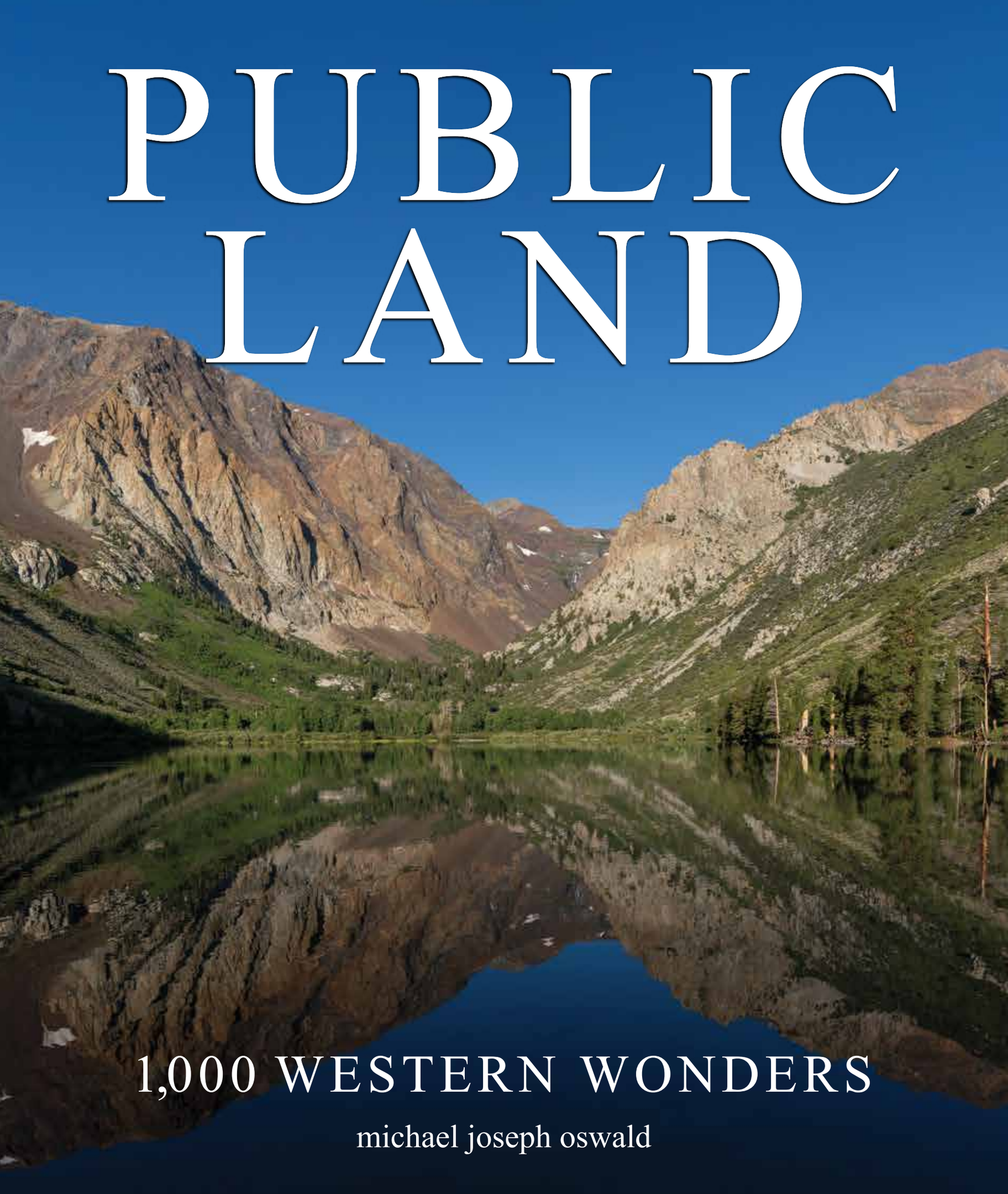
PUBLIC LAND



1,000 WESTERN WONDERS

michael joseph oswald


Come and Explore
Your Public Land

Public

/ˈpəblik/ open to or shared by the people



About the Author

I'm a guy who believes in the democratization of public land information. I think a lot about how much time we collectively spend planning trips, reading between reviews, and analyzing resources. I genuinely want to help you make the most of your time and money.

