
AMERICA'S
BEST
IDEAS



My National Parks Journal

This journal belongs to

_____


North Cascades
Olympic
WASHINGTON
Mount Rainier
Glacier
MONTANA
NORTH DAKOTA
Theodore Roosevelt
Yellowstone
OREGON
IDAHO
Crater Lake
Grand Teton
SOUTH DAKOTA
Redwood
Wind Cave
Badlands
WYOMING
Lassen Volcanic
CALIFORNIA
NEBRASKA
NEVADA
Yosemite
Great Basin
Rocky Mountain
UTAH
COLORADO
Arches
Pinnacles
Kings Canyon
Capitol Reef
Black Canyon of the Gunnison
Canyonlands
KANSAS
Sequoia
Zion
Bryce Canyon
Great Sand Dunes
Mesa Verde
Death Valley
Grand Canyon
Channel Islands
Joshua Tree
Petrified Forest
OKLAHOMA
ARIZONA
NEW MEXICO
PACIFIC OCEAN
Saguaro
White Sands
Carlsbad Caverns
Guadalupe Mountains
TEXAS
Big Bend
ALASKA
RUSSIA
Kobuk Valley
Gates of the Arctic
ALASKA
CANADA
Denali
Wrangell-St. Elias
Lake Clark
Kenai Fjords
Glacier Bay
Katmai
BERING SEA
PACIFIC OCEAN
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS


Voyageurs
Isle Royale
MINNESOTA
WISCONSIN
MICHIGAN
IOWA
Indiana Dunes
ILLINOIS
INDIANA
OHIO
Cuyahoga Valley
Shenandoah
WEST VIRGINIA
Gateway Arch
New River Gorge NP
KENTUCKY
VIRGINIA
MISSOURI
Mammoth Cave
TENNESSEE
NORTH CAROLINA
Great Smoky Mountains
ARKANSAS
Hot Springs
SOUTH CAROLINA
Congaree
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
MISSISSIPPI
LOUISIANA
FLORIDA
MAINE
Acadia
VT
NH
MA
RI
CT
NEW YORK
PENNSYLVANIA
NJ
MD
DE
ATLANTIC OCEAN
GULF OF MEXICO
Everglades
Biscayne
Dry Tortugas
REMOTE ISLANDS
KAUA'I
NI'IHAU
O'AHU
MOLOKA'I
Haleakala
MAUI
HAWAII
HAWAI'I
PACIFIC OCEAN
Hawai'i Volcanoes
REMOTE ISLANDS
American Samoa
TUTUILA
OFU
TA'Ū
AMERICAN SAMOA
PACIFIC OCEAN
REMOTE ISLANDS
VIRGIN ISLANDS
PUERTO RICO
Virgin Islands

My National Parks Checklist

- [ ] Acadia
- [ ] American Samoa
- [ ] Arches
- [ ] Badlands
- [ ] Big Bend
- [ ] Biscayne
- [ ] Black Canyon of the Gunnison
- [ ] Bryce Canyon
- [ ] Canyonlands
- [ ] Capitol Reef
- [ ] Carlsbad Caverns
- [ ] Channel Islands
- [ ] Congaree
- [ ] Crater lake
- [ ] Cuyahoga Valley
- [ ] Death Valley
- [ ] Denali
- [ ] Dry Tortugas
- [ ] Everglades
- [ ] Gates of the Arctic
- [ ] Gateway Arch
- [ ] Glacier
- [ ] Glacier Bay
- [ ] Grand Canyon
- [ ] Grand Teton
- [ ] Great Basin
- [ ] Great Sand Dunes
- [ ] Great Smoky Mountains
- [ ] Guadalupe Mountains

- [ ] Haleakala
- [ ] Hawaii Volcanoes
- [ ] Hot Springs
- [ ] Indiana Dunes
- [ ] Isle Royale
- [ ] Joshua Tree
- [ ] Katmai
- [ ] Kenai Fjords
- [ ] Kings Canyon
- [ ] Kobuk Valley
- [ ] Lake Clark
- [ ] Lassen Volcanic
- [ ] Mammoth Cave
- [ ] Mesa Verde
- [ ] Mount Rainier
- [ ] New River Gorge
- [ ] North Cascades
- [ ] Olympic
- [ ] Petrified Forest
- [ ] Pinnacles
- [ ] Redwood
- [ ] Rocky Mountain
- [ ] Saguaro
- [ ] Sequoia
- [ ] Shenandoah
- [ ] Theodore Roosevelt
- [ ] Virgin Islands
- [ ] Voyageurs
- [ ] White Sands
- [ ] Wind Cave
- [ ] Wrangell-St. Elias
- [ ] Yellowstone
- [ ] Yosemite
- [ ] Zion

