BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA Invites Visitors to Explore the USA's Iconic and Lesser-Known Parks

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (December 7, 2025) – The U.S. National Park Service protects 63 national parks and over 400 sites across the United States and its territories. Brand USA, the nation's destination marketing organization, invites visitors to explore iconic and lesser-known parks featuring wildlife-rich wetlands, dramatic geological wonders, historic architecture, immersive reenactments, vintage train rides, and even old-fashioned soda tastings. Whether on land or underwater, America's parks offer unforgettable experiences waiting to be explored.

"The United States offers an unmatched range of natural wonders, more varied than anywhere else on earth, and while our iconic national parks are world-famous for a reason, they're just the beginning," said Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA. "The most rewarding way to experience these breathtaking landscapes is to combine those bucket-list destinations with the hidden gems and state parks nearby. By visiting during the quieter times of year and exploring these lesser-known spots, travelers can experience more of the country while finding incredible value along the way."

The U.S. Department of the Interior recently announced new visitor policies and fee schedules beginning January 1, aimed at modernizing park infrastructure and ensuring visitor revenue directly benefits the parks. These include a $100 non-resident surcharge for each visitor aged 16 and older at 11 of the most visited national parks: Acadia National Park (Maine), Bryce Canyon National Park (Utah), Everglades National Park (Florida), Glacier National Park (Montana), Grand Canyon National Park (Arizona), Grand Teton National Park (Wyoming), Rocky Mountain National Park (Colorado), Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks (California), Yellowstone National Park (Wyoming, Montana, Idaho), Yosemite National Park (California), Zion National Park (Utah).

Travelers planning to visit three or more parks may find the new $250 America the Beautiful Non-Resident Annual Pass cost-effective. The pass covers entrance fees and the non-resident surcharge at the parks listed (for the passholder/vehicle or passholder plus up to three adults where per-person fees apply) and is valid for 12 months from the month of purchase.

International visitors are encouraged to consider visiting during shoulder seasons to experience fewer crowds and to check the National Park Service website and respective state park websites before traveling for closures, seasonal updates, and other important announcements.

EXPLORE THE EXTRAORDINARY

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK (MAINE)

A few reasons that Acadia National Park continues to be one of the top national parks in the country: sweeping sunrise views at Cadillac Mountain, crystal-clear waters of Jordan Pond, dramatic cliffs and crashing coastline along Park Loop Road, or the charming harborfront scenery of Bar Harbor. Don't miss these nearby spots that also brim with New England's nature and quaint charm:

- Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument - closest to Millinocket, Maine (free entry)
    - How to get there: Fly to Portland, Maine (PWM) or Bangor (BGR), take a shuttle to Millinocket, and then arrange a ride to one of the main trailheads
    - Points of interest: Breathtaking scenes unfold at every hour. By day, spot Mount Katahdin, the highest peak in Maine (though actually climbing it requires going to nearby Baxter State Park, which is not accessible from the national monument; a small fee also applies). The International Appalachian Trail (IAT)/Sentier International des Appalaches (SIA) is a 26.2 mile trail that runs the length of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument and connects parts of the Appalachian Mountains in Maine to Canada. With some of the most measurably dark skies in the entire Northeast, this star-gazer's paradise is also an International Dark Sky Sanctuary. At the gleaming, year-old, 7,900 square foot Tek?k?pim?k Contact Station, hear the word "Katahdin," which means the "greatest mountain" in the local Wabanaki

languages, pronounced in Penobscot or in Peskotomuhkati-Wolastoquey (Passamaquoddy-Maliseet).
    - Level of difficulty: Medium - Hard. The terrain is rugged, amenities are sparse (so come prepared with gas, a GPS, and supplies), and the nearest town, Millinocket, is 20 miles away. Campsites are available for a fee at recreation.gov.

- Saint Croix Island International Historic Site - Calais, Maine [free entry]
    - How to get there: The site is best accessed by car. For drivers using GPS, the site's physical address is 84 Saint Croix Drive, Calais, Maine 04619
    - Points of interest: A scenic spot on the St. Croix River near the U.S. - Canada border, this site commemorates the 1604 French settlement and early exploration in North America. Expect interpretive exhibits, a reconstructed French cross, walking trails with scenic river views, the Wabanaki Cultural Center, and birding at the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, along with ranger-led programs that highlight the site's historical significance.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy, with boardwalks and short and accessible trails. The family-friendly site is primarily educational and suitable for visitors of all ages, and the website includes itineraries for one-, two-, and four-hour visits.

BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK (UTAH)

Attractions at Bryce Canyon National Park are varied and endless: glowing hoodoos (rock spires) at sunrise and sunset, immersive hikes along the Navajo Loop and Queen's Garden trails, sweeping panoramas from the Rim Trail, unforgettable stargazing under its dark night skies, and peaceful forests and wildlife that surround the canyon. For even more stunning views of the Colorado Plateau, geological formations that inspire double-takes (and dozens of photos), and scenic hiking for all levels, don't miss these nearby parks:

- Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument – Arizona, Utah (free entry)
    - How to get there: The site is best accessed by car. For drivers using GPS, the visitor center is located at 755 W Main in Escalante, UT and can be accessed from State Highway 12.
    - Points of interest: With records of human presence dating 10,000 years, this massive monument showcases layered sandstone cliffs, slot canyons, unique geological formations, and manmade structures like the 775-year-old Defiance House and the impressive Navajo Bridge. Launch a boat off the ramp at Lees Ferry to explore the Colorado River, or hike or drive any number of trails, some of which require four-wheel drive. Popular areas include Calf Creek Falls, Zebra Slot Canyon, and Devils Garden.
    - Level of difficulty: Medium to hard. Many areas are remote and require hiking over rugged terrain. Backcountry navigation skills are strongly recommended.

- Capitol Reef National Park – Torrey, Utah (standard park entrance fee)
    - How to get there: The National Park Service website advises visitors NOT to use GPS to access the park, and provides a map instead.
    - Points of interest: A geological cacophony of dramatic cliffs, domes, and narrow canyons along the Waterpocket Fold, which the National Parks Service describes as "a wrinkle in the Earth!" Highlights include fruit orchards and over two dozen hiking trails through striking scenery – some easy, but many not. It's less crowded than many Utah parks.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy to difficult. Scenic drives and short walks are accessible; backcountry hikes and canyons are strenuous and best for the experienced.

EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK (FLORIDA)

The vast, subtropical wetlands of the Everglades National Park offer scenic waterways perfect for kayaking or canoeing, endangered species like the Florida Panther, and opportunities for birdwatching, photography, and stargazing. Don't miss these nearby sites that also teem with wildlife, greenery, and adventures in and of out the water:

- Big Cypress National Preserve - Ochopee, Florida (free entry; open 24/7)
    - How to get there: Directions from several points of origin are available on the National Park Service website.
    - Points of interest: The freshwaters throughout the 729,000 acres of this vast swamp support the marine health of the nearby Everglades National Park while also being home to the endangered Florida Panther. Explorers can hike boardwalks, paddle rivers on kayak or canoes, or do scenic drives such as the Loop Road, which is 24 miles and passes through three counties. Star-gazing, birdwatching, and photography are also top activities.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy to medium. Most trails and boardwalks are accessible, but the backcountry requires preparation and navigation know-how.
- Biscayne National Park - Homestead, Florida (free entry)
    - How to get there: Input this address into the GPS: 9700 SW 328th Street, Sir Lancelot Jones Way, Homestead, FL 33033. Additional directions are available on the National Park Service website.
    - Points of interest: With Miami in the distance, this park is 95% water and protects coral reefs, mangrove forests, and islands in Biscayne Bay. The Biscayne National Park Institute offers snorkeling to coral reefs and a shipwreck on the

Maritime Heritage Trail, as well as cruises to Boca Chita Key and lighthouse.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy to medium. Shore-based trails are short and accessible. Boating and snorkeling require equipment and water safety knowledge.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK (MONTANA)

The soaring peaks and alpine landscapes of Glacier National Park offer breathtaking drives along Going-to-the-Sun Road, crystal-clear waters at Lake McDonald, iconic hikes to Grinnell Glacier, and panoramic vistas with wildflowers and wildlife at Logan Pass. Check out these nearby sites that also showcase dramatic mountains, pristine lakes, and unforgettable hiking adventures:

- Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site – Deer Lodge, Montana (free entry)
    - How to get there: The park is located between two of Montana's other national parks – Yellowstone and Glacier – at 25 Grant Circle, Deer Lodge, MT 59722.
    - Points of interest: Though it's no longer the headquarters of a 10,000-acre cattle operation, this working ranch continues to house chickens, livestock and cattle. The 88 historic structures on this historic ranch preserve the legacy of western ranching and the life of its founder, Conrad Kohrs. Visitors can tour the ranch house, barn, and outbuildings, watch living-history demonstrations, and learn about 19th- and 20th-century cattle ranching practices.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy. Walking trails around the ranch are flat, accessible, and family-friendly. Ranger programs provide context and insight into historic ranch life.
- Big Hole National Battlefield – Wisdom, Montana (free entry)
    - How to get there: While public transportation is not available, the website provides directions from several nearby towns.
    - Points of interest: A battlefield commemorates the 1877 Nez Perce War with a monument, walking trails, and a visitor center with interpretive exhibits and an award-winning film, Weet'uciklitukt: There's No Turning Back, Battle at Big Hole, that all explain the conflict, strategies, and lives of the Nez Perce and U.S. Army. An observation deck of the battlesite offers a panoramic view the battlesite
    - Level of difficulty: Easy. Trails are short and mostly flat. Educational signage and accessible features like audio and Braille guides invite visitors with all kinds of backgrounds.
- Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail - Sixteen states, including Oregon and Washington (free entry)
    - Points of interest: This 3,700-mile trail passes through 16 states and traces the 1804–1806 expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark across the northern United States. Rangers lead demonstrations at Fort Clasop and kayak / canoe tours in the river, offering insights into exploration, Native American cultures, and early U.S. history.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy to moderate. Many access points include easy visitor centers and short walking trails. Some river or backcountry sections require moderate effort.

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK (ARIZONA)

The vast, colorful vistas of Grand Canyon National Park offer breathtaking viewpoints along the South Rim, immersive hikes on trails like Bright Angel, quieter panoramas from the North Rim, and unforgettable adventures on the Colorado River. Check out these additional sites for even more few-times-in-a-lifetime sights, sweeping landscapes, and memorable outdoor experiences:

- Wupatki National Monument – Flagstaff, Arizona (standard park entrance fee; a 7-day pass also includes access Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument)
    - How to get there: The National Park Service website recommends a four-wheel drive vehicle and starting at the Wupatki Visitor Center at 25137 North Wupatki Loop Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86004.
    - Points of interest: Against the colorful backdrop of the Painted Desert, this national monument preserves ancient Puebloan ruins, which includes the largest freestanding pueblo in the state, multi-story dwellings with 104 rooms, ball courts, and a natural blowhole. Visitors can walk short trails connecting several ruins and a citadel, explore visitor center exhibits, enjoy desert flora and wildlife, or participate in any of several strenuous ranger-led hikes that offer rare views of the various pueblos.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy. Trails are mostly short and well-marked. Ranger-led hikes to larger ruins, which can last anywhere between 30 minutes to 8 hours, and may be strenuous and on rugged, unmarked terrain.
- Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument – Flagstaff, Arizona (standard park entrance fee; a 7-day pass also includes access Wupatki National Monument)
    - How to get there: GPS devices can glitch in these parts, but the physical address of Sunset Crater Visitor Center is 6082 Sunset Crater Road, Flagstaff AZ, 86004.
    - Points of interest: A preservation of Arizona's most recent volcanic eruption (1085 CE), this monument features a series of trails through volcanic cinder cones, lava flows, and scenic desert landscapes. While the Lenox Crater Volcano remains closed because of fire damage, the Lava Flow Trail and Lenox Crater Trail allow visitors to explore volcanic geology up close – and sometimes includes sightings of elk, deer, coyotes, and bobcats.

    - Level of difficulty: Easy to medium. Trails are relatively short but hardened lava can be hard, jagged, and sharp. Hiking shoes or comfortable footwear are recommended.
- Walnut Canyon National Monument – near Flagstaff, Arizona (standard park entrance fee)
    - Points of interest: Walnut Canyon protects ancient cliff dwellings built by the Sinagua people. An ADA-accessible viewpoint at the visitor center offers a view of the canyon, while two trails take visitors through it: The Rim Trail (.7 miles round-trip) is paved, fairly flat, and features two overlooks of the canyon, while those willing to descend 736 stairs on the somewhat strenuous Island Trail (.9 miles) are rewarded with an up-close encounter of these dwellings.
    - Level of difficulty: Medium. Trails include stairs and uneven terrain descending into the canyon; some sections may be strenuous for those with mobility limitations.
- Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site – Ganado, Arizona (free entry)
    - How to get there: Accessible by car or public buses through Navajo Transit System.
    - Points of interest: The oldest-operating trading post in Navajo nation, this historic trading post has been selling goods, crafts, and Native art since 1878, providing insight into local culture and early trade networks. Free ranger-guided tours of the original Hubbell home are available as weather permits, allowing peeks into the living space as it was originally furnished. The historic barn, historic farm tools, and livestock are also on view.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy. Most areas are accessible, with short walks and flat terrain. Guided tours bring the experience to life.

