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ESSENTIAL FRIENDS

Local Passion, National Impact.

CELEBRATING FRIENDS GROUPS

IN THE NATIONAL PARKS

- ACADIA
- BIG BEND
- BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
- GLACIER
- GRAND TETON
- GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS
- SHENANDOAH
- YELLOWSTONE

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JUNE 2012

"I was my son's age the last time I visited Yellowstone. Today I'm standing at Old Faithful again, my four-year-old on my shoulders. Both of us staring in wide-eyed wonder as it leaps impossibly high into the air, painting clouds in the clear blue Wyoming sky. After all these years, I realize it still has the power to make me feel like a little kid again."

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NATIONAL PARKS TRAVELER'S ESSENTIAL FRIENDS
National Impact. Local Passion.

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PUBLISHED BY
NATIONAL PARKS TRAVELER
Commentary, news, and life in America's Parks

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EDITORS' NOTE

Essential Friends is a collaboration between ***National Parks Traveler*** and a core group of national parks foundations, trusts, and friends groups aimed at enhancing and furthering the now nationally significant role of these organizations in the preservation of our parks. ***National Parks Traveler***, published by National Park Advocates LLC, takes to heart the mission of preserving parks and promoting these groups.

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ESSENTIAL FRIENDS

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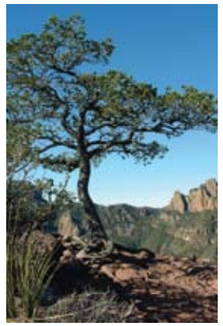

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Mountain goat overlooks Hidden Lake in Glacier National Park, by Ian Shive, recipient of the 2011 Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography. See more of his work at www.ianshive.wordpress.com

Ribbon cutting for the Blue Ridge Parkway Communications Center

ESSENTIAL FRIENDS
Local Passion, National Impact

As lovers of national parks look forward to the 2016 centennial of the National Park Service—guardian of "America's Best Idea"—there has never been a better time to profile the rise and role of what may be our "Second Best Idea"—the friends groups, trusts, and foundations that support those parks.

As federal dollars for parks have dwindled, an inspiring, ongoing proliferation of park friends groups and charitable foundations have stepped up to offset shortfalls, to help parks continue to attain excellence; in short, to provide essential funding.

These "essential friends" have never served a more important role. Their work is a nationally significant—but largely untold—story. Until now. National park friends groups are exciting "local" movements having nationwide impact. They're the biggest national story you've never heard about.

Connect with ***National Parks Traveler*** on Facebook and Twitter! Share how you experience our national parks by posting your favorite vacation story or sharing a photo. Join in the conversation and keep up-to-date on park news around the country.

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@ParksTraveler

NPT Flickr album

Our Future At Stake

National parks preserve our most incredible, and indelible, landscapes, our culture, and our history. In these tough economic times, the parks are even more important as accessible, low-cost destinations where people can escape the moment and create memories sure to renew our American spirit.

In these pages, you'll find eight great national parks, from the Atlantic and the Appalachians to the Rockies, from Mexico to Canada. And you'll meet the people who passionately step up to help "their parks" on our behalf.

They're among the nation's most innovative and energetic friends and foundations worthy of your support.

A Slow, Sad Slide

It's difficult to point to a substantive drop in Park Service funding in any one year, says, Deny Galvin, Park Service deputy director from 1985-2001. Nevertheless, trends show that the agency's budget has fared poorly over the years. From 1981-2010, if the Park Service's budget had matched the growth of the country's Gross Domestic Product, he estimates that the agency would enjoy an annual budget of $4.6 billion—instead of the current $2.6 billion.

And over that period, Galvin points out, the budget for park operations—day-to-day operations, staffing, etc.—has grown, but budgets for construction, land acquisition, and the like, have dwindled. Today the agency's overall budget represents 0.08 percent of the federal budget. "For every $1,000 the government spends," Galvin says, "80 cents goes to national parks."

The irony is that studies show that every dollar spent on our parks produces $4 of economic impact on America's tourism sector, money drawn into large and small rural gateway communities throughout the country. The latest report showed the park system generated $31 billion and 258,000 jobs in 2010, an increase of $689 million and 11,500 jobs from 2009 levels. Those dollars—and Euros, Yuan, Pounds, and a world of other currencies—are spent by people attracted to the scenic, cultural, and historic values preserved in our parks.

Sadly, the discretionary spending in the federal budget that fuels the fluctuating resources of the Park Service is often what's targeted when the axe needs to fall.

Yellowstone Park Foundation trail work

"The creation of friends groups is one of the most significant things that's happened in the park system in the last 30 years."

—Deny Galvin, National Park Service deputy director from 1985-2001

Help from Our Friends

Fortunately, the friends group movement stepped into that vacuum.

The public has been involved with parks from the start. "Some of our nation's most treasured places—from Acadia to the Grand Tetons—were gifts by individuals to the American people," says National Park Foundation President and CEO Neil Mulholland. "Today, the National Park Foundation is proud to stand with, support and establish Friends Groups to continue this noble tradition. Thanks to them our national parks will receive the local support they need into their next century and beyond."

The potential of friends groups for national parks seemed to catch fire with the Park Service in the 1980s. "Lee Iacocca's early 1980s effort to refurbish the Statue of Liberty

The Waters of Yellowstone.

Just one of the many natural wonders, historical sites and national parks worth protecting and enhancing for present and future generations. Get involved and support national park friends groups!

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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NPCA is the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing the National Park System, the largest and most diverse park system in the world. It is the only independent membership organization dedicated to protecting the park system. NPCA and its thousands of members and supporters are committed to preserving our nation's natural, cultural, and historical heritage. To learn more please visit **www.npca.org**.

showed the national value of local effort," says Galvin.

"The creation of friends groups is one of the most significant things that's happened in the park system in the last 30 years," Galvin says.

In the 1980s, "federal-funding trends made it more and more difficult for the Park Service to meet all its needs," continues Galvin, "and the thought was that these organizations could raise money to build visitor centers in parks. These days, the opportunity for a park to build a visitor center with public funds is virtually nonexistent unless you get a congressional earmark."

"If you look at what friends groups do today," says Galvin, "they build visitor centers, they rehabilitate buildings. But since the early days, friends groups have evolved to provide so much more for the parks."

"The National Park Service is loved by a greater percentage of the American people than *Ivory Soap* is pure," says Gary Everhardt, a former director of the National Park Service and the Blue Ridge Parkway superintendent who saw the road to completion. "The American people want to contribute."

A National Tour of Answers for Park Problems

You can contribute too, thanks to the friends, foundations, and trusts that raise funds to improve campgrounds, pay for wildlife research, repair trails and much more. They even set up endowments to repair a given park's trails *forever*. And, yes, they do build visitor centers, and so many other essential things.

With no dramatic park funding increases in sight, and four years ahead of the centennial of the National Park Service, now is the right time for Americans to discover—and join— these inspiring friends groups. Their contributions are more effective, influential, indeed essential, than ever before.

Every one of the nearly 400 units of the National Park System is special, but for many Americans, there is that one park that epitomizes an image of our country, our grandest vistas, our most quintessential events. For about 150 of those parks, there are organized citizen stewards.

Each and every one of those groups out there are essential to those national parks. You will meet some of them in the following pages and during this year on ***National Parks Traveler***.

We encourage you to read about them—and join. These groups are local, but you don't need to live in Wyoming to love Yellowstone, or Maine to treasure Acadia. Nor do you need to be going to your favorite this summer. With a contribution you can visit in spirit, or recall the time you made that one park pilgrimage that the entire family remembers.