Land

/land/ the surface of the earth



About the Book

"Too many people!" is the number one complaint I hear in National Parks. I'm the kind of guy who can enjoy a mountain while someone else is looking at it, but I also know playing lotteries to hike a trail, extremely competitive parking, and advance reservation requirements that can evaporate within minutes of release are not enjoyable. When I learned there's nearly 400 million acres of Public Land out West, I thought helping people find less popular natural wonders might be a fun project to work on. It was. Hopefully the places in this book are even more fun for you.



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NPS

National Park Service

This book explores…

31 National Parks
33 National Monuments
8 National Recreation Areas
4 National Historical Parks
2 National Preserves
1 National Seashore
1 National Memorial
1 National Historic Site
1 National Battlefield
1 National Heritage Area

All NPS site headers are **blue.**



USFS

United States Forest Service

This book explores…

55 National Forests

Within those forests are several National Recreation Areas and Wilderness Areas, two National Scenic Areas, two National Volcanic Monuments, two National Natural Landmarks, one National Monument, and one Management Unit.

All USFS site headers are **green.**

*National Forests use NF, FR, and FS as prefixes for their roads. I simplified and used NF for all of them.



BLM

Bureau of Land Management

This book explores…

63 BLM Sites, including six National Monuments, four Wilderness Areas, two Scenic Areas, two National Conservation Areas, and one Recreation Area.

All BLM site headers are **purple.**

State

Parks Outside the Federal Purview

This book explores…

132 State and Regional Parks.

All State site headers are **orange.**

This book also explores ten sites on Tribal Land (headers in **red**). As well as 13 miscellaneous sites. Miscellaneous sites fall under the Department of Defense (DoD), National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO), Department of Energy (DoE), National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Bureau of Reclamation, and private property (open to the public). These site headers are **gray**.







More than a Book…

Visit **www.stoneroadpress.com/PL1000** to download printable itineraries (with maps, hiking details, and weather charts) for when you're ready to leave cell coverage behind and explore these Western Wonders (like Canyonlands National Park's White Rim Road pictured here). You'll also find a Google Map with all the sites in this book pinned.



National Park Favorites

The National Park Service manages more than 60 National Parks. They are the most well-developed and easiest-to-navigate public land in our country. While they're all wondrous, a few stand out.

