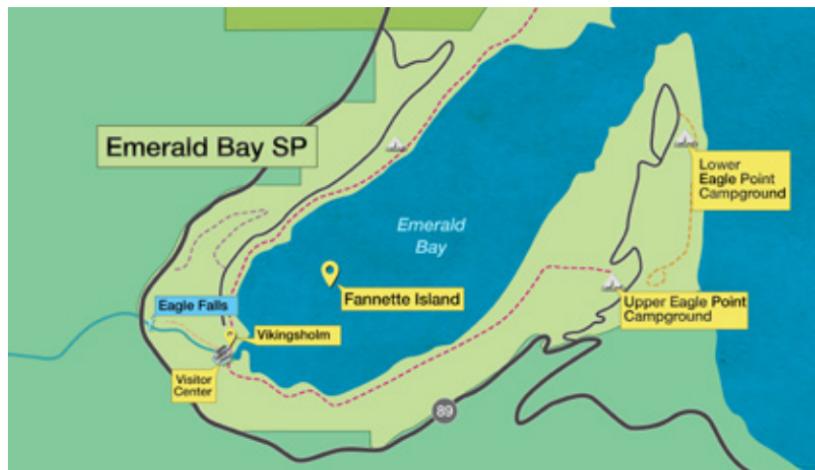
Tours of the inside are available daily between late May and the end of September. The rest of the year, visitors are free to walk around the grounds and peer through the windows.

All of Emerald Bay was declared a California state underwater park in 1994. This status safeguards the bay's underwater environment and historic shipwrecks. Scuba divers and snorkelers can discover the bay's below-the-surface wonders via California's first maritime heritage underwater trail, opened in 2018.



Emerald Bay State Park also offers ways to explore the great outdoors on land. Aside from the bay, the park's most outstanding natural attraction is Lower Eagle Falls. The 140-foot-high cascade is reached via a short but steep trail that starts right beside Vikingsholm. It is best to visit in May or June when water from melting snow reaches its peak.

The Vikingsholm parking lot is also the jumping off spot for the short hike to Upper Eagle Falls and Eagle Lake, which is on the west side of Highway 89 in the Desolation Wilderness area. Desolation is a natural extension of the Emerald Bay ecosystem, and it is a gateway into Tahoe's epic hiking trails.



D. L. Bliss State Park

D. L. Bliss State Park is adjacent to Emerald Bay. The park is a blend of thick forest, rocky shoreline, and white-sand beaches with magnificent views across the lake to the Nevada side.

The park's Rubicon Point Lighthouse is an architectural curiosity. Resting at 6,300 feet above sea level, it has the distinction of being America's highest lighthouse.

The Rubicon Trail is the longest of the three hiking routes that meander through Bliss State Park. It stretches for 12 miles along the lakeshore and all the way around Emerald Bay.

A much shorter trail leads to Balancing Rock. Estimated to weigh 130 tons, this hunk of weathered granite balances precariously atop another huge boulder.

Lester Beach at the park's north end is the best place at Bliss to launch a personal watercraft. It is an ideal spot for canoes, kayaks, or paddleboards. There is also a roped-off swimming area.

The park's visitor center offers small but interesting exhibits on flora, fauna, and geology. There are also summertime interpretive happenings like guided hikes and campfire talks.





Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point

Just four miles north of Bliss, Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point is the largest and probably the most rugged of the state parks along the Tahoe shore. Sugar Pine Point hosted the Nordic events of the 1960 Winter Olympics at Lake Tahoe.



Once the snow starts to fall, the state park maintains five groomed cross-country skiing and snowshoe trails throughout the winter. Two of the shorter trails are along the scenic, snow-covered lakeshore. The toughest trail is a 3.3-mile loop up General Creek. Additionally, rangers lead several winter activities.

Sugar Pine Point is also fun to visit during the summer too. Along the waterfront are a beach and dock where you can take a swim or launch non-motorized watercraft. Right behind the shore is another grand vacation home from long ago: the Hellman-Ehrman Mansion, or Pine Lodge as it was christened upon completion in 1903.



The mansion opens to tours between Memorial Day and the end of September. The remainder of the year, visitors are free to linger on the huge back porch and gaze across the lake. Additionally, the estate tennis courts are open to the public. Another of the estate's buildings is home to the park's nature center and gift shop.

Leave It as You Found It

The mission of America's state parks is to preserve the country's natural, historic, and cultural resources while providing opportunities for recreation and education. However, preservation isn't just a job for park employees. Visitors have a responsibility to follow park rules and regulations, which are designed for both visitor safety and the safety of the park flora, fauna, and facilities. Regulations differ from park to park, and some are just common sense. But here are some general principles to keep in mind:

1. Stick to designated trails, campgrounds, and day-use areas. Going off the trail can damage plant life and expose you to hazards like poison ivy, aggressive wild animals, falling rocks, and so on.
2. Keep your pets on a leash, and keep an eye on your kids to keep them from harming park resources or themselves.
3. Always pack your trash out. Parks with a small staff, a remote location, or a particularly delicate ecosystem may have a formal carry-in/carry-out policy, but it's a good practice anywhere you go.
4. Pay attention to fire safety regulations. Never light a fire outside a designated area, and never ignore dry season restrictions on open flames. This also applies to cigarettes: A stray butt can do unthinkable damage.
5. Firewood can harbor invasive insects and harmful fungus. Firewood brought from outside the park is often forbidden, but most parks will have some for sale at the visitor's center or camp store.
6. Finally, be aware of any restrictions on flower picking, rock hounding, or interacting with wildlife. If you find something beautiful, take a photo and leave it in place.

Your best bet for any park is to know the rules before you go. Check the website of the park or the state's parks department before setting out for one of America's state parks.

Cave Rock State Park

This lecture now turns to the craggy terrain of the Nevada shore, starting with Cave Rock State Park, which lies on Highway 50. In fact, Highway 50 runs right through the middle of Cave Rock in a double vehicle tunnel.

A parking lot on the rock's south side lies beside a small beach, picnic area, and boat-launch ramp. You're not allowed to fish from the shore, but the angling right offshore is said to be excellent, thanks to the steep underwater drop off.

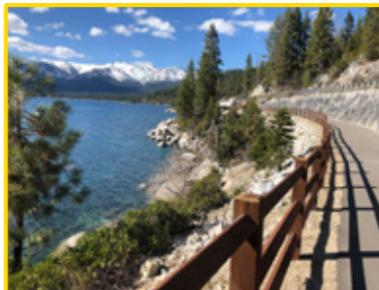
Cave Rock is sacred to the Washoe, a group of Native Americans living in the area. They were never consulted about the desecration caused by tunnel construction at the site, and for years they lobbied to restrict recreational access to the summit.

That finally happened in 2003 when the government banned climbing in order to protect sacred and archaeological sites on the rock. However, you can still hike to the upper edge of the rock—and great views across the lake—from a trailhead and parking lot on Cave Rock Drive on the east side of Highway 50.

Sand Harbor State Park

Sand Harbor State Park is another great spot on the Nevada shore. Perched on a hook-shaped peninsula about three miles south of Incline Village, this park appeals to a broad range of people.

The scenery is gorgeous. Activities at the park run a broad gamut from swimming and scuba diving to paddle sports, hiking along two short nature trails, waterfront picnics, and interpretive programs at the park's nature center. You can also hike or bike out from town via the East Shore Trail, a beautiful route completed in 2018.



Between May and September, the park's water-sports kiosk rents kayaks, paddleboards, and sailing kayaks for use on the lake. Sand Harbor's waterfront amphitheater provides a stunning outdoor venue beneath the starry sky for the annual Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival.



The park stays open year-round; even during the snowy winter months, there is something to do. Options include short snowshoe trails and even horse-drawn sleigh rides along the lakeshore.

California's Coastal Redwood Parks





Roughly 95 percent of the world's old-growth redwood trees live in California. Around 80 percent of those trees are found in parks, including the three state parks that form the focus of this lecture: Prairie Creek, Del Norte Coast, and Jedediah Smith.



Background on the Redwoods

Coastal redwoods were once far more numerous than they are today. Prior to the arrival of American settlers and the timber industry in the 1800s, around 2.1 million acres of the region was covered in old-growth coastal redwoods. Logging became widespread after California became part of the United States in 1850.

Redwood logging reached a fever pitch in the early 20th century as new technology became available to fell big trees. It was around this same time that efforts to save them also began to peak.

In 1918, a group of nature-loving friends from San Francisco decided to take a road trip up the coast to see the redwoods. During the course of this trip, they witnessed first-hand the widespread destruction of the coastal redwoods by timber companies.



