AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS
OWNER'S GUIDE

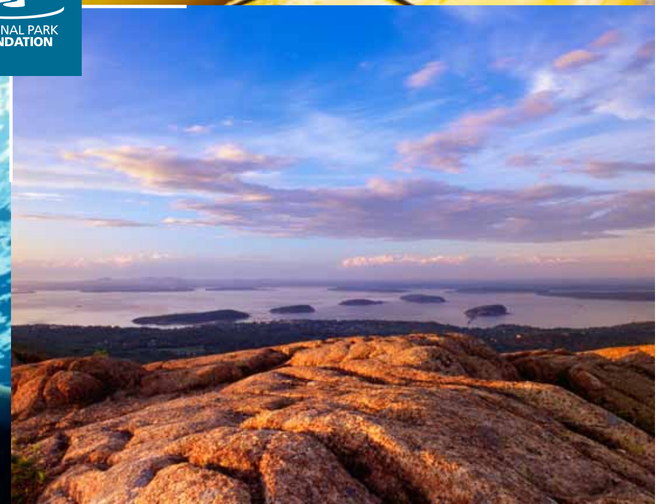
SPECIAL EDITION
VOLUME 1

parks FOR play

35 NATIONAL PARK ADVENTURES FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES

Presented by the National Park Foundation

NATIONAL PARK
FOUNDATION



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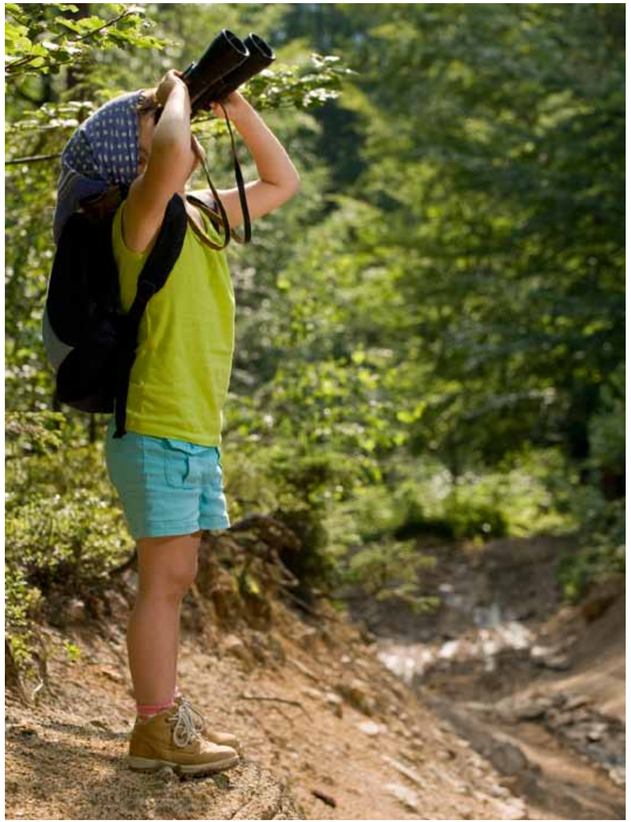

"Guard it well, for it is far more precious than money... once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price."

— ANSEL ADAMS

The National Parks have been called America's Best Idea. But there's also a case to be made that they're America's Best Classroom. Or America's Best Place to Connect with Your Kids.

Young and old and everywhere in between–each of us as citizens are part owners of America's over 400 national parks. At the National Park Foundation, we believe that taking young people to their parks helps create a connection to these incredible spaces that will grow with them for a lifetime.

This guide is meant for parents, aunts, uncles, friends and teachers to help kids and teens enjoy, explore and have adventures together in the parks.

Share a park, and shape a life.

Acadia National Park

BAR HARBOR, MAINE

Anchored in the Atlantic just off the Maine coast, Acadia is a unique mountainous national park with the ocean lapping at it's granite foundation. Thick forests threaded with hiking and biking opportunities and coastal features make for perfect family fun.

- Sea-life bingo keeps youngsters excited tallying green sea urchins, orange sea stars, and other curious marine creatures that reside in tide pools that surface at low tide. Watch for harbor seals farther out in the water.
- Leafy oaks, maples, and beeches frame (and shade!) the carriage roads that wind through the park's interior. Pedaling families can explore 47 miles of these gentle routes that weave through the woods and along lakes perfect for skipping stones and picnic breaks.
- Teens can navigate the park's sea waters in guided kayak tours or learn how to climb on the cliffs that rise above the Atlantic. Hiking trails that lead through spruce-fir forests and past granite outcrops with views of the Gulf of Maine are perfect for the entire family.

Arches National Park

MOAB, UTAH

This fantastic red-rock landscape, with more stone arches and "windows" than anywhere else on Earth, is an incredible playground for young and old.

- More than 2,000 arches frame varying aspects of this landscape, and while gravity has pulled some down, erosion is sculpting replacements. Before you let your kids climb through one, though, take a stroll down Park Avenue to get a feel for this super-sized landscape.
- How long will gravity allow Balanced Rock to remain balanced? That's a question you and your kids can ponder as you gaze at this precariously perched oddity. Continue to discuss it as you head into the nearby Windows Section, where young and old can climb into, and through, the North and South Windows, as well as Turret Arch.
- Delicate Arch is the main attraction, and while the hike is 3 miles roundtrip, it's worth it to gaze through this giant with the La Sal Mountains far off.

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

ONEIDA, TENNESSEE

Straddling the Tennessee-Kentucky border with cool streams for splashing and paddling and deep forests and gorges with sandstone bluffs, Big South Fork is popular with paddlers, hikers, campers, and mountain bikers.