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK (WYOMING)

The dramatic peaks of Grand Teton National Park offer soaring views of the jagged Teton Range, crystal-clear waters at Jenny Lake, iconic scenic viewpoints like Oxbow Bend and Schwabacher Landing, and outstanding wildlife viewing throughout the valley and along the Snake River – think moose, elk, bear, and bald eagles. Check out these nearby sites for more geological wonders, pristine lakes, and a sense of local history:

- John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway – near Jackson, Wyoming (free entry)
    - Points of interest: This scenic corridor connects Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks, offering hiking trails, picturesque views of lava flows, and opportunities to spot wildlife along the Snake River.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy and accessible to most, with activities mostly consisting of short walks near the parkway.
- Fort Laramie National Historic Site – Fort Laramie, Wyoming (free entry)
    - Points of interest: Originally a center for fur trading, Fort Laramie – or the "Grand Old Post," as it was nicknamed – became the largest and best-known military post on the Oregon Trail. Highlights include nine museum spaces scattered across several historic buildings, the Enlisted Bar, which sells vintage sodas from that time period, living history and reenacted programs, and during the summer months, black powder demonstrations of the firearms and cannons.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy. Mostly flat trails, with accessible areas, and many types of ranger-led programs
- Devils Tower National Monument – Devils Tower, Wyoming (standard park entrance fee)
    - Points of interest: Rising 867 feet above the Belle Fourche River, this jaw-dropping flat-topped butte and sacred site for several Native American tribes. Visitors can hike any of five trails of varying difficulty and elevation changes, though the most popular is the Tower Trail around the base of the formation.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy to medium. The base trail is accessible, while climbing routes are strenuous, involve significant changes in elevation, and require preparation and proper equipment.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK (COLORADO)

The towering peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park offer breathtaking drives along Trail Ridge Road, expansive alpine tundra and high mountain scenery, serene alpine lakes in the Bear Lake corridor, and exceptional wildlife viewing including elk, moose, and bighorn sheep. Here are nearby sites that also showcase how the landscape affected local history throughout the centuries:

- Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site – Colorado (free entry)
    - Points of interest: This reconstructed 19th-century adobe trading post offers a glimpse into the fur trade era between the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and pioneers on the Santa Fe Trail. A short walk leads to the fort's buildings, where a 45-minute walking tour, blacksmithing, and other demonstrations are part of the ranger-led programs. Several easy hiking loops pass the Arkansas River floodplain and a menagerie of wildlife.
    - Level of difficulty: Easy. Walking is mostly on flat terrain within the fort and around the river, though not all parts of the trail are paved.
- Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site – Eads/Chivington, Colorado (free entry)
    - Points of interest: This site commemorates the 1864 massacre that led to the deaths of hundreds of Cheyenne and Arapaho people. Visitors can walk trails, pay respects at the memorial, learn about the history and cultural significance of the event through exhibits, and observe the wildlife in the area.

- Level of difficulty: Easy. Trails are short, accessible, primarily educational, and reflective.

SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS (CALIFORNIA)

The towering giant sequoias of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks offer serene walks through the Grant Grove and the Giant Forest, awe-inspiring views of the General Sherman Tree, the largest tree in the world by volume, dramatic vistas of Kings Canyon's cliffs and waterfalls, and panoramic climbs up Moro Rock for sweeping Sierra Nevada scenery. Don't miss the dramatic geological sites and flavors of local culture at these nearby sites:

- Manzanar National Historic Site – near Independence, California (free entry)
  - Points of interest: One of ten war relocation centers around the country, Manzanar preserves the history of Japanese American internment during World War II. Visitors can explore Block 14, which housed 10,000 Japanese-American people during the war, as well as the barracks, mess hall, and women's latrine.
  - Level of difficulty: Easy. Trails are mostly flat and accessible, making the site suitable for all ages.
- Devils Postpile National Monument – Mammoth Lakes, California (free entry; summer shuttle may be required)
  - Points of interest: Famous for striking rectangular basalt column formations that reach up to 60 feet, as well as the 101-foot high Rainbow Falls, this park offers scenic hiking trails and a visitor center, all of which can be reached by the mandatory seasonal shuttle bus.
  - Level of difficulty: Easy to medium. Trails are mostly moderate, with some elevation changes. Summer visitors may need to use the shuttle system due to limited parking.