Back in San Francisco, determined to stop the destruction, they created the Save the Redwood League—a group dedicated to saving the coastal giants through calls to action, fundraising drives, government lobbying, and other means. Within a few years, the league had identified several stands of old-growth redwoods that required urgent action to save, including a pristine grove around Prairie Creek.

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

The oldest of the three aforementioned state parks, Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park was established in 1923 with 160 acres purchased from a gold-mining company. The park takes its name from a huge meadow in the middle of the redwood forest, a grassy area where Roosevelt elk can often be seen grazing in the early morning and late afternoon.

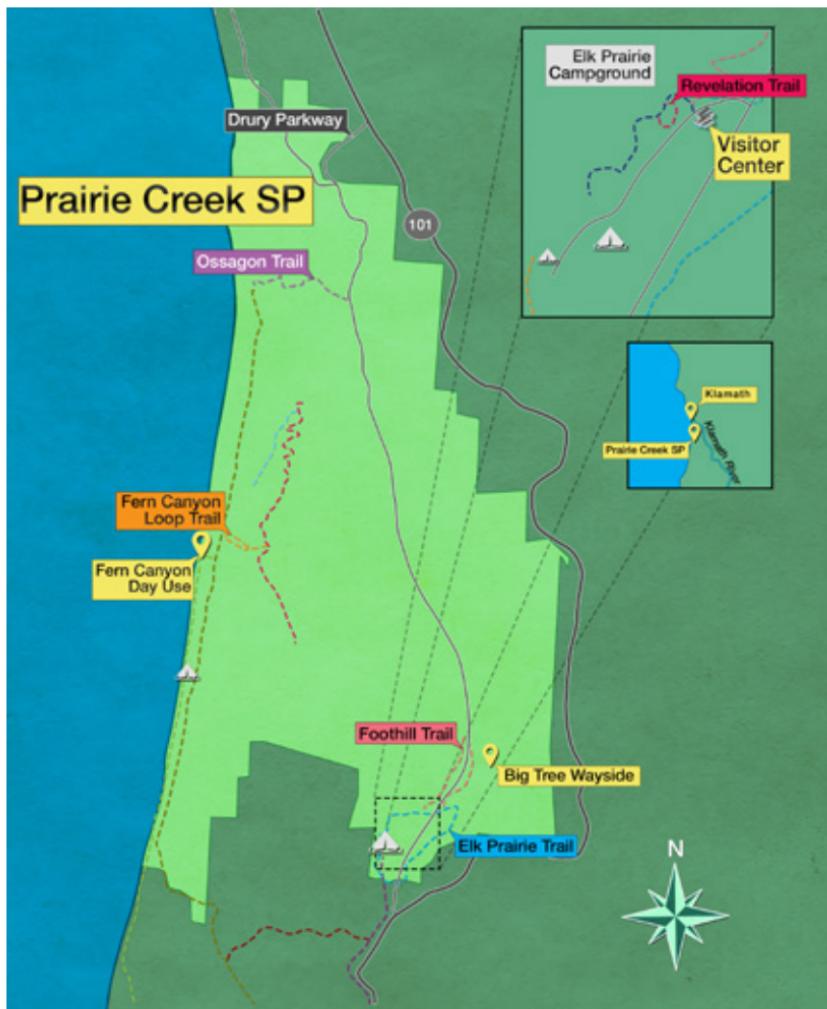
The state park visitor center squats beneath tall trees on the north side of the grassland. Six trails radiate from the visitor center, including a path that loops all the way around the meadow. Additionally, Revelation Trail provides a short but powerful introduction to the redwood forest.

Another, longer trail leads downhill through redwoods to primordial Fern Canyon, a ravine strewn with boulders and fallen redwoods. Fern Canyon and its meandering stream run all the way down to Gold Bluffs Beach on the park's Pacific coast.



Roosevelt elk often linger in the grassy patches between the waves and bluffs. Prairie Creek is actually one of the parks that helped save the beasts from extinction in the early 20th century. Be sure to keep your distance: They can get aggressive, especially during the mating season from August and October.

Some of Prairie Creek's largest and most majestic trees are found along hiking trails that start beside Drury Parkway, particularly the Foothill Trail that starts from Big Tree Wayside. Another great walk is the Ossagon Trail, which leads to a secluded beach of the same name. Drury Parkway eventually merges onto Highway 101 and a stretch of coast that includes the traditional lands of the Yurok tribe, the lofty Klamath River Overlook, and a historic World War II radar station near Klamath Beach.



Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park

Located a dozen miles north of Prairie Creek, Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park was the next one to come along. Via purchases and private donations, the park was created in 1927 to protect a narrow band of old-growth forest right along the shore.

However, logging continued in the hills and vales above the redwood groves, activity that contributed to silting up the streams, disturbing the wildlife, and threatening the natural balance of the state park. The problem wasn't solved until 2002, when the 25,000-acre Mill Creek Watershed was added to the park.



Since then, state park rangers and their partners have undertaken the largest environmental restoration project in California history. The restoration is far from finished, but it has already yielded impressive results.

Hikers can explore the Mill Creek restoration zone via some of the old logging roads, but motor vehicles are banned. You have to travel on foot if you want to see how the once-devastated valleys and canyons are slowly being transformed back into redwood groves.

The coastal part of Del Norte is rather light on trails, but there are some available. A pullout at milepost 16 on Highway 101 marks the start of the spectacular Damnation Creek Trail, which descends 1,100 feet through old growth forest to a secluded rocky beach. From that same point, you can also wander north or south along the California Coastal Trail and its vertiginous path across the top of the Del Norte sea cliffs.



Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park

Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park was created in 1929 to safeguard old-growth redwoods along the banks of the Smith River near Crescent City. The park is named for explorer and trapper Jedediah Strong Smith, who in 1828 became the first person of European descent to walk amid these coastal giants.

The Civilian Conservation Corps and other nonprofit or volunteer groups made the park easier to use for visitors. Most of the park's visitor facilities—including the campground, boat launch, and visitor center—are located on the river's north bank near the town of Hiouchi.

The Smith River flows slowly through the park. It is warm enough between June and August for rafting, kayaking, canoeing, and swimming. There are plenty of spots for fishing, too. A footbridge leaps the river to the Stout Memorial Grove and wilderness trails on the south bank.



Stout Memorial Grove is significant because it was one of the first stands of coastal redwood set aside for protection, when the 44-acre parcel was donated to the California state park system by the widow of lumber baron Frank D. Stout. Its peaceful riverside location makes the grove a favorite among redwood aficionados.



Other Parks and Planning Your Visit

Prairie Creek, Del Norte, and Jedediah Smith are not the area's only state parks. There are other great parks nearby, including Tolowa Dunes State Park along the shore north of Crescent City and Humboldt Lagoons State Park, which protects a wildlife-rich coastal area on the south side of Orick.

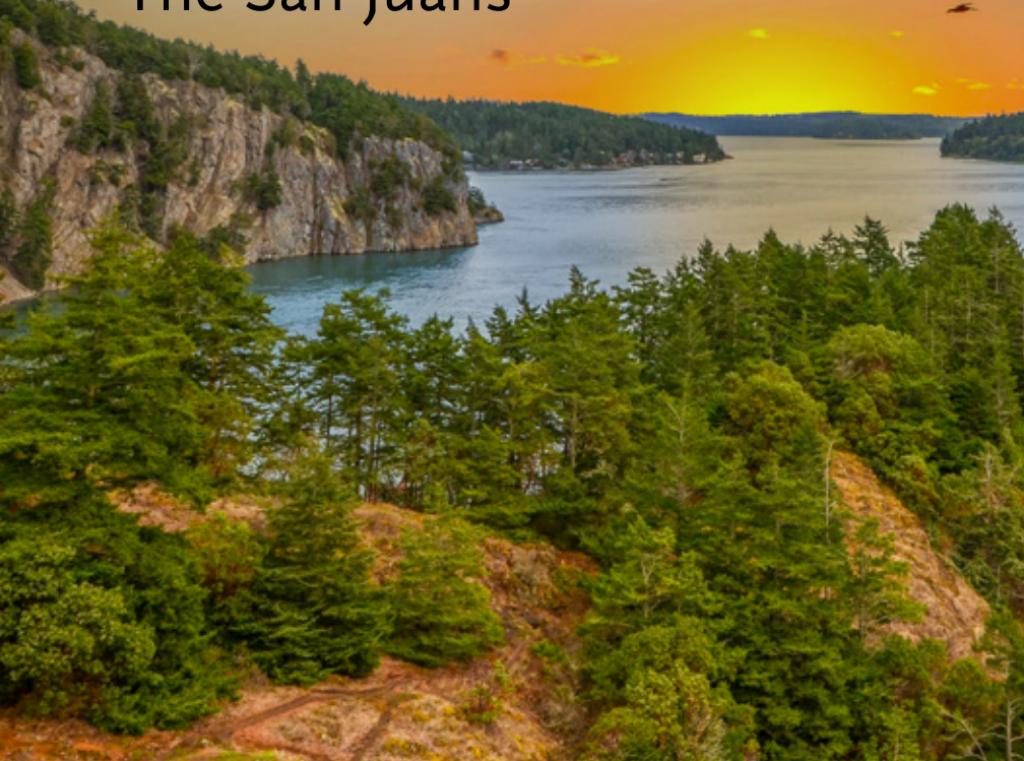
As for accommodations, the three redwood parks offer four developed campgrounds. They are named Jedediah Smith, Mill Creek, Elk Prairie, and Gold Bluffs Beach. There are no hotels, lodges, or cabins in the parks. However, there are plenty of places to stay in nearby communities like Trinidad and Orick on the south side of the parks. Another option is Crescent City in the north. There is also one historic hotel: the old Requa Inn, which clings to a mountainside above the spot where the Klamath River empties into the ocean.