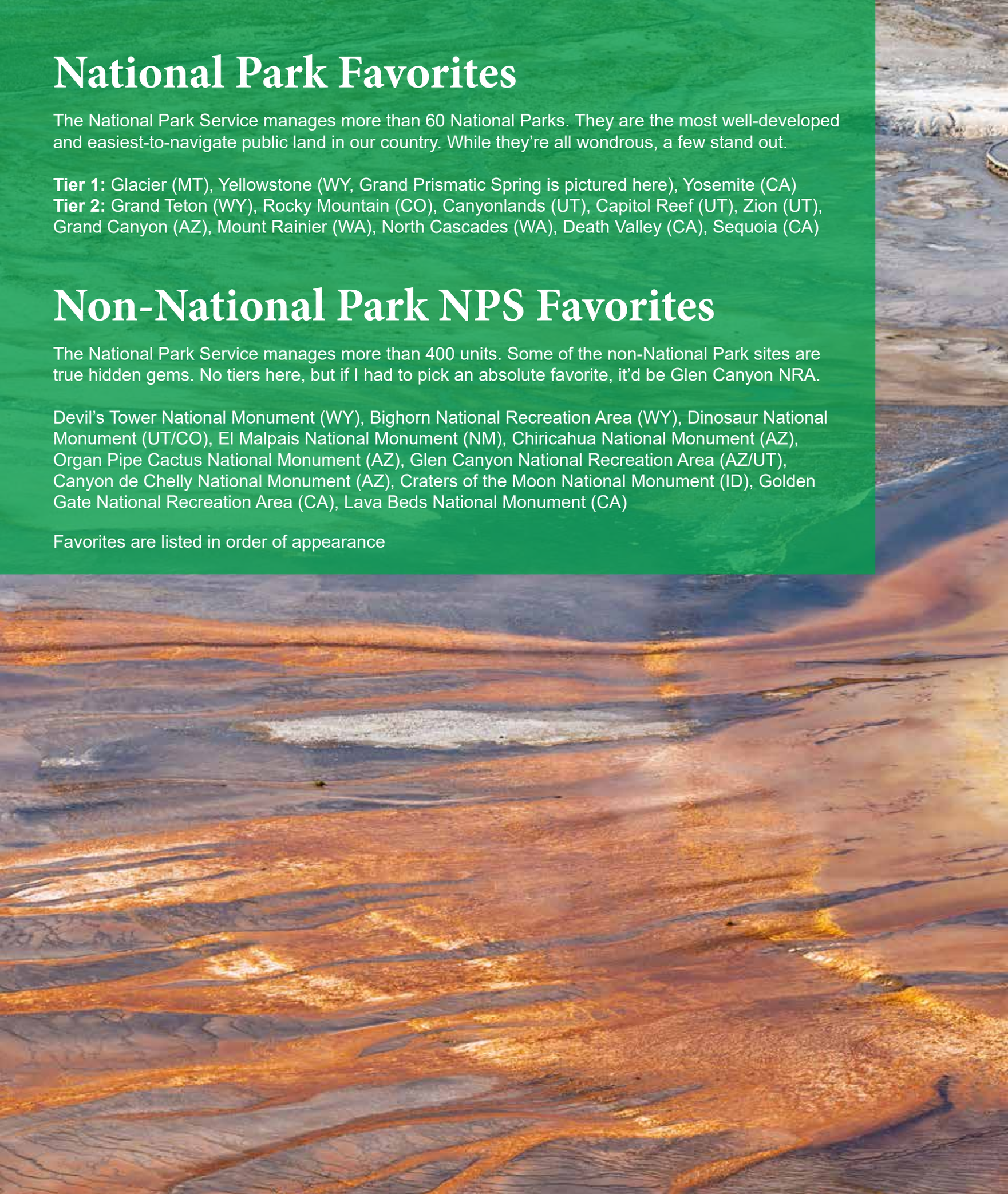
Tier 1: Glacier (MT), Yellowstone (WY, Grand Prismatic Spring is pictured here), Yosemite (CA)
Tier 2: Grand Teton (WY), Rocky Mountain (CO), Canyonlands (UT), Capitol Reef (UT), Zion (UT), Grand Canyon (AZ), Mount Rainier (WA), North Cascades (WA), Death Valley (CA), Sequoia (CA)

Non-National Park NPS Favorites

The National Park Service manages more than 400 units. Some of the non-National Park sites are true hidden gems. No tiers here, but if I had to pick an absolute favorite, it'd be Glen Canyon NRA.

Devil's Tower National Monument (WY), Bighorn National Recreation Area (WY), Dinosaur National Monument (UT/CO), El Malpais National Monument (NM), Chiricahua National Monument (AZ), Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (AZ), Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (AZ/UT), Canyon de Chelly National Monument (AZ), Craters of the Moon National Monument (ID), Golden Gate National Recreation Area (CA), Lava Beds National Monument (CA)

Favorites are listed in order of appearance







National Forest Favorites

National Forests can be confusing (disjointed units of massive forest conglomerates, peculiar boundaries, etc.) and relatively inaccessible (vast wilderness areas, unpaved roads, limited signage, gates, etc.), but if you do a little homework (with the help of this book), you can find some unbelievable natural wonders with a tiny fraction of the crowds common in our similarly magnificent National Parks. Don't be scared by bullet holes in park/road signs. That usually means you're in the right place.



Bitterroot (MT), Custer-Gallatin (MT), **Shoshone** (WY), **Caribou-Targhee** (WY/ID), Arapaho (CO), **Uncompahgre** (CO, that's Uncompahgre in the photo), Rio Grande (CO), **San Juan** (CO), Tonto (AZ), Coconino (AZ), **Ashley** (UT), **Uinta** (UT), **Sawtooth** (ID), **Mount Baker-Snoqualmie** (WA), Okanogan-Wenatchee (WA), Gifford Pinchot (WA), Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (OR), Willamette (OR), Deschutes (OR), **Inyo** (CA), Shasta-Trinity (CA)

All of these forests are massive, and I've only scratched their surface, so I'm not going to pretend to be an expert, but I put the ones I can't wait to return to in gold.

BLM Favorites

Rio Grande-Del Norte National Monument (NM), Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness (NM, pictured), Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (NM), Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (AZ), Valley of the Gods (UT), Factory Butte Recreation Area (UT), Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (UT), Bonneville Salt Flats (UT), Red Rock Canyon (NV), Leslie Gulch (ID), Alabama Hills National Scenic Area (CA)

These are all pretty great, but Grand Staircase-Escalante is huge and incredibly unique, and Alabama Hills features some of the best views in the country. Looking back, those two stand out to me.