Parks by Age

Oldest

Yellowstone (1872)
Sequoia (1890)
Yosemite (1890)
Mount Rainier (1899)
Crater Lake (1902)
Wind Cave (1903)
Mesa Verde (1906)
Glacier (1910)
Rocky Mountain (1915)
Hawaii Volcanoes (1916)
Lassen Volcanic (1916)
Denali (1917)
Acadia (1919)
Grand Canyon (1919)
Zion (1919)

Newest

New River Gorge (2020)
White Sands (2019)
Indiana Dunes (2019)
Gateway Arch (2018)
Pinnacles (2013)
Great Sand Dunes (2004)
Congaree (2003)
Cuyahoga Valley (2000)
Black Canyon of the Gunnison (1999)
Death Valley (1994)
Joshua Tree (1994)
Saguaro (1994)
Dry Tortugas (1992)
American Samoa (1988)
Great Basin (1986)

Parks by Size*

More than 1 Million Acres (million acres)

Wrangell-St. Elias, Gates of the Arctic, Denali, Katmai, Lake Clark, Death Valley, Glacier Bay, Yellowstone, Kobuk Valley, Everglades, Grand Canyon, Glacier

500k-1 Million Acres

Olympic, Big Bend, Joshua Tree, Yosemite, Kenai Fjords, Isle Royale, Great Smoky Mountains, North Cascades

250-500k Acres

Kings Canyon, Sequoia, Canyonlands, Hawaii Volcanoes, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain

100-250k Acres

Channel Islands, Badlands, Capitol Reef, Mount Rainier, Petrified Forest, Voyageurs, Shenandoah, Crater Lake, Biscayne, Zion, White Sands, Redwood, Great Sand Dunes, Lassen Volcanic

50-100k Acres

Saguaro, Guadalupe Mountains, Great Basin, Arches, Theodore Roosevelt, New River Gorge, Dry Tortugas, Mammoth Cave, Mesa Verde

25-50k Acres

Acadia, Carlsbad Caverns, Bryce Canyon, Wind Cave, Haleakala, Cuyahoga Valley, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Congaree, Pinnacles

0-25k Acres

Indiana Dunes, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Hot Springs, Gateway Arch

*Bigger doesn't always mean more to do/see. Acadia is small but it's heavily developed. Alaskan parks are HUGE but they're nearly 100% wilderness.

Parks by Visitation*

Most (millions)

Great Smoky Mtns (11.6)
Grand Canyon (5.2)
Zion (4.1)
Rocky Mountain (4.1)
Yellowstone (3.9)
Yosemite (3.9)
Acadia (3.2)
Grand Teton (3.2)
Olympic (3.0)
Glacier (2.7)
Joshua Tree (2.5)
Cuyahoga Valley (2.4)
Indiana Dunes (2.1)
Bryce Canyon (2.1)
Gateway Arch (1.6)
Hot Springs (1.6)
Arches (1.5)
Hawaii Volcanoes (1.5)
Shenandoah (1.4)
Mount Rainier (1.4)
New River Gorge (1.3)
Death Valley (1.2)

Fewest (thousands)

Gates of the Arctic (9)
Kobuk Valley (12)
Lake Clark (16)
Isle Royale (21)
American Samoa (25)
North Cascades (27)
Katmai (41)
Wrangell-St. Elias (66)
Dry Tortugas (67)
Great Basin (132)
Congaree (148)
Guadalupe Mtns (186)
Pinnacles (228)
Voyageurs (239)
Black Canyon of the Gunnison (280)
Virgin Islands (295)
Channel Islands (321)
Carlsbad Caverns (405)
Big Bend (423)
Great Sand Dunes (422)
Redwood (450)
Glacier Bay (450)