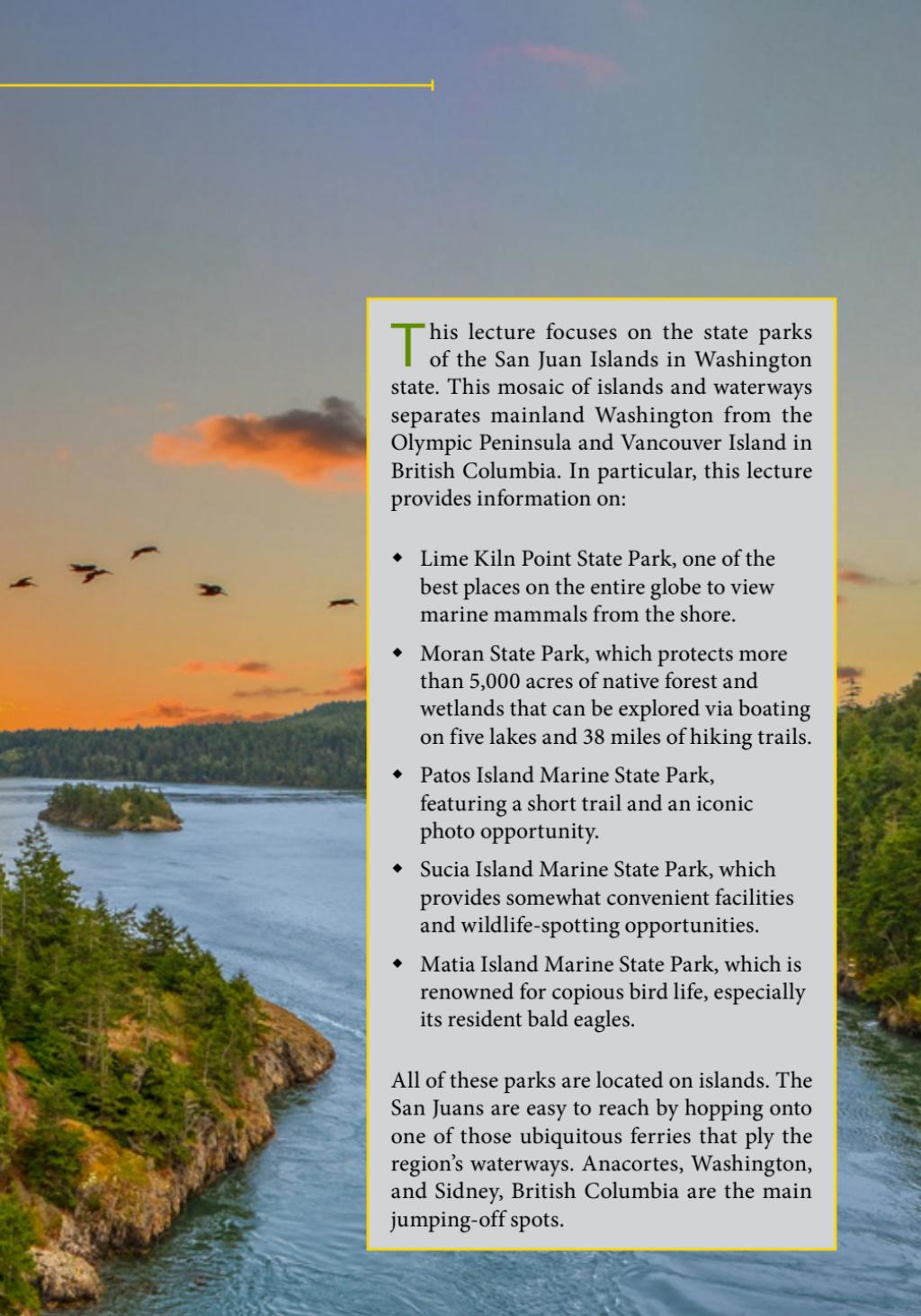
Trinidad, Orick, and Crescent City also serve as the home base for many of the private outdoor adventure companies that operate inside the park. In addition to renting kayaks, paddleboards, and bikes, they also offer guided trips in the coastal lagoons or among the big trees.

For a blast from the past, plan your visit to the redwood state parks to coincide with the Orick Rodeo in July. For nearly 60 years, the rodeo has brought bull riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, mounted archery, and deep-pit barbecue to an amazing location right in the middle of the state parks and the great coastal redwoods.

Washington's Orca Islands:

The San Juans





This lecture focuses on the state parks of the San Juan Islands in Washington state. This mosaic of islands and waterways separates mainland Washington from the Olympic Peninsula and Vancouver Island in British Columbia. In particular, this lecture provides information on:

- ◆ Lime Kiln Point State Park, one of the best places on the entire globe to view marine mammals from the shore.
- ◆ Moran State Park, which protects more than 5,000 acres of native forest and wetlands that can be explored via boating on five lakes and 38 miles of hiking trails.
- ◆ Patos Island Marine State Park, featuring a short trail and an iconic photo opportunity.
- ◆ Sucia Island Marine State Park, which provides somewhat convenient facilities and wildlife-spotting opportunities.
- ◆ Matia Island Marine State Park, which is renowned for copious bird life, especially its resident bald eagles.

All of these parks are located on islands. The San Juans are easy to reach by hopping onto one of those ubiquitous ferries that ply the region's waterways. Anacortes, Washington, and Sidney, British Columbia are the main jumping-off spots.



Lime Kiln Point State Park

Lime Kiln Point State Park is no more than 41 acres, but it packs a mighty punch when it comes to marine mammals and human heritage. The park is located about halfway down the windward (or western) side of San Juan Island.

From the park's wooden bluffs, you can gaze out across the Haro Strait. The strait itself contains whales. They are numerous and come in many different species, including gray whales, minke whales, humpbacks, and orcas. There are also other marine mammals like sea lions and porpoises.

May through September is the best time for whale watching at Lime Kiln. However, it is relatively easy to see orcas at any time of year. They live locally in the inland waters along the Washington and British Columbia coasts rather than migrating from the open Pacific. The local orcas are part of a much-studied group called the southern resident killer whales.



The Pig War

San Juan Island is where the Pig War played out in the summer of 1859. At that point in time, the San Juan Islands were claimed by both the US and Britain. There were American settlers and a British Hudson's Bay Company ranch on San Juan Island.

The military confrontation arose when an American farmer shot and killed a Hudson's Bay Company pig that was rooting through his vegetable garden. When the British threatened to arrest the farmer, the American settlers on San Juan Island asked for intervention. A US gunboat and detachment of infantry and artillery arrived.

The British upped the ante by sending three warships and more than 2,000 troops. The two armies dug in at either end of the island, the Americans in the south, the Brits in the north, with Lime Kiln Point around equidistant between the two warring camps.

In the end, not even a single shot was fired. President James Buchanan dispatched General Winfield Scott to negotiate a ceasefire, and the two sides wound up jointly governing the San Juan Islands for the next 12 years.

Volunteers and rangers at the Lime Kiln Interpretive Center can tell you what to watch for at any given time. There are also exhibits on both the transient and resident whales as well as the area's human history.

The park's offshore waters are also great for kayaking on your own or as part of guided group trips offered by San Juan Island's commercial outfitters. With a kelp forest floating just offshore, the area is also great for scuba diving, although divers should be aware of strong currents.

Those who want to learn more about the local orcas and other marine mammals that frequent the San Juan Islands should head to The Whale Museum in Friday Harbor. It is on the opposite side of the island from Lime Kiln.





Moran State Park

Over on the eastern side of the San Juan Islands is a much different kind of reserve: Moran State Park on Orcas Island. It is known for its ample trails, campgrounds, and boating.

