

A scenic view of a river flowing through a dense forest of tall evergreen trees, with rocky banks and small buildings visible in the distance.

NATIONAL PARKS OF THE UNITED STATES

Featuring Scenic Views & Brief Overviews from 16 U.S. National Parks



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National parks contain many of our nation's most treasured landscapes. On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the "Organic Act" which established the National Park Service, a federal bureau in the Department of the Interior that would be responsible for the maintenance of the parks and monuments that were then managed by the department. Since 1916, the National Park System has expanded to include over 420 national parks!

In 1964, the "Wilderness Act" was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System thereby instructing the National Park Service to manage and preserve designated wilderness areas. The National Park Service is one of the United States' leading agencies for history and culture. Their mission is to preserve both the natural and cultural resources of its national parks fully and unimpaired.





DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

CALIFORNIA (NV)

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

DRIVING
HIKING
CAMPING

SIZE

3,422,024 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

MOSAIC CANYON

Death Valley is the largest U.S. National Park outside Alaska and also the hottest place on Earth. In the summer months temperatures average over 100°F (38°C), and often exceed 120°F (49°C). Nearly 1,000 miles of paved and dirt roads provide access to locations both popular and remote. Even so, 93% of the park is protected as officially designated Wilderness. That wild country includes low valley floors crusted with barren salt flats, rugged mountains rising as much as 11,000 feet, deep and winding canyons, rolling sand dunes, and spring-fed oases. Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes (pictured on the left,) is the largest dune field in the park and offers an unforgettable experience.

Badwater Basin, also located in Death Valley, is the lowest point in North America at 282 ft below sea level and offers views of a surreal landscape of vast salt flats. In this below-sea-level basin, steady drought and record summer heat make Death Valley a land of extremes. Yet, each extreme has a striking contrast. Towering peaks are frosted with winter snow. Rare rainstorms bring vast fields of wildflowers. Lush oases harbor tiny fish and refuge for wildlife and humans. Despite its morbid name, a great diversity of life survives in Death Valley. Death Valley has more than 1,000 described plant species, ranging from ancient bristlecone pines to ephemeral spring wildflowers. Part of this

diversity is due to the over 11,000 feet of elevation change found in the park. Death Valley is famous for its spring wildflower displays, but these rare events are the exception, not the rule! On average, superblooms only come around once in a decade, with the last ones in 2005 and 2016. Common animals seen in the park include coyotes, bighorn sheep, invasive burros, pupfish, and desert tortoise. Death Valley has a variety of campgrounds from primitive arrangements to full hook-up. Backpacking in Death Valley National can be challenging, but the opportunities for experiencing solitude, sweeping vistas, dark night skies and awesome geology abound. Plan to carry plenty of your own water.





GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK

ALASKA

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

HIKING
WATER ACTIVITIES
CAMPING

SIZE

3,223,384 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

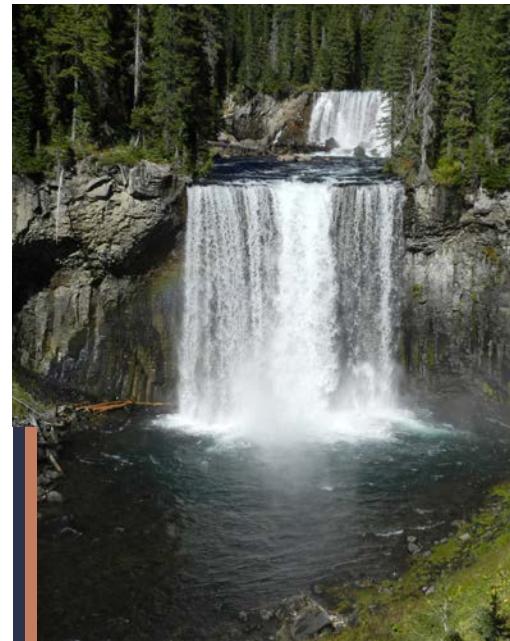
MT. FAIRWEATHER

Glacier Bay National Park is a highlight of Alaska's Inside Passage and part of a 25-million acre World Heritage Site—one of the largest internationally protected areas in the world. From sea to summit, Glacier Bay offers limitless opportunities for adventure and inspiration. It is a land reborn, a world returning to life, a living lesson in resilience. If ever we needed a place to intrigue and inspire us, this is it. Glacier Bay is a homeland, a living laboratory, a national park, a world heritage site, a biosphere reserve, and designated wilderness. It's a marine park, where great adventure awaits by boating into inlets, coves and hideaway harbors. It's also a land park, with snow-capped mountains,

spectacular glaciers, and emerald-green forests. Glacier Bay has been the homeland of the Huna Tlingit people for countless generations. About 250 years ago a single, large tidewater glacier covered all of Glacier Bay. By 1750 the glacier began to retreat—now retreated 60 miles to the head of the bay. Currently glaciers cover 27 percent of the park. At last count there were 1,045 glaciers in the park. There are over 50 named glaciers, seven of which are active tidewater glaciers that calve icebergs into the sea. Most park glaciers originate between elevations from 8,000 to 15,000 feet. Dramatic change and the ebb and flow of nature occur at every scale: within centuries,

seasons, and hours. The tides swell and recede dramatically twice a day, oftentimes by as much as twenty vertical feet. Long days in the summer become markedly brief in the winter, as the earth's axis slants away from the sun. Sea kayaking is one popular way to experience the wilderness. The park also offers opportunities for both fresh and saltwater sport fishing. Since 1879, scientists from all around the world have been highly attracted to the pristine ecosystems in Glacier Bay, dominated by its natural successional processes. Visitors congregate in the warmer summer months, witnessing the calving of glaciers to contemplate change and resilience, as well as their connection to this dynamic landscape.





YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

WYOMING (ID, MT)

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

HIKING
WATER ACTIVITIES
CAMPING

SIZE

2,219,791 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

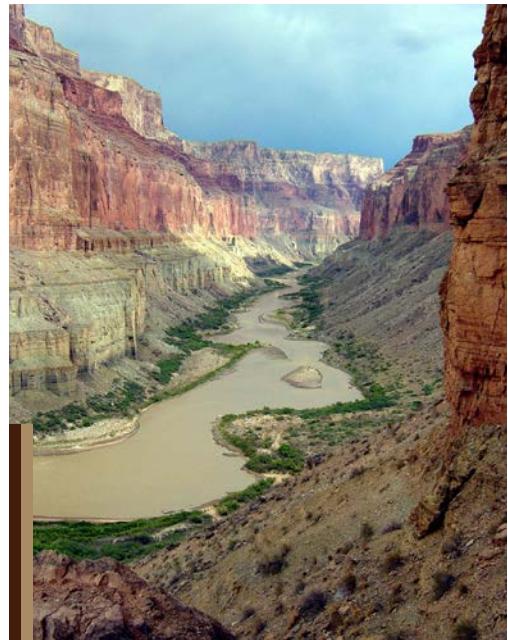
OLD FAITHFUL

One of the greatest experiences in Yellowstone is witnessing the geologic wonders of the park. Topping the list of the Park's geologic wonders are hydrothermal features such as hot springs, mudpots, fumaroles, and geysers. Well over 10,000 different hydrothermal features are estimated to be active within the park. Perhaps even more incredibly, over half of the world's active geysers are found here. Every year, between 500-700 geysers are active. In 2011, it was determined that 1,283 geysers have been recorded as erupting in Yellowstone. This is truly incredible, when all of the rest of the world's geysers combined number totals less than 500. Hydrothermal features are

extremely dynamic, changing throughout the day, across seasons, and over years, making revisits to the different thermal basins even more interesting. Besides seeing familiar sites, you can also see how those areas have changed since the last visit. Yellowstone's abundant and diverse wildlife are as famous as its geysers. There are nearly 300 species of birds, 16 species of fish, five species of amphibians, six species of reptiles, and 67 species of mammals which include seven native ungulate species and two bear species. Fire has been a key factor in shaping the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Several native plant species evolved adaptations so they survive and, in some cases,

even flourish after periodic fires. Fire influences the processes and patterns of the ecosystem, such as nutrient cycling and plant community composition and structure. At Yellowstone, the Earth's crust has been compressed, pulled apart, glaciated, eroded, and subjected to volcanism. All of this geologic activity has formed the mountains, canyons, and plateaus that now define the natural wonder that is Yellowstone National Park. The park also offers more than 900 miles of hiking trails which are primarily managed as wilderness. When planning a hike, remember that many of Yellowstone's trails are more than 7,000 feet above sea level. Most areas retain snow until late May or early June.





GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

ARIZONA

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

TOURING
HIKING
CAMPING

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•••

1,218,375 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

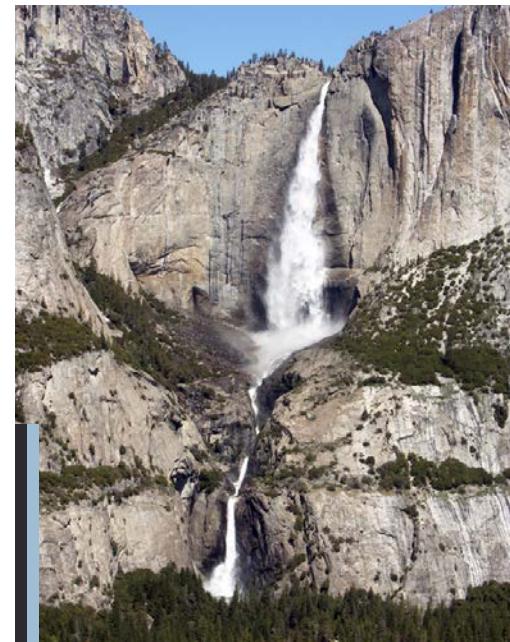
DESERT VIEW

Located in Arizona, Grand Canyon National Park encompasses 277 miles (446 km) of the Colorado River and adjacent uplands. The park is home to much of the immense Grand Canyon, plunging up to a mile (1.6 km) deep, and up to 18 miles (29 km) wide. Layered bands of colorful rock reveal millions of years of geologic history. Grand Canyon is unmatched in the incomparable vistas it offers visitors from the rim. Grand Canyon is considered one of the finest examples of arid-land erosion in the world. Incised by the Colorado River, the canyon is vast, averaging 4,000 feet deep for its entire 277 miles span. It is 6,000 feet deep at its deepest point and 18 miles at its widest. Extreme