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK (WYOMING, MONTANA, IDAHO)

The geothermal wonders of Yellowstone National Park include larger-than-life eruptions of Old Faithful, vibrant, kaleidoscopic colors at the Grand Prismatic Spring, dramatic vistas of the Yellowstone Grand Canyon and its waterfalls, and exceptional wildlife viewing of bison, elk, and bears throughout the park's valleys and meadows. After the explosive grandeur of Yellowstone, experience quieter scenery and reflect on local history at these sites:

- Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area – Wyoming / Montana (free entry)
  - How to get there: The park is divided into two districts that are not connected. Consult the website for detailed driving instructions.
  - Points of interest: With over 120,000 acres and an expanse that can require three hours to drive, this area offers dramatic canyon landscapes, the Bighorn River, four historic ranches, and historic sites like the Yellowtail Dam.
  - Level of difficulty: Easy to medium. Trails and viewpoints are generally accessible, while backcountry exploration requires moderate preparation.
- Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument – Crow Agency, Montana (standard park entrance fee)
  - Points of interest: Walking trails, sweeping monuments, and a cemetery commemorate the 1876 battle between the U.S. Army and the combined forces of the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. An audio walking tour enabled by cell phones – visitors can dial into a number and add the number of their stop to hear more – connects present to past.
  - Level of difficulty: Easy. Trails are mostly flat, and clear signage guides visitors through the battlefield.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK (CALIFORNIA)

The iconic landscapes of Yosemite National Park include soaring granite cliffs of El Capitan, the challenging summit and panoramic views of Half Dome, the lushness throughout the Yosemite Valley, and majestic waterfalls like Yosemite Falls and Bridalveil Fall cascading through the park's dramatic terrain. For singular spectacles closer to urban centers, try these:

- Golden Gate National Recreation Area – near San Francisco, California (free entry)
  - Points of interest: Home to a UNESCO biosphere with 19 distinct ecosystems, and the only one that includes lands, sea, and city, this vast expanse includes coastal cliffs, beaches, historic military sites, an art center with rotating artists in residence, and urban parks around San Francisco. It's popular for hiking, cycling, picnicking, and exploring cultural landmarks like Fort Point.
  - Level of difficulty: Easy to medium. Trails run the gamut from gentle urban walks to hilly coastal paths.
- Muir Woods National Monument – near Marin County, California (standard entry fee; parking has a fee)
  - Points of interest: Steps away from the entrance are the famous shaded forest trails and towering old-growth redwoods that seem almost as old as time. Hiking options include over a dozen routes ranging from a casual stroll to mountain climbing, with the more strenuous options leading through steep, unpaved paths that connect to nearby Mount Tamalpais State Park. The proximity to San Francisco – about 16.5 miles – is an added bonus.

- Level of difficulty: Easy to difficult. The most popular trails are flat and well-maintained; some steeper loops are available for moderate hikes.

ZION NATIONAL PARK (UTAH)

The dramatic landscapes of Zion National Park, Utah's first national park, include towering sandstone cliffs of Zion Canyon that soar up to 3,000 feet above the valley floor, immersive river hikes through the narrow slot canyon of The Narrows, the adrenaline-inducing trail of Angels Landing with steep switchbacks and chains leading to panoramic canyon vistas, and serene walks to the Emerald Pools, where waterfalls cascade into lush pools surrounded by desert vegetation. For more soaring altitudes and immersive outdoor experiences, don't miss these nearby spots:

- Cedar Breaks National Monument - Brian Head, Utah (standard entrance fee)
  - Points of interest: From an altitude of 10,000 feet, Cedar Breaks' claim to fame is view of 2,000-foot deep natural amphitheater carved from the "Pink Cliffs" of the Claron Formation, along with dark skies for star-gazing, alpine meadows with wildflowers in summer and bristlecone pines year-round. In the winter, try a free, beginner-friendly mile-long shoeshoe hike led by park rangers.
  - Level of difficulty: Easy to moderate. Rim trails are accessible, while longer hikes into the amphitheater can be strenuous. Elevation is high, so altitude acclimation may be necessary.
- Pipe Spring National Monument - Fredonia, Arizona (standard park entrance fee)
  - Points of interest: Less than an hour's drive to Zion National Park, this historic Mormon settlement also preserves centuries of Native American history through the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians Visitor Center and Museum, which features exhibits and a 25-minute video on historic interactions between the two groups. Visitors can tour Winsor Capital from Memorial Day to Labor Day, visit a partially restored fort, fruit orchard, livestock pens with horses and longhorn cattle, and explore trails highlighting pioneer life, water management, and desert ecology.
  - Level of difficulty: Easy. Trails are short and mostly flat, making them accessible for families and casual hikers. Guided tours are at a leisurely pace.