State Park Favorites

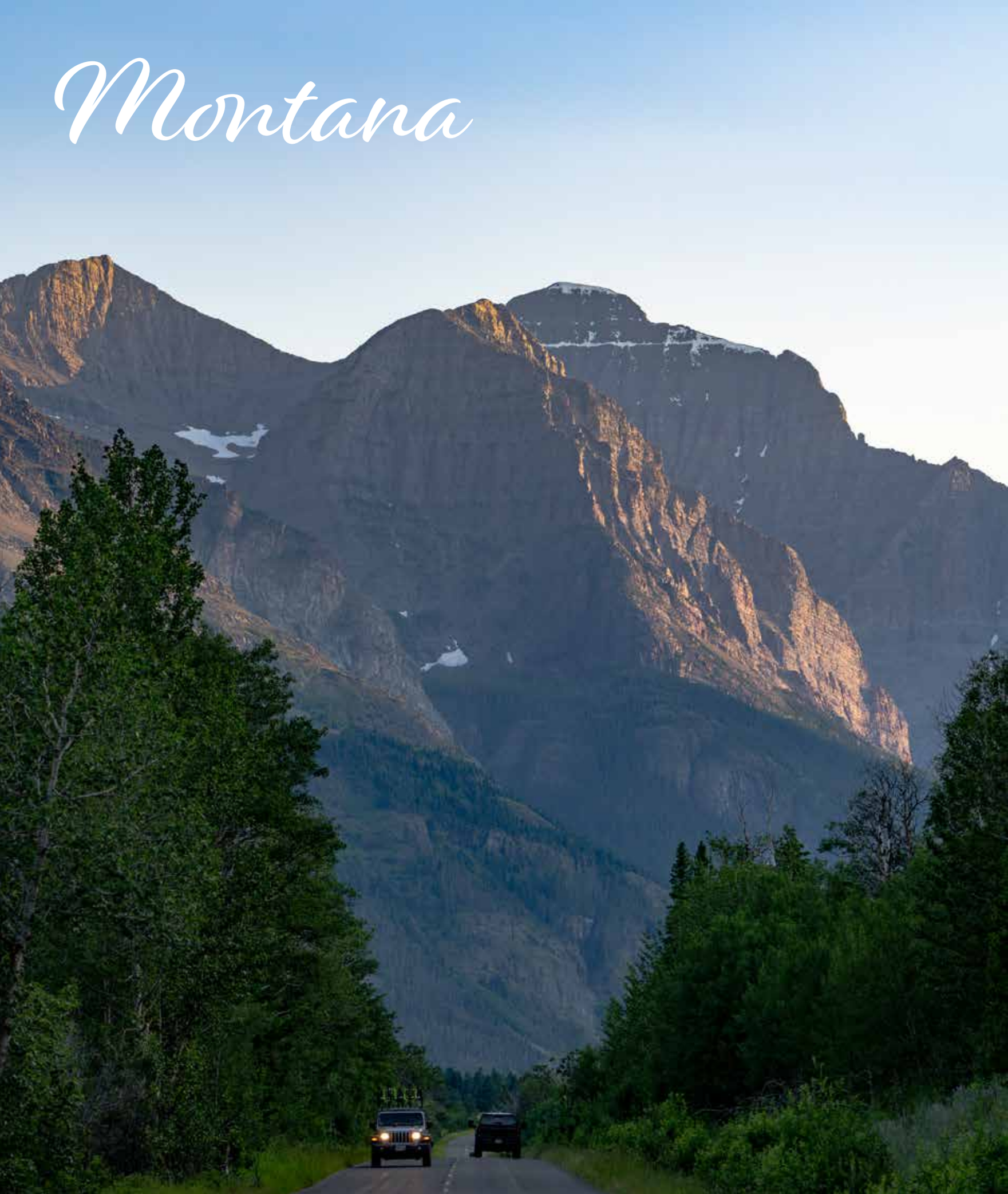
State Forest (CO), City of Rocks (NM), Slide Rock (AZ), Deadhorse Point (UT), Goblin Valley (UT, pictured), Kodachrome Basin (UT), Coral Pink Sand Dunes (UT), Valley of Fire (NV), Cathedral Gorge (NV), Shoshone Falls (ID), Palouse Falls (WA), Lake Owyhee (OR), Succor Creek (OR), Silver Falls (OR), The Cove Palisades (OR), Smith Rock (OR), Oceanside Beach (OR), Samuel H. Boardman (OR), Humboldt Redwoods (CA), Ano Nuevo (CA), Cotoni-Coast Dairies (CA), Anza-Borrego Desert (CA), McArthur-Burney Falls (CA)