Or pass it on—give the kids a gift membership! A sense of ongoing stewardship may just encourage them to take their own kids (one day) and continue a family tradition that's a national tradition, too. ■

Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone Park Foundation
Headquarters in Bozeman, MT
www.ypf.org

Glacier National Park
Glacier National Park Fund
Headquarters in Columbia Falls, MT
www.glacierfund.org

Acadia National Park
Friends of Acadia
Headquarters in Bar Harbor, ME
www.friendsofacadia.org

Shenandoah National Park
Shenandoah National Park Trust
Headquarters in Charlottesville, VA
www.snptrust.org

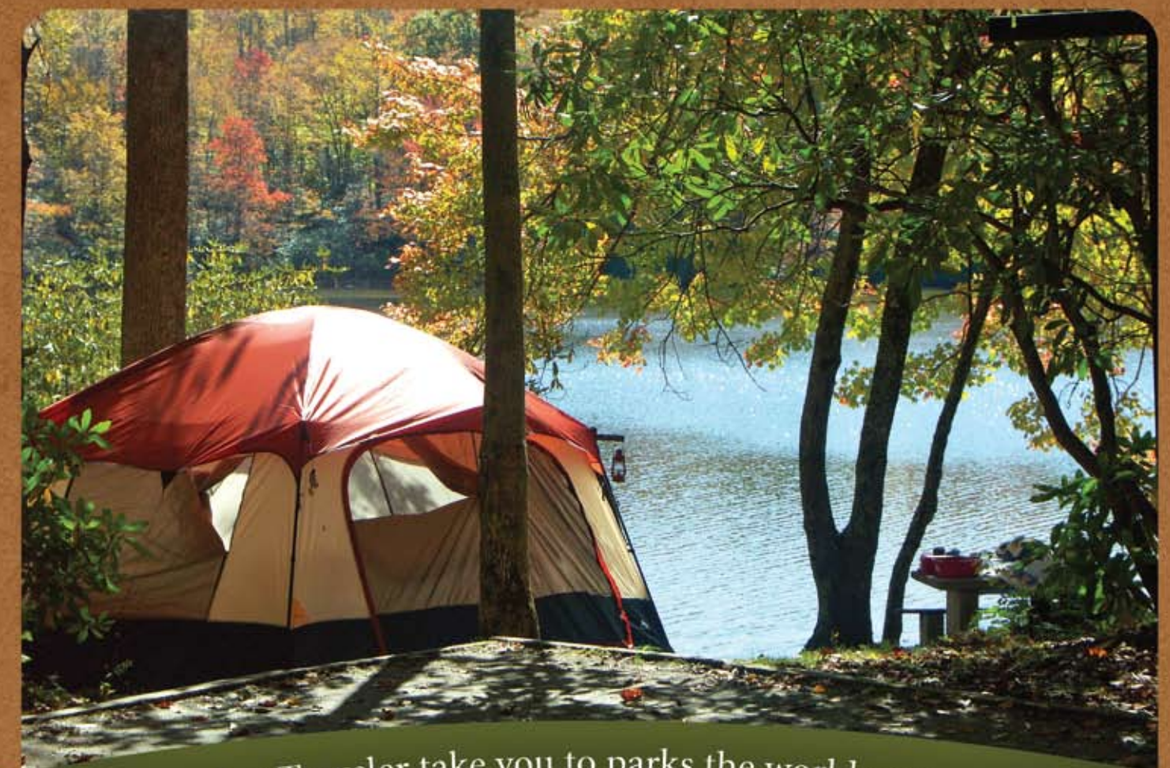
Grand Teton National Park
Grand Teton National Park Foundation
Headquarters in Moose, WY
www.gtnpf.org

Blue Ridge Parkway
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
Headquarters in Winston-Salem, NC
www.brpfoundation.org

Big Bend National Park
Friends of Big Bend National Park
Headquarters in Big Bend National Park, TX
www.bigbendfriends.org

Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Friends of the Smokies
Headquarters in Kodak, TN
www.friendsofthesmokies.org

■ Where are all the other National Parks? Visit www.nationalparkstraveler.com to view our complete directory.



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Raw, Surf-Splashed... and Accommodating

Acadia National Park

Acadia National Park's foundation was forged by the blue-blooded families of Boston and New York, but its position among the ranks of national parks was driven by the passion of a man who fell in love with Mount Desert Island at an early age. Today this Maine jewel welcomes all with a refreshing mix of forested mountains and ocean-pounded coasts that are among the country's most iconic land- and seascapes.

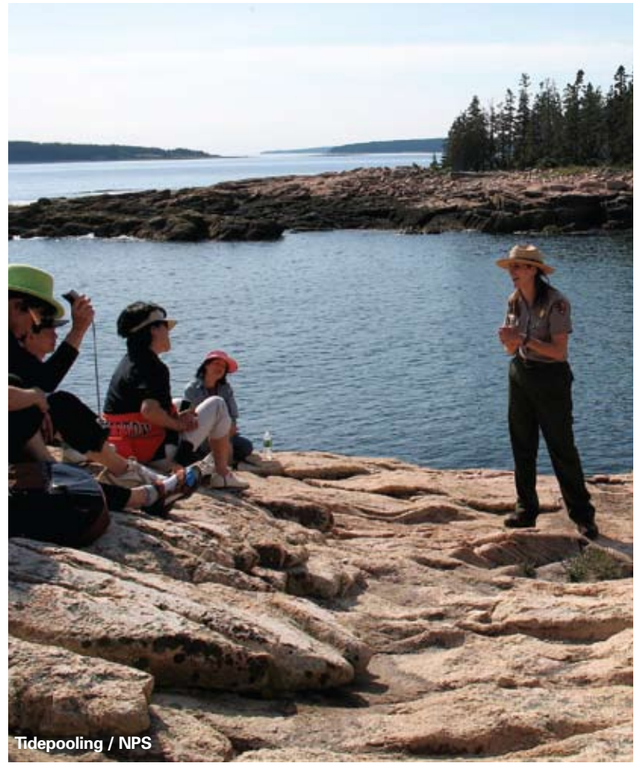
Acadia largely was born of a desire by the 20th century's wealthiest East Coast families to protect bucolic summering grounds. But it was George B. Dorr, a Bostonian who visited the island in 1868 on a family vacation, who envisioned a national park here and saw it become a reality. Today Acadia reflects "Down East" hospitality and architectural beauty. It is a park where you can relax in the Arcadian setting of Jordon Pond over tea and buttery popovers, take a horse-drawn carriage ride through the fragrant piney and mixed hardwood forests on John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s leaf-covered carriage roads, climb a cliff, or paddle a sea kayak through Acadia's powerful surging sweep of blue-green Atlantic swells.

The Atlantic Ocean is decidedly cold here, too cold for most swimmers, but along Acadia's rocky shoreline you'll find tide pools cupping lime-green sea urchins, bright red sea stars, and green anemones. Leave the shores behind while hiking to the park's summit, 1,530-foot Cadillac Mountain, and you'll gain panoramic views of Frenchman's Bay, the Gulf of Maine, and the Atlantic itself.

Acadia visitors can typically face a dilemma on their very first day in the park. Should they hike, go to the beach, or pedal through the forests of Mount Desert Island? Hiking opportunities are plentiful enough that an entire vacation could be spent on the trails within park boundaries. There are shorter paths that lead to gorgeous overlooks, long trails that wend their way up ridgelines to outstanding views (and even lemonade stands). And there are airy "trails" that scale rock faces, iron rung after iron rung, high above the sea.

No lodges lie within park boundaries, but there are two campgrounds, and surrounding towns have a wide array of lodging possibilities.