Moran's centerpiece is Mount Constitution, a 2,400-foot peak that boasts the highest elevation anywhere in the San Juans. A stone viewing tower that offers panoramas of the entire region crowns the summit. You can take several trails to the summit of Mount Constitution or cruise the motor road to the top for the view.

Mountain Lake and Cascade Lake are the largest of the park's five bodies of water. Both lakes are ideal for boating and swimming on calm water. They are also stocked with rainbow trout for visitors who bring their fishing equipment.

Scattered along the north shore of Cascade Lake are three campgrounds, a snack bar, and a water sports dock with small rental boats and fishing equipment. There are no reservations, so arrive early if you want to get out on the water. Near the south end of Cascade Lake, an equestrian outfitter offers trail rides through the park's old-growth forest.

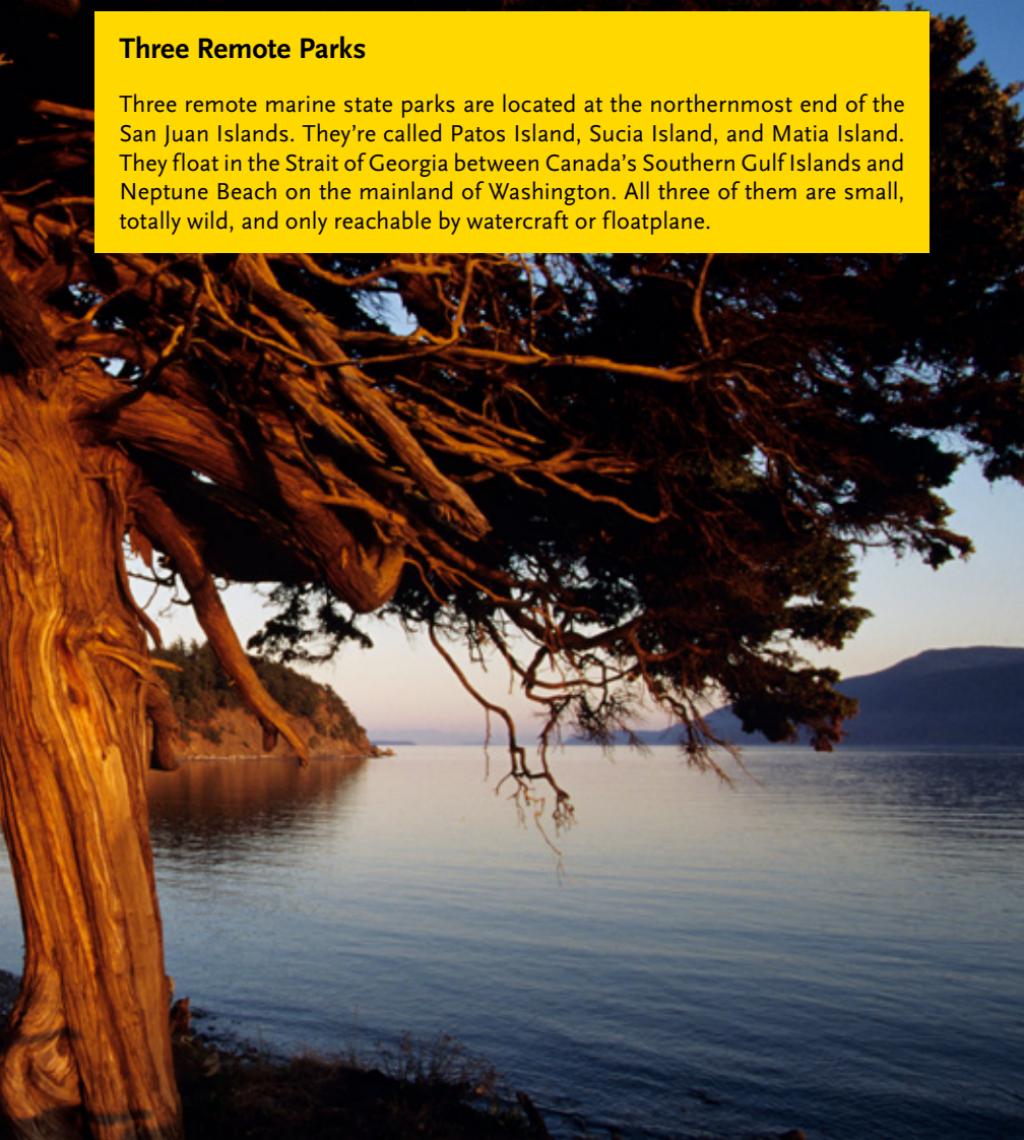


Moran State Park offers 15 different trails. The longest and toughest are the loops that include the tops of Mount Constitution and Mount Pickett. Both of them are roughly seven miles in length.

Among the easier, but still incredibly scenic, trails are the Cascade Lake Loop, the Cascade Falls Trail, and the Mountain Lake Loop. All three of these routes feature flat terrain and relatively little elevation gain or loss.

Three Remote Parks

Three remote marine state parks are located at the northernmost end of the San Juan Islands. They're called Patos Island, Sucia Island, and Matia Island. They float in the Strait of Georgia between Canada's Southern Gulf Islands and Neptune Beach on the mainland of Washington. All three of them are small, totally wild, and only reachable by watercraft or floatplane.



Patos Island Marine State Park

Patos Island Marine State Park is the westernmost of the three, separated from Canada by just three miles of open water that marks the border between Washington State and British Columbia. Mooring buoys in Active Cove allow safe anchorage and access to two campsites along the island's southern shore. Paddlers can pull their craft right up onto the beach.

A 1.5-mile trail meanders through the woods to the north shore and onward to a small lighthouse perched at the west end of Patos Island. If you're there on a sunny, clear day, the lighthouse and snowcapped Mount Baker—far in the distance—make up the iconic photo to snap on Patos Island.

Sucia Island Marine State Park

Sucia Island Marine State Park is the next one over. Rather than a single landmass, it's actually a small archipelago of 10 islands, with Sucia as the largest. With numerous safe places to moor, anchor, or beach a boat, Sucia is far and away the most popular of the northern trio, especially during the busy summer months when scores of pleasure craft visit the park.

Sucia offers 60 campsites, several picnic shelters, half a dozen hiking trails, restrooms, and even drinking water. There is also a cold-water reef you can scuba dive or snorkel. Abundant bird life is also present, and there is a good chance you'll be able to spot harbor seals or migrating whales.

Puget Sound Island Parks

Some of the islands in the Puget Sound, just below the San Juans, have great state parks as well. You can drive there rather than hopping onto boats.

Whidbey Island offers seven state parks. You can reach the south end of Whidbey on a ferry from the Seattle metro area, or you can drive Interstate 5 and Washington State Highway 20 to the north end, a road trip that includes the historic Deception Pass Bridge. Erected in the 1930s, the bridge connects Whidbey Island with the rest of Washington State, and it also links the two halves of Deception Pass State Park.

South of Deception Pass, the highway follows a meandering course across the rest of Whidbey Island and onward to six more state parks. These range from beach parks along branches of the Puget Sound to heritage sites like Fort Casey Historical State Park.

From Fort Casey, you can hop a ferry over to Port Townsend on the Olympic Peninsula. Alternatively, you can keep driving all the way to Clinton at the south end of Whidbey Island. There is a ferry available across Possession Sound to Mukilteo and nearby Seattle.



Matia Island Marine State Park

Matia Island Marine State Park falls within the confines of the federally managed San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Strictly speaking, the state park comprises just five acres around Rolfe Cove, which is enough room for a small dock, mooring buoys, a campground, and a restroom facility. However, visitors have access to a one-mile wilderness trail through the island's old-growth forest to a secluded cove on the eastern shore.

The reserve is an excellent spot for bird watching, especially with its nesting bald eagles. There are plenty of other birds as well, including oystercatchers, cormorants, gulls, ducks, and even puffins.

If you don't have your own boat, charter companies on Orcas Island can organize daytrips to Patos, Sucia, and Matia as well as lighthouse cruises that float past most of the 17 historic lights in the San Juan Islands in a single day.



Alaska's State Parks:

The Last Frontier





Alaska is renowned for its astonishing national parks, including Denali, Glacier Bay, and Kenai Fjords. However, Alaska is also blessed with 120 state parks. This lecture focuses on two of them in particular: the massive Wood-Tikchik and Chugach state parks.



Wood-Tikchik State Park

Sprawling across 1.6 million acres of wilderness, Wood-Tikchik is one of the nation's largest state parks. It is around the same size as the state of Delaware. It is also very remote, perched in the southwest corner of Alaska near the Bering Sea and Alaskan Peninsula.