Welcome to Your Public Land

Montana





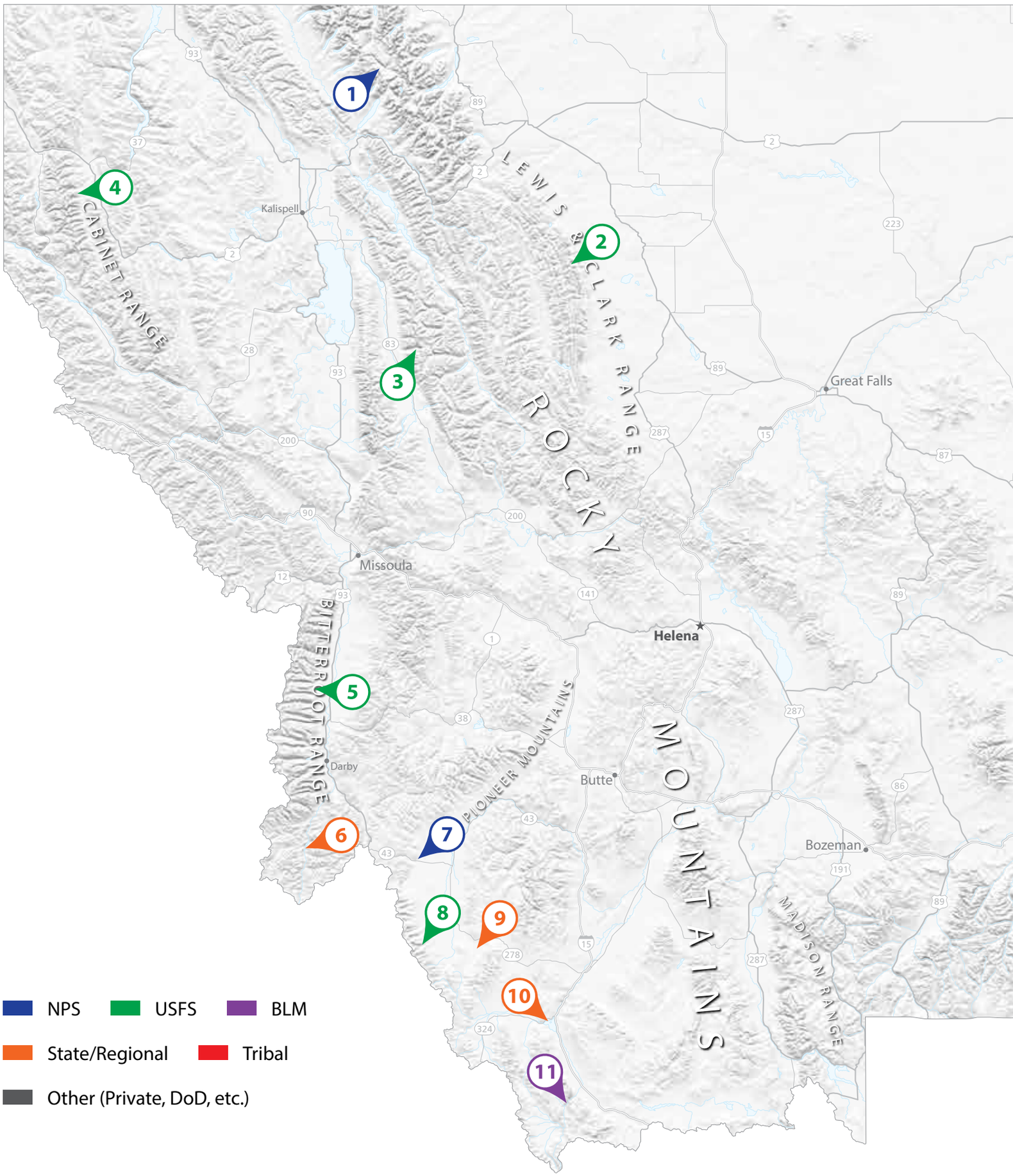
Capital	Population	Size (acres)	Population Density (people/square mile)	Federal Land (acres, % of MT)	State Land (acres)	NPS (acres)	USFS (acres)	BLM (acres)	FWS (acres)	DOD (acres)
Helena (Pop. 34,000)	1.1M (43 of 50)	93.2M (4 of 50)	7.8 (48 of 50)	27.1M (29.0%)	5.2M (5.6%)	1.2M (1.3%)	17.2M (18.4%)	8.0M (8.6%)	653K (0.7%)	5.9K (0.01%)