- The undammed Big South Fork of the Cumberland River is the main attraction for paddling enthusiasts, who head to the NRA for both gentle meanders and Class IV white-water that challenges the experts.
- Big South Fork is increasingly gaining a reputation for its mountain bike trails, which range from entry-level to expert rides.
- Hunting, fishing, star-gazing, and horseback riding are some of the other pastimes enjoyed at the NRA. Looking for a comfortable overnight trip? Hike, mountain bike, or ride your horse to the Charit Creek Lodge that lies within the NRA's forests.

Biscayne National Park

HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA

"Water world" is an apt description of this south Florida park, as 95 percent of it is underwater. Slip beneath the surface, though, while snorkeling and you'll discover a realm of rainbow-hued coral reefs swarming with fish.

- Beginning snorkelers can sign up to explore coral ledges with their colorful fish in calm waters surrounding Elliott Key and nearby islands, while experienced snorkelers can opt for an open-water reef exploration.
- Don't like to get wet? There are glass-bottom boat tours that open a window on the park's marine life. Or hop into a canoe or kayak and drift through mangrove swamps and lagoons looking for school fishes, rays, and even sharks.
- Families visiting Biscayne between December and April can sign up to attend "Family Fun Fest" – a daylong program held on the second Sunday of those months and focused on activities tied to the park's diverse resources.

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Bryce Canyon National Park

BRYCE, UTAH

Creamsicle-hued ranks of stone soldiers -- stubby hoodoos -- show off nature's whimsical personality. Carved by wind, rain, and freeze-thaw cycles, these peculiar formations rise over you as you explore the trails that weave through the colorful underbelly of the Paunsaugunt Plateau.

- Bryce Canyon is a hiking park, one with short, moderate, and a single long-distance hikes. Descend below Sunset Point on the Navajo Trail and you'll go past Thor's Hammer and Two Bridges and into Wall Street, a slot canyon.
- Those with several days on their hands to backpack follow the Under-the-Rim Trail, a 23-mile-long path that winds along the base of Bryce Canyon before climbing back up to the rim. Along with offering solitude, this route provides a unique upward view at the park's colorful underpinnings.
- Family campers are right at home in the park's North and Sunset campgrounds, heavily treed settings not far from the short hikes that dip down into Bryce Canyon's geologic wonders.

Cape Cod National Seashore

WELLFLEET, MASSACHUSETTS

Sand castles, surf jumping, and beach volleyball all come to mind on this sweep of sand and forest on the coast of Massachusetts, but there's also cycling, whale watching, and hiking.

- Beaches are the pride and joy of Cape Codders, and the national seashore doesn't disappoint. Nauset Light and Coast Guard are two of the more famous beaches, but Marconi Beach also is a great stretch of sand that offers a bit more elbow room due to smaller crowds.
- Don't miss a trip to Provincetown, both to enjoy Race Point Beach, view the historic U.S. Life-Saving Service headquarters building with its "breeches buoy" rescue demonstrations, and head to sea on one of the many whale-watching excursions.
- Cycling is one of the best ways to get around the Cape thanks to its paved rail trail, which leads through the woods, pass kettle ponds created by retreating glaciers, and to spurs leading to Coast Guard, Marconi and Le Count Hollow beaches.

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Cape Hatteras National Seashore

MANTEO, NORTH CAROLINA

A thin string of barrier islands make up this national seashore. It's a setting said to have been popular with Blackbeard the pirate, though these days it's favored by those who enjoy surf fishing, wild horses, and beachside camping.

- Blackbeard anchored his ship off Ocracoke Island in the early 1700s. You won't find pirates here today, but you might spy some of the seashore's famed wild horses, the "Banker" ponies fabled to have descended from horses stranded in the 16th or 17th centuries when ships foundered here.
- Offering four campgrounds with nearly 600 campsites, Frisco Campground is a favorite of campers who like to be close to the water. Only the Ocracoke Campground, though, offers reservations. The other three are strictly first-come, first-serve.
- While on the Outer Banks, don't pass up a visit to the Wright Brothers Memorial, and show the young ones where Orville and Wilbur got airborne in 1903. Also, visit Fort Raleigh National Historic Site and learn about Sir Walter Raleigh's lost colony of 1587.

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

Running more than 184 miles across a landscape that once was frontier, the C&O Canal today preserves a slice of Americana and opens a window into a period of history when communications, travel, and commerce moved much slower than today.

- Experience the canal up close with a ride aboard a canal boat pulled by mules, just like it was done more than a century ago. Part of the thrill comes when you pass through locks where the water level is raised 8 feet to overcome the surrounding elevation change. Board either in Georgetown or at Great Falls.
- Visit the mule stables to meet the current roster of mules that haul the boats or visit Great Falls to delve into the history of the canal and its people.
- In Georgetown you not only can board a canal boat for a ride, but also explore this historic community that dates to 1751. In summer the National Park Service offers walking tours through Georgetown.

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Death Valley National Park

DEATH VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Once viewed as a wasteland, Death Valley is, in truth, a magical land. Dune fields ripple the park's interior, geology shows its pastel hues at Artists Palette, and an oasis rises above a "furnace."

- Badwater is more than just a place where you don't want to take a drink. It's the lowest spot in North America, at 282 feet below sea level, a place to inspect the salt pan that makes up the floor of Death Valley
- Rising slightly above this sweltering landscape is a series of sand dunes that seem out of place without a pounding surf. But these sandy hills are great for hiking with young ones to see what might have skittered by before you, or to marvel in the tracings wind-blown vegetation has created.
- The fruits of a yesteryear swindler are on display at Scotty's Castle, an early 20th-century wonder built by a curious friendship between a desert rat and a Chicago millionaire.