*Average annual visitation over the past decade

Parks by Hiking Trails*

Most Trails	Fewest Trails
Yellowstone	Kobuk Valley
Sequoia & Kings Canyon	Gates of the Arctic
Great Smoky Mountains	Dry Tortugas
Yosemite	Gateway Arch
Olympic	Katmai
Glacier	Lake Clark
Grand Canyon	Petrified Forest
Shenandoah	Biscayne
North Cascades	White Sands
Rocky Mountain	Badlands
Mount Rainier	American Samoa
Redwood	Arches
Canyonlands	Black Canyon of the Gunnison
Redwood	Congaree
Cuyahoga Valley	Glacier Bay
Isle Royale	Hot Springs
Saguaro	Mesa Verde
Acadia	Denali
Big Bend	Haleakala
Lassen Volcanic	Kenai Fjords

*More hiking trails = longer stays. Expect a park with a lot of hiking trails to be busier and harder to reserve overnight accommodations.

More Visitation Data

Visitation changes quite a bit, month-to-month, year-to-year. You can find more data at irma.nps.gov/stats (or scan the QR code).

About National Park Crowds

National Parks can get crowded, especially in summer. Crowds should not scare you from planning a National Park vacation, but you do need to do a little extra planning. When we went to print, a few parks (Glacier, Arches, and Rocky Mountain) required timed-entry permits for popular regions during peak season. Zion's Angel's Landing Trail, Acadia's Cadillac Summit, and Haleakala's Summit (sunrise) also required a permit. Want to avoid permits and crowds? Here are a few suggestions:

1). Travel between Labor Day and Memorial Day (look at weather data, September and October can be a great time to visit the parks, even the mountainous ones) – Desert (Joshua Tree, Big Bend, Death Valley) and Hawaii parks get busy during holidays (fall through spring).
2). Get an early start!
3). Go for a long hike!
4). Go to a less popular park!
5). Avoid weekend trips to parks near large cities
6). Look outside the parks to National Forests, State Parks, BLM Land, or other NPS sites in summer! The National Park Service manages 85 million acres of land. The U.S. Forest Service manages 193 million acres. The Bureau of Land Management manages 247 million acres. There's plenty of space for everyone.

Badlands

Prairie-dog-certified Good Lands!

Est. November 10, 1978
Size: 242,756 Acres

Visitation: 990,000
Trails: 10+ Miles

- [ ] Drive Badlands Loop Road
- [ ] Spend the night (Badlands' rocky spires are best at dawn and dusk)
- [ ] Hike to the Castle (via Castle, Medicine Root or Saddle Pass trails)
- [ ] Hike Notch Trail (there's a fun wooden ladder)
- [ ] Watch prairie dogs at Robert's Prairie Dog Town
- [ ] Check out Fossil Exhibit Trail
- [ ] Stop at Red Shirt Table Overlook (perhaps the best view in the park)
- [ ] Off-road to Sheep Mountain Table (you can hike or mountain bike too!)


Prairie Dog
Alert!!!

Badlands is an extremely rich fossil site, including fossils of long-extinct three-toed horses, camels, and rhinos!



Biscayne

An underwater park

Est. June 28, 1980
Size: 172,971 Acres

Visitation: 550,000
Trails: 8+ Miles

- [ ] Book a snorkel or boat tour
- [ ] View Stiltsville from Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park
- [ ] Hike the "Spite Highway" on Elliott Key
- [ ] Check out shipwrecks along Maritime Heritage Trail
- [ ] Paddle Jones Lagoon
- [ ] Admire the lighthouse at Boca Chita Key

Florida

95% of the park is water!*



*There are more than 70 shipwrecks and quite a few manatees but no fruit-based underwater visitor centers

Bryce Canyon

One of Mother Nature's finest masterpieces

Est. February 25, 1928
Size: 35,835 Acres

Visitation: 2.1 Million
Trails: 50+ Miles

- [ ] Spend at least one night!
- [ ] Enjoy Bryce Amphitheater (Sunrise, Sunset, Inspiration Point, Bryce Point), one of the most spectacular settings on the planet!
- [ ] Hike! (Rim, Wall Street, Navajo, Queens Garden, Peekaboo Loop, Fairyland Loop - they're all great)
- [ ] Take a horse ride into the amphitheater!