With its charming and accommodating gateway communities—Bar Harbor, Southwest Harbor, Somesville, Northeast Harbor, and Bass Harbor—and its many outdoor opportunities, Acadia is never at a loss for ways to entertain you.



Tidepooling / NPS

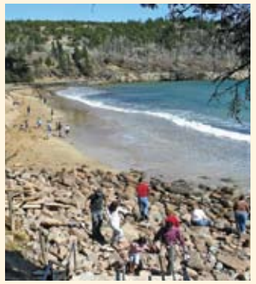
Thunder Hole / Michael Rickard

Insider Tips:

Board a boat. See Mount Desert Island as Samuel de Champlain did in 1604. Try the ranger-led cruise to Baker Island.

Park your car and walk. Take the village connector trails or ride the free *Island Explorer* shuttle into the park.

Explore Acadia's historic trail system, which includes engineering feats of granite steps and iron rungs.



Don't miss Echo Lake. Its clear, refreshing waters are warmer than the ocean, and the swimming and kayaking are great.

Come in June. The park is less crowded than during the height of summer and fall.

Friends Of Acadia: Partnering For Acadia's Future

Acadia in 1919 became the first national park east of the Mississippi. Thanks to people with a passionate love for the beauty of Mount Desert Island—and its cool summers (at least compared to inner-city Boston and New York City)— the jewel dubbed "MDI" was spared from rampant development.

One visit to Mount Desert Island, its surrounding waters, and outlying islands is all it takes to understand why those early Acadia aficionados so deeply appreciated the area that they made preservation a possibility. They created Village Improvement Associations that cut trails through the woods and around the ponds, installed those iron rungs in cliffsides, and built stone steps to make exploration easier.

Friends of Acadia continues that longstanding tradition of inspiring and connecting private partners for the public good. This all important theme is reflected in the upkeep of Acadia's carriage roads and its hiking trails, its clean-powered shuttle system, and even the further protection of private lands in and adjacent to the park.

"Acadia National Park was created through a unique public/private partnership: many, many gifts of land, large and small, from individuals who love this place were given to the American people to make up Acadia," notes Aimee Beal Church, the non-profit organization's communications and outreach coordinator. "***Friends of Acadia*** builds on this tradition by working with governmental

and non-governmental organizations, individuals, communities, clubs and groups."

The friends group has raised $3.4 million to maintain the beautiful and peaceful 45-mile-long carriage road system that Mr. Rockefeller had built on Mount Desert Island. Since 2000 it also has raised $13 million for ***Acadia Trails Forever***, the country's first endowed hiking trail system.

Through an agreement with L.L. Bean, ***Friends of Acadia*** also garnered $3.25 million to underwrite the ***Island Explorer***, a propane-powered fleet of 30 shuttle buses that loop the park, enabling visitors to be car-free once they reach Mount Desert Island. And ***Friends*** leverages enough dollars to support nearly 150 jobs in the park each summer.

The theme of partnering has enabled ***Friends of Acadia*** to recruit area volunteers to perform maintenance on the park's trail and carriage road system. A novel idea also brings high school students into the park. The organization's ***Acadia Youth Technology Team*** brainstorms the role of technology in the park and explores how today's electronic tablets or smartphones can nurture and inform the next generation of park stewards without obscuring the raw beauty of Acadia.

Looking ahead, ***Friends of Acadia*** is building upon the ***Acadia Youth Technology Team's*** efforts to grow the ranks of park advocates, and is continuing to develop the ***Acadia Gateway Center***, a planned welcome center for park visitors with a maintenance shop for ***Island Explorer*** buses. With the park's 2016 centennial coming the same year that the National Park Service marks its centennial—President Wilson christened what's now Acadia as the Sieur de Monts National Monument in 1916—the friends group is developing initiatives for that celebration.

Friends of Acadia does more than just build on the vision that Acadia's founders had for this special place. Whether it's keeping the ***Island Explorer*** fleet running, turning today's youth into tomorrow's park stewards, or advocating for the park before Congress, ***Friends*** builds on a treasured philanthropic tradition of private citizens who gave their summer place to future generations of a grateful public. ■

"Friends of Acadia is an outstanding organization that has raised substantial sums of money and provided thousands of hours of volunteer labor in support of Acadia National Park. FOA has established two major endowments that provide annual allotments for trails maintenance and carriage road rehabilitation."

—Acadia Superintendent Sheridan Steele

Best Ways To Support Friends of Acadia:

Join ***Friends of Acadia***. Let them put your dues to work hiring ridgerunners for the summer, or underwriting the Acadia Youth Conservation Corps.

If you can—emulate the park's early 20th century blue-blooded supporters—and contribute cash or transfer stocks or other securities.

If you can't—then designate ***Friends of Acadia*** as a beneficiary of your IRA, 401(K), or other, more modest assets.

Advocate on behalf of ***Friends of Acadia***, or volunteer. You can be a docent at the Gardens at Sieur de Monts, or help groom trails in winter.

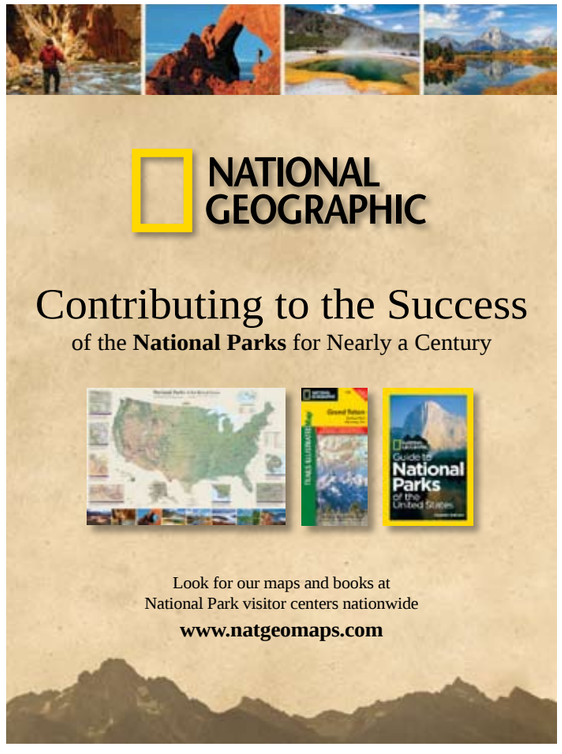
Bass Harbor morning light / Michael Rickard

View from South Bubble looking south across Jordon Pond / Sheridan Steele, NPS

Carriage rides / Ray Radigan, NPS

Discriminating Explorer: Solitude

Leave the crowds and head to Isle au Haut, a tiny (12.7 square miles) island south of Mount Desert Island that showcases the peaceful, remote side of Acadia. Here you'll find a 5-site campground and a few bed-and-breakfast inns where you can end a day of hiking through northern forests, exploring cobblestone beaches, or kayaking. Bring your bike—there are no car ferries—and pedal to Duck Harbor, Eastern Head, and Western Head. If you stay on Mount Desert Island, a visit to Acadia wouldn't be complete without a brunch of jam-smeared popovers and tea at the Jordon Pond House. Or skip brunch and plan on a lobster dinner. Build your appetite by cruising the vehicle-free carriage roads on bikes, with stops in art galleries in the villages of Seal Harbor and Northeast Harbor. A stroll through the park's Wild Gardens of Acadia at Sieur de Monts Spring will familiarize you with some of the more than 850 plant species found in Acadia.