Everglades National Park

HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA

Perhaps known better by its nickname, the "River of Grass," the Everglades boasts the largest subtropical wilderness area in the United States. Not surprisingly, the park is a sanctuary rich with wildlife.

- Though located in heavily populated south Florida, there are plenty of adventures in the park. For spectacular wildlife viewing, take a hike on the park's most popular trail, the Anhinga Trail, a 1/4-mile long hard surface path and boardwalk. Head out onto Florida Bay in kayaks for a camping trek centered around chickees – elevated camping platforms -- at Shark Point and Johnson Key.
- To experience firsthand the marshes and mangroves of the park, consider a canoe trip on the Turner River, Nine Mile, or Nobel Hammock water trails. The park offers nearly 50 backcountry campsites. Consider the fall and winter months for your trip to avoid the heat and most insects.
- Take the kids to Shark Valley and take a 14-mile tram tour or rent a bike to explore sawgrass sloughs and tropical hardwood forests and take in a magnificent elevated view of the Everglades.

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Fredericksburg and Spotsylania National Military Park

FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA

A visit to this Civil War site—composed of four major battlefields: Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House—is both educational and somber, one that opens eyes to the nation's growing pains.

- Walk the Sunken Road. Though not a quarter-mile long, its historical perspective of key events during the Battle of Fredericksburg is incredible. There's the Innis House that still holds bullet holes from the battle, and the stone wall that offered protection for Rebel forces under Gen. Robert E. Lee.
- Tour the Chancellorsville Battlefield, including a stop at the visitor center that showcases uniforms, weapons, and other Civil War artifacts. Nearby is the site where Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was mortally wounded by his own troops in a case of "friendly fire."
- Explore the Hazel Grove and Fairview, where some cannons still hold the positions they defended more than a century ago when the Blue and the Grey clashed on May 3, 1863.

Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve

GUSTAVUS, ALASKA

Impressive in size at nearly 3.3 million acres, Glacier Bay also is doubly impressive when it comes to wildlife viewing, sea kayaking, and tidal glaciers that shuck their icy overburden into the ocean.

- Arrive via cruise ship and plan your day around a cruise with rangers who point out the tidal glaciers as well as humpback whales, sea lions, tufted puffins and other marine life that teems in the bay.
- To get a better feel for this park, find a room in the Glacier Bay Lodge or in one of the B&Bs or inns in nearby Gustavus. Then map out day hikes, fishing for salmon or halibut, or a day-long exploration of the surrounding waters on a ranger-guided catamaran-jaunt.
- There's good reason Glacier Bay is recognized as one of the top sea kayaking destinations in the country. Between the breath-catching landscape of glaciers, mountains and forest and the rich marine life, you're never bored. And for an escape into the wilderness, the Beardslee Islands are a short paddle away.

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Glacier National Park

WEST GLACIER, MONTANA

Glacier National Park was given its name for glacier-carved grounds that were formed over 10,000 years ago during the ice age. Today, Glacier offers natural wonders that need not be served with ice. Rocky ribs of the Continental Divide are on display, there are turquoise lakes reflecting rocky ramparts, and every now and then may meander past some shaggy mountain goats.

■ Stand atop Logan Pass and it's easy to see how glaciers sculpted this landscape. Hike to Hidden Lake and not only will you find a jewel, but if you're lucky, plenty of mountain goats to fill your camera.

■ Glacier is a land of contrasts. Leave the high country and you can descend into a Red Cedar and Western Hemlock forest along the Cedars Nature Trail, or head to Avalanche Lake to see glacial waters cascade hundreds of feet into the lake.

■ Glacier's backcountry offers solitude for the long-distance hiker, as well as some companionship and comfort if you make your bed in either the Granite Park or Sperry chalets, historic stone inns that once catered to railroad passengers on the trail.

Grand Canyon National Park

GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA

True, this park's fame revolves around an incredible crack in the earth, but there's so much more to experience on a trip to the Grand Canyon for kids of all ages.

■ Pick a rim, North or South, and you'll enjoy one of the most spectacular views on the planet, one that really humbles humans as architects. Get closer to the landscape by hiking down into the abyss, if only for a short distance, to better appreciate Mom Nature's erosional handiwork.

■ Looking down into the Grand Canyon is a great experience, but looking back up from the bottom can be even more amazing. Gain that perspective with a float trip down the Colorado River, or on a mule trek down to Phantom Ranch.

■ This park is as much about human civilization as it is about geology. The Tusayan Ruin and Museum on the South Rim explore that human history from the perspective of the Pueblo Indians who lived here eight centuries ago. In the Nankoweep area of the park there are ancient granaries long-gone cultures used to store foods.

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Grand Teton National Park

MOOSE, WYOMING

The Alps will seem like anthills after you've stood before the Tetons that brace Wyoming's western border with Idaho. And nestled at the base of these crags is a string of lakes and sweeps of forest that are among the most picturesque in the park system thanks to the crags overhead.

■ Teens looking for a challenge can measure themselves against the Tetons, thanks to climbing schools where world-class guides will teach them the basics and lead them to the summit of 13,770-foot Grand Teton.

■ Though a park renowned for climbing, Grand Teton also has some pretty great paddling. Jenny and Jackson lakes are perfect for exploring short and long, while the Snake River offers both relaxing and heart-racing raft trips.

■ Wildlife-viewing opportunities abound in Grand Teton, from bald eagles and osprey that cruise the Snake River looking for juicy trout to grizzlies, moose, wolves, and even cougar that roam the landscape.