Asked about Bryce Canyon, Ebenezer Bryce said
"It's a heck of a place to lose a cow."




Who let the
dogs out!!!

Canyonlands

Infinite layers of rock

Est. September 12, 1964
Size: 337,598 Acres

Visitation: 680,000
Trails: 200+ Miles

At Island In the Sky:

- [ ] Sunrise at Mesa Arch
- [ ] Check out some overlooks (Grand View, White Rim, Buck Canyon, and Green River)
- [ ] Off-road or Mountain Bike White Rim Road
- [ ] Go whitewater rafting!

At Needles:

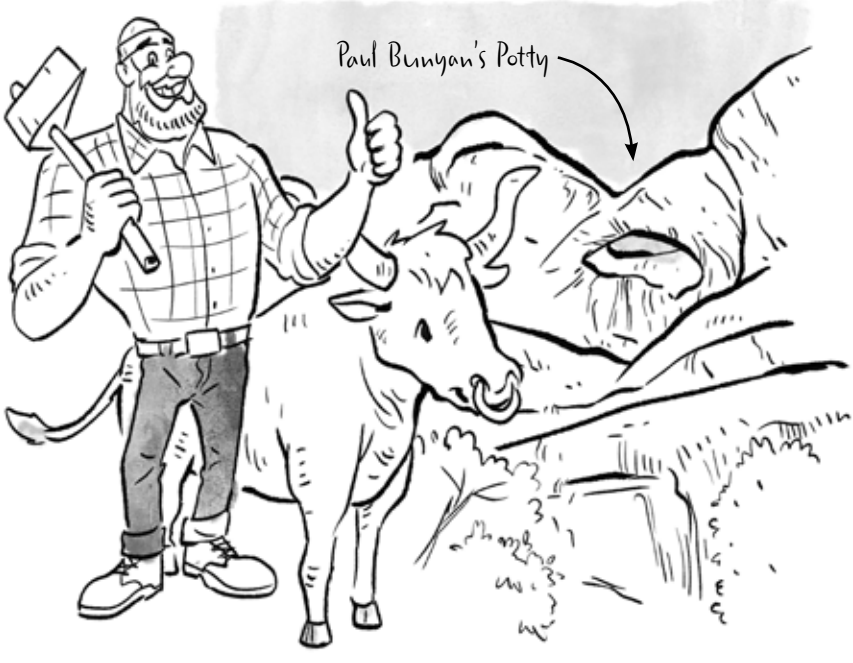
- [ ] Go hiking! (Joint, Chesler Park, Druid Arch, Peekaboo, Lost Canyon are all excellent)
- [ ] Go off-roading! (Many great options from Elephant Hill)

At the Maze:

- [ ] It's a maze of 4x4 roads!

Utah

Canyonlands' wacky rocks have equally wacky names!



