UNITED STATES
NATIONAL PARKS

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National Park Service

The idea of a national park began in 1870 when an expedition set out at its own expense to investigate all the incredible stories of natural wonders that had been coming out of the area now known as Yellowstone. They had heard stories of geysers shooting columns of boiling water into the sky, hot pools of water, mud volcanoes, forests filled with wildlife in every form, and of gigantic water falls. After finding all these stories to be true, the group discussed the commercial value of such wonders, but then considered waiving personal claims to the area and seek to have it set aside for all time as a reserve for the use and enjoyment of all people.

With this came the idea of creating a national park. The idea became a reality that, through the years has grown from one park to include 25 national parks.

Although Yellowstone National Park was established on March 1, 1872 as the nation's first national park, the National Park Service was not created until August 25, 1916. The National Park System is comprised of 392 areas covering more than 84 million acres. There areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation area, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House. This album focuses on just one part of the National Park Service — the National Parks.

Over one half of the park areas administered by the National Park Service have been set aside as symbols and evidence of our history and prehistory. Many of the national parks contain historic places that represent important aspects of that history.
Visiting a national park is like traveling through an American history textbook, as the textbook educates us about the people, events, building, objects, landscapes, and artifacts of the American past.
In the East

Acadia
Location: Maine
Established: 1919 as Lafayette National Park
name changed to Acadia National Park in 1929

By the 1800s, settlers living on Mount Desert Island were destroying the natural resources through lumbering, farming, shipbuilding, and fishing. To preserve the beauty of the island, Acadia was established, making it the first national park located east of the Mississippi River. Surrounded by the ocean, both deciduous and northern coniferous forests can be found in the park. Today thousands of visitors are drawn to the park to hike the granite peaks, including Cadillac Mountain — the tallest peak on the east coast, to bike the historic carriage roads, to enjoy the scenery, or just to relax.

Animal life found in Acadia includes a record 338 bird species (the bald eagle and peregrine falcon can been seen here), 31 fish species, beavers, coyotes, white-tailed deer, harbor seals, frogs, salamanders, and more.

Great Smoky Mountains
Location: Tennessee & North Carolina
Established: 1934

Whether you are a hiker, biker, fisherman, or a nature enthusiast, the Smokies has something for everyone. 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, and the quality of its remnants of Southern Appalachian mountain culture, this is America's most visited national park. Although established by Congress in 1934, land acquisition continued, and in 1940 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt officially dedicated the park.

The Smokies are a premier wildlife viewing area, with a total of 65 mammals living in the Park. Some, such as the deer, squirrels, and skunks are seen quite often. Others include the bobcat, wild European boar, coyote, beaver, and mink. Several species of squirrels make their homes in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, such as the gray squirrel, fox squirrel, red squirrel, southern flying squirrel, and northern flying squirrel.

Wolf Trap Farm National Park
Location: Virginia
Established: 1966

As early as 1739 a stream running through Fairfax County became known as Wolf Trap Creek, so named because of the trapping of the wolves in the area. In 1966 the Wolf Trap Farm was donated to the American people as a National Park. Located near Vienna, Virginia, the Farm offers a wealth of cultural and natural resources to the nation. The Filene Center which is part of the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, was named for Catherine Filene Shouse. Mrs. Shouse donated her farm, which, in addition to the buildings, contained over 100 acres of land, to become a National Park. This was the first national park for the performing arts.

Virgin Islands National Park
Located: St John Island/St. Thomas Island
Established: 1956

The Virgin Islands are volcanic islands, created by a long process of undersea mountain building brought about by periods of explosive volcanism alternating with centuries of coral reef deposits. A chain of islands (including the Greater Antilles, the Virgin Islands, and the Lesser Antilles) begins with Cuba and ends with Trinidad, off the coast of South America. St. John and St. Thomas as located in the northern sector of these islands. In addition to the acreage on the islands, the Virgin Islands National Park includes approximately 5,650 acres of offshore areas that include coral reefs, mangrove shorelines, and sea grass beds.

The Virgin Islands National Park is home to 140 species of birds, 302 species of fish, 7 species of amphibians, and 22 species of mammals. The coral reef is the habitat for a variety of animals, including the parrot fish, snappers, butterfly fish, angels, and squirrel fish. Invertebrates, such as starfish, sponges, crabs, and lobsters, also make their home among the corals. Sandpipers, crabs, and mollusks visit the beaches on the Virgin Islands. Sea turtles visit the beaches to lay their eggs. The tiny, inch-long Dwarf Gecko is native to the islands. Other animals seen on the islands are the wandering donkey, deer, goats, sheep, and mongoose.