EXPERIENCE THE TRAIL LESS TRAVELED: A SELECTION OF NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC

From the Atlantic coast to far-flung Pacific shores, and every geographic region that lies between those oceans, both the National Park Service and state park systems protect the extraordinary range of landscapes. These regional highlights offer just a glimpse into the breadth of the experiences while offering endless opportunities to explore history, ecology, and recreation. Whether seeking outdoor thrills, reflective solitude, family-friendly memories, or off-the-beaten-path discovery, travelers will find unforgettable experiences in every region of the United States.

Northeast:

- Franconia Notch State Park – Lincoln, New Hampshire – Tucked into the White Mountains, this park is known for its dramatic mountain pass between Flume Gorge and Echo Lake waterfalls, alpine hiking trails, and picturesque New England scenery.
- Minute Man National Historical Park – Lexington, Massachusetts – Travel back to April 19, 1775 to experience the Revolutionary War through battlefields, historic structures, occasional reenactments, and quaint New England landscapes.
- Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area – Pennsylvania, New Jersey – Nestled in one of the most densely populated regions of the country, this area includes stunning river valleys, waterfalls, and hiking along the Appalachian Trail.
- Weir Farm National Historic Site –Wilton, Connecticut – Nature and art collide at the home and studio of the American impressionist painter J. Alden Weir, who called this the "Great Good Place." The site encourages visitors to create art 365 days a year and supports this directly during the summer months, with colored pencil kits offered on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and watercolor kits provided on weekends May through October. View original art, join the artist collective, or enter the site's annual contest. Self-guided and ranger-led studio tours are available.

Mid-Atlantic:

- Niagara Falls State Park – Niagara Falls, New York – America's oldest state park offers breathtaking views of Niagara Falls, scenic walking paths, memorable boat tours like the Maid of the Mist, and dramatic perspectives of one of the country's most iconic natural wonders.
- Harpers Ferry National Historical Park – Harpers Ferry, West Virginia – Visit the site of John Brown's history-changing raid near the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Don't miss the museums, 19th century-style storefronts, and the many sites where

history comes alive.
- Assateague State Park – Assateague Island, Maryland – Known for its wild horses, sandy beaches, and coastal marshes, this coastal, island park offers a rare chance to experience a barrier island ecosystem with swimming, camping, and wildlife viewing.
- Kenilworth Park & Aquatic Gardens – Washington, D.C. – Water lilies, lotus flowers, and tranquil walking trails offer the only national park dedicated to aquatic plants and serene escape in the nation's capital.
- Valley Forge National Historical Park – King of Prussia, Pennsylvania – The winter encampment of George Washington offers a museum, trails, and a slice of refuge, all of which can be experienced through a 90-minute trolley tour.

South:

- Dry Tortugas National Park – Florida – Accessible only by boat or sea plane, this park spans seven islands about 70 miles away from Key West, and includes the magnificent six-sided Fort Jefferson, and snorkeling in crystal clear waters and coral reefs.
- Congaree National Park – near Eastover, South Carolina – One of the region's largest primeval hardwood forests, with towering trees, canoeing through swampy waterways, and boardwalk trails that will be updated in 2026.
- Big Bend National Park – Terlingua, Texas – Home to hundreds of bird species and some of the best bird-watching in the country, remote desert canyons, Rio Grande vistas, and unforgettable stargazing opportunities in near-total darkness. The darkness is in large part because of the remote location in Southwest Texas – the nearest bus and train stations are over 100 miles away. Note that Big Bend State Park, which is smaller and has fewer facilities, is also within the local vicinity.
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park – Tennessee, North Carolina – Misty mountains set a backdrop for an explosion of wildlife and 1,500 species of wildflowers. Hike or drive to over a dozen waterfalls, or explore any of the 90 historical structures.
- Hunting Island State Park – near Beaufort, South Carolina – This coastal island features maritime forests, pristine beaches, abundant wildlife, a historic lighthouse that can be climbed to the top, and a four-hour beach drop tour to round out the classic Lowcountry outdoor experience.

Midwest:

- Isle Royale National Park – near Houghton, Michigan and Copper Harbor, Michigan – Board a boat to Isle Royale and its surrounding islands in Lake Superior, the world's largest freshwater lake by surface area.
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park – near Cleveland, Ohio– An urban oasis nestled between Cleveland and Akron that features many waterfalls, scenic railroads, and quiet forested trails that feel like stepping into another era, including the Towpath Trail which follows the Ohio and Erie Canal route.
- Indiana Dunes National Park – near Chesterton, Indiana – Striking combination of towering sand dunes, Lake Michigan beaches, and unique prairie habitats that attract plants and birds alike.
- Mackinac Island State Park – Michigan – Covering over 80% of Mackinac Island, Michigan's first state park boasts historic forts, scenic bluffs, limestone caves, and miles of carriage roads for hiking, cycling, and horse-drawn taxis, all without motor vehicles to preserve its 19th-century charm.
- Devil's Lake State Park – Baraboo, Wisconsin – This rugged beauty in the Barbaroo hills is famous for its dramatic quartzite bluffs, crystal-clear lake, a rock formation called the Devil's Door, and extensive hiking trails that lead to stunning vistas.