Dry Tortugas

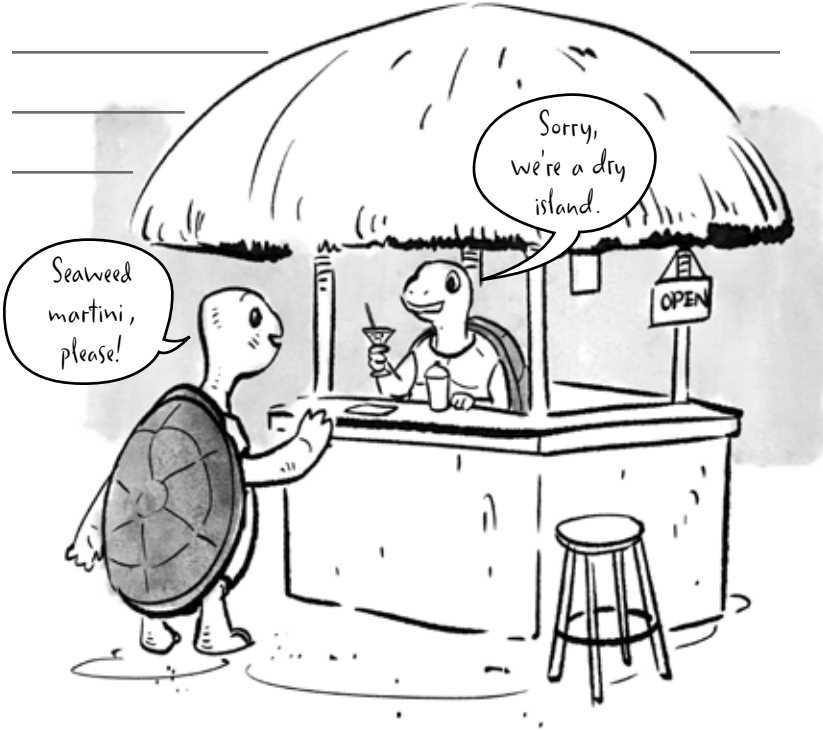
A naval fort turned tourist attraction

Est. October 26, 1992
Size: 64,701 Acres

Visitation: 67,000
Trails: 1 Mile

- [ ] Book your trip (it's only accessible by boat or floatplane)
- [ ] Paddle - the ferry transports kayaks (fee + reservations)
- [ ] Snorkel (free snorkel sets are available to ferry passengers)
- [ ] Tour Fort Jefferson
- [ ] Watch some birds! (10s of 1,000s of sooty terns nest here, among other species)
- [ ] Camp! You'll almost have the island to yourself (just be prepared for rats - seriously!)

Florida



Early explorers named these islands for the abundance of turtles, later adding "dry" to let others know there's no water.

Everglades

A river of grass

Est. December 6, 1947
Size: 1.5 Million Acres

Visitation: 970,000
Trails: 50+ Miles

- [ ] Paddle through a maze of mangroves (Turner River, Hells Bay, Nine Mile...)
- [ ] Take a boat tour (Flamingo or Ten Thousand Islands - there are airboat tours, too!)
- [ ] Spot alligators (Tamiami Highway, Anhinga Trail, Shark Valley)
- [ ] Go birdwatching (Eco Pond, Christian Point, West Lake)

Everglades is the only place on Earth where alligators and crocodiles are found living side by side.



Great Sand Dunes

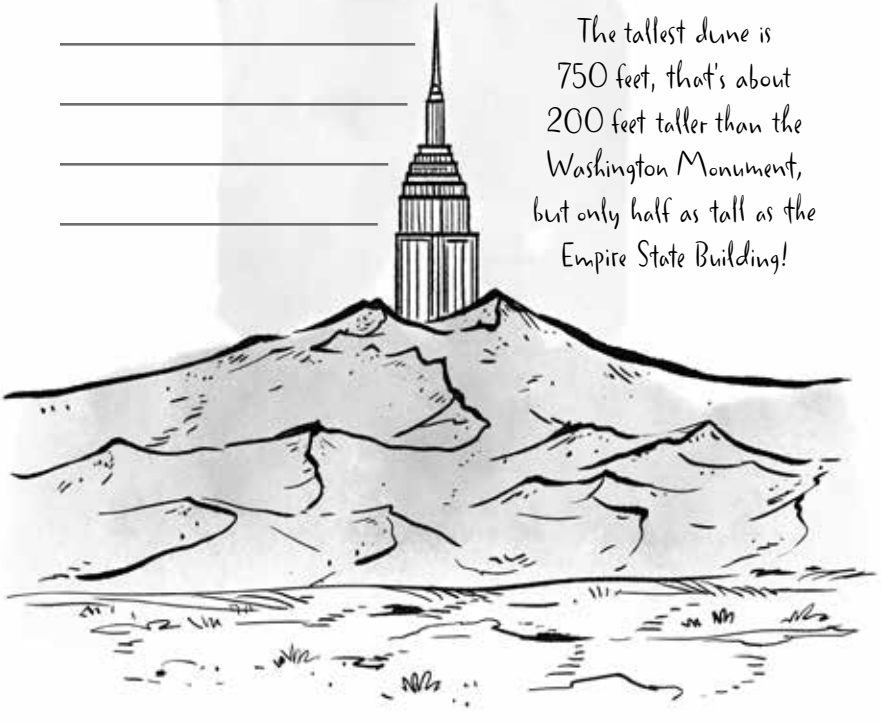
A sea of sand in a sublime setting

Est. September 24, 2004
Size: 149,028 Acres

Visitation: 422,000
Trails: 50+ Miles

- [ ] Climb High Dune!
- [ ] Frolic in the sand (sledding, sandboarding, or bound down the dunes)!
- [ ] Off-road (and camp along) Medano Pass Primitive Road
- [ ] Hike to remote lakes (Sand Creek Lakes, Medano Lake)

Colorado



The tallest dune is 750 feet, that's about 200 feet taller than the Washington Monument, but only half as tall as the Empire State Building!