Although outdoor recreation and wilderness preservation are the park's main reasons for existence, it also serves several other vital functions.

Wood-Tikchik protects one of Alaska's most important fish and wildlife breeding areas. It also preserves an area where traditional subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering are still allowed.



The park revolves around a dozen large glacial lakes, with the snowcapped Wood River Mountains as a backdrop. All of the lakes are long, thin, and deep. The water from these lakes, constantly replenished by heavy winter snow, drains into two extensive river systems: the Tikchik River in the north and the Wood River in the south, hence the park's double name.

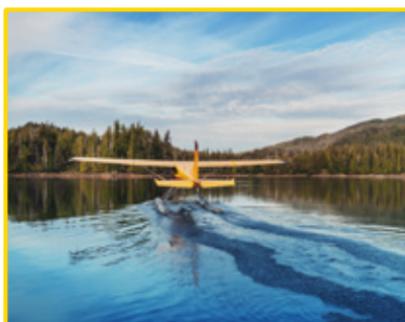


The Challenges of Wood-Tikchik State Park

Wood-Tikchik is not an easy park to get to know—even reaching it is a challenge. The fastest and most efficient way is hiring a bush pilot with a floatplane to fly you to one of the lakes. A prearranged pickup day is advisable.

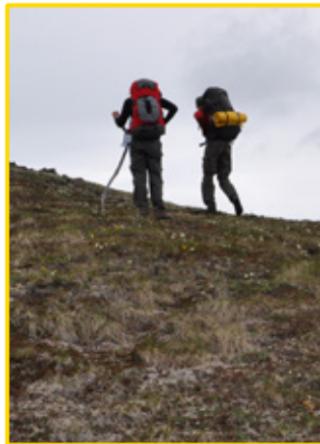
You can also reach the park via canoe, kayak, or small motorboat. This involves flying into Dillingham, Alaska, renting your watercraft, and making your way to Lake Aleknagik State Recreation Site, 23 miles north of town. From there, you can paddle or motor in via a series of five interconnecting lakes that lead to the southern part of the park.

Aleknagik is also the best jumping off spot for those who want to backpack into the park. Keep in mind that this will be a slog: There are few developed trails.



Whether you arrive by plane, boat, or foot, visitors must tread lightly. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources—the people who manage the state parks—emphasize that facilities at the park “are rustic and few” and that the park has a “great emphasis placed on ‘pack it in, pack it out’ policies.”

There is only one developed campground in the entire park, which is at Agulukpak River. Only a handful of primitive campsites are present. Otherwise, with a backcountry camping permit, you are free to camp wherever you end up at the end of your daily hike or paddle.



Likewise, there are only two ranger stations. The rangers who staff those remote outposts suggest that anyone who ventures through the Wood-Tikchik backcountry—which is essentially the entire park—pack a survival kit, a GPS device, and topographic map. Be sure to file a trip plan with family, friends, or the park service that details your route and expected return date.

Five remote fishing lodges, which sleep around 20 to 30 people each, are scattered throughout the park. They are only open mid-June to mid-October for fly-in guests with reservations only. Avid anglers can also fly into Wood-Tikchik on day trips and multi-day float trips organized by outfitters in Anchorage or Dillingham.

Attractions at Wood-Tikchik

Wood-Tikchik can require a long, expensive, and arduous trip. However, the attractions at the park are plentiful. For instance, the wildlife is incredible, including, beavers, caribou, moose, otters, muskrats, foxes, black and brown bears, and wolverines. Aerial life in the park includes eagles, osprey, swans, loons, and scores of other birds.



During the spawning season, Wood-Tikchik is one of the iconic places where visitors can see grizzly bears standing in the water and fishing for salmon. More than 50 million fish gather in Bristol Bay each year, and millions of them make their way upriver to spawn in the waterways of Wood-Tikchik.

Both of the park's rivers eventually empty into nearby Bristol Bay. This is one of the world's richest fisheries. Overall, fishing in Wood-Tikchik is the stuff of angler legend. The park features five different kinds of salmon, as well as trout, grayling, Arctic char, northern pike, and more. King salmon in the area can range up to 60 pounds.

The landscapes are also incredible, as are the lakes. The lakes range from 15 to 45 miles in length. They are connected by a warren of rivers and narrow channels that make the park great for wilderness boating.

The Wood River Lakes Water Trail, which meanders for roughly 85 miles between Aleknagik and Kulik Lake in the heart of the park takes you on a weeklong journey, traversing five lakes and four rivers through the heart of the Wood River Mountains and along the edge of the open tundra of the Nushagak Lowlands.





Visiting Wood-Tikchik

The best time to visit is in summer and early fall if you're planning on boating, hiking, fishing, or nature photography. The park is open for business in winter, too. Snowmobile is an especially good way to explore the snowy backcountry, and there is plenty of area for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, too.

In any season, weather can vary greatly from one part of the park to another. The southern lakes region is more temperate. On the other hand, the northern lake region can get as hot as 80 degrees in summer and far below 0 degrees in winter.

No matter what season you decide to visit the park, you'll need to be safety conscious and totally self-sufficient. If help is at least an hour away during the warmer months, imagine how long it might take emergency services to reach you in winter.

If the park has a visitor hub—a place where you're most likely to run into other human beings—it's probably Tikchik Lake. That is where a couple of the fishing lodges are located.

A visit to Wood-Tikchik is easily combined with other large and significant nature reserves in the area. Directly west and northwest of the state park are the massive Togiak and Yukon Delta national wildlife refuges along the coast of the Bering Sea. Also close at hand is Katmai National Park and Preserve, with its abundant wildlife and amazing volcanic landscapes.

Chugach State Park

Located right on the outskirts of Anchorage, Chugach State Park is extremely easy to reach and explore. It does have some rugged backcountry, but even the far corners of Chugach are easier to reach than most of Wood-Tikchik.



The park is renowned for outdoor adventure. It features summer hiking, mountain biking, paragliding, and horseback riding as well as winter skiing, snowboarding, dogsledding, and snowmobiling. The park also provides calmer activities such as berry picking and birdwatching.

Chugach is even richer in wildlife than Wood-Tikchik. Its more temperate climate supports a wider range of creatures. There are plenty of bear and moose, but there are also mountain goats, timber wolves, Dall sheep, and lynx. More than 200 bird species have been spotted in the park, including Alaska's state bird—the willow ptarmigan.



Visiting Chugach's Turnagain Area

Chugach is vast in size, but it has only four main hubs: Eklutna Lake in the far north, the Eagle River Valley in the middle, the Anchorage Hillside Trails in the southwest, and the Turnagain shoreline in the deep south.

Because the Seward Highway runs along its entire length, the Turnagain coast is the easiest to reach. The Alaska Railroad parallels the highway, as does a 13-mile bike path, making this one of the state's major transportation corridors.



Among the Turnagain area's landmarks is the Potter Section House State Historic Site. In the 1920s, Potter was a railroad work camp. Today, the restored structure does double duty as the Chugach State Park headquarters and visitor center. It's a great place to ask questions, gather maps and trail guides, and plan your adventures in Chugach.

Farther down the Turnagain coast is Indian Valley and its historic mine. Founded in 1901, the underground shafts coughed up enough gold to keep the mine active until World War II. Now, the mine is a private summertime attraction with gold panning, a gift shop, and two structures—the main building and the assay office—listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Additionally, the Turnagain area is renowned for its great tidal range. The tides range by as much as 40 feet, making them the largest tides in the United States. Bird Point is the best place to catch the tidal extravaganza as well as a great place to lookout for wildlife that frequent the area.



As tempting as it might seem, do not venture into the mudflats exposed along the shore at low tide. The footing is often like quicksand, and you don't want to get stuck out there when the tides are rolling in.

Visiting Chugach's Girdwood Area

Right up the road from Bird Point is Alaska's biggest and best winter sports hub: the town of Girdwood and Alyeska Resort. Girdwood is also the jumping-off point for some of the state park's best hikes, like the Crow Pass Trail over to Eagle River and the daunting Eklutna Traverse.





The 23-mile Crow Pass Trail is the southernmost segment of the Historic Iditarod Trail. The Eklutna Traverse is one of Alaska's most spectacular hikes. It is a 38-mile trek across four glaciers flanked by snowcapped peaks.

Descending from the highlands, the Eklutna Traverse merges into the Eklutna Lakeside Trail on a route that takes you across the entire state park. Along the way are primitive campsites and overnight huts maintained by the Mountaineering Club of Alaska.

With its gorgeous shoreline and numerous trails, Eklutna Lake invites outdoor adventure in both summer and winter. The seven-mile lake facilitates all sorts of water sports. To maintain the valley's incredible peace and quiet, only non-motorized boats and electric motors are allowed. Eklutna is also the most popular place in the park for camping.