A Wonder 24 Hours a Day

Big Bend National Park

Big Bend National Park sits at a cultural crossroads—on the border of Texas and Mexico—but it speaks the universal language of natural beauty. Technicolor sunsets here in West Texas fade away to crisp, coal-black skies that seem to bring the cosmos within arm's reach. A wild and scenic river encourages lazy days floating through the landscape. The park's geology is a soaring museum, locking in its grasp vestiges of prehistoric life.

You could miss some of these wonders if you head inside at sundown. So dark are nights at Big Bend, and so alluring for celestial exploring, that the park is recognized as a Gold Tier International Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association. Clear skies, temperate nights, and miles of undeveloped space in the vast and remote Chihuahuan Desert provide an unforgettable astronomical experience. With the rangers' help you'll enjoy night hikes, stargazing through telescopes, and pick up tips on night sky preservation.

When the sun returns, it reveals a stunning landscape that descends from 7,825-foot Emory Peak, through the rugged Chisos Mountains, across desertscapes that slowly reveal once-lush prehistoric lands, to the wild and scenic Rio Grande River. This can be a demanding landscape of more than 800,000 acres, but it is also a wondrous one prized for its stark beauty, amazing geology, and stories locked in rock. Those stories are nearly 250 million years old, dating to the Triassic Age when reptiles ruled the Earth.

Today Big Bend remains rich in wildlife, too. Black bears, once thought to be gone from the park, slowly are repopulating it. Mountain lions reside here, too, as do coyotes, javelinas, and 20 species of bats! Big Bend's location along migratory bird routes also makes it an optimal place for birding. Those patient enough, and lucky enough, just might spot the Colima Warbler, a gorgeous bird that heads to Big Bend in the spring to mate and nest before flitting back south to Mexico.

If you're looking for dramatic desert scenery, a chance to get away from crowds, and lots of variety in elevation, climate and things to do, you'll find all that and more in Big Bend.

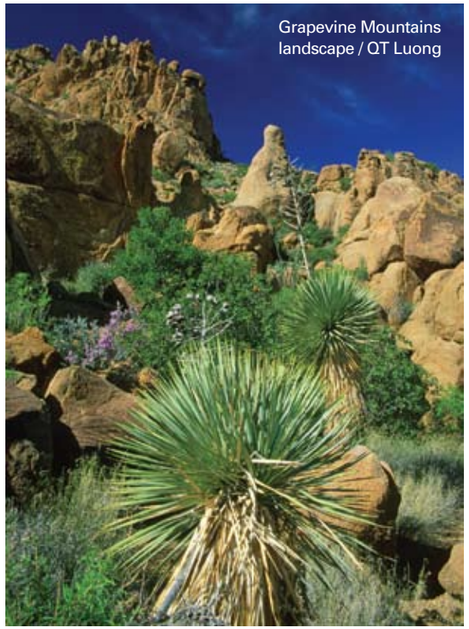
Photo by Tyler Nordgren

Big Bend's prehistoric past comes to the surface under the careful work of permitted paleontologists / NPS

Friends Of Big Bend National Park: Looking Forward While Protecting The Past

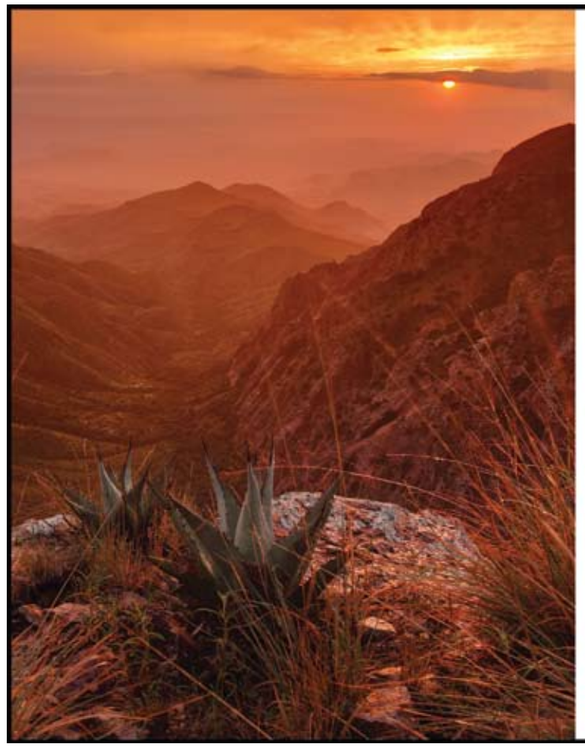
The foremost mission of the National Park Service is to preserve the units of the park system, but providing for public enjoyment and education through interpretation is never overlooked. Helping drive both those missions at Big Bend is ***Friends of Big Bend National Park***, a group that one day could be sponsoring a road or trail run and the next day spending the proceeds from that race on maintaining trails in the park.

"With the ever-increasing squeeze on park budgets, we have been talking about long-term planning," says Courtney Lyons-Garcia, executive director of the friends group. "We hope to grow this ***Trails Fund*** into an endowment that will eventually pay the park's annual trail maintenance costs. We have just started it, but we feel confident that we can put $10,000


Grapevine Mountains landscape / QT Luong

Discriminating Explorer: The Lost Mine Trail

Ever wonder what is on the other side of the mountain? Get a peek by taking the *Lost* Lost Mine Trail. When you reach the peak generally considered to be the end of the Lost Mine Trail, keep going! Although the two rock formations at the terminus of the Lost Mine Trail are imposing from any angle, they each look quite different from the other side. There are certain points along the route in which the variations in color of the rocks are stunning. There is no official trail beyond the Lost Mine Trail, so consult a ranger to determine your route, and be ready to pick your way a bit. The end of this adventure finds you perched atop a narrow spine of rock reminiscent of the backbone of a dinosaur. It is from this vantage point that you will observe the "back side" of the familiar rock formations that characterize the Lost Mine Trail and make it one of the most scenic venues in the park.



Friends of Big Bend National Park

Our mission is to support, promote, and raise funds for Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River in partnership with the National Park Service and other supporters who value the unique qualities of this national resource along the Rio Grande.

Join us for these special events at the Park

National Public Lands Day — Sept 29, 2012

Big Bend Ultra Run — January 20, 2013

Friends of BIG BEND National Park

www.bigbendfriends.org • 432-207-2202

Insider Tips:

Families flock to the Rio Grande Village area for birding. There is a great boardwalk called the Rio Grande Village Nature Trail, and a small visitor center. Helpful rangers can tell you what birds are out and about.

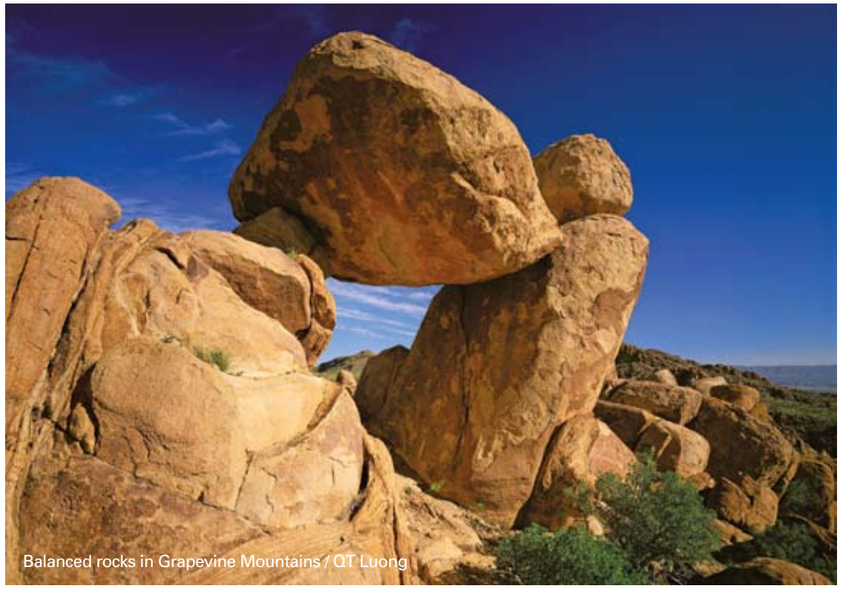
Colima warbler / NPS

Kids will be happy playing on the sand dunes along the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River. Find them via a short hike at Boquillas Canyon.