- Adeline Jay Geo-Karis Illinois Beach State Park – Zion, Illinois – This state park, stretching along the shores of Lake Michigan, offers sandy beaches, marshes, and dunes, as well as hiking and biking trails, swimming, birdwatching, and basking in the vastness of the lake.

Mountain:

- Custer State Park – Custer, South Dakota – Bison herds pass the granite peaks of the Black Hills while the Needles Highway offers starkly scenic drives at this quintessential mountain?prairie experience.
- Boysen State Park – Shoshoni, Wyoming – Located along Boysen Reservoir and the Wind River, the park offers boating, fishing, hiking, and scenic views of the surrounding Wind River mountains and red rock formations.
- Great Sand Dunes National Park – Mosca, Colorado – The tallest sand dunes in America are set over 8,000 feet in the airagainst the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, alpine lakes, and tundra. Sand sledding and star-gazing in this International Dark Sky park are unforgettable.
- Mesa Verde National Park – Colorado – Ancient Pueblo cliff dwellings along canyon walls preserve the Native American ingenuity of multiple tribes at this World Heritage Site, where microclimates foster vegetation and insect species that exist nowhere else on earth.

- Bear Lake State Park – St. Charles, Idaho – Set against the Cache Mountains, turquoise waters tinted by dissolved limestone make this “Caribbean of the Rockies” perfect for swimming, boating, and relaxing along the shore.

Pacific Northwest:

- Olympic National Park Port Angeles, Washington – Diverse ecosystems create unparalleled diversity in one park, with alpine peaks, temperate rainforests, lakes, and a wild Pacific coastline with beaches and tidepools.
- Mount Rainier National Park Ashford, Washington – An active volcano with glacial peaks, the 14,410-foot Mount Rainier and its surrounding areas include wildflower meadows, iconic volcanic landscapes, and an area named Paradise.
- Crater Lake National Park – Oregon – From any of the 30 overlooks along the 33-mile Rim Drive, gaze into the collapsed volcano – the crater! – which contains the deepest lake in the U.S., with vibrant, impossibly blue waters that become a backdrop to hiking and boat tours.
- Smith Rock State Park – Terrebonne, Oregon – A world-class rock climbing destination with plenty for visitors who prefer to stay on the ground, this park features dramatic volcanic spires, deep river canyons, and miles of hiking trails.

California:

- Humboldt Redwoods State Park – California – Some of the tallest trees on Earth live in these lush primeval forests, which feature the largest collection of old-growth redwoods on the planet, a 32-mile scenic drive through these trees, and several hiking trails.
- Lassen Volcanic National Park – near Mineral, California – A lesser-known volcanic wonder with active geothermal areas, fumaroles, lava flows, and serene mountain lakes. In the warmer months, the park also organizes parkcaching challenges.
- Pinnacles National Park – Towering volcanic rock formations, talus caves with bat conservation efforts, and California condors soaring overhead.
- Channel Islands National Park – Off the coast of Santa Barbara, California – Spread across five islands, this land and water wonder has sea caves, kelp forests, the Anacapa lighthouse (the last lighthouse built on the West Coast), and isolated island landscapes that both burst with life and feel untouched. Access is available only by boat or small plane, and bicycles are not allowed on the island, so plan trips here well in advance..
- Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve – San Diego, California – Coastal cliffs overlooking the Pacific, rare Torrey pine trees, and scenic trails provide a unique combination of beach, bluff, lagoon, and the dense shrubbery of chaparral ecosystems.