Everglades
Location: Florida
Established: 1934

In 1934, Congress passed an act authorizing a park to be acquired that was to be a wilderness to protect the fragile ecosystem. On December 6, 1947, President Harry S. Truman dedicated the Everglades National Park stating, "Here is land, tranquil in its quiet beauty, serving not as the source of water, but as the receiver of it. To its natural abundance we owe the spectacular plant and animal life that distinguishes this place from all others in our country." Today the Everglades National Park welcomes more than one million visitors to the largest subtropical wilderness in the U.S.

More than 50 species of reptiles (including 26 snakes), 18 species of amphibians, 350 different species of birds, and hundreds of insects and spiders are found in the park. Many of the more than 40 species of mammals have adapted to the semi-aquatic environment of the park. Visitors can see a marsh rabbit swimming or white-tailed deer wading through the sawgrass. Two of the mammals found in the Everglades — the Florida Panther and the West Indian Manatee — are now on the endangered species list.
In the East

Acadia National Park
2001 • Scott C138

Great Smoky Mountains National Park
1935 • Scott 765

Acadia National Park
1934 • Scott 746

Wolf Trap Farm Park
1982 • Scott 2018

Everglades National Park
1947 • Scott 952

Performance at Wolf Trap Farm
1972 • Scott 1452

Virgin Islands National Park
1937 • Scott 802

Virgin Islands National Park
1967 • Scott UXC6
Northern Rockies

Badlands
Location: South Dakota
Established: 1939 as Badlands National Monument
1978 elevated to Badlands National Park

Located in southwestern South Dakota, the Badlands National Park contains that biggest and the baddest of the badlands found in Western United States. For thousands of years, the native Americans used this land for their hunting grounds. Here they found large fossilized bones, fossilized seashells and turtle shells. Visitors now visit to view the Park’s sharply eroded buttes, pinnacles, and spires.

Animal life found in the Badlands includes 37 mammals, 9 reptiles, 206 birds, and 69 butterfly species. Bison, bighorn sheep, and the endangered black-footed ferret roam the mixed-grass prairies of this National Park.

Glacier
Location: Montana
Established: 1910

The mountains of Glacier National Park began forming millions of years ago when ancient rocks were forced up and over much younger rock strata. By the late 1800s, tourists could travel to West Glacier by train, take a stagecoach ride to Lake McDonald, and then board a boat for an eight-mile trip into the mountains where they could view the rugged peaks, clear waters, and glacial-carved valleys of the area. In 1900 the area was made a Forest Preserve, but was still open to mining and homesteading. In 1910 President Taft signed a bill establishing Glacier National Park, protecting the nearly 1.4 million acres of wilderness and spectacular mountain scenery.

Today this landscape is a wilderness full of wildflowers and wildlife. The big horn sheep, mountain goats, elk, black bear, and deer are frequently seen. Grizzly bear, moose, bison, and wolves live in the park all year long. Osprey, ptarmigan, and golden eagles can be seen soaring over the mountains. The endangered bald eagle also nests in Glacier National Park.

Yellowstone
Location: Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho
Established: 1872

Yellowstone National Park covers 2.2 million acres (nearly the size of the State of Connecticut) in northwestern Wyoming, overlapping into Montana and Idaho. The park is comprised of high, forested, and volcanic plateaus, with mountains on the north, south, and east sides of the park. The area is filled with geysers, hot pools, pools, and hot springs that are beautiful and fun to enjoy. Old Faithful is located within Yellowstone, as well as the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone.

Established in 1872, Yellowstone National Park is America’s first national park. It is home to a large variety of wildlife including, wolves, bison, coyote, and elk. Buffalo, geese, ducks, otters, and black bear have been seen throughout the northern region of the park. Threatened species known to reside in the Yellowstone National Park include grizzly bears, bald eagle, and lynx and endangered are the gray wolf and the whooping crane.
Northern Rockies

Glacier National Park
1934 • Scott 748

Badlands National Park
1967 • Scott UXC28

Yellowstone National Park
1934 • Scott 744

Yellowstone National Park
1972 • Scott 1453
Utah and Arizona

Zion National Park
Location: Utah
Established: 1919

On the canyon walls of Zion National Park one can see the geologic formations, laid down one above the other, in orderly succession. Each formation reveals the geography, climate, fauna, and flora of its time through mineral content, the fossils, and the thickness of each layer. Almost 12,000 years ago Zion’s first inhabitants tracked mammoth across the plains. However, the formations show that resources dwindled and the people turned to farming to maintain their existence. In the mid-1800s flash floods destroyed towns and drought burned the crops.

