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# The Best National Parks in All 50 States <sup>[1]</sup>

These must-see National Parks—one for each state, plus the District of Columbia—showcase our country's natural beauty and rich history.



[1]



Around 300 million people visit National Park Service locations annually, mostly the "biggies" like the Grand Canyon, Great Smoky Mountains and Yosemite. But among the more than 400 sites are many lesser-known gems that also showcase our country's incredible scenery and remarkable past. In honor of the NPS's 100th birthday, here are must-see National Parks in every state (plus the District of Columbia).

**NHP = National Historical Park • NHS = National Historic Site • NL = National Lakeshore  
• NM = National Monument • NP = National Park**

**Alabama** Follow the path of the civil rights movement by driving the **Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail** <sup>[2]</sup>; stop at the interpretive centers midway and by the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge.

**Alaska** Trek into **Klondike Gold Rush NHP** <sup>[3]</sup> (in and around Skagway, a cruise port) for fascinating tales of this rugged territory's fortune hunters.

**Arizona** Two and a half hours south of the Grand Canyon is **Montezuma Castle NM**, <sup>[4]</sup> one of the continent's best-preserved cliff dwellings.

**Arkansas** Stroll along Bathhouse Row, then have a soak at the hundred-plus-year-old **Buckstaff Baths in Hot Springs NP** <sup>[5]</sup>.

**California Lassen Volcanic NP** <sup>[6]</sup>'s eruptive past reveals itself with boiling pools and mud pots; there are also seasonal stargazing programs.

**Colorado** Hike through ancestral Puebloan villages built between 1200 and 1300 A.D. at **Hovenweep NM** <sup>[7]</sup> in the Four Corners region.

**Connecticut** Be creatively inspired by **Weir Farms NHS** <sup>[8]</sup> in Wilton, the only NP honoring American Impressionism. (It still hosts artists-in-residence.)

**Delaware** The first state to ratify the Constitution celebrates early America—from its founding to the Industrial Revolution—at the aptly named **First State NHP** <sup>[9]</sup>.

**Florida Dry Tortugas NP** <sup>[10]</sup>, accessible by ferry from Key West, shelters coral reefs and the massive but unfinished Fort Jefferson, where a Lincoln assassination co-conspirator was once imprisoned.

**Georgia** In downtown Atlanta, the **Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS** <sup>[11]</sup> welcomes visitors into MLK's childhood home (15 people per tour). Self-guided options include Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, the D.R.E.A.M. Gallery and "I Have a Dream" World Peace Rose Garden.

**Hawaii** Don't miss sunrise or sunset (just as stunning but less crowded) at **Haleakalā NP** <sup>[12]</sup>'s summit on Maui.



**Idaho** NASA astronauts studied **Craters of the Moon NM & Preserve** <sup>[13]</sup>'s volcanic landscape in preparation for their lunar missions.

**Illinois** Check out the Chicago-area company town George Pullman constructed for his railcar workers at the new **Pullman NM** <sup>[14]</sup>.

**Indiana** Learn about Honest Abe's formative years at **Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial** <sup>[15]</sup>. Then travel back to the frontier at the Lincoln Living History Farm.

**Iowa** Native Americans built the 200-plus animal-shaped hillocks overlooking the Upper Mississippi River at **Effigy Mounds NM** <sup>[16]</sup>.

**Kansas** Go on a hike to experience the once-flourishing grasslands of the Plains—where the bison roam free—at **Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve** <sup>[17]</sup>.

**Kentucky** Tour a cave and listen to stories of the early pioneers who headed over the Appalachians at **Cumberland Gap NHP** <sup>[18]</sup>.

**Louisiana** Swing by **New Orleans Jazz NHP** <sup>[19]</sup> for a musical history lesson, performance or map of noteworthy jazz sites.

**Maine** The **Appalachian National Scenic Trail** <sup>[20]</sup>'s northern terminus is also this state's highest point, Mount Katahdin.

**Maryland** Assist in raising or lowering the 15-stars-and-stripes flag at Baltimore's **Fort McHenry NM and Historic Shrine** <sup>[21]</sup>, birthplace of our national anthem.

**Massachusetts** Old North Church, the Paul Revere House and Bunker Hill—follow in the footsteps of American revolutionaries at **Boston NHP** <sup>[22]</sup>.

**Michigan** **Sleeping Bear Dunes NL** <sup>[23]</sup> overlooks northern Lake Michigan, a pristine spot for paddling, bird-watching and completing the Dune Climb.

**Minnesota** Set in the North Woods bordering Canada, **Voyageurs NP** <sup>[24]</sup> winds along the waterways and land routes plied by Native Americans and traders.

**Mississippi** Monuments, trenches, cannons and an ironclad gunboat—the USS *Cairo*—are some of **Vicksburg National Military Park** <sup>[25]</sup>'s Civil War artifacts.

**Missouri** Ride a tram up to the top of St. Louis' soaring Gateway Arch at **Jefferson National Expansion Memorial** <sup>[27]</sup>.