Great Basin National Park

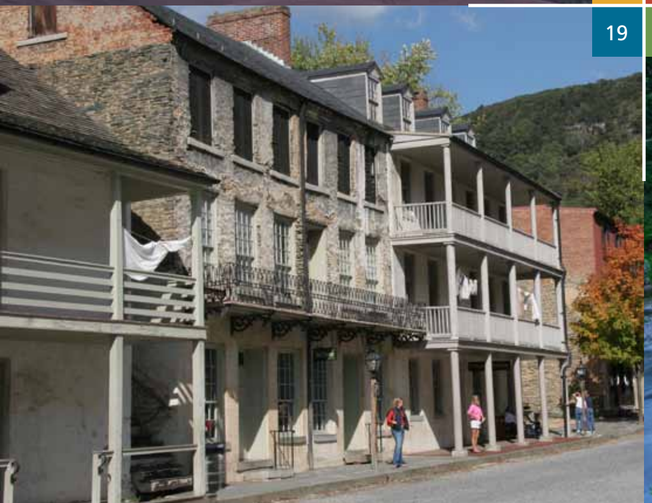
BAKER, NEVADA

This Great Basin icon is unusual in that you can stand atop its 13,063-foot summit and then go underground to marvel and its artfully carved caverns.

■ Wheeler Peak, rising to 13,063 feet, is an alpine wonder surrounded by high desert. It also harbors some of the oldest trees on earth, 5,000-year-old Bristlecone pines, who's Latin name "pinus longaeva" reflects the species' longevity.

■ Descend into the park's Lehman Caves and you'll find an underworld of marble and limestone flowstones, dripstones, "popcorn," and even "moonmilk." Budding geologists and spelunkers can work on telling stalactites apart from stalagmites.

■ Summertime is perfect for short, and long, hikes, winter brings snowshoers and backcountry skiers into the park. Year-round some of the darkest skies in the country offer the best views of the Milky Way in the country.



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Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve

MOSCA, COLORADO

It's hard to find a national park that features both towering sand dunes and alpine highlands that rise beyond 13,000 feet, but Great Sand Dunes National Park offers just that.

- Kids love to get sandy on the tallest sand dunes in North America. Rising to about 650 feet, these dunes in the heart of the park are perfect for skiing, sand-boarding, or just plain old rolling down.
- Camping is allowed both in the dunefields as well as in the upper reaches of the park, where miles of trail give backpackers plenty of options. Medano Lake is a great, cool destination on a hot summer outing.
- Along with its outstanding scenery, Great Sand Dunes has its share of wildlife, from herds of elk and bison to bighorn sheep, black bears, and colorful western tanagers. More unusual are the short-horned lizards, plateau lizards, and many-lined skinks, another type of lizard.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

GATLINBURG, TENNESSEE

Appalachian lore and beauty are woven like a tapestry through this veiled playground. Streams that cascade and rest in pools are perfect for fending off summer's dog days, while hikes show off this park's diverse and beautiful vegetation.

- Cades Cove is a Smoky Mountains heirloom from an earlier day. It's historic structures and sprawling meadows offer a step into a more self-sufficient time. It's a good setting to spy deer and, on occasion, black bears.
- Don't overlook Cataloochee. True, it can take some time to reach, but here you'll find the park's elk herds, a peaceful campground next to a babbling trout stream, and a page out of the past in some of its homesteads.
- Clingmans Dome is the park's high point, one capped by a spiral ramp that tops out at an observation platform that, on clear days, offers views into seven states (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia). The Appalachian Trail crosses the park here, a wondrous footpath that leads you into a quieter walk of life.

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Harpers Ferry National Historic Park

HARPERS FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA

A footpath, towpath, and key moments in the United States' formative history converge at this setting along the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers in eastern West Virginia.

- John Brown's ill-fated takeover of a U.S. armory here in October 1859 was a precursor to the Civil War, as he hoped to arm an uprising of slaves. His raid failed, though, and he was hanged for treason and other charges.
- Harpers Ferry was a background for many Civil War battles and troop movements. In September 1862 the site witnessed the largest surrender of Union troops during the conflict, as Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson captured 12,500 Union troops stationed there.
- The Appalachian National Scenic Trail passes through Harpers Ferry, running 3 miles through the park. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is based here, as well, and offers insights and help for those wanting to hike the 2,178-mile AT end-to-end. A portion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal also flows by here, and the towpath makes for an excellent bike ride with the kids.

Lassen Volcanic National Park

MINERAL, CALIFORNIA

The hissing of fumaroles and sputtering of mudpots might make you think you're in Yellowstone National Park, but they can be found in Lassen Volcanic National Park as well. And they're just one of the highlights of this geologic wonder.

- Budding geologists will be fascinated with Lassen Volcanic, as it can count all four major types of volcanoes -- shield, plug, cinder cone, and composite. There's even a Volcano Club kids can join to learn more about this volcanic landscape.
- Along with volcanoes, this park features some gorgeous backcountry lakes, such as Cliff, Terrace and Shadow, that can be reached with a short hike. Or you can mix geology and hiking with a 5-mile roundtrip to the top of Lassen Peak, an example of a plug dome volcano.
- Evidence of the underlying volcanism can be found at Boiling Springs Lake, where a number of steam vents keep the waters simmering at a temperature of about 125 degrees.

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Mammoth Cave National Park

MAMMOTH CAVE, KENTUCKY

For nearly 370 miles a subterranean labyrinth runs below this jewel of Kentucky, branching off right and left, up and down, and even doubling back on itself. Guided tours lead to the highlights, while "wild cave" tours beckon to the adventurous.

■ A Mammoth Cave trip is built around a cave tour with the family, or three! Take the Violet City Lantern Tour to experience the passageways by flickering lamp light as many of its first visitors did, view the incredible flowstones on the Frozen Niagara Tour, or visit the Snowball Room with its ancient autographs inscribed with soot.