In 1909 the cliff-and-canyon landscape and wilderness full of the unexpected (including the world’s largest arch — Kolob Arch — with a span that measures 310 feet) was designated as the Mukuntuweap National Monument. In 1919 it became Zion National Park and dedicated as such for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

Due to the differences in elevation, visitors to the park today may see a diversity of plants and animals: mule deer and turkey on the forested plateaus or bighorn sheep in the canyons. There more than 285 species of birds recorded in Zion National Park including the greater roadrunner, the great blue heron, Gambel’s quail, and the rock wren. Mountain lion, striped and spotted skunks, desert cottontail, and mountain vole can be seen within the park, as well as tiger salamanders, canyon tree frogs, and desert horned lizards. Even the western rattlesnake may make an occasional appearance in Zion National Park.

Petrified Forest National Park
Location: Arizona
Established: 1962

Millions of years ago the area of the Petrified Forest National Park was a large basin area with many rivers and streams flowing through the lowland. Winds carried ash from volcanoes located to the west which mixed with the sediment covering some of the trees that were buried before they could decompose. The ash caused some of the trees to petrify in such a way that even today the fossils show every detail of the trees’ original surfaces, creating brilliant rainbows of color.

In the mid-1800s surveyors who had visited this area found a “painted desert and its trees turned to stone.” In 1906 the desert was set aside as the Petrified Forest National Monument. The Petrified Forest National Park was established in 1962 to protect these fossils — some of the largest and most beautifully preserved concentrations of petrified wood in the world.

Pronghorn, jackrabbits, coyotes, prairie dogs, badgers and porcupines make their home in the Park. The collared lizard is the largest and most frequently seen lizard in the park, however several more species of reptiles can be found including the plateau striped whiptail, the glossy snake and the western rattlesnake.

Grand Canyon
Location: Arizona
Established: 1919

Millions of years ago, the Colorado River began eroding through the Arizona ground, creating a canyon that is now approximately 277 miles long, in some places 18 miles wide, and up to 6,000 feet deep, — known as the Grand Canyon. The Canyon was largely unknown until 1869 when Major John Wesley Powell traveled down the Colorado River on a small wooden boat. In 1893 the area was designated a Forest Reserve, became a U.S. National Monument in 1908, and in 1919 became the Grand Canyon National Park. More than 5 million people visit the park each year to view the beautifully preserved and exposed rock layers forming the walls of the canyon.

The Grand Canyon National Park contains several major ecosystems, hosting five of the seven life zones and three of the four desert types in North America. This allows for the existence of more than 75 species of mammals, 50 species of reptiles and amphibians, 25 species of fish, and nearly 375 species of birds in the park. Mule deer, bighorn, bobcats, coyotes, and mountain lions inhabit the slopes of the inner canyon. Among the smaller mammals are beavers, gophers, chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits. Reptiles and amphibians are represented by a wide variety of lizards, snakes (including the unique Grand Canyon “pink” rattlesnake), turtles, frogs, and salamanders. Hundreds of species of birds make their home in the park, along with countless insects and arachnids (spiders and scorpions).

Grand Canyon National Park is home to a number of threatened and endangered species. The native Colorado River fish have suffered as a result of the dramatic changes in water volume, temperature, and sediment. These fish include the Colorado squawfish, humpback chub, and humpback chub. Several species of endangered birds make Grand Canyon home, including the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and willow flycatcher.
Utah and Arizona

Zion National Park
1934 • Scott 747

Petrified Wood
1974 • Scott 1538

Grand Canyon National Park
1934 • Scott 741

Grand Canyon National Park
1972 • Scott UXC12

Grand Canyon National Park
1990 • Scott 2512

Grand Canyon National Park
2001 • Scott C135

Grand Canyon National Park
1998 • Scott 3183h
Arizona

Saguaro National Park
Location: Arizona
Established: 1994

The saguaro has been described as the supreme symbol of the American Southwest — a plant with personality. The giant saguaro cacti, unique to the Sonoran Desert, may reach a height of 50 feet in this cactus forest.