**Montana** Midway between Glacier and Yellowstone NPs, **Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS** <sup>[28]</sup> is a working cattle ranch offering house tours, wagon rides and cowboy talks.



**Nebraska** **Homestead NM of America** <sup>[29]</sup> commemorates the pioneers who helped settle the

West under the Homestead Act.

**Nevada Great Basin NP** <sup>[30]</sup> offers astronomy programs plus full-moon hikes under some of the darkest night skies around.

**New Hampshire** Visit the house, workshop and gardens of the illustrious American sculptor at **Saint-Gaudens NHS** <sup>[31]</sup>.

**New Jersey** Enjoy a lightbulb moment at **Thomas Edison NHP** <sup>[32]</sup> while exploring the prolific inventor's home, laboratory complex and recording studio.

**New Mexico** Native Americans and early Spanish settlers carved designs and symbols into volcanic rocks at **Petroglyph NM** <sup>[33]</sup>, near Albuquerque.

**New York** Imagine life as an immigrant at Manhattan's **Lower East Side Tenement Museum NHS** <sup>[34]</sup>.

**North Carolina** Share the excitement of the first successful flight and view replica aircraft at **Wright Brothers National Memorial** <sup>[35]</sup>.

**North Dakota** Spot bison, elk and more at **Theodore Roosevelt NP** <sup>[36]</sup> the land that inspired this fearless leader's conservation policies.

**Ohio** Why should presidents get all the glory? **First Ladies NHS** <sup>[37]</sup> in Canton depicts the accomplishments of the White House's unelected commanders in chief.

**Oklahoma** Depression-era structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the turreted Lincoln Bridge, swimming holes and mineral springs are some of the attractions at **Chickasaw National Recreation Area** <sup>[38]</sup>.

**Oregon** Colorful hills, fauna and flora relics, and fantastic geologic features abound at **John Day Fossil Beds NM** <sup>[39]</sup>.



**Pennsylvania** Honor the Civil War battlefield where many gave what Lincoln called their "last full measure of devotion" at **Gettysburg National Military Park** <sup>[40]</sup>.

**Rhode Island** Newport's beautiful **Touro Synagogue NHS** <sup>[41]</sup>, dating back to the Colonial era, embodies our country's religious freedom.

**South Carolina** The first shot of the Civil War was fired at **Fort Sumter NM** <sup>[42]</sup> in Charleston Harbor.

**South Dakota** Revisit the Cold War at **Minuteman Missile NHS** <sup>[43]</sup>, then head to nearby Badlands NP.

**Tennessee** The Atomic Age is the focus of the recently established **Manhattan Project NHP** <sup>[44]</sup> in Oak Ridge.

**Texas** Once covered by tropical waters, **Guadalupe Mountains NP** <sup>[45]</sup> has thousands of fossils plus rugged mountains and canyons and amazing wildlife.

**Utah Dinosaur NM** <sup>[46]</sup> straddles two states, but the wall of bones—around 1,500—at the Quarry Exhibit Hall is in Utah.

**Vermont Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP** <sup>[47]</sup>'s gardens and mansion offer tours spring through fall. The grounds are open year-round, with trails for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

**Virginia Wolf Trap NP for the Performing Arts** <sup>[48]</sup> boasts more than 100 different shows May through September; off-season there are backstage tours and two nature trails.

**Washington** Lovely Lake Chelan and hundreds of glacier-capped peaks are found in **North Cascades NP** <sup>[49]</sup>'s alpine wilderness.

**West Virginia** Brave the rugged whitewater of **New River Gorge National River** <sup>[50]</sup>, and revel in the scenic canyons and awe-inspiring bridge.

**Wisconsin** Cruise to Lake Superior's **Apostle Islands NL** <sup>[51]</sup> for lighthouse tours, beachcombing and campfire programs.

**Wyoming** The sagebrush desert of **Fossil Butte NM** <sup>[52]</sup> is home to astonishingly well preserved (and renowned) animals and plants.

**PLUS Washington, DC** The **National Mall and Memorial Parks** <sup>[53]</sup>—Ford's Theatre, the MLK Jr. Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Washington Monument are a few of its iconic treasures—majestically commemorates our nation's storied history.



**Where to stay?** Accommodations in the larger parks range from campsites (some with RV hookups) to rustic cabins to handsome lodges. At each park's website, click on "Plan Your Visit." Best advice? Book early.

**Quick Getaway:** Experience all the majestic beauty and breathtaking thrills of America's national parks with National Parks Adventure, a giant-screen documentary narrated by Robert Redford. For more information and theaters, go to [nationalparksadventure.com](http://nationalparksadventure.com).

**Read All About It:** *59 Illustrated National Parks* by Joel Anderson and Nathan Anderson • *Guide to National Parks of the United States* <sup>[54]</sup>, eighth edition, by National Geographic (there's also a version by National Geographic Kids) • *Life Lessons from the National Parks* by Penny Musco • *See America* by Creative Action Network

**A Present to You!** In honor of the centennial, admission to NPS sites are free on these days in 2016:  
April 16–24  
August 25–28  
September 24

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