changes in elevation, exposure, and climate help to sustain a remarkable range of biotic communities within unusual proximity; a relatively undisturbed ecosystem that allows for natural processes to continue, providing sanctuary for present and future life. However, the significance of Grand Canyon is not limited to its geology. Grand Canyon contains several major ecosystems and its great biological diversity may be attributed to the presence of five of the seven life zones and three of the four desert types in North America. The five life zones represented are the Lower and Upper Sonoran, the Hudsonian, the Transition, and the Canadian. This would be equivalent to traveling

from Mexico to Canada. The Park also serves as an ecological refuge, with relatively undisturbed remnants of dwindling ecosystems (such as boreal forest and desert riparian communities). It is home to numerous rare, endemic and specially protected (threatened or endangered) plant and animal species. Over 1,500 plant, 355 bird, 89 mammalian, 47 reptile, 9 amphibian, and 17 fish species are found in park. People have been part of Grand Canyon's history and culture from 10,000 years ago through today. Eleven contemporary tribes have cultural links to the area, and their oral histories are rich with references to the creation of that great chasm and torrential river.





YOSEMITIE NATIONAL PARK

CALIFORNIA

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

TOURING
HIKING
CAMPING

SIZE

748,436 ACRES

SPOTS
***TO**
VISIT

YOSEMITE VALLEY

First protected in 1864, Yosemite National Park is best known for its waterfalls, but within its nearly 1,200 square miles, you can find deep valleys, grand meadows, ancient giant sequoias, a vast wilderness area, and much more. Over eons, rivers and glaciers somehow carved 3,000 feet into solid granite to create Yosemite Valley. The nuances of the Valley form spectacular rock formations, for which Yosemite Valley is famous. Visitors all year can gaze up from the Valley floor to appreciate the enormity of it all. It is not only a great valley, but a shrine to human foresight, the strength of granite, the power of glaciers, the persistence of life, and the tranquility of the High

Sierra. Half Dome, pictured on the left, is perhaps the most recognized symbol of Yosemite. Rising nearly 5,000 feet above the Valley floor, it is one of the most sought-after landmarks in Yosemite. Some people even hike or rock-climb to the top! El Capitan, rising over 3,000 feet above the floor of Yosemite Valley, is a favorite for experienced rock climbers. El Capitan is opposite Bridalveil Fall and is best seen from the roads in western Yosemite Valley. The Three Brothers, made up of Eagle Peak (the uppermost "brother"), as well as the Middle and Lower Brothers, are located just east of El Capitan. Cathedral Rocks and Spires form the eastern side of the canyon through

which Bridalveil Creek flows. Sentinel Rock, like a sentry, overlooks Yosemite Valley, along the opposite side of the Valley From Yosemite Falls. Yosemite Valley is home to most of the park's famous waterfalls. The best time to see them is during spring runoff; they have little or no water in late summer and fall. Yosemite Falls, pictured above, is the largest waterfall in the park and is able to be viewed from numerous places around Yosemite Valley, especially around Yosemite Village and Yosemite Valley Lodge. Located in the southern portion of Yosemite, the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias holds the largest abundance of mature giant sequoias in the park, home to over 500 trees.





GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

TENNESSEE (NC)

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

FISHING
HIKING
CAMPING

• • •
SIZE
• • •

522,427 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT
CADES COVE

Ridge upon ridge of forest straddles the border between North Carolina and Tennessee in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. World renowned for its diversity of plant and animal life, the beauty of its ancient mountains, as well as the quality of its remnants of Southern Appalachian mountain culture, this is America's most visited national park. Great Smoky Mountains is the most biodiverse park within the National Park system. Biological diversity, or 'biodiversity' refers to the number and variety of different types of animals, plants, fungi, and other organisms in a location or habitat. Encompassing over 800 sq. mi in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, there is no other area of

equal size in a temperate climate can match the park's amazing diversity. Over 19,000 species have been documented in the park and scientists believe that an additional 80,000-100,000 species may live here. The park is dominated by plant-covered, gently contoured mountains that formed perhaps 200-300 million years ago, making them among the oldest mountain ranges in the world! Elevations in the park range from approximately 850 to 6,643 feet. This range in altitude mimics the climate and habitat changes you would experience driving north or south across the eastern United States, say from Georgia to Maine. Plants and animals common in the southern United States thrive in the

lowlands of the Smokies while species common in the northern states find suitable habitat at the higher elevations. Some 100 species of native trees find homes in the Smokies, more than in any other North American national park. Almost 95% of the park is forested, and about 25% of that area is old-growth forest. Over 1,500 additional flowering plant species have been identified in the park. The park is at the center of diversity for salamanders, mollusks, millipedes, and mushrooms. It is also home to more than 200 species of birds, 68 species of mammals, 67 native fish species, nearly 40 species of reptiles, and 43 species of amphibians. Contributing to such diversity are factors of geology, weather and climate.





CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK

UTAH

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

BOATING
HIKING
TOURING

SIZE

337,598 ACRES

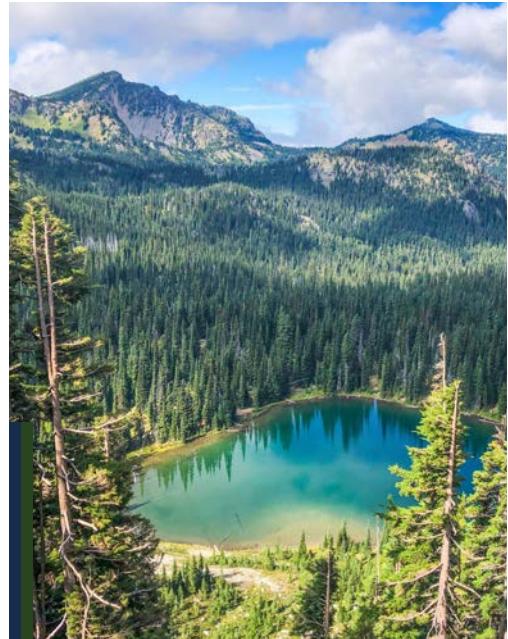
SPOTS
TO
VISIT
ISLAND IN THE SKY

Canyonlands National Park preserves 337,598 acres of colorful canyons, mesas, buttes, fins, arches, and spires in the heart of southeast Utah's high desert. Water and gravity have been the prime architects of this land, sculpting layers of rock into the rugged landscape you see today. Humans first visited Canyonlands over 10,000 years ago. Nomadic groups of hunter-gatherers roamed throughout the southwest from 8,000 BCE (Before Common Era) to 500 BCE, leaving evidence of their presence behind in various structures and rock markings remain in the park today. Canyonlands preserves a rich variety of desert ecology, natural beauty and human history

throughout its four districts, which are divided by the Green and Colorado rivers. While the districts share a primitive desert atmosphere, each retains its own character, offering different opportunities for exploration and adventure. Island in the Sky is the most accessible district, offering expansive views from many overlooks along the paved scenic drive, several hikes of varying length and a moderate four-wheel-drive route called the White Rim Road. The Needles offers more of a backcountry experience. The Maze is a remote district requiring considerably more time and self-reliance to visit. To many visitors, some of the most outstanding natural features in Canyonlands are

the geologic formations which millions of years of erosion have had on a landscape of sedimentary rock. Beyond the big rocks of Canyonlands, its biological soil crust, potholes, rivers, and streams create riparian habitats. Though the natural quiet of Canyonlands often creates the impression of lifelessness, many plants and animals live here. You can encounter a variety of plant species from tiny lichens clinging to sandstone to stately cottonwoods growing in canyon bottoms. Wildflowers bloom in spring, cacti appear among the knobby soil, and bunch grasses grow throughout the open country. Varied districts and ecosystems allow scientists to research how life adapts to an ever changing world.





MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

WASHINGTON

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

HIKING
CLIMBING
CAMPING

SIZE

236,381 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

INSPIRATION PT.

Ascending to 14,410 feet above sea level, Mount Rainier stands as an icon in the Washington landscape. An active volcano, Mount Rainier is the most glaciated peak in the contiguous U.S.A., spawning five major rivers. Subalpine wildflower meadows ring the icy volcano while ancient forest cloaks Mount Rainier's lower slopes. Wildlife abounds in the park's ecosystems. A lifetime of discovery awaits. Reaching the summit requires a vertical elevation gain of more than 9,000 feet over a distance of eight or more miles. Climbers must be in good physical condition and well prepared. Proper physical conditioning can offset the effects of fatigue that lead to mistakes and

injuries. Weather, snow, and route conditions can change rapidly, making the difference between a pleasant and rewarding experience or a tragedy. Before beginning a climb, obtain a current weather forecast. During your climb, turn back if weather conditions deteriorate. Severe winter-like storms on the mountain are not uncommon during the summer. Approximately 58 percent of the park is covered by forest. At Mount Rainier you can find 65 mammal species, 14 species of amphibians, 5 species of reptiles, over 180 species of birds, and 14 species of native fish. Invertebrates represent nearly 85% of the animal biomass in the park. About half of the birds observed in the park nest

here and many are migrants that winter in the southern United States or Central America. Resident amphibians are found in both aquatic environments or on land and reptiles are typically found in upland habitats. There are over 890 vascular species, over 260 non-vascular plant species and fungi, as well as more than 100 exotic plant species in the park, especially along transportation corridors, near trails, as well as in riparian areas. Mount Rainier's renowned wildflowers bloom for a limited amount of time each year but it is difficult to determine when "peak" bloom will occur each year as factors are heavily dependent on the weather and precipitation. Often, many flowers will bloom by mid-July into August.





PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL PARK

ARIZONA

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

TOURING
HIKING
CAMPING

• • •

221,391 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

BLUE MESA

The natural world of Petrified Forest is far more complex than it seems on the surface. Located near the southern edge of the Colorado Plateau, the park is part of an amazing geological region. Some of the most famous geological parks are found on the Colorado Plateau, including Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce, and Arches—just to name a few. Each has its own character, including which layer of the geological story is featured by that park. Petrified Forest is comprised of two geological formations, the Late Triassic Chinle Formation and the Mio-Pliocene Bidahochi Formation. Ancient environments are represented by these layers. The fossils that can be found through the park can help

scientists reconstruct their ancient environments. The colorful Painted Desert badlands are composed of bentonite, a product of altered volcanic ash. The clay minerals in the bentonite can absorb water and swell much as eight times their dry volume. The expansion and contraction properties of the bentonite cause rapid erosion and prevent much vegetation from growing. Mesas and buttes are other features created by erosion. The flat tops are created by the presence of cap rocks, more erosion-resistant rock such as sandstone over softer clays. The softer rock is protected by the cap stones, but, as the sides weather and the protective rock falls down, the softer rock erodes

away as it is exposed to the elements. The types of plants and animals found in the park depend on the elevation, minerals in the soil and rock, as well as the availability of moisture. Plants of arid climates have adaptations which enable them to survive the extremes of temperature and a lack of precipitation. Adaptations can be grouped in two basic categories, drought escapers and drought resistors. Within the park, you may see open grasslands, shrublands, little juniper-cliffrose woodlands, as well as riparian and spring habitats. To experience the park you may either visit the North or South unit and hike, ride a horse, follow a guided tour, or backpack overnight. Plan to bring food, water, sun protection.





SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

VIRGINIA

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

FISHING
HIKING
CAMPING

• • •
SIZE
• • •

197,438 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

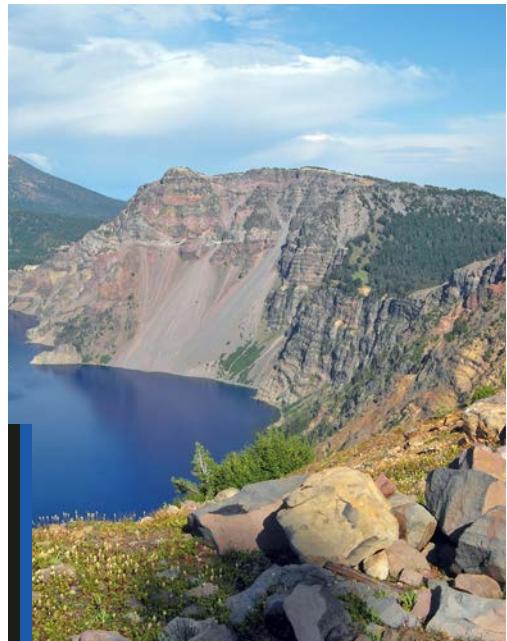
OLD RAG MOUNTAIN

Shenandoah National Park rises above the Virginia Piedmont to its east and the Shenandoah Valley to its west; it is the largest fully protected area in the mid-Appalachian region, including 300 square miles of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Two peaks, Stony Man and Hawksbill, exceed 4,000 feet. The range of elevation, slopes and aspects, rocks and soils, precipitation, and latitude provide a varied mix of habitats for life. Tens of thousands of living creatures make their homes in the park, from black bears resting beneath rock overhangs, to the tiny aquatic insects that dart through cool mountain streams. The Park is home to over 190 resident and transient bird species, more than 50 mammal

species, over 20 reptile and amphibian species, and over 40 fish species. A handful of the animal species are large and more likely to be sighted. With patience, skill, and some luck, visitors may see some of the thousands of other park residents. The park is the only place in the world where Shenandoah salamanders live. The National Park is home to a wonderful variety of plant life. Over 1400 species of vascular plants are found in the park, though fewer than one hundred of these are the familiar trees and shrubs most noticeable to park visitors. Most of Shenandoah's landscape is forested. The forests within Shenandoah National Park are generally classified as "oak-hickory", yet

they contain far more than just oak and hickory trees to discover. The park's 70 mile length and 3500 foot elevation range create numerous habitats able to support a variety of forest cover types. The park has about 90 perennial streams. A main feature of these high elevation streams is their high gradient, meaning that the quick drop off the mountain includes pools interspersed with riffles, rapids, cascades and falls. In many places, streams drop over ledges, creating waterfalls up to 93 feet high. Fire is a critical aspect of the growth of certain plant species as well as a normal part of Appalachian forest ecology. The patterns of fires characteristic of the region and ecosystem are called fire regimes.





CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK

OREGON

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

HIKING
WATER ACTIVITIES
CAMPING

SIZE

183,224 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

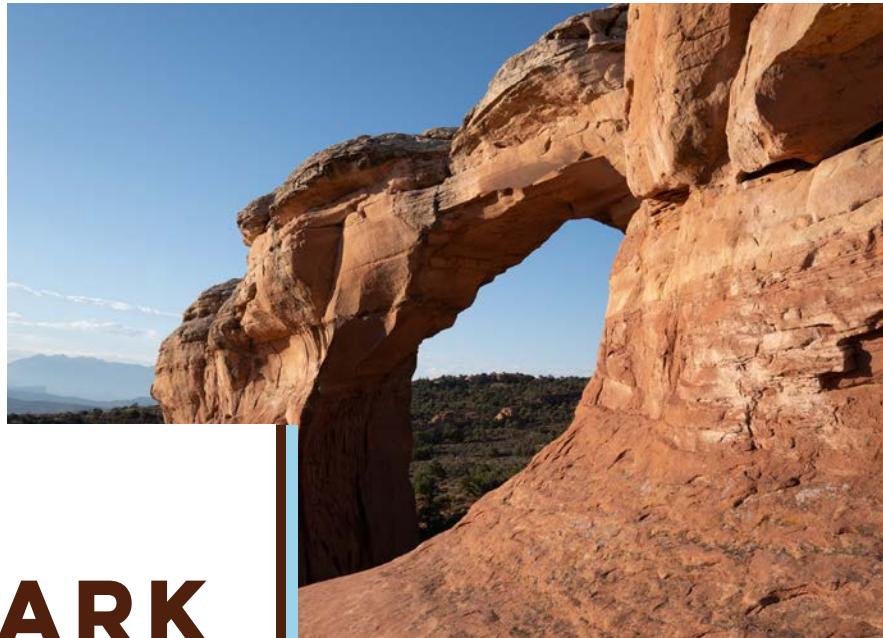
GARFIELD PEAK

With a depth of nearly 1,950 feet, Crater Lake is the deepest lake in the United States—and one of the most beautiful. The intense blue color of the water is an indication of its great depth and purity. The lake is considered by scientists to be the cleanest and clearest large body of water in the world. Surrounded by cliffs, the lake is fed entirely by rain and snow. Crater Lake itself occupies less than 10% of the park. Over 95% of the park is managed as wilderness. Beyond the lake, old-growth forests blanket the landscape. Established in 1902, the park protects 15 species of conifers, from towering ponderosa pines to ancient white-bark pines. These trees shelter a wide array of

wildlife, including black bears, mountain lions, elk, and spotted owls. Surrounding the picturesque, deep-blue Crater Lake are over 180,000 acres of forests, meadows, wetlands, and pumice fields. Together these create the canvas of Crater Lake National Park which rises in elevation from 3,990 feet to 8,926 feet. Crater Lake rests in the belly of a dormant volcano. The volcano once stood 12,000 feet tall, but collapsed after a major eruption 7,700 years ago. Subsequent eruptions formed Wizard Island, a cinder cone rising from the water. Within the park, there is an abundance of fascinating volcanic features, including a second rocky island, the Phantom Ship (pictured above).

The park supports more than 700 species of native plants that thrive. The lake water level is controlled by precipitation, evaporation, and seepage through the rocks. There are no lakes or streams run out from Crater Lake. The park contains more than 40 caves, with just over 30 of them located within the rim of the caldera. The caldera is 5-6 miles in diameter and 3900 feet deep. The 33-mile historic Rim Drive that circumnavigates the lake. Along the drive are 30 overlooks, each highlighting a specific view of the lake, a significant geologic formation in the caldera, or environmental feature such as a sub-alpine meadow. Some stops also have exhibits with information available about respective views.





ARCHES NATIONAL PARK

UTAH

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

DRIVING
HIKING
BICYCLING

• • •
SIZE
• • •

76,679 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

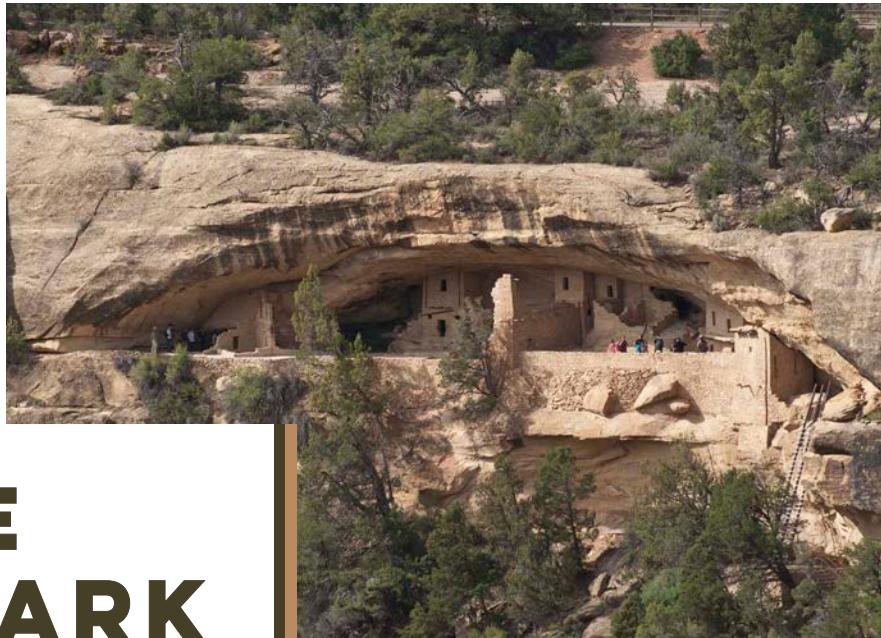
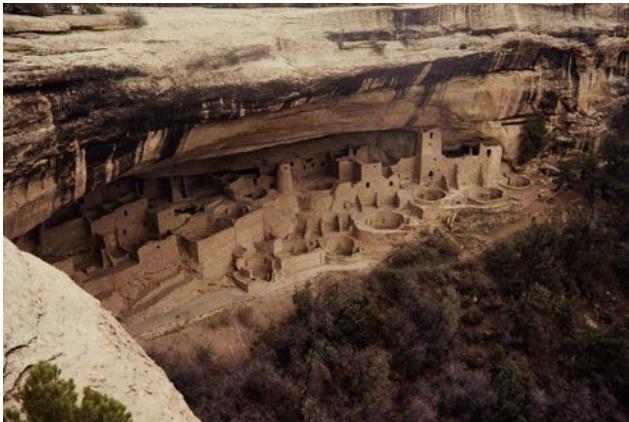
DELICATE ARCH