■ While the underground is certainly the main attraction, explore the surface and you'll enjoy hiking and biking trails that wind through hardwood forests, giant sink holes that help explain this porous terrain, and well-tended cemeteries that tell centuries-old stories.

■ A ride aboard Miss Green River offers another aspect of this intriguing landscape. The hour-long cruises cover 7 miles up and down the Green River that meanders through the park.

Mesa Verde National Park

MESA VERDE, COLORADO

Perched high on a southwestern Colorado mesa, the dwellings squeezed into the cliffs offered both great views, and great protection, for a culture that vanished about 700 years ago. Today Mesa Verde National Park both protects, and explains, those dwellings and their mysterious builders.

■ To best appreciate the ancestral Puebloans' security concerns, climb up into Balcony House. Not only is the view perfect, but the dwelling offers protection from both hot summer sun and cold winter storms. When you squeeze through a 12-foot tunnel to leave, you'll see an example of their measures against possible invaders.

■ Cliff Palace is the icon of Mesa Verde, and through a ranger-guided tour you'll climb five ladders as you move between levels. Close-up views of kivas and dwellings.

■ Just five of Mesa Verde's cliff dwellings are open to the public, so don't stop at Balcony House and Cliff Palace. Walk into Spruce Tree House, and climb down the ladder into the kiva, before taking a tour of Long House that's tucked into a sprawling alcove and then Step House. Several other dwellings can be spotted from a distance while driving the park roads.

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Mount Rainier National Park

ASHFORD, WASHINGTON

This Cascadian icon is more than meets the eye, which is an awful lot! From glacial snouts you can walk up to and year-round snowfields for play to rain forest settings and long-distance trails, Rainier is a wonderland inviting exploration.

■ Wonderland indeed. Long-distance hikers head down the Wonderland Trail, hoping to complete the 93-mile loop in one jaunt. While the length might not seem daunting to experienced hikers, the thousands of feet you gain in elevation from the ups and downs will definitely test you.

■ Paradise does indeed exist at Mount Rainier, and this outpost on the southern flanks of the mountain is a great day destination or base camp. The 94-year-old Paradise Inn, beautifully renovated between 2006 and 2008, is a perfect retreat after a long day.

■ On the way to Sunrise, a launching spot for many backcountry hikes, don't overlook Ohanapecosh, a landscape of towering old-growth trees and cool hikes.

Olympic National Park

PORT ANGELES, WASHINGTON

A poster-child for the diversity of the National Park System? That would be Olympic. Here on the Washington peninsula kids are lured onto Pacific-splashed beaches, into lush temperature rain forests, and across glacial highlands.

■ Aspiring naturalists can hone their observational skills in the Hoh Rain Forest. Nourished by 12 feet of rain a year, this leafy, temperate rain forest overflows with life, from giant "banana" slugs and towering, moss-draped old-growth forests to Roosevelt elk that call the forest a year-round home.

■ Rialto Beach is perfect for combing beaches for whatever the ocean has tossed ashore. Wave-pounded sea stacks show where the shoreline once was, and the "Hole-in-the-Wall," a seaside arch, depicts erosion at work.

■ Which other parks allow you to start the day with a snowball fight (on Hurricane Ridge) and end it soaking in warm springs (like those at Sol Duc Hot Springs)?

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Ozark National Scenic Riverways

VAN BUREN, MISSOURI

Spring-fed rivers are the focal point of this destination, though there's more than meets the eye at first glance. Paddling, angling, and horseback riding are just some of the ways to explore this unit of the park system with your family.

- Whether you float Jacks Fork, Upper Current, or Lower Current rivers, you'll be able to spend a day, or several days with overnights along the river, exploring the waters protected by the riverway.
- You'll find four designated horse trails in the park, as well as other opportunities along state-, county- and park-owned roads that are either unpaved or unmaintained for motorized traffic.
- Before the arrival of the National Park Service, this part of Missouri was knitted together with communities. Through craft demonstrations and restorations and preservations of buildings, you can come to appreciate life on the Ozarks frontier.

Rocky Mountain National Park

ESTES PARK, COLORADO

A quick, two hour scenic drive from Denver International Airport, Rocky Mountain is a park that well lives up to its name, with soaring peaks, rumpled mountains, aspen groves and sweeps of coniferous forest.

- Herds of elk and bighorn sheep reside year-round in Rocky Mountain, and to raise the odds of spying some be sure to stop at Sheep Lakes in Horseshoe Park just up the road from the Fall River Entrance (Higway 34).
- A quick primer on the park's landscape can be had by driving Trail Ridge Road, which climbs to 12,183 feet in elevation and, along the way, passes through thick forest and across alpine tundra.
- Rocky is a hiking park, with long-distance treks that lead to the top of Longs Peak (14,259 ft.), and shorter, family friendly trails that run short distances to gorgeous settings such as Bear and Mills lakes and spectacular Alberta Falls.

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San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Eighteenth-century Spanish history abounds here, where missionaries in 1718 established an outpost to Christianize the native populations. Explore the park with a guide or on your own on bike.

