2012

10 Most Visited National Parks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Park</th>
<th>Recreational Park Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (TN, NC)</td>
<td>9,008,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grand Canyon National Park (AZ)</td>
<td>4,298,178</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Yosemite National Park (CA)</td>
<td>3,951,393</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Yellowstone National Park (WY, MT, ID)</td>
<td>3,394,326</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Rocky Mountain National Park (CO)</td>
<td>3,176,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Olympic National Park (WA)</td>
<td>2,966,502</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Zion National Park (UT)</td>
<td>2,825,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Grand Teton National Park (WY)</td>
<td>2,587,437</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Acadia National Park (ME)</td>
<td>2,374,645</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Cuyahoga Valley National Park (OH)</td>
<td>2,161,185</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Park Service
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Established in 1934, Great Smoky Mountains National Park is comprised of ridge upon ridge of endless forest straddling the border between North Carolina and Tennessee. World renowned for the diversity of its 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. With over 800 miles of maintained trails, nearly 80 historic buildings, spectacular displays of wildflowers and a wide variety of animals including approximately 1,500 bears, Great Smoky Mountains National Park offers a myriad of activities to enjoy.

The Great Smoky Mountain National Park is an icon of the national park system. Over 10,000 different species of flora and fauna have been identified within the Park’s boundaries. The large number of species in the park is due to the diverse habitats, ranging from spruce-fir forests to temperate deciduous forests. The diversity of the Park has also lead to it being designated as an International Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site. » More Info

Did you know?
Money to buy the land that became Great Smoky Mountains National Park was raised by individuals, private groups, and even school children who pledged their pennies. In addition, the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial Fund donated $5 million to create the park.

I have been hiking the GSMNP for 12 years now. I can’t begin to tell all the stories of the beauty and peace that abound.
Grand Canyon National Park

Founded on the Colorado Plateau in Arizona, the Grand Canyon National Park is one of the most studied geologic landscapes in the world. The canyon, created when drainage systems carved the semi-arid desert, offers a record of three of the four eras of geologic time and supports five of the seven life zones. The park protects endemic and threatened species and rare ecosystems like the boreal forest.

As a visitor, you can enjoy extensive hiking and backpacking trails or raft the majestic Colorado River, either with a professional rafting guide or on your own on a private river trip. Explore the many activities of the popular Southern Rim or venture to the remote Northern Rim, visited by only ten percent of park visitors. From Tuweep Overlook, enjoy views of the Colorado River 3,000 feet below that will take your breath away. A gorgeous classroom of arid-land erosion and a hub of outdoor recreation, the Grand Canyon is a true wonder of the American Southwest, and of the North American continent. » More Info

Did you know?

Grand Canyon’s Yavapai Observation Station (1928) located one mile (1.6 km) east of Market Plaza, features exceptional canyon views. Geology exhibits allow park visitors to see and understand the complicated geologic story in ways that all can understand. Exhibits and bookstore open daily.

My wife and I got married at Grand Canyon National Park last week. It was one of the most spiritually exhilarating experiences of our lives.
Yosemite National Park

Not just a great Valley...
but a shrine to human foresight, strength of granite, power of
glaciers, the persistence of life, and the tranquility of the High Sierra.

Yosemite National Park, one of the first wilderness parks in the United States,
is best known for its waterfalls, but within its nearly 1,200 square miles, you can
find deep valleys, grand meadows, ancient giant sequoias, a vast wilderness
area, and much more.

Established in 1890, Yosemite National Park embraces a spectacular tract
of mountain-and-valley scenery in the Sierra Nevada. Yosemite Park’s
awe-inspiring landscape includes waterfalls, meadows, and forests with
groves of giant sequoia trees.

Today, Yosemite National Park spans nearly 1,200 square miles. » More Info

Did you know?

Descending from Yosemite Valley, the Merced River becomes a continuous
cascade in a narrow
gorge littered by massive boulders. Dropping
2,000 feet in 14 miles, canyon walls rise steeply
from the river and have many seasonal waterfalls
cascading down to the river.

Yosemite is a beautiful
place to be. I went there
in summer of ‘05. It was
absolutely breathtaking.
I definitely recommend
going there soon.
Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone National Park, America’s first national park, was shaped, in part by a prehistoric volcanic eruption. The geothermal wonders, such as Old Faithful, are the remaining evidence of one of the world’s largest active volcanoes. These spectacular features intrigued the park’s earliest visitors, and helped lead to its Federal protection.

In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed a law declaring that Yellowstone would forever be “dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” Today, Yellowstone Park spans an area of 3,472 square miles across the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

A mountain wildland, home to grizzly bears, wolves, and herds of bison and elk, the park is the core of one of the last, nearly intact, natural ecosystems in the Earth’s temperate zone.

**Did you know?**

There were no wolves in Yellowstone in 1994. The wolves that were reintroduced in 1995 and 1996 thrived and there are now over 300 of their descendents living in the Greater Yellowstone Area.

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“...This was my first trip to YNP. I got to share it with my one and only and my parents. It was the best vacation I have ever had. The sights are wonderful and Old faithful was a dream.”
Feel Like You’re On Top of the World!