At the park's far northwestern corner, down at the bottom of the Eklutna River valley, 200-foot Thunderbird Falls is the park's highest cascade. The hike to reach the falls starts from a trailhead outside the park, just off the Glenn Highway north of Anchorage.



Visiting Chugach's Eagle River Valley Area

Near the center of the park, the Eagle River Valley carries the park's longest stream, a 40-mile meander between Eagle Glacier and the Cook Inlet. This area offers the park's best chance to canoe, kayak, or float.



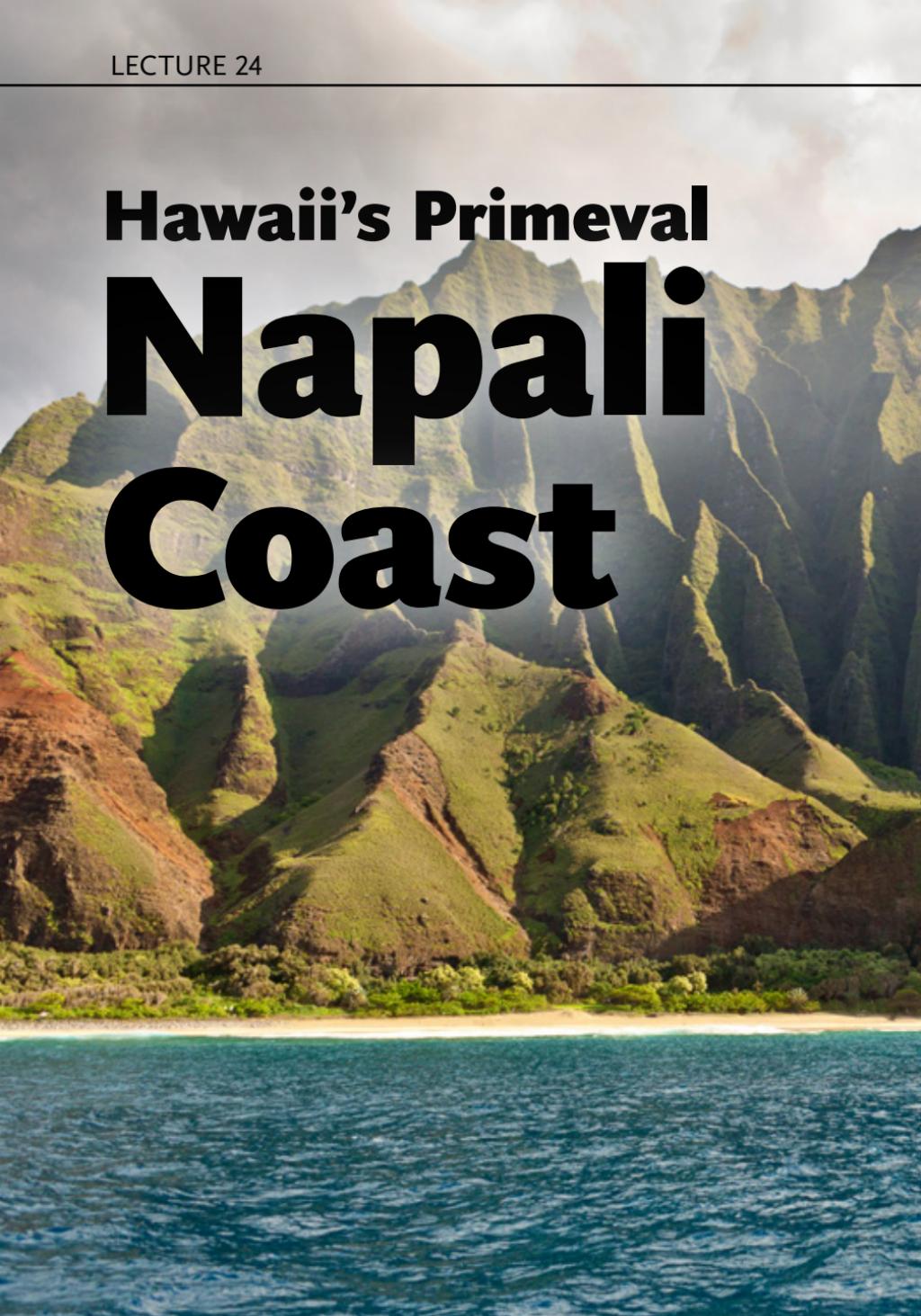
There are some good hiking options in the Eagle River area, including the Rendezvous Peak Trail to Arctic Valley. Another option is a trail along the south fork of the Eagle River that leads to two pristine lakes hidden high in the Chugach Mountains. The valley is also home to the Eagle River Nature Center, which offers a variety of public activities, lectures, and workshops, including guided nature hikes.

Visiting Chugach's Anchorage Hillside Trails Area

The park also provides options for wilderness hiking on the very edge of Anchorage in the Anchorage Hillside Trails area. Some of the trails are easy, like the quarter-mile Anchorage Overlook Trail. This trail provides a great place to watch the sunset over Cook Inlet and the twinkling lights of Anchorage in the early evening.

Others are more challenging. The Middle Fork Loop is a half-day trek through spruce and hemlock groves, tundra, and lakes. This is prime moose terrain. The Anchorage Hills area also offers mountain biking trails as well as cross-country skiing and snowmobile routes in winter.

Hawaii's Primeval Napali Coast





The Hawaiian island of Kauai features the Napali Coast on its north shore. The coast features rust-colored cliffs that rise thousands of feet above the Pacific Ocean. Nearly the entire coast is protected within the confines of state parks. This lecture covers many of the island's state parks, including:

- ◆ Ha'ena State Park.
- ◆ Napali Coast Wilderness State Park.
- ◆ Nu'alolo Kai and Miloli'i state parks.
- ◆ Polihale State Park.
- ◆ Waimea Canyon State Park.
- ◆ Koke'e State Park.

Ha'ena State Park

Ha'ena State Park lies at the very end of Highway 560, about an hour's drive from Kauai's airport and the island's main hotel cluster. Ha'ena's most popular attraction is Ke'e Beach, a small strip of sand with a swimming area protected by an offshore reef.

During the summer months, the water is generally calm. This means great swimming and snorkeling in crystal-clear water. Among the brightly colored creatures that hang out in the lagoon are butterflyfish, damselfish, surgeonfish, and wrasses. During the winter, the lagoon isn't so gentle, so check local conditions before venturing into the water.



Behind the shore, Ha'ena State Park is covered in thick forest. On the south side of Highway 560 are a pair of ancient sea caves. Partially filled with turquoise-colored water, it's estimated these caves are at least 4,000 years old and show that the coastline is now a few hundred yards farther out to sea than it used to be.



Right beside the state park entrance is Limahuli Garden and Preserve. This is a 900-acre division of the National Tropical Botanical Garden, a nonprofit establishment dedicated to the conservation and research of tropical plant species. Guided and self-guided tours of the garden leave from the visitor center.





The Kalalau Trail

The trailhead of the legendary Kalalau Trail lies at the very end of Highway 560, just before Ke'e Beach. There is a kiosk with information about the trail, and rangers post riptide warnings and other safety information on a whiteboard beside the start.

During heavy rains, the trail can experience washouts, rock slides, and flash floods. During these times, the entire trail or portions of it can be closed. Therefore, before heading to the trail, check the state park website or the Kalalau Trail Facebook page for the latest trail conditions.



Anyone who walks or hikes on a regular basis should have no problem trekking the trail's first two miles. But it is steep, with more than 500 feet of elevation gain in the first mile.

Napali Coast Wilderness State Park

This trail continues to the start of the Napali Coast Wilderness State Park. This area's beach is a good place to relax, but the waves and currents offshore mean that swimming is not recommended.

Hanakapi'ai Stream trickles into the ocean here. Up from the beach are a series of interesting rock pools. The valley trail continues up the jungle for two miles—and more than 700 feet of elevation gain—to Hanakapi'ai Falls.



Anyone hiking farther west along the Kalalau Trail needs to be in possession of an overnight camping permit from the Hawaiian Division of Parks. The trail quickly climbs from beach level to 800 feet as it passes through the coastal portion of the area's nature reserve, which protects several distinct native Hawaiian ecosystems. Eventually, the trail works its way back into Napali Coast Wilderness State Park.

Four miles out from Hanakapi'ai Beach is the lush Hanakoa Valley, where trekkers can pause for a rest or even an overnight stay in a primitive campsite on the valley's stone agricultural terraces. Hanakoa Campground is perched around 500 feet above sea level. The towering cliffs make it impossible to reach the ocean below.