After a long day, relax at the Hot Springs, an historic area of Big Bend where you can soak your bones.

Take a drive. Follow the Old Maverick Road, an improved dirt road that is wide and easy to navigate, into the mountains. There are great cultural stops along the way, such as Luna's Jacal and Terlingua Abajo, as well as some historic overlooks.

Explore the Dorgan Sublett Trail, a 1.5-mile loop that offers panoramic views of Santa Elena Canyon, the Rio Grande River, Mexico, and cultural ruins.


Balanced rocks in Grapevine Mountains / QT Luong

a year into this fund from the *Ultra Run*, which was just named *Best Trail Run* in a national park by *Runner's World* magazine."

Enhancing interpretation and the visitor's experience of Big Bend is a primary goal of the friends group, which is bootstrapping a $1.1 million campaign for a *Fossil Discovery Trail*. This initiative is the most significant addition to Big Bend's interpretive facilities in decades. It will create an interpretive timeline that will traverse the various ancient environments—volcanic savannah, inland floodplain, coastal floodplain, and marine environment—that gripped this landscape down through the ages. Visitors will learn about these geologic periods and the park's fossilized past as they stop at pavilions along the loop trail proposed for Tornillo Creek.

Santa Elena Canyon framed by ocotillo / Bob Zeller

Through a combination of fossil replicas, interpretive text, artwork, geologic diagrams and viewing scopes set up in the pavilions, visitors will be able to make the connection between the fossilized remains from four eras and the geologic formations that exist in Big Bend today.

In the past, *Friends of Big Bend* also has provided more than $200,000 for an interpretive video at the park's Panther Junction Visitor Center, and used income from sales of the friends group's custom state license plates to fund wetlands restoration, and teacher education programs. The non-profit organization also played a major role in protecting Big Bend's night skies by helping to underwrite improved lighting systems at Panther Junction and in the Chisos Basin.

Representative of the cross-boundary wonders Big Bend National Park shares with Mexico, the friends group also supports efforts to increase cross-border cooperation for the protection of the Chihuahuan Desert. In line with that, the friends group recently helped fund signage and staffing of the new Boquillas Border Crossing Station.

Through it all—running races, orientation films, fossil trails—*Friends of Big Bend* thrives on the passion of its supporters.

"The best thing about *Friends of Big Bend* is that so many members are sincerely dedicated to the park," says Ms. Lyons-Garcia. "In addition to funds, they provide donated images, in-kind services, and countless volunteer hours. The enthusiasm of those volunteers and contributors is what makes our events and publications a success and permits us to provide funds and services to the park." ■

Best Ways To Support Friends of Big Bend National Park:

A *Friends of Big Bend* membership or Annual Fund gift help ensure the friends group can continue to provide services and support to the park for years to come.

Enter the Big Bend Ultra Run during Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, a race in which you can run 10 kilometers, 25 kilometers, or 50 kilometers. Proceeds fuel the organization's Trails Fund.

Make a planned gift.

Give to the $1.1 million Fossil Discovery Trail campaign.

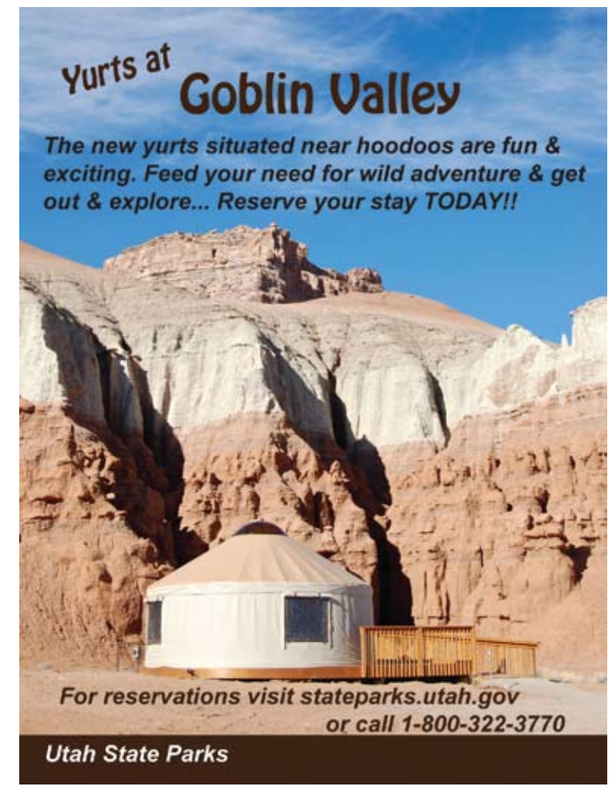
Volunteer. "We could not provide funds or service to the park without the enthusiasm of our volunteers," says *Friends of Big Bend* Executive Director Courtney Lyons-Garcia.

"The Friends of Big Bend National Park are one of the park's primary partners providing significant fund-raising, significant friend-raising, and advocacy activities that greatly benefit the park and its local communities."

—David Elkowitz, Big Bend National Park Chief of Interpretation & Visitor Services

Dorgan Sublette ruins / Matthew Bell

Lone pine tree / Greg Brazaitis



A Long and Winding Road

The Blue Ridge Parkway

When many people think of national parks in the United States, Western scenes come to mind. The Blue Ridge Parkway adds an Eastern aesthetic to equally global recognition as an icon of the American landscape.

Stretches of road elsewhere in the country are as spectacular, but nothing matches this manicured, uniquely uncommercialized, half-a-thousand-mile thoroughfare through the lofty heart of America's first frontier. The scenery is great, but equally memorable is the encounter with history and traditional Appalachian culture and music.

As far as national park experiences go, it's hard to beat a Parkway vacation—day-after-day of scenic new sights along the spine of the Southern Appalachians from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina. Add Shenandoah's Skyline Drive and the Smokies to the trip and you have the quintessential experience of the Eastern mountains.

The winding, reduced-speed-limit road is a relaxed motor trail among the airy mountaintops of Eastern America's highest mountains. It's an Appalachian Trail for cars.

When everything bursts into shades of green and pink in the spring, one of the world's most diverse natural environments explodes into bloom. Summer days at the heights are cool for hiking, picnicking, and camping. And fall brings electric color and awe-inspiring distant views.

There are campgrounds a day's drive apart, wallet-sparing National Park Service lodges—and trails—miles and miles of trails that won't deter the less active visitor. There are long hikes, but the vast majority are easy "leg-stretcher" trails designed to lead even families with children and older travelers to awesome views.

The recent completion of major new interpretive facilities—the Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville, North Carolina, and the Blue Ridge Music Center near Galax, Virginia—crown the route as a one-of-a-kind experience of America's most storied region, where our traditional music was born (and can still be heard) and handcrafted works of art tempt travelers.

Add the East's highest mountains, and the Blue Ridge Parkway may just be the ultimate road trip in a country long known for a love of the open road.

Parkway winds through the Craggy Mountains / Randy Johnson

The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation—Preserving the Parkway Down the Road

The Parkway's well-watered ridgetop route offers an enticing metaphor to describe the ***Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation***. These advocates have showered a cascade of contributions on "America's most scenic road."