Haleakala

Mars on Earth, with a side of rain forest

Est. August 1, 1916
Size: 33,265 Acres

Visitation: 980,000
Trails: 30+ Miles

- [ ] Drive to Haleakala Summit
- [ ] Get up early for sunrise at the summit (permit req'd)
- [ ] Hike Sliding Sands Trail!
- [ ] Drive to Kipahulu for Pipiwai Trail (Waimoku Falls)!

Hawaii


Maui lassoed the sun from Haleakala
to make the days longer
My mom needs to dry her laundry!

Hot Springs

Relax with a traditional massage/bath

Est. March 4, 1921
Size: 5,554 Acres

Visitation: 1.6 Million
Trails: 20+ Miles

- [ ] Stroll Grand Promenade
- [ ] Drink some spring water
- [ ] Get a traditional massage/bath
- [ ] Tour Fordyce Bathhouse (and park visitor center)
- [ ] Go up Hot Springs Mountain Tower (fee)

Arkansas

Before all the pills and supplements, thermal baths were the miracle cure!



Katmai

Come watch the bears fish at Brooks Falls

Est. December 2, 1980
Size: 4.1 Million Acres
Visitation: 41,000
Trails: 5+ Miles

- [ ] Watch bears at Brooks Falls!
- [ ] Go fishing!
- [ ] Tour Valley of 10,000 Smokes!
- [ ] Take a flightseeing tour!

Katmai's fishing bears are world famous!



Petrified Forest

Trees of stone and painted deserts

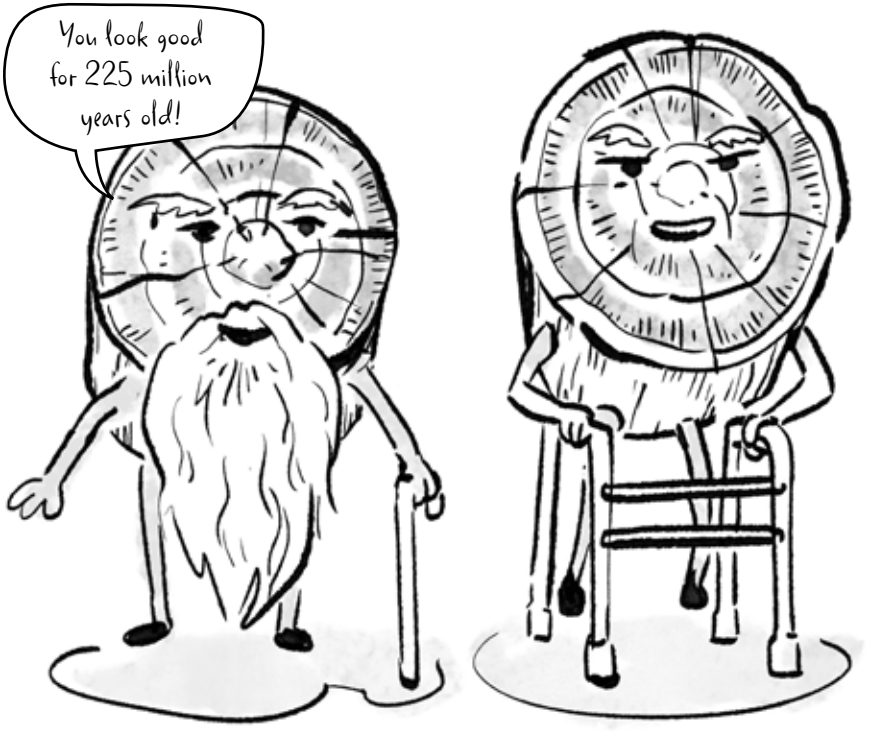
Est. December 9, 1962
Size: 221,390 Acres

Visitation: 630,000
Trails: 7+ Miles*

- [ ] Drive Park Road, including Blue Mesa Loop
- [ ] Stop at Rainbow Forest Museum to see Petrified Wood
- [ ] Enjoy views of the Painted Desert
- [ ] Check out Off-the-beaten-path trails like the Devil's Playground

*There are many miles of "off-the-beaten-path" trails, too!