Arches National Park is a wonderland of red rocks and blue sky. The red rock landscape at Arches might feel timeless, dream-like, or even otherworldly. You can see arches, towers, pinnacles, and balanced rocks from the paved park roads. Take a hike, and you can see even more. Over two thousand natural sandstone arches, the greatest concentration of rock arches in the world, are preserved in Arches National Park. People come from all over the world to visit Arches National Park, and visiting Delicate Arch (pictured on the left,) is on the top of many visitors' to-do lists. In a park with over 2,000 stone arches, this particular free-standing arch has become one of the most

widely recognized symbols of the state of Utah and one of the most famous geologic features in the world. Balanced Rock (pictured above,) is one of the most iconic features in the park, standing a staggering 128 feet (39m) tall. While this formation may appear to be an epic balancing act, it's actually not balanced at all. The rock boulder of Entrada Sandstone sits attached to its eroding pedestal of Dewey Bridge mudstone. Exposure of the two rock strata layers provide ideal conditions for the formation of arches and balanced rocks. Balanced Rock (pictured in the top left,) defies gravity but eventually, the 3,600 ton boulder will come tumbling down like many others have as the

erosional process continues to shape the landscape. There is no better time than the present to see this awe-inspiring giant. Though the natural quiet of Arches often creates the impression of lifelessness, the park is home to many plants and animals. The most frequently sighted animals include birds, lizards, and some small mammals, though seasons and weather play large roles in determining what animals are active. Diverse plant communities thrive in patches of biological soil crust, while others seem to grow right out of cracks in the rock. The 18-mile scenic drive passes many outstanding natural features. On a clear night, you can view great stars just about anywhere from the park.





MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK

COLORADO

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

CAMPING
HIKING
TOURING

SIZE

52,485 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

CLIFF PALACE

Mesa Verde National Park, designated as a World Heritage Site in 1978, is now one of the premier archeological sites in the world and of paramount importance in educating people about preserving and protecting our international treasures. Mesa Verde (Spanish for green table), offers a look into the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people who had made it their home for over 700 years, from 550 to 1300. Today, the park protects nearly 5,000 known archeological sites, including 600 cliff dwellings. Pictured above is the largest cliff dwelling in the park, Cliff Palace, able to be viewed from several angles and overlooks. Spruce Tree House is the park's third largest as well as the best-preserved

cliff dwelling. Constructed between 1211 and 1278, it was built into a natural alcove and contains 130 rooms, eight kivas, and may have housed between 60 to 80 people. The correct geological term for the park's region is cuesta. Cuestas are similar to mesas, but instead of being relatively flat, they gently dip in just one direction. Each environment has characteristics that favor certain plants while limiting others. For instance, prickly pear cactus can be found on dry, sunny, rocky soils, whereas Douglas-fir is found in shaded, moist areas with deeper soils. Numerous seep springs created from the juncture of Cliff House sandstone and Menefee shale provide microclimatic conditions

for moisture loving plant species such as mosses and ferns. Habitats in Mesa Verde support a great diversity of wildlife including resident and migratory fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. Because of Mesa Verde's protected status, many plant and animal species that have disappeared or are rarely seen in the region still exist at the park. Pictured above is the Balcony House, a medium-sized cliff dwelling with 40 rooms and two kivas. Although it can not be viewed from the roadway, the Balcony House may be viewed from the Soda Canyon Overlook Trail. To get the most out of your visit to Mesa Verde, stop first at the Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center for park information.





ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

MAINE

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

WATER ACTIVITIES
HIKING
BICYCLING

SIZE

49,075 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT
MOUNT DESERT ISLAND

Acadia National Park protects the natural beauty of the highest rocky headlands along the Atlantic coastline of the United States, an abundance of habitats, and a rich cultural heritage. At 3.5 million visits a year, it's one of the top 10 most-visited national parks in the United States. Visitors can enjoy 27 miles of historic motor roads, 158 miles of hiking trails, and 45 miles of carriage roads. Acadia is home to around 40 species of mammals, more than 330 species of birds, 30 species of fish, 7 known species of reptiles, and over 10 species of amphibians. Acadia is blanketed with forests and woodlands that are situated in the transition zone of two ecoregions: the northern boreal forest and

the eastern deciduous forest. Much of the park is covered by spruce-fir forests, representative of the boreal influence. Acadia also contains stands of oak, maple, beech, and other hardwoods more typically seen across New England. Fragile plant communities exist on the mountain summits and rocky outcrops across Acadia. Spruce-fir forests are patchy and stunted in areas, while shrubs like mountain cranberries, blueberries, mountain holly, and rhodora dominate the scene. Over 20 percent of Acadia is classified as wetland. All classes of wetlands (swamps, marshes, and bogs) are found within the park. They form the transition between terrestrial and aquatic environments, and provide

significant contribution to the productivity, health, and distinctive character of the region. Wetlands are especially important for maintaining biodiversity as they provide a habitat for a wide range of species. Native wildlife frequent the wetlands alongside nesting, overwintering, or migrating species, such as birds along the Atlantic flyway. More than half of Maine's state-listed rare plants are found in wetland habitats, and at least one rare plant is found in each Acadia wetland type. Life abounds in the serene waters within Acadia's lakes, ponds, and streams—from waterfowl to fish, wildlife depends on aquatic vegetation. Several aquatic plants found in Acadia are listed as threatened or endangered.





BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK

UTAH

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

CAMPING
HIKING
DRIVING

• • •
SIZE

35,835 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

BRYCE POINT

The geology of Bryce Canyon is a story rich with change and exciting interaction between nature's forces. The creation of the unique landscape that makes Bryce Canyon famous began between 35 and 55 million years ago, when much of southern Utah was covered by braided rivers and streams, and later by a system of lakes. Bryce Canyon is not only a single canyon, but a series of natural amphitheaters or bowls, carved into the edge of a high plateau. The most famous of these is the Bryce Amphitheater, filled with irregularly eroded spires of rocks called hoodoos. Perhaps every visitor to the park will spend at least some time marvelling at its four main viewpoints, all found within the

first few miles of the park: Bryce Point, Inspiration Point, Sunset Point, and Sunrise Point. Other viewpoints are found all along the park's 18-mile main road which travels from park's only entrance in the north along the plateau rim to its highest elevations in the south (over 9,000 ft / 2,743 m). Hiking trails connect between viewpoints along the rim of the Bryce Amphitheater and allow visitors to explore the forests of the plateau. Because Bryce transcends 2000 feet (650 m) of elevation, the park exists in three distinct climatic zones: Spruce/Fir forest, Ponderosa Pine forest, and Pinyon Pine/Juniper forest. This diversity of habitat provides for high biodiversity. Here at Bryce, you can enjoy over

100 species of birds, dozens of mammals, and more than a thousand plant species. It is the uniqueness of the rocks which caused Bryce Canyon to be designated as a national park. Hoodoos are formed when ice and rainwater wear away the weak limestone which makes up the Claron Formation. The hoodoos' geologic story is also closely tied to the rest of the Grand Staircase region including the Cedar and Black Mountains volcanic complex. The relentless force of water never stops carving away at the Claron Formation. Each year many tons of rock are cracked and broken away during the winter, then summer monsoons dissolve the calcite bonding them together, carrying them to the Colorado River.





HALEAKALĀ NATIONAL PARK

HAWAI'I

ACTIVITIES
TO
EXPLORE

CAMPING
HIKING
BICYCLING

• • •
SIZE
• • •

33,265 ACRES

SPOTS
TO
VISIT

KALAHAKU OVERLOOK

Isolated in the mid Pacific, the Hawaiian Islands are the most remote major island group on Earth. They were formed as the Pacific Plate moved across a volcanic "hot spot" within the earth's mantle. Lying 2,400 miles (3,862 km) from the nearest continent, they have never had connection to any other land mass. Natural crossings across this great expanse of ocean by animals and plants were extraordinarily rare and surprising occasions. After such accidental arrivals, and isolated from mainland populations, these pioneer organisms took strange courses of evolution and allowed a unique biota to develop. Annually, the rainforests on Haleakalā's steep windward slopes receive

as much as 120 inches of rainfall. These forests are stable and enduring when they are not subject to depredation by pigs and goats. No place can prepare you for the experiences and feelings you will have on the summit of Haleakalā volcano. The landscape—deeply sculpted, richly colored, and forever changing—is unlike anywhere else on Earth. Spend a few hours hiking in the cinder desert landscape or just a few minutes looking for rare forest birds in the native shrubland. Whatever you may choose to do, you will do it surrounded by native Hawaiian plants and animals. Over millennia, Molten earth, erosional forces, and ocean have worked in concert to shape the land.

Over 90% of the native biota of in the park are endemic to the Hawaiian Islands with nearly 50% endemic to Maui. The unique variety of terrain, vegetation, and scenery found here successfully capture the broad spectrum of ecology found across the Hawaiian Islands and specifically on the island of Maui. Visitors of the Kipahulu District—an area of coast that has been inhabited by native people for hundreds of years—are treated with views of waterfalls, sweeping ocean vistas, and Hawaiian cultural experiences. There is no better way to experience Haleakalā National Park than on your own two feet. Enjoy the great outdoors on a variety of trails in two dramatically different districts.

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