Alaska:

- Gates of the Arctic National Park – Arctic region of Alaska; accessible by plane from Fairbanks – Located entirely in the Arctic Circle and accessible only by air and having no roads or trails to speak of, this majestic park demands extreme self-sufficiency to explore its river, towering peaks, pure solitude, and ancient ways of life.
- Katmai National Park and Reserve – Near King Salmon, Alaska in the state’s southwest region; accessible by floatplane or ferry from King Salmon – Famous for the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, a volcanic landscape, and the thousands of brown bears that inhabit the lands – one of the best locations in the country for bear-spotting!
- Denali National Park and Reserve – Healy, Alaska, in the state’s interior region – Home to the tallest peak in North America, Mount Denali (20,310 feet), with six million acres, only one road, and in the summer, a free bus for short trips within the park's accessible areas.
- Wood-Tikchik State Park – Dillingham, Alaska, in the state’s southwest region – At 1.6 million acres and the size of Delaware, it is the largest state park in the country, representing 15% of all state park land in the U.S. The park’s pristine lakes, rivers, and mountains offer vast, remote wilderness for backcountry exploration, while also supporting local subsistence living. Road access can be limited, so consult the website for the navigational guidance.
- Kachemak Bay State Park – near Homer, Alaska, in the state’s Southcentral region – Accessible only by boat or plane, the coastal wilderness of Alaska’s first state park offers fjords, glaciers, and abundant wildlife, making it a paradise for kayaking, fishing, and remote hiking.

Hawaii:

- Hawai?i Volcanoes National Park – Big Island – In the home of Mauna Loa (the world’s largest volcano) and K?lauea (one of the most active volcanoes on Earth), this UNESCO World Heritage site offers hikes across lava fields, strolls around fumaroles, scenic drives near geological wonders, and demonstrations from local artisans.
- Haleakal? National Park – Maui – The massive Haleakal? crater, volcanic landscapes, and diverse ecosystems ranging from tropical rainforest to alpine deserts provide unforgettable backdrops for hikes of all levels. Sunrises from the summit are world-

famous.

- Kalaupapa National Historical Park – Moloka'i – Preserving the extremely remote settlement of individuals with Hansen's disease (leprosy), this park is surrounded by ocean on three sides and dramatic 2,000 foot sea cliffs on the fourth. For those who arrive by plane, boat, or strenuous hike, there are guided historical tours, hiking trails, and insights into the cultural and human history of Moloka'i's isolated peninsula.
- Waimea Canyon State Park – Kaua'i – Often called the "Grand Canyon of the Pacific," with dramatic red cliffs, deep gorges, views of Ni'ihau Island, and scenic hiking trails through striking geological formations.
- Koke'e State Park – Kaua'i – Set 4,000 feet high in the mountains of Kaua'i, this park offers hiking through native forests, waterfalls, birdwatching, panoramic vistas of the Napali Coast, and plum-picking when it's in season.

Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands:

- San Juan National Historic Site – San Juan, Puerto Rico – The majestic and expansive Castillo San Felipe del Morro fort is the beating heart of this World Heritage site and a must-see among the many charming historic corners of Old San Juan.
- El Yunque National Forest – near Luquillo, Puerto Rico – The only tropical rainforest in the U.S. National Forest System, featuring lush trails, waterfalls, diverse wildlife, and panoramic viewpoints over the Sierra de Luquillo.
- Virgin Islands National Park – St. John – Two thirds of the island of St. John is a national park with pristine beaches, coral reefs, tropical forest hikes, and sugar plantations that still have intact or working parts.
- Christiansted National Historic Site Christiansted, St. Croix – Wander through the yellow fort that was built by the Danish, one of 7 nations to lay their claim to St. Croix over the centuries. The colonial architecture and seaside charm offer postcard-perfect views of the island's past, while the nearby boardwalk lends a connection to the present.
- Buck Island Reef National Monument – Off the coast of St. Croix – An underwater snorkeling trail with vibrant coral reefs and marine biodiversity make it one of the best snorkeling and diving destinations.

Minor Outlying Islands:

- War in the Pacific National Historic Site – Piti, Guam – This site honors the fallen soldiers of Guåhan (Guam) from World War II through several features, including a museum at the visitor center, a cemetery, and a memorial. Be sure to check out the oral history tour, which includes interviews with survivors and can be experienced during a 2–3 hour self-guided driving tour.
- National Park of the American Samoa – Pago Pago, American Samoa – This three-island park features pristine coral reefs, lush rainforests, and dramatic coastal scenery, with highlights including Pola Island, Ofu Beach, and the Mount Alava Trail. It also preserves living Samoan culture, where villages, traditions, and communal land remain an integral part of the park experience.
- American Memorial Park – Saipan / Northern Mariana Islands – Explore the island's connection to World War II through a museum, memorial, bell tower, and expansive recreational areas, such as the tennis courts and picnic areas. Within walking distance are Micro Beach, a popular spot for wind-surfing, as well as the town of Garapan, which has shops and cafes.

Note to the Editor:

Supporting assets can be found here.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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