Since its founding in 1997, the ***Parkway Foundation*** has bestowed nearly $3.5 million on Parkway projects. Their colorful "Share the Journey" logo license plate garners more than $500,000 a year. The distinctive plates also popularize the Parkway—already the most visited unit of the National Park System. These are North Carolina's most popular specialty tags, and they are ubiquitous on roads from Parkway overlooks to the Outer Banks.

Photo by Randy Johnson

In March, CEO Carolyn Ward was honored at the White House as a "Champion of Change" for what is surely one of the ***Foundation's*** most noteworthy achievements. The ***Kids in Parks*** program gets children and families unplugged and outside, learning about nature on interpretive TRACK Trails. With a nearly $1 million grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation and over 40 partners across the country, this network of paths is rapidly expanding all over the entire nation.

The concept turns many kinds of existing trails into enticing, educational experiences. Armed with engaging brochures, kids and parents learn about nature and get fit, at times by emulating the "animal athletes" depicted on the pamphlets.

The exploding TRACK Trails program addresses major childhood issues of our time, "nature deficit disorder" and obesity, and has garnered dozens of partner agencies, organizations, and funding sources. The mission is to create so many of the trails in local, county, state, and national parks and forests that any family can have access to trails at home (wherever they live) and nearby, permitting repeated use of different trails.

The group's funding of the Blue Ridge Parkway's ***Parks as Classrooms*** program further benefits more than 25,000 school children each year by bringing Parkway rangers—and a message of stewardship—to the classroom.

Most recently, the ***Foundation*** largely funded a state-of-the-art Blue Ridge Parkway Communications Center in Asheville that enhances national park, law enforcement, and emergency

"The support provided by the Foundation has become vital to our ability to meet some of the Parkway's most basic needs and maintain a sustainable and healthy Blue Ridge Parkway."

—Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Phil Francis

Parks as Classrooms

Carolyn Ward and Jason Urroz at the White House / Courtesy photo

Discriminating Explorer: Drive It All

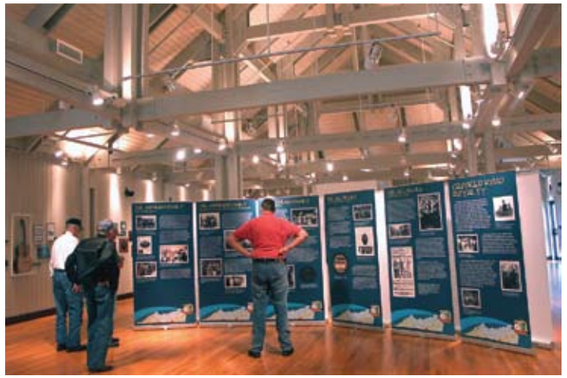
Talk about getting away from it all. The vast realm of the Southern Appalachians is an enigma to many. The Parkway orients you to the region—while simultaneously obscuring your regular reality with day-after-day immersion in relaxing scenery and historic insight. The ultimate trip tip: Travel the entire Parkway from end-to-end. Give it a week! Get out of your car and hike some trails. See interpreters planting long-farmed fields. Watch grain being ground in a grist mill. Pause to hear the soul-stirring multicultural sounds of America's roots music. Bring your children and grandchildren, attend ranger-led programs and hike on a TRACK Trail.

Hop off the road and marvel at the different resort regions along the way—including hip travel hotspots like Asheville and Boone—and stay in nationally significant accommodations that are Parkway Plus partners. Great dining, even wineries, will inspire toasts to growing refinement in "Appalachia." Then share your story with the Foundation—your End-to-Ender Rewards package features a certificate suitable for framing, a RIDE pin, decals and bumper stickers.

www.endtoender.org

Abbott Lake, Peaks of Otter

Fall colors


Blue Ridge Music Center exhibit / Photos by Randy Johnson

services interactivity all along the geographically complex, nearly 500-mile road that's long been hampered by dead communications zones.

The ***Foundation's*** ultimate goal is to fund $2.5 million in projects and programs annually for the Parkway. In 2012, the $650,000 the ***Foundation*** has committed to the Parkway will make a difference across a range of projects, including replacing a visitor center roof at Waterrock Knob, enhancing visitor access, facilities, and trails at the popular Graveyard Fields Overlook, and providing accessible trails at two of the Parkway's great lakes, Abbott Lake at Peaks of Otter near Roanoke, Virginia, and Price Lake, near Blowing Rock, North Carolina. The funds also support programs at The Blue Ridge Music Center and will restore a historic trout pond at Moses Cone Park.

In the past 15 years, more than 5,000 acres have been added by conservancy groups to the Parkway's narrow corridor. The ***Foundation*** provides small grants to conservancy groups for acquiring critical easements to adjacent lands that Superintendent Phil Francis calls the Parkway's "borrowed landscape."

Those efforts impact more than scenery. Francis calls the 469-mile, north-to-south range of the road "a critical transect of land needed to protect biodiversity and deter habitat fragmentation along the Southern Appalachians."

The ***Foundation's*** diverse research projects include wildlife studies, habitat and exotic vegetation research, the collection and archiving of historical maps and oral histories—the kind of information you see on the interpretive panels, educational materials, and exhibits funded by the ***Foundation***—and seen by many of the Parkway's 16 million visitors. ■

Best Ways To Support the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation:

The ***Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation*** takes pride in being the only Blue Ridge Parkway partner organization that allows for maximum flexibility in the use of each donated dollar, regardless of donor interests. See all the options at www.brpfoundation.org.

Enjoy the Parkway—and help the ***Foundation*** too. Stay with a Foundation Parkway Plus partner.

Purchase a North Carolina Blue Ridge Parkway Specialty Plate if you live in NC. $20 of your $30 fee goes directly to the Foundation for Parkway projects and programs.

Join the Andre Michaux Society, the French explorer who thought he'd climbed the "highest peak in all North America" when he looked down across the future Parkway route in 1794. Achieve your own peak impact for the Parkway! Many ways to give involve tax deductions, including life insurance and charitable trusts.

Give to the ***Foundation's*** honors and memorials program. If you know a family member or friend with a deep personal connection to the Parkway—or just wonderful memories of a visit long ago—honor them. Gifts larger than $5,000 create an endowment fund.

Claim your own special "Inch of the Parkway" at MyInchOfTheEarth.com. You'll be able to share pictures and stories describing why this place is important to you, and share your story and special place with friends through Facebook, Twitter, email and more and invite others to claim their own virtual inch. Proceeds will be shared with the National Park Foundation and the ***Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation***.

Insider Tips:

Weather. This is the loftiest road in the East, so expect abrupt weather changes. Sweaters in the summer? Snow in the fall? Yep.

Cell Service. Expect limited cell service.

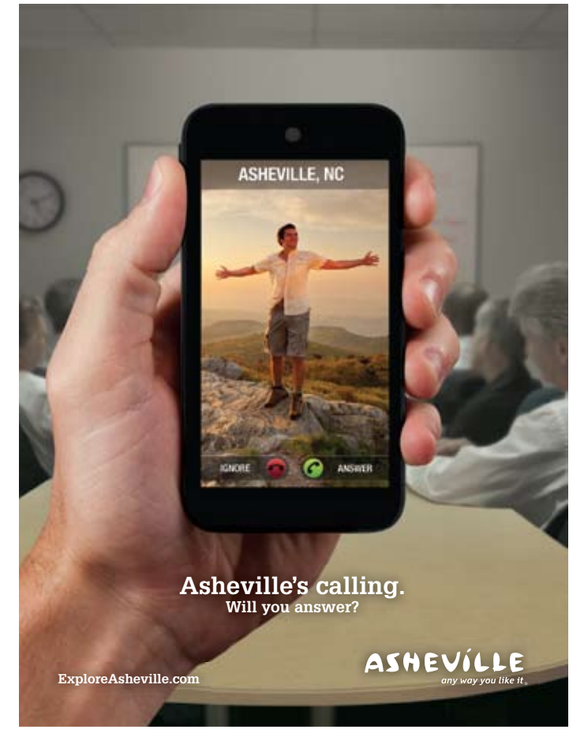
Wildlife. Protect the "locals"—drive slowly to avoid wildlife in morning and evening.