"Shoshone" was initially considered as the name for Montana Territory. Early explorers used to refer to the Shoshone as the Snake Indians, and that wasn't the positive connotation decision makers sought. Montana, from the Spanish word montaña, was much better.

While the sky may be big wherever you are in Montana, it's not all mountains. Montana has the lowest average elevation of all the Rocky Mountain states. That's largely due to the vast expanses of grasslands, farmland, and badlands east of the Rocky Mountains. The state's geography is remarkably different from its western to eastern boundaries, two imaginary lines nearly 600 miles apart. The Western third of the state is rugged and mountainous. The Eastern two-thirds features arid plains and craggy badlands. Considering its size (the 4th-largest state), Montana is sparsely populated. Only eight cities in the state have a population greater than 10,000. And, unsurprisingly, all eight of those cities are much closer to the mountains than they are to the state's eastern boundary.

Humans are drawn to the mountains. Man draws state boundaries. There are quite a few stories about how Montana's western boundary was chosen. Each involves a group of Montana lobbyists plying key members of Congress with libations. The boundary moved from the Continental Divide to the crest of the Bitterroot Mountains. It's unclear exactly what those special interests were. But it likely had something to do with the wealth of resources beneath Butte, once called "The Richest Hill on Earth," and the Sapphire Mountains, as well as Flathead Lake (one of the largest natural freshwater lakes west of the Mississippi), timber resources, and the supreme beauty of the Bitterroot Mountains. They are spectacular.

▲ Lake Como - Bitterroot National Forest
◄ Going-to-the-Sun Road - Glacier National Park


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11
Kalispell
Missoula
Great Falls
Helena
Butte
Bozeman
Darby
CABINET RANGE
LEWIS & CLARK RANGE
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
BITTERROOT RANGE
PIONEER MOUNTAINS
MADISON RANGE
NPS
USFS
BLM
State/Regional
Tribal
Other (Private, DoD, etc.)





54 Montana Wonders

1. Glacier National Park
- Goat Haunt
- Many Glacier
- Grinnell Glacier
- Swiftcurrent Lookout
- St. Mary Lake
- Going-to-the-Sun Road
- Hidden Lake
- Highline/Granite Park
- Avalanche Lake
- Sperry Glacier/Chalet
- Lake McDonald
- Two Medicine
- Pitamakan-Dawson Pass

2. Helena-Lewis & Clark NF
- Muddy Creek Falls
- West Fork Teton
- Headquarters Creek Pass
- Mortimer Gulch
- Benchmark
- Tears of the Turtle Cave

3. Flathead National Forest
- Hungry Horse Reservoir
- Holland Lake/Falls
- Mission Mountains

4. Kootenai National Forest
- Yaak Mountain Lookout
- Granite Lake
- Leigh Lake
- Bull Lake

5. Bitterroot Nat'l Forest
- Canyons & Valleys
- Ward Mountain
- Lost Horse Road
- Lake Como
- Tin Cup
- Trapper Peak
- Medicine Point Lookout

6. Painted Rocks State Park

7. Big Hole Nat'l Battlefield

8. Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF
- Lower Miner Lakes
- Lemhi Pass
- Pioneer Scenic Byway
- Sawtooth Lake
- Canyon Creek Kilns

9. Bannack State Park

10. Camp Fortunate

11. Big Sheep Creek Road

12. Custer-Gallatin NF
- Palisade Falls
- Natural Bridge Falls
- Woodbine Falls
- West Rosebud
- East Rosebud
- Basin Creek Lakes
- Timberline Lake
- West Fork Rock Creek
- Lake Fork
- Hellroaring Plateau

13. Beartooth Highway

▲ Hidden Lake - Glacier National Park