Since 1933 this extraordinary giant cactus has been protected within Saguaro National Monument. Preserved along with it are many of the other members of the Sonoran Desert community — the other cacti, the desert trees and shrubs, and the animals. In lushness and variety of life, the Sonoran Desert far surpasses all other North American deserts. And yet, paradoxically, it is one of the hottest and driest regions on the continent. In 1994 Saguaro National Park was established.

Summer temperatures often climb above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and less than 12 inches of rain fall in a typical year. Desert animals have adapted to life in this environment. Many have become nocturnal to avoid the heat of the day, such as the cactus mouse and the western diamondback rattlesnake. The Gambel’s quail, roadrunners, desert tortoise, and Gila monsters restrict their activities to early morning or the cooler evening hours. The animals have also adapted to the shortages of water. The kangaroo rat never needs to drink a drop of water. It uses its sensitive front paws to sift through the sand, discovering seeds by smell as well as by touch, getting all the water it needs from the seeds it eats.
Colorado and California

Mesa Verde
Location: Colorado  
Established: 1906

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt established Mesa Verde National Park to “preserve the works of man,” the first cultural park set aside in the National Park System. The park preserves a spectacular reminder of the 1,000-year culture of the Ancestral Puebloans. The first Ancestral Puebloans settled in Mesa Verde around AD 550. They lived in pithouses (houses dug into the ground) built on the mesa tops or in the cliff recesses. By 1000 AD they were living in houses build above ground, built by skillful stone masons.

However, around 1200 the people began to move back into the cliff alcoves that had sheltered their ancestors long centuries before. Perhaps it was for defense; perhaps the alcoves offered better protection from the elements; perhaps there were religious or psychological reasons. Whatever the reason or combination of reasons, it gave rise to the cliff dwellers for which Mesa Verde is most famous. Most of the cliff dwellings were built from the late 1190’s to the late 1270’s. They range in size from one-room houses to villages of more than 200 rooms — Cliff Palace. The Ancestral Puebloans lived in the cliff dwellings for less than 100 years. By about 1300 Mesa Verde was deserted.

When the people of Mesa Verde left, they traveled south into New Mexico and Arizona, settling among their kin already there. Whatever happened, some of today’s Pueblo people, and perhaps other tribes, are descendants of the cliff dwellers of Mesa Verde.

Mesa Verde National Park offers a diversity of wildlife. Mule deer, turkeys, squirrels, skunks, and an occasional black bear can be seen throughout the park. Visitors may also see coyotes, mountain lions, elk, or even a porcupine. Several species of bats, voles, mice, and squirrels inhabit the park. Great horned, spotted, long-eared, pygmy, saw whet, and flammulated owls are also found within boundaries of Mesa Verde.

Rocky Mountains National Park
Located: Colorado  
Established: 1915

During the Ice Age massive glaciers ground the landscape, shaping the meadows and peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Snow covered peaks rise above fertile valleys and glistening lakes where many of the peaks are above the tree line. Few people settled in this rugged country. However word about this beautiful area did spread and visitors soon came to see the sites. In 1909, the area was proposed to become a national park to preserve the wildlands from inappropriate use. However, it was not until 1916 that legislation was signed to create the Rocky Mountain National Park — a reserve devoted to conservation of nature where “thousands of families will find rest and hope…”

Wildlife watching is the number one activity for visitors to the Rocky Mountains National Park. Nearly 60 species of mammals and 280 bird species can be found in the park. Elk, bighorn sheep, moose, and mule deer and common and can be seen year round. White-tailed ptarmigans are common, but difficult to spot. American dippers can be found along many steams. However, wildlife viewing is especially rewarding in the wintertime. The sights of a coyote hunting in a snow-covered meadow, of herds of elk with their breath condensing in the air, or a cow and a calf moose silhouetted against the snow are unforgettable images.

Yosemite
Location: California  
Established: 1890

The discovery of gold in the foothills of California ended the idyllic lifestyle of the Native Americans in that area. Following nearly twenty years of confrontation between the tourists and the Indians, Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation to set aside the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias as a public reserve, for the purpose of preserving the uniqueness of the alpine wilderness, the groves of Giant Sequoias, and the glacially carved Yosemite Valley. The reserve became the Yosemite National Park in 1890. Nearly 3.5 million people visit the park each year to hike, bike, or just visit the impressive waterfalls, cliffs and unusual rock formations, or to have their photo taken next to the Giant Sequoias.