Petrified wood is more than 200 million years old!




Like snow-birds,
we moved to AZ

Saguaro

The symbol of the American Southwest

Est. October 14, 1994
Size: 92,867 Acres

Visitation: 860,000
Trails: 160+ Miles

Saguaro West:

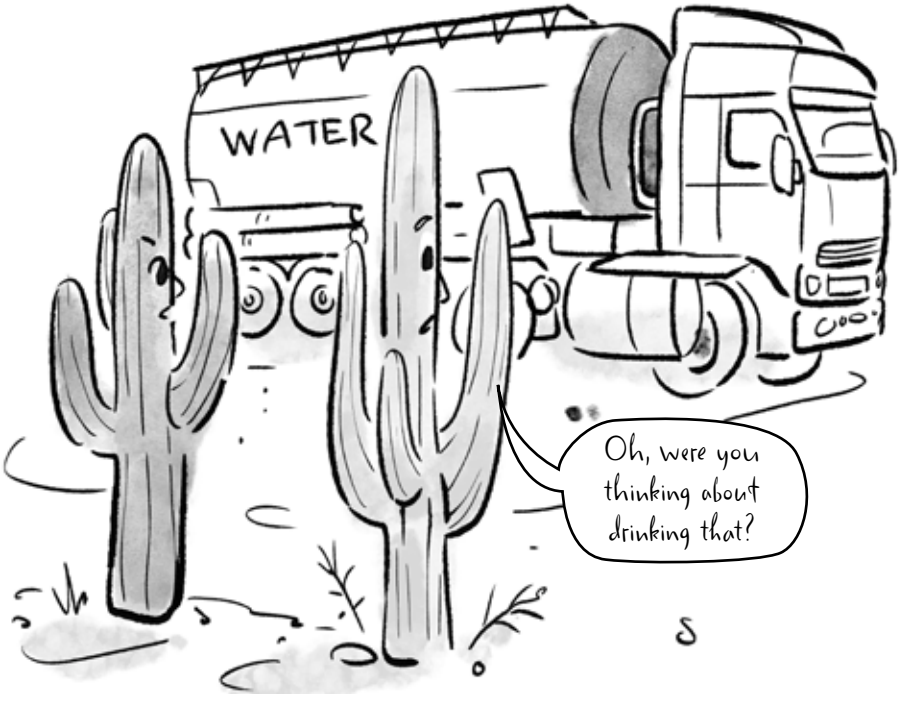
- [ ] Drive Bajada Loop Drive
- [ ] Hike to the summit of Wasson Peak!
- [ ] Visit Red Hills Visitor Center

Saguaro East:

- [ ] Drive Cactus Forest Drive
- [ ] Complete the arduous trek to the summit of Rincon Peak
- [ ] Backpack to Manning Camp!

Arizona

One Saguaro can absorb more than 200 gallons of water after a rain!



Theodore Roosevelt

Where Theodore Roosevelt found a rigorous life

Est. November 10, 1978
Size: 70,447 Acres

Visitation: 660,000
Trails: 100+ Miles

South Unit:

- [ ] Drive Scenic Loop Drive
- [ ] Look for bison at Beef Corral Bottom and/or Big Plateau
- [ ] Spot a few million prairie dogs!
- [ ] Look for wild horses!
- [ ] Tour Roosevelt's Maltese Cross Cabin

North Unit:

- [ ] Drive Scenic Drive
- [ ] Stop at River Bend Overlook (nice sunset spot) and/or hike the Caprock Coulee Loop
- [ ] Yeah, you'll find a few prairie dogs here too!
- [ ] Enjoy tranquility along the Little Missouri River


Theodore Roosevelt came to this region to "bag a bison."
What are you doing with that bag?


Prairie Dog
Heaven!!!

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