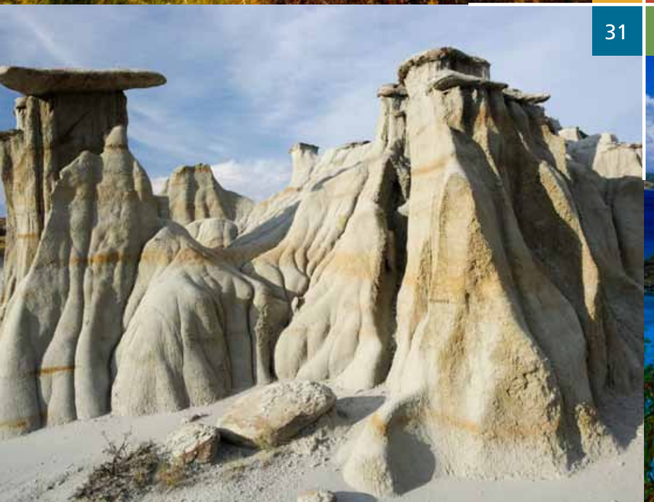
- Learn about the Franciscan missionaries, and their building skills, with a guided tour to one of the four missions preserved within the historical park.
- An 8-mile-long hiking and biking path that follows the San Antonio River leads to the four missions within the park. While the route does not loop back on itself, you can start at any of the four missions and walk or pedal only as far as you'd like.
- History students can gorge themselves on not just the Franciscans' efforts to attract followers, but also on the cattle drives that originated here during the Revolutionary War and the efforts by the French, Spanish, and English to gain footholds in the Southwest.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

THREE RIVERS, CALIFORNIA

The biggest trees on earth are just the opening act of this High Sierra beauty, which offers both surprising subterranean adventures and foot paths that can lead you for days through high country wilderness.

- The Giant Forest is just that, a stupendous setting of gargantuan Sequoia trees rising to 275 feet. These thick-trunked trees, along with getting you to tilt your head way back to take in their full height, invite games of hide-and-seek.
- Hiking opportunities abound in Sequoia and Kings Canyon. Take an easy day hike in the Foothills in the spring and enjoy the eye-popping wildflower display while exploring the oak woodlands. Or, take a backpacking trip to explore the alpine lakes, meadows and Sierra peaks of the Kings Canyon or Mineral King areas of the parks.
- Some of the trees are rooted in soil and rock woven with caverns. Crystal Cave is just the most visible and accessible of the park's caves, one where teens can head off on a "wild cave" tour of crawling and squirming through passages. Too dirty? Sign the family up for an historic candle-lit cave tour.



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Shenandoah National Park

LURAY, VIRGINIA

A rumpled ridge of the Appalachian Mountains running through the heart of Virginia holds up this forested park that's laced with hiking trails and countless waterfalls that leap past overgrown homesteads slowly vanishing back into the landscape.

- The Appalachian National Scenic Trail runs the length of the park, making short forays, and overnight treks, possible along the country's oldest official long-distance footpath.
- Laughter -- both from leaping waters and giggling kids -- echo up through the hollows cut by waterfalls that pool conveniently in places for beating summer's heat and humidity.
- Despite its location in the Mid-Atlantic State, nearly 80,000 acres of Shenandoah is officially designated wilderness, a perfect expanse to explore with kids. New to camping or hiking? Sign up for the "Hiking With Children" or "The Basics of Family Camping" programs.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

EMPIRE, MICHIGAN

Many jewels of the National Park System are strung along the Great Lakes, and Sleeping Bear Dunes on Lake Michigan is one of them. Drawing its name from Native American legend, this lakeshore offers beaches, towering sand dunes, and more than 100 miles of hiking trails.

- Gain a quick feel for the lakeshore along the 7-mile-long Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive, a loop that winds both along the beaches and their sand dunes as well as through the park's Beech-Maple forests.
- Young and old get a kick out of the challenge of the "Dune Climb." Reach the top of the dunes and you'll enjoy the view of Glen Lake...as well as the sandy thrill of running, or rolling, back down to the bottom.
- Winter isn't the off-season here, as there are trails for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. And if there's enough snow, kids and adults can even sled down the 100+ ft. Dune Climb.

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Theodore Roosevelt National Park

MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA

Deep in the badlands of North Dakota, this national park preserves the landscape that instilled in Theodore Roosevelt many of his conservation ethics. The park also is home to bison, prairie dogs, wild horses, elk, pronghorn antelope, and golden eagles.

- What started out as a hunting trip in 1883 turned Roosevelt into a cattle rancher, a link to the landscape that helped fan his love for the out-of-doors. At the park you can view his first home there, the Maltese Cross Cabin.
- Throughout this summer the Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association will host "Teddy Bear Picnics" to celebrate these stuffed animals and delve into their history.
- Backcountry camping, hiking, paddling, and wildlife viewing are among the ways to pass the days during a family visit to this national park. Horse travel follows both established trails in the park, and, for the adventurous, cross-country excursions with overnights in the backcountry.

Virgin Islands National Park

ST. JOHN, VIRGIN ISLANDS

Warm, aquamarine waters that teem with colorful fish and lap sugar-sand beaches are just one facet of this Caribbean pearl. You also can hike into the past or sail into the sunset.

- Trunk Bay, named after the leatherback turtles that once nested here in abundance, is ideal for newcomers to snorkeling. Here a marked underwater trail will introduce you and your kids to corals and possibly the colorful sergeant majors and blue tangs that mill about in squadrons that flit here and there in unison.
- Once you're comfortable in the water, the park offers numerous coves and bays to snorkel in search of elkhorn and staghorn corals, luminescent-green parrot fish, and green and leatherback sea turtles.
- The Caribbean's history runs deep in sugar plantations and the slave labor that built and worked them. The ruins of the Annaberg Sugar Plantation help explain these dark days of colonial slavery.

Yellowstone National Park

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING

This is where the world's national park movement began, and when you wander the geyser basins, marvel at the wildlife, and explore the backcountry, it's easy to understand why the preservation movement took hold here.

- Catching an Old Faithful Geyser eruption is a must-do activity, but don't stop there. Bring the family to Observation Point, a short mile-long roundtrip that offers sprawling views of the Upper Geyser Basin. Then walk the entire basin along the boardwalks and paths to get a better appreciation for the geothermal waterworks at play here.
- The Lamar Valley in the park's Northern Range is the best stop for viewing elk, bison, and wolves. Improve your odds of winning at wildlife bingo by arriving early or late in the day.
- Roughly 95 percent of Yellowstone's visitors confine their trips to the front country, which is unfortunate. Venture down a trail, or paddle across a lake, and you'll experience a wilderness setting that hasn't changed in centuries.