Rocky Mountain National Park’s 415 square miles encompass and protect spectacular mountain environments. Enjoy Trail Ridge Road—which crests over 12,000 feet including many overlooks to experience the subalpine and alpine worlds—along with over 300 miles of hiking trails, wildflowers, wildlife, starry nights, and fun times. In a world of superlatives, Rocky is on top!

The park includes an amazing diversity of ecosystems: alpine tundra with tiny, brilliant wildflowers that survive the harsh conditions above 11,000 feet, fragrant pines and delicate aspens of the montane forests, to the wet grassy valleys with meandering streams. The park offers over 350 miles of hiking trails, 200 backcountry sites, endless angling, birding and wildlife viewing opportunities, as well as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in winter.

Did you know?

Rocky Mountain National Park licensed the nation’s first female nature guides in 1917. Sisters Ester and Elizabeth Burnell learned the naturalist trade from advocate and author Enos Mills.

We have visited other major National Parks (Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce...) and Rocky Mtn. has become our recent favorite!
Olympic National Park

With three distinct and diverse ecosystems—Pacific coast, rain forest valleys, glacier-capped mountains—Olympic National Park is home to a stunning variety of plants and animals. Geology, climate, isolation, history and sheer size mean this nearly one million-acre park, 95% wilderness, protects relatively intact ecosystems, making it a priceless living laboratory and a home for plants and animals large and small. Originally established as a national monument in 1909, the area was re-designated Olympic National Park by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1938. In 1976, it became an International Biosphere Reserve, and in 1981 was designated a World Heritage Site.

Olympic National Park is a land of beauty and variety. A day’s exploration can take you from breathtaking mountain vistas with meadows of wildflowers to colorful ocean tidepools. Nestled in the valleys are some of the largest remnants of ancient forests left in the country. Olympic is like three magical parks in one. Take some time to explore its many faces! » More Info

Did you know?

The old growth forests of the Pacific Northwest produce three times the biomass (living or once living material) of tropical rain forests.

It was my first visit to Olympic National Park, and I can honestly say there wasn’t a part of it that didn’t take my breath away.
Zion National Park

Utah’s First National Park...
Follow the paths where ancient native people and pioneers walked. Gaze up at massive sandstone cliffs of cream, pink, and red that soar into a brilliant blue sky. Challenge your courage in a narrow slot canyon. Zion’s unique array of plants and animals will enchant you as you absorb the rich history of the past and enjoy the excitement of present day adventures.

Established in 1919, Zion National Park’s 229 square miles are composed of dramatic landscapes of sculptured canyons and soaring cliffs. Zion is located at the junction of the Colorado Plateau, Great Basin and Mojave Desert provinces. This unique geography and the variety of life zones within the park make Zion significant as a place of unusual plant and animal diversity.

» More Info

Did you know?
California Condors, which were released in Vermillion Cliffs, Arizona, in the late 1990’s, are increasingly being sighted in Zion National Park.

This park was breathtaking. Walking the trails and seeing the waterfalls along the way through the cracks on the trail were beautiful.
Mountains of the Imagination...
Rising above a scene rich with extraordinary wildlife, pristine lakes, and alpine terrain, the Teton Range stands monument to the people who fought to protect it. These are mountains of the imagination. Mountains that led to the creation of Grand Teton National Park where you can explore over two hundred miles of trails, float the Snake River or enjoy the serenity of this remarkable place.

The jagged range includes its signature peak Grand Teton at 13,770 feet and at least twelve pinnacles over 12,000 feet. Seven morainal lakes adorn the base of the range, and more than 100 alpine lakes dot the backcountry. Elk, moose, mule deer, bison and pronghorn are commonly found in the park, while black bears roam the forests and canyons and grizzlies wander throughout more remote portions of the park.

» More Info

Did you know?

Did you know that the granite and gneiss composing the core of the Teton Range are some of the oldest rocks in North America, but the mountains are among the youngest in the world?

These mountains seem to rocket out of the ground as if being forced by God’s giant hand. This is the most impressive park I’ve been to.
Acadia National Park

The First National Park East of the Mississippi River
Comprised of a cluster of islands on the rugged Maine coast, Acadia National Park encompasses over 47,000 acres of granite-domed mountains, woodlands, lakes, ponds, and ocean shoreline. Steep slopes rise above the rocky shore, including Cadillac Mountain, which at 1,530 feet is the highest point on the U.S. Atlantic coast. Such diverse habitats create striking scenery and make the park a haven for wildlife and plants. More than 140 miles of hiking trails and 45 miles of historic carriage roads lead visitors to stone-faced bridges, waterfalls, cliffs and scenic vistas and help share the rich human history of the region that includes Native Americans, European settlers, artists, conservationists, and more.

» More Info

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Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Have made several trips to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park this past summer. Brandywine Falls and gorge was beautiful.

Did you know?
Cuyahoga Valley National Park’s namesake river flows north and south. The Cuyahoga River begins its 100 mile journey in Geauga County, flows south to Cuyahoga Falls where it turns sharply north and flows through CVNP. American Indians referred to the U-shaped river as Cuyahoga or “crooked river.”
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