Don't Just Sit There! The Parkway is a road, but short, easy trails at many overlooks lead to spectacular sights—and are a perfect way to sample the natural side of a great American drive.

No gas is available on Parkway itself—hop off when needed. Nearly 500 miles at the crest may involve closures—visit the Parkway site for the latest.

Get On for Off Season. When not closed by snow, many parts of the Parkway make great destinations in winter. Near Boone, NC, ski resorts are close to the Parkway and cross country skiing on Parkway trails is popular.

Park Ranger Ann Childress helps children cut the ribbon for the first TRACK Trail opening on the Parkway in 2009 / Theresa Lovelace



Crown of the Continent

Glacier National Park

The view from Mount Gould / NPS

Mountain goats are easy to spot on Logan Pass / Kurt Repanshek

Rivers of ice that once slowly wrenched their way down from rocky mountains, now are in retreat, revealing jagged bands of rock that form the Continental Divide. These glaciers nourish the land below. Their melt waters fill streams and feed lakes that infuse alpine meadows with vibrant wildflowers and enrich thick forests in a landscape roamed by grizzlies and wolves.

Tucked far north in Montana, hard against the Canadian border, Glacier National Park is a rumpled and craggy masterpiece. Within the park's 1 million acres rise rustling aspen glades, stands of an unusual evergreen—larch—that loses its needles in winter, even a temperate rainforest of Pacific red cedars, hemlocks and Pacific yew. This is the kingdom of grizzlies and wolves, wolverines and lynx, species that for many exist only in books, magazines, and nature documentaries.

Stand atop Logan Pass and you can see, hear, even smell this wildness. Jagged peaks knife the sky, sculpted basins reflect past glaciation, fields of snow remain from winters past, and mountain goats loll. The goats you encounter on the pass are so close and nonchalant they could be models strutting a runway. They seem to pose in the meadows framing the trail to Hidden Lake.

Exploring Glacier's rugged, wild heart is challenging and demanding and definitely not for neophytes. But there are numerous front-country vistas and day hikes to entice the novice. On a day hike to a lake, you can reconnoitre a dense forest along a crashing creek filled by cataracts of ice-melt tumbling some 4,000 feet. Or make your way across an alpine meadow flecked with dainty lupines, showy asters, and tall bear grass. You can paddle across one of the park's 131 named lakes, or count goats back on Logan Pass.

Spend time in a true wonderland, Glacier National Park—where wispy waterfalls like Bird Woman Falls will draw your eyes as readily as the Jackson Glacier—and you won't be disappointed. The native Blackfeet people called this area the "Shining Mountains" and the "Backbone of the World," fitting descriptions for the globally-renowned landscape you'll find in Glacier National Park.

Insider Tips:

Explore the Going-to-the-Sun Road. Ongoing construction work might slow your progress over the Continental Divide, but this 50-mile route gives you a highly personal connection to the park's landscape.

Searching for a memorable photograph? Snap one of Wild Goose Island in St. Mary Lake, one of the most photogenic shots in the country.

Take a hike. With more than 700 miles of trail, Glacier has a path for you, from short, ambling walks to long-distance treks.

Swiftcurrent Lake / Kurt Repanshek

Visit the Many Glacier Valley. A lot of visitors hug the Going-to-the-Sun corridor and don't reach Many Glacier, but it's one of the most scenically spectacular areas of Glacier and is great for spotting wildlife.

Spend time on Logan Pass. The views are breathtaking in all directions, the wildlife (mountain goats, mainly) are in your face, and easy hikes lead you across colorful wildflower meadows.

The Glacier Fund: Supporting The Crown Of The Continent

Wherever you go in Glacier National Park, the heart of the region known as the Crown of the Continent, you're likely to see the great work of the ***Glacier National Park Fund***. Just some of the projects this non-profit friends group has supported since 1999 include studies of avalanche corridors above the scenic Going-to-the-Sun Road, helping kids "reconnect" with nature and feel comfortable in the outdoors, and trail maintenance.

In these days of scant federal dollars, the ***Fund's*** vital mission is to support park staff in ways that will ensure Glacier and its resources are preserved for today and will last beyond tomorrow. No surprise, then,

Fall for Glacier
in Glacier National Park
Montana
September 6 – 9, 2012

Experience the beautiful Two Medicine region, considered the most scared area on the Park by the Blackfeet Nation. Celebrate the centennial of the historic Glacier Park Lodge in East Glacier and enjoy a weekend filled with activities, special guests and excursions.

For more information...
www.fallforglacier.org
www.glacierfund.org
or call 406-892-3250

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK FUND

Avalanche Lake / Kurt Repanshek

that the group has worked on trail rehabilitation projects, nurtured citizen scientists on beneficial research projects, created notebooks to help park visitors keep track of the wildlife they spot, and provided bear-proof storage boxes to protect campers and bears alike.

That may sound relatively straight-forward and appear to be a fundamentally local effort, but the ***Glacier Fund*** is a conduit for literally millions of dollars of donations that flow in from across a country grateful for this group's support of such an iconic park.

Ever ride a Red Jammer down the Sun Road? The ***Fund*** helped contribute the money needed to restore a fleet of 33 Jammers, and created an endowment to help keep the fleet on the road in the years to come. Another endowment, one with a $1 million goal, is being built by the ***Fund*** to support maintenance of the more than 700 miles of hiking trails in Glacier. Research underwritten by the organization is delving into the wildlife corridors that tie Glacier National Park to the Bob Marshall Wilderness to the south and the Canadian Rockies to the north—studies that are key to species survival in this increasingly developed world.

Though the National Park Service is tasked with ensuring your enjoyment in the national parks, it's increasingly unable to cover all the bases. In the park's Many Glacier area, for example, the ***Glacier Fund*** is responsible for an accessible trail to the shore of Swift Current Lake. It has also worked to preserve such historic structures as the Sperry and Granite chalets—stone-and-timber waystations in the high country.

Looking ahead, the ***Fund*** endeavors to create a $1 million endowment for projects that nurture park stewards—already it has brought more than 30,000 kids into Glacier to experience ***Discover Glacier*** programs. It also provides annual funding for trail work and to build an endowment fund for native plant restoration. But that's just part of the ***Fund's*** roadmap. With the park's rich wildlife resources, the organization is committed to increasing wildlife research and, where necessary, restoring habitat. The ***Fund*** plans to raise more than $200,000 for bull trout research and restoration, to fund ongoing research into wolverines and lynx, and to pay for research into how Glacier's grizzlies react to humans. You can be a part of these efforts. ■

Best Ways To Support The Glacier Fund:

Cash donations of any size are always welcome. The organization's annual fund is based primarily on repeat donors who give $100 or less.