Yosemite National Park

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA

This cathedral of rock and water embraces some of the most spectacular scenery on Earth, with towering granite sentinels, cascading waterfalls, and glorious Sierra high country.

- A day spent in the Yosemite Valley can be both claustrophobic, in light of its narrow length, and spectacular, due to granite spectacles called El Capitan, Half Dome, and Glacier Point. Walk the trail where Yosemite Fall splashes to the ground, or douse yourself in the Merced River during summer's heat.
- Follow the Mist Trail to the high country above the Yosemite Valley. Not only does this trail cool you off, thanks to the spray from Vernal and Nevada falls, but it leads you towards Half Dome and the visual reward that dome offers to those who reach its summit.
- Explore the Tioga Road and all the high country trails that lead away from it into the High Sierra. Take a day to hike to Cathedral Lake, or spend several days hiking from tent cabin to tent cabin in the High Sierra Camps.

Zion National Park

SPRINGDALE, UTAH

Soaring walls of buff alabaster- and umber-hued sandstone, narrow slot canyons, and red-rock vistas of this Southwestern park dwarf its visitors, who, once they get over their awe, swarm like ants over the landscape.

- Short, family friendly hikes to Emerald Pools (a trio of shimmering potholes), Weeping Rock with its hanging wildflower gardens, and the Pa'rus Trail acquaint you with the uniqueness of Zion Canyon.
- Passage through the Temple of Sinawava along the Riverside Walk and into the iconic "Zion Narrows" slot canyon is literally walking into a crack in the earth. In the high heat of summer it also is refreshing and an opportunity for kids to cool off in the thin flows of the Virgin River.
- Angels Landing is perhaps the most revered hiking destination in Zion. The panoramic views of Zion Canyon are both precarious and unbeatable. But to enjoy those views you must ascend a 2.5-mile trail culminating with a chain-clutching half-mile approach along a narrow scarp of rock. Recommended for families with olders teens.

Things to Do

IN JUST ABOUT EVERY NATIONAL PARK

Did you know that there are over 400 national parks in the United States? There's an adventure to be had in every single one. If you visit a park that's not included in this guide, we have some suggestions to help make the most of your trip:

- Take a picture! Photos of your visit to any park will help you remember the experience for a lifetime. Also – make sure that the picture is the ONLY thing you take from the park. Everything else there is being preserved for you, and the generations who will follow you.
- Talk to the Park Rangers! They are experts about the sites they help protect and preserve. Ask them about their favorite views, stories, historical events and natural wonders.
- You can buy a Park Passport at most Ranger Stations – and then ask rangers at each park you visit to stamp your Park Passport to keep track of your park visits!
- Explore the park, and find your favorite spot. Afterwards, visit nationalparks.org and share your stories, memories and tips with other park visitors.

PARK DIRECTORY

To help plan your national park adventure, here is a full directory of all 35 national parks in this guide – complete with information on entrance fees, Junior Ranger programs and camping availability. An icon and abbreviations key can be found at the end of the directory. Happy Planning!

1	Acadia NP BAR HARBOR, MAINE	207.288.3338	www.nps.gov/acad	●	●	●
2	Arches NP MOAB, UTAH	435.719.2299	www.nps.gov/arch	●	●	●
3	Big South Fork NRRA ONEIDA, TENNESSEE	423.286.7275	www.nps.gov/biso	●	●	●
4	Biscayne NP HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA	305.230.7275	www.nps.gov/bisc		●	●

5	Bryce Canyon NP BRYCE, UTAH	435.834.5322	www.nps.gov/brca	●	●	●
6	Cape Cod NS WELLFLEET, MASSACHUSETTS	508.771.2144	www.nps.gov/caco	●	●	
7	Cape Hatteras NS MANTEO, NORTH CAROLINA	252.473.2111	www.nps.gov/caha		●	●
8	Chesapeake and Ohio Canal NHP HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND	301.739.4200	www.nps.gov/choh	●	●	●
9	Death Valley NP DEATH VALLEY, CALIFORNIA	760.786.3200	www.nps.gov/deva	●	●	●
10	Everglades NP HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA	305.242.7700	www.nps.gov/ever	●	●	●
11	Fredericksburg and Spotsylania NMP FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA	540.373.6122	www.nps.gov/frsp		●	
12	Glacier Bay NP and PRES GUSTAVUS, ALASKA	907.697.2230	www.nps.gov/glba		●	●
13	Glacier NP WEST GLACIER, MONTANA	406.888.7800	www.nps.gov/glac	●	●	●
14	Grand Canyon NP GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA	928.638.7888	www.nps.gov/grca	●	●	●
15	Grand Teton NP MOOSE, WYOMING	307.739.3300	www.nps.gov/grte	●	●	●
16	Great Basin NP BAKER, NEVADA	775.234.7331	www.nps.gov/grba		●	●