The relatively mild climate along Yosemite's western boundary supports bobcat, black bear, mule dear, amphibians, reptiles, a wide variety of bats, and other lower-elevation wildlife species. Fewer wildlife species are found in the higher elevations. However, the golden-mantled ground squirrel; birds, such as the fisher, Hermit Thrush, northern goshawk, and Steller's Jay; and reptiles, such as the western fence lizard, rubber boa, and northern alligator lizard can still be found. The pika, marmot, jackrabbit, nutcracker, finch, and Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep can be found in the highest elevations were the climate is too harsh to support many wildlife species. Some other animal species found within the park are the golden eagle, great gray owl, coyote, and the endangered peregrine falcon,
Colorado and California

Mesa Verde National Park
1934 • Scott 743

Beacon on Rocky Mountains
1928 • Scott C11

Yosemite National Park
1934 • Scott 740

Flag over Yosemite National Park
1988 • Scott 2280
The Northwest

Mount Rainier
Located: Washington
Established: 1899

Mount Rainier National Park, established in 1899, contains vast expanses of pristine old-growth forests, subalpine flower meadows, spectacular alpine scenery, and great opportunity for stimulating outdoor activities. The park has the greatest single-peak glacial system in the United States. Glaciers radiate from the summit and slopes of the 14,411-foot volcano, Mount Rainier.

Visitors hike the beautiful, peaceful, challenging mountain, or just enjoy the scenery. More than two million people visit Mount Rainier National park annually.

The seasons and elevation play a big role in determining where the wildlife is to be found. In summer, chipmunks, chickarees, ground squirrels, marmots, and pika are commonly seen mammals. Clark's nutcrackers, gray jays, Steller's jays, and ravens are commonly seen birds. Deer are frequently seen, but black bear, elk, and mountain goats are more elusive. Elk can be found in early fall. The color of black bear may be brown, tan or blond, and to see one is a rare treat. Mountain goats stay close to the high country cliffs in Mount Rainier National Park.

Crater Lake
Location: Oregon
Established: 1902

Crater Lake National Park is located in the enormously, high Cascade Range of Oregon. The center of the park is the 1,949-foot deep Crater Lake, created by the eruption of Mt. Mazama. The Indian tribes used this land for hunting and for gathering food supplies, and were able to keep it “hidden” until 1853 when it was seen by gold prospectors. It wasn't until 1885 that William Steel began to bring recognition to the park, and in 1902 Crater Lake was given National Park status. Winter enthusiasts to the park see the breathtaking views, open slopes, and dense forests — and, an average of 533 inches (that is over 44 feet) of snow. The park emerges into summertime glory in June and early July providing visitors the opportunity to hike, camp, fish, or just relax in the beauty of the mountains.

The diverse vegetation of the park supports wildlife including the elk, black tail deer, coyote, pronghorn, black bear, weasel, mountain lion, and more, with a wide variety of animal species living in the backcountry. Trout and salmon have been introduced into the lake. Birds, such as the Thurber's Junco, three-toed and hairy woodpeckers, red-tailed hawks, great horned owls, and bald eagle, make Crater Lake National Park their home.

Mount McKinley National Park and
Denali National Park
Located: Alaska
Established: 1917 Mount McKinley
1980 renamed Denali

In 1906–07, Charles Sheldon developed a plan to conserve the region around Mount McKinley as a national park. He traveled around the area studying boundaries that would include territories suitable for a game refuge. Mount McKinley National Park was established in 1917 as a wildlife refuge. However, Mount McKinley, North America's highest peak, was not wholly included within the boundaries. In 1980, Jimmy Carter signed a bill establishing the 6 million acre Denali National Park and Preserve — a area larger than the State of Massachusetts.

Today, the Park exemplifies interior Alaska's character as one of the world's last great frontiers for wilderness adventure. Spring, summer, and fall provide a short respite from the long season of deep cold. Dall sheep, caribou, and moose can be seen feeding throughout the park. Other animals seen include the wolf, grizzly bear, fox, showshoe hare, wolverine, and lynx. Among the 156 species of birds recorded at Denali National Park are the golden eagle, arctic tern, short-eared owl, snow bunting, hawk owl, and goshawk.
The Northwest

Mt. Rainier National Park
1934 • Scott 742

Crater National Park
1934 • Scott 745

Mt. McKinley National Park
1972 • Scott 1454

Denali National Park
2001 • Scott C137
The American Philatelic Society

A special thank you to John Hotchner for his assistance in identifying the stamps related to the state of Virginia.

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