Crawler's Ledge and Beyond

Beyond Hanakoa is what most hikers consider the most spectacular part of the trail: a narrow section called Crawler's Ledge that hovers around 300 feet above the sea. Crawler's Ledge is the main reason that *Backpacker* magazine lists the Kalalau as one of America's most dangerous hikes.



You don't have to literally crawl on your hands and knees to transit the ledge. However, you will find yourself grasping the rocky cliff on the inland side as you gingerly step along the path. Past Crawler's Ledge, the rest of the trail continues to climb up to 700 feet before a gradual descent along the home stretch into Kalalau Valley.

You might come across some of the local wildlife, particularly feral goats and pigs that state park workers are trying to vanquish because of their negative impact on the native vegetation.

The trail continues on the other side of a stream in the valley bottom. Beyond are Kalalau Beach and its primitive, tree-shaded campground. Keep in mind that camping permits allow no more than five nights at Kalalu Beach.



Farther West

The Kalalau Trail ends at the campground. More valleys and beaches lie farther west, but it's impossible to reach them without a boat.

Honopu is one of those valleys. Because it is considered sacred by native Hawaiians, no one is allowed to land a boat on the beach there. Instead, visitors must anchor their boats and swim ashore through the high surf.

Despite its inaccessibility, Honopu might be the most famous indentation along the entire Napali Coast. It is stunning, featuring two crescents of sand separated by a rocky promontory with a 90-foot natural arch.

Nu‘alolo Kai and Miloli‘i State Parks

Beyond Honopu are more reserves that can only be reached by boat. Nu‘alolo Kai State Park preserves the remains of an ancient Hawaiian fishing village, including a partially reconstructed canoe house. The rocky beach is protected by a coral reef and a lagoon that offers some of the best snorkeling along the Napali Coast.

Around the other side of the point is Miloli‘i State Park, a favorite place for kayak camping and surfing. Here, you might see turtles breeching offshore or monk seals.



Polihale State Park

If you keep going down the shore by boat, you will eventually reach Polihale State Park at the very end of the Napali Coast. It is also possible to drive to Polihale. It is about an hour's drive from Lihue via State Highway 50 and an old sugarcane plantation road.

At Polihale, the giant sea cliffs give way to a coastal plain with modern farm fields and rolling dunes along the shore. Four-wheel drive is highly recommended if you decide to drive out.

Locals go to the park for the beach camping and shore fishing. The lack of an offshore reef means the water is rough and not conducive to safe swimming for most of the year. However, the sunsets here are incredible.

But the sunsets at this far western end of the Hawaiian Islands are to die for—a panorama across the vast Pacific that includes a silhouette of little Niihau Island on the horizon.





Waimea Canyon State Park

The lush highlands behind the Napali Coast cliffs are also spectacular—and much easier to reach. State Highway 550 offers a highly scenic route from the coastal town of Waimea into the heart of Waimea Canyon State Park.

Roughly 8.5 miles up from the town is the first place where you can park and take in the view. It is not very well marked; look for a blue emergency call box on the right side of the road and pull off where you can.

This same pullout offers trailheads for two of the park's best hikes. The short Iliau Nature Loop offers panoramic views of the canyon without being too strenuous. Meanwhile, the Kukui Trail leads into the bottom of Waimea Canyon. This is a difficult, 2.5-mile trek.

Beside the Waimea River in the canyon bottom is Wiliwili Camp, where you can rest and take in the luxuriant scenery before hiking back up to the parking area. Hardcore hikers can continue downstream along the 11.5-mile Waimea Canyon Trail, which exits the state park on its long and winding way to the town of Waimea near Kauai's south shore.

Alternatively, you can hike upstream and join the six-mile Koai'e Canyon Trail to the secluded Lonomea Camp with its rainforest swimming holes. With an overnight camping permit from the Hawaiian Division of State Parks, you can sleep at one of the four primitive camps in the canyon bottom. Otherwise, need to be out of the park by sundown.

Koke'e State Park

Highway 550 meanders along the west rim to Waimea Canyon Overlook and Pu'u Ka Pele Lookout before cruising into Koke'e State Park. This park rides a lofty rainforest ridge between Waimea Canyon and the Kalalau Valley.

The park also boasts more amenities than any of the other parks in this lecture, most of them arrayed around Kanaloahuluhuli Meadow in the middle of the park. This area features a museum and a visitor center with exhibits on the park's flora and fauna. Additionally, other than rudimentary campsites, the Koke'e cabins offer the only overnight lodging inside any of the Napali Coast parks.



Roads and trails radiate out in many directions, leading to stunning overlooks of the canyon or coast. The park features a plethora of trails. Most of them are less than two miles in length, but others are quite long.

One good option is to continue the drive along Highway 550 to Pu'u O Kila Lookout and walk a short way along the Pihea Trail to places where you can look straight down into the Kalalau Valley. You can keep walking around the upper edge of the valley to a junction, with incredible views all along the way. However, the trail becomes steeper and more treacherous as you make your way around the rim.



The trail eventually curls away from the rim, meandering through the rainforest to a junction with another great walk along the Alaka'i Swamp Trail. This route renders a rare glimpse of a boggy ecosystem created by heavy rainfall on the mountaintop. The trail terminates at the Kilohana Lookout.

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PARKS LIST

LECTURE 1 Niagara Falls: America's Oldest State Park

Niagara Falls State Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/46/>

Whirlpool State Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/105/>

Devil's Hole State Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/42/>

Joseph Davis State Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/45/>

Artpark (Earl W. Bridges Artpark): <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/113/>

Fort Niagara State Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/175/>

LECTURE 2 The Pennsylvania Wilds: Wilderness Reborn

Leonard Harrison State Park:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/LeonardHarrisonStatePark/>

Colton Point State Park:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/ColtonPointStatePark/>

Cherry Springs State Park:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/CherrySpringsStatePark/>

Kinzua Bridge State Park:

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Cook Forest State Park:

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Sinnemahoning State Park:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/SinnemahoningStatePark/>

LECTURE 3 New York's Adirondacks: "Forever Wild"

Adirondack Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/regions/adirondack/default.aspx>

LECTURE 4 Exploring New Hampshire's White Mountains

Franconia Notch State Park:

<https://www.nhstateparks.org/visit/state-parks/franconia-notch-state-park/>

Crawford Notch State Park:

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Mt. Washington State Park:

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LECTURE 5 The Yankee Coast: Plymouth to Montauk

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Fort Adams State Park:

<http://www.riparks.com/Locations/LocationFortAdams.html>

Montauk Point State Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/61/>

Camp Hero State Park: <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/97/>

LECTURE 6 New Jersey Pineland Legends and Landscapes

Wharton State Forest:

<https://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/wharton.html>

Brendan T. Byrne State Forest:

<https://njparksandforests.org/parks/byrne.html>

Bass River State Forest: <https://njparksandforests.org/parks/bass.html>

Penn State Forest: <https://njparksandforests.org/parks/penn.html>

Belleplain State Forest: <https://njparksandforests.org/parks/belle.html>

Double Trouble State Forest: <https://njparksandforests.org/parks/double.html>

Barnegat Lighthouse State Park:

<https://njparksandforests.org/parks/barnlig.html>

Island Beach State Park: <https://njparksandforests.org/parks/island.html>

North Brigantine State Natural Area:
<https://njparksandforests.org/parks/bass.html>

LECTURE 7 The Tidewater South: America's Birthplace

Jamestown Settlement: <https://jyfemail.jyf.virginia.gov/eStore/>
Yorktown Victory Center: <https://jyfemail.jyf.virginia.gov/eStore/>
Assateague State Park:
<http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/eastern/assateague.aspx>
Dismal Swamp State Park: <https://www.ncparks.gov/dismal-swamp-state-park>

LECTURE 8 Georgia and Carolina Islands: Lost in Time

Reynolds Mansion: <https://gastateparks.org/ReynoldsMansion>
Sapelo Island Wildlife Management Area:
<https://georgiawildlife.com/sapelo-island-wma>
Hunting Island State Park: <https://southcarolinaparks.com/hunting-island>
Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site:
<https://southcarolinaparks.com/charles-towne-landing>
Fort Fisher State Historic Site: <https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/fort-fisher>
Fort Fisher State Recreation Area:
<https://www.ncparks.gov/fort-fisher-state-recreation-area>
North Carolina Aquarium: <http://www.ncaquariums.com/>
Jockey's Ridge State Park: <https://www.ncparks.gov/jockeys-ridge-state-park>