		Telephone	Website	Fee	Jr. Ranger Program	Camping
17	Great Sand Dunes NP and PRES MOSCA, COLORADO	719.378.6399	www.nps.gov/grsa	●	●	●
18	Great Smoky Mountains NP GATLINBURG, TENNESSEE	865.436.1200	www.nps.gov/grsm		●	●
19	Harpers Ferry NHP HARPES FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA	304.535.6029	www.nps.gov/hafe	●	●	
20	Lassen Volcanic NP MINERAL, CALIFORNIA	530.595.4480	www.nps.gov/lavo	●	●	●
21	Mammoth Cave NP MAMMOTH CAVE, KENTUCKY	270.758.2180	www.nps.gov/maca		●	●
22	Mesa Verde NP MESA VERDE, COLORADO	970.529.4465	www.nps.gov/meve	●	●	●
23	Mount Rainier NP ASHFORD, WASHINGTON	360.569.2211	www.nps.gov/mora	●	●	●
24	Olympic NP PORT ANGELES, WASHINGTON	360.565.3130	www.nps.gov/olym	●	●	●
25	Ozark NSR VAN BUREN, MISSOURI	573.323.4236	www.nps.gov/ozar		●	●
26	Rocky Mountain NP ESTES PARK, COLORADO	970.586.1206	www.nps.gov/romo	●	●	●
27	San Antonio Missions NHP SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS	210.932.1001	www.nps.gov/saan		●	
28	Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP THREE RIVERS, CALIFORNIA	559.565.3341	www.nps.gov/seki	●	●	●

		Telephone	Website	Fee	Jr. Ranger Program	Camping
29	Shenandoah NP LURAY, VIRGINIA	540.999.3500	www.nps.gov/shen	●	●	●
30	Sleeping Bear Dunes NL EMPIRE, MICHIGAN	231.326.5134	www.nps.gov/slbe	●	●	●
31	Theodore Roosevelt NP MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA	701.623.4460 or 701.842.2333	www.nps.gov/thro	●	●	●
32	Virgin Islands NP ST. JOHN, VIRGIN ISLANDS	340.776.6201	www.nps.gov/viis		●	●
33	Yellowstone NP YELLOWSTONE NP, WYOMING	307.344.7381	www.nps.gov/yell	●	●	●
34	Yosemite NP YOSEMITE NP, CALIFORNIA	209.372.0200	www.nps.gov/yose	●	●	●
35	Zion NP SPRINGDALE, UTAH	435.772.3256	www.nps.gov/zion	●	●	●

Telephone
Website
Fee
Jr. Ranger Program
Camping

ABBREVIATIONS KEY

NHP—National Historical Park
NL—National Lakeshore
NMP—National Military Park
NP—National Park
NP and PRES—National Park and Preserve
NRRA—National River and Recreation Area
NSR—National Scenic River/Riverways

CAMPGROUND & TOUR RESERVATIONS

For more information on national park camping and tour reservations please visit http://www.recreation.gov for details.

Hey, Parents!

One of the National Park Foundation's top goals is to connect kids to America's national parks. Our parks provide special opportunities for learning and fun, and help children see firsthand the importance of caring for our environment. A few ways that the National Park Foundation gets kids involved in parks are Junior Ranger, Webranger, and Electronic Field Trip programs.

To learn more, visit nationalparks.org.

Junior Ranger

As a supporter of the Junior Ranger and WebRanger programs, the National Park Foundation has helped make the Junior Ranger program available to hundreds of thousands of children in nearly 300 national parks. Through fun, hands-on activities, Junior Rangers explore and engage in some of the country's most incredible parks and historic sites. Learn more at: www.nps.gov/learn/juniorranger.cfm

WebRangers

WebRangers, an online extension of Junior Ranger, lets kids explore the parks from home at their own pace with games, activities, maps and secret codes. To get started as a Junior Ranger, visit www.nps.gov/webrangers!

Electronic Field Trip

The EFT program is an interactive educational experience that breaks down the geographic barrier between youth and our national treasures, and creates a shared classroom experience with park rangers, fellow students and classrooms across the country. Through the program, students nationwide learn about the unique features of the park and walk away with a real world appreciation for geology, eco-systems, climate change and more. Each program is also accompanied by a comprehensive lesson plan and interactive web site to enhance the learning experience. Learn more about EFTs at www.electronicfieldtrip.org.

About the National Park Foundation

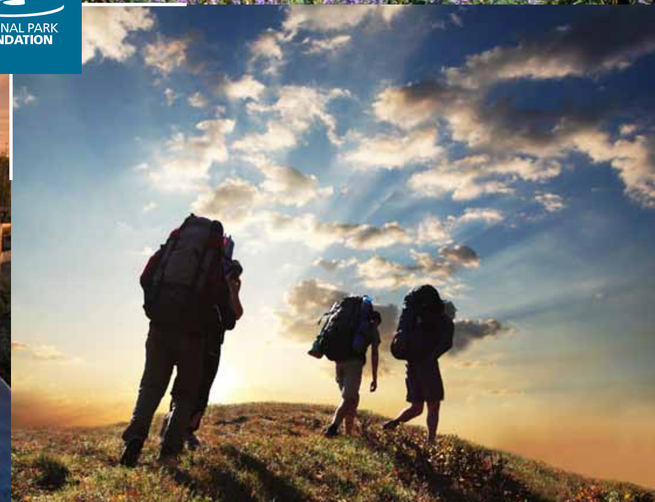
You are the part-owner of 84 million acres of the world's most treasured landscapes, ecosystems, and historical sites – all protected in America's over 400 national parks. Chartered by Congress, the National Park Foundation is the official charity of America's national parks. We work hand in hand with the National Park Service to help connect you and all Americans to the parks, and to make sure that they are preserved for the generations who will follow.

Join us – This is Your Land.

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/nationalpark

TWITTER: twitter.com/goparks

MOBILE: Text ***PARKS*** to **90999** and donate **$10** today!*

*A one-time donation of $10 will be added to your mobile phone bill or deducted from your prepaid balance. All charges are billed by and payable to your mobile service provider. Service is available on most carriers. Donations are collected for the benefits of the National Park Foundation by the mGive Foundation and subject to the terms found at www.mGive.com/A. You can unsubscribe at any time by texting STOP to short code 90999 ; Text HELP to 90999 for help.

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