LECTURE 9 Southern Appalachian Peaks and Valleys

DeSoto State Park: <https://www.alapark.com/desoto-state-park>
Fort Mountain State Park: <https://gastateparks.org/FortMountain>
Tallulah Gorge State Park: <https://gastateparks.org/TallulahGorge>
Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area:
<https://discoversouthcarolina.com/mountain-bridge-wilderness-area>

LECTURE 10 The Florida Keys: Tropical Paradise Parks

John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park: <http://pennekamppark.com/>

Bahia Honda State Park: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/BahiaHonda>

Long Key State Park:

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/long-key-state-park>

Curry Hammock State Park:

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/curry-hammock-state-park>

Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/dagny-johnson-key-largo-hammock-botanical-state-park>

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fort-zachary-taylor-historic-state-park>

Indian Key Historic State Park: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/IndianKey>

San Pedro Underwater Archaeological Preserve State Park:

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/san-pedro-underwater-archaeological-preserve-state-park>

Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park:

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/windley-key-fossil-reef-geological-state-park>

Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/lignumvitae-key-botanical-state-park>

LECTURE 11 West Texas: Where the West Is Still Wild

Palo Duro Canyon State Park:

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/palo-duro-canyon>

Big Bend Ranch State Park: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/big-bend-ranch>

Davis Mountains State Park:

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/davis-mountains>

Balmorhea State Park: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/balmorhea>

Monahans Sandhills State Park:

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/monahans-sandhills>

Big Spring State Park: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/big-spring>

Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway:
<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/caprock-canyons>

LECTURE 12 Adventures in the Ozarks and Ouachitas

Ha Ha Tonka State Park:
<https://mostateparks.com/park/ha-ha-tonka-state-park>

Ozark Folk Center State Park:
<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/ozark-folk-center-state-park>

Onondaga Cave State Park:
<https://mostateparks.com/park/onondaga-cave-state-park>

Lake Ouachita State Park:
<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/lake-ouachita-state-park>

Beavers Bend State Park: <https://www.travelok.com/state-parks/422>

Talimena State Park: <https://www.travelok.com/state-parks/7645>

Pinnacle Mountain State Park:
<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/pinnacle-mountain-state-park>

Queen Wilhelmina State Park:
<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/queen-wilhelmina-state-park>

LECTURE 13 State Parks along the Mighty Mississippi

Itasca State Park:
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00181#homepage

Fort Snelling State Park:
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00154#homepage

Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site: <https://mostateparks.com/park/mark-twain-birthplace-state-historic-site>

Mark Twain State Park: <https://mostateparks.com/park/mark-twain-state-park>

Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site: <https://cahokiamounds.org/>

Columbus-Belmont State Park:
<https://parks.ky.gov/parks/recreationparks/columbus-belmont/>

Delta Heritage Trail State Park:
<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/delta-heritage-trail-state-park>

Louisiana Purchase State Park:

<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/louisiana-purchase-state-park>

Mississippi River State Park:

<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/mississippi-river-state-park>

Pass-a-Loutre Wildlife Management Area:

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wma/2786>

Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site:

<https://www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/historic-sites/rosedown-plantation-state-historic-site/index>

LECTURE 14 Presidential Parks in the Land of Lincoln

Lincoln Homestead State Park: <https://parks.ky.gov/parks/recreationparks/lincoln-homestead/>

Lincoln State Park: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2979.htm>

Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site: <https://www.lincolnsnewsalem.com/>

Brown County State Park: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2988.htm>

John James Audubon State Park:

<https://parks.ky.gov/parks/recreationparks/john-james/>

LECTURE 15 The Great Lakes: Back from the Brink

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park: <http://www.michigandnr.com/ParksandTrails/Details.aspx?id=426&type=SPRK>

Mackinac Island State Park: <https://www.mackinacparks.com/parks-and-attractions/mackinac-island-state-park/>

Peninsula State Park: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/peninsula/>

Indiana Dunes State Park: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2980.htm>

South Bass Island State Park: <http://parks.ohiodnr.gov/southbassisland>

LECTURE 16 The Black Hills: Nature and Native Heritage

Custer State Park: <https://gfp.sd.gov/parks/detail/custer-state-park/>

George S. Mickelson Trail:

<https://gfp.sd.gov/parks/detail/george-s--mickelson-trail/>

Spearfish Canyon State Nature Area:

<https://gfp.sd.gov/parks/detail/spearfish-canyon-nature-area/>

Bear Butte State Park: <https://gfp.sd.gov/parks/detail/bear-butte-state-park/>

LECTURE 17 Parks of the Colorado Front Range

State Forest State Park: <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/StateForest>

Eldorado Canyon State park:

<https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/EldoradoCanyon>

Lincoln Park: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/capitol/groundslincoln-park>

Mueller State Park: <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/Mueller>

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area:

<https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/ArkansasHeadwatersRecreationArea>

LECTURE 18 Southwest Red Rock and Desert Canyon Parks

Red Rock State Park: <https://azstateparks.com/red-rock/>

Slide Rock State Park: <https://azstateparks.com/slide-rock/>

Fort Verde State Historic Park: <https://azstateparks.com/fort-verde/>

Dead Horse Ranch State Park: <https://azstateparks.com/dead-horse/>

Jerome State Historic Park: <https://azstateparks.com/jerome/>

Valley of Fire State Park: <http://parks.nv.gov/parks/valley-of-fire>

Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park:

<https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/coral-pink/>

Kodachrome Basin State Park:

<https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/kodachrome-basin/>

Escalante Petrified Forest State Park:

<https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/escalante-petrified-forest/>

Anasazi State Park Museum: <https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/anasazi/>

LECTURE 19 California's Badlands: Anza-Borrego

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=638

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=667

Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve: <https://torreypine.org/>

Old Town San Diego State Historic Park:

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=663

San Pasqual Battlefield State Historic Park:

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=655

Border Field State Park: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=664

LECTURE 20 Big Blue: The Beauty of Lake Tahoe

Emerald Bay State Park: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=506

D. L. Bliss State Park: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=505

Ed Z'berg-Sugar Pine Point State Park:

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=510

Cave Rock State Park:

<http://parks.nv.gov/parks/lake-tahoe-nevada-state-park-2>

Sand Harbor State Park:

<http://parks.nv.gov/parks/lake-tahoe-nevada-state-park>

LECTURE 21 California's Coastal Redwood Parks

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=415

Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park:

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=414

Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park:

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=413

LECTURE 22 Washington's Orca Islands: The San Juans

Lime Kiln Point State Park: <https://parks.state.wa.us/540/Lime-Kiln-Point>

Moran State Park: <https://parks.state.wa.us/547/Moran>

Matia Island Marine State Park: <https://parks.state.wa.us/544/Matia-Island>
Patos Island Marine State Park: <https://parks.state.wa.us/561/Patos-Island>
Sucia Island Marine State Park: <https://parks.state.wa.us/594/Sucia-Island>
Deception Pass State Park: <https://parks.state.wa.us/497/Deception-Pass>
Fort Casey Historical State Park: <https://parks.state.wa.us/505/Fort-Casey>

LECTURE 23 Alaska's State Parks: The Last Frontier

Wood-Tikchik State Park:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/wtc/index.htm>

Chugach State Park:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspuits/chugach/chugachindex.htm>

Baranof Castle State Historic Site:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspuits/southeast/baranofcastle.htm>

Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/eagleprv.htm>

Totem Bight State Historical Park:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/totembgh.htm>

LECTURE 24 Hawaii's Primeval Napali Coast

Ha'ena State Park: <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/haena-state-park/>

Napali Coast State Wilderness Park:

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/napali-coast-state-wilderness-park/>

Hono O Napali Natural Area Reserve:

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/ecosystems/nars/kauai-2/hono-o-na-pali-2/>

Nu'alolo Kai State Park:

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/napali-coast-state-wilderness-park/>

Miloli'i State Park:

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/napali-coast-state-wilderness-park/>

Polihale State Park:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/polihale-state-park/>

Waimea Canyon State Park:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/waimea-canyon-state-park/>

Koke'e State Park: <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/kokee-state-park/>

Na Pali-Kona Forest Reserve:

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/forestry/frs/reserves/kauai/na-pali-kona/>

Iolani Palace State Monument:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/oahu/iolani-palace-state-monument/>

Royal Mausoleum State Monument:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/oahu/royal-mausoleum-state-monument/>

Diamond Head State Monument:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/oahu/diamond-head-state-monument/>

Kaiwi State Scenic Shoreline:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/oahu/kaiwi-state-scenic-shoreline/>

Wai‘anapanapa State Park:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/maui/waianapanapa-state-park/>

Mäkena State Park: <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/maui/makena-state-park/>

Kealakekua Bay State Historical Park:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/hawaii/kealakekua-bay-state-historical-park/>

Akaka Falls State Park:

<http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/hawaii/akaka-falls-state-park/>

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