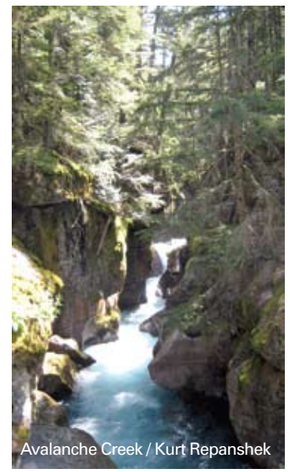
Donate to avalanche research. These vital studies into slide paths improve safety for road crews clearing the Going-to-the-Sun Road, and build our knowledge of "avalanche path ecology."

Fall, or Spring, for the ***Glacier Fund***. Attend either the Fall for Glacier or Spring for Glacier fundraising events the ***Glacier Fund*** hosts.

Consider volunteering. Gardeners wanted! Trade your plot beside the driveway with a setting in Glacier and restore the park by pulling non-native weeds. The ***Glacier Fund*** could use help with that, as well as its Citizen Science program, at the Native Plant Nursery, and on trail crews.

"The Glacier Fund is an essential partner in accomplishing the park's primary mission of preserving and protecting resources and serving visitors. Simply put, the Glacier Fund connects people to Glacier National Park. The relationship between the park and the Glacier Fund has matured over the years, and we look forward to a continued productive partnership."

— Glacier Superintendent Chas Cartwright


Avalanche Creek / Kurt Repanshek

Bighorn sheep / NPS

Discriminating Explorer: Spend A Night In Glacier

Though more than 1 million acres, Glacier National Park turns into a clutch of small communities at day's end. Day trippers head out of the gates, leaving behind a small collection of lodges and motels dotting the park's landscape—Lake McDonald Lodge, Many Glacier Hotel, Rising Sun and Swift Current motor inns. The adventurous, though, book a night or two at either the Sperry or Granite chalets.

A century ago these rock-and-timber lodges catered to visitors who reached the park by train, then rode horseback across its wonders, stopping overnight at the chalets. Today they are perfect backcountry basecamps for you to explore Glacier's high country, comfortable knowing you'll spend the night under a roof with new-found friends who share your passion for Glacier.

Photo by Marty Koch

A Western Classic

Grand Teton National Park

No photograph can truly capture the razor-sharp way Wyoming's Teton Range soars above the Jackson Hole Valley. That staggering scarp, the countless climbing routes that spider web the summits, and the tranquil pockets sprinkled beneath the peaks combine to define this picturesque place as one of the world's magnets for mountaineers.

More than that, these craggy mountains anchor one of the iconic destinations of the National Park System, Grand Teton National Park. It is a park born of geologic fits and starts that today reflects a rustic portrait of the nation's frontier heritage.

It's an indelibly handsome portrait. Thirteen-thousand-seven-hundred-seventy-foot-tall Grand Teton is the biggest "Stop Sign" in the West. Flanked by Middle Teton and South Teton, the Grand scrapes the sky with its distinctive "horn," a reminder that glaciers helped mold this landscape. With a dozen or so neighboring summits rising above 10,000 feet, the Tetons form a monumental spine of rock that arguably is the Lower 48's most visibly arresting mountain range.

With a string of mirroring lakes at the mountains' base, this idyllic setting attracts the typical vacationing family and the powerful—U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze held historic meetings in 1989 at the park's Jackson Lake Lodge.

Come summer, you can relax beneath snowfield-dappled mountains or hike across paint-by-number meadows of red Indian paintbrush, yellow arrowleaf balsamroot, blue flax, white-and-blue columbine, mountain bluebells, green gentians and more.

Wildlife—grizzly and black bears, wolves and moose, pronghorn antelope and bison—roam this land, while bald eagles wheel in search of fat Snake River trout.

Visitors looking for Western history find it at Grand Teton, too, as many acres were acquired from early homesteaders. Today some of their homes remain, owned and protected by the Park Service. The White Grass Ranch dates to 1913, when Harold Hammond homesteaded it. Today the ranch and its 13 cabins are vestiges of that Old West history. Visit Menor's Ferry, a ferry crossing dating to 1894, and you can see where Horace Albright, then Yellowstone National Park's superintendent, met with locals in 1923 to discuss ways to protect the Western character of the valley and fledgling park from being overrun by development.

Photo by Grand Teton National Park Foundation

Lodging in the park has strong Western influences, too, from comfortable log cabins at the Triangle X Ranch, a working dude ranch, to the cabins at Colter Bay Village.

There's much more to do in Grand Teton than grab a rope and ice axe and climb to the park's roof. From hiking these glorious mountains and paddling its streams to enjoying outdoor barbecues or taking an afternoon horseback ride, this national park is undeniably a Western classic.

Insider Tips:

Explore the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve. This peaceful area offers a nature trail system and LEED-certified visitor center that make it a Grand Teton gem. Go early, parking is limited and often full by midday.

Explore the slower-paced Teton Park Road by bike, or hike in the Jenny Lake area to Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point. Most visitors never see snow-covered Jenny Lake in spring, but a ride down the Teton Park Road to Jenny Lake loop from the Bradley-Taggart parking area during the month of April is well-worth the effort. It's one of the best bike rides in the country for one month.

Summit "The Grand." If you're relatively fit, this is a not-to-be-missed adventure in Grand Teton. No need to be a climber, they'll teach you.

Snake River / NPS

Photography Gems: Oxbow Bend, Snake River — Particularly in fall when the aspens are turning. Usually a calm stretch of water holding an amazing reflection of Mount Moran and Skillet Glacier.

Schwabacher's Landing. Go in the morning when the water is still and you'll be rewarded with a great view of the Grand as well as the peak's perfect reflection in the water.

Grand Teton National Park Foundation and its donors are elevating improvement and education projects well beyond the park's federal budget, creating pristine trails, protecting wildlife, and enabling unforgettable moments of discovery. It's these projects that significantly enhance resources and make this iconic park memorable for millions of visitors each year.

www.gtnpf.org

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

Protecting The Grand And Everything Below: The Grand Teton National Park Foundation

Grizzlies are perhaps the iconic species of the Rocky Mountain West, an animal emblematic of the western landscape going back centuries, one that personifies the strength of nature in the region. Educating visitors about magnificent wildlife and other park resources is one of the key missions ***Grand Teton National Park Foundation*** shares with the National Park Service.

If you've ever camped at String Lake, or one of the park's other front-country campgrounds, you've likely benefited from the ***Foundation's*** work. Throughout the park this national park friends group has used donations to purchase and install more than 200 bear-resistant food storage boxes so you don't need to worry about having your food cache raided...or about inadvertently teaching bears that humans are food dispensers.

Funding wildlife research, and protecting that wildlife, is another important ***Foundation*** mission. The ***Foundation*** underwrites studies that relate to the park's Bighorn sheep, sage grouse, pikas, and cougars, and provides funding for tracking collars that greatly aid the park's scientists in their studies.

When you look at the ***Foundation's*** work, it is easy to see that its diverse efforts to benefit Grand Teton are reflective of the many dimensions of its namesake national park.

Oxbow Bend / Douglas C. Ayers

A quick glance at the ***Foundation's*** strategic plan shows initiatives touching wildlife, trails, historic preservation, artifact collection and restoration, even efforts to help Grand Teton acquire privately held property within the park's borders.

The non-profit organization proved its mettle with its very first major project—raising funds for the $25 million ***Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center***, a state-of-the-art, sustainable facility that opened in 2007, with an auditorium addition in 2011. This 25,600-square-foot facility, named after the late U.S. Sen. Craig Thomas of Wyoming, who loved the park, was sorely needed to properly showcase interpretive exhibits and help orient visitors.

Just as vital is the organization's effort to nurture future park stewards. A nationally significant element of that effort is the ***Foundation's*** innovative ***Pura Vida*** and ***Young Stewards and Leaders*** outreach programs that connect Hispanic youth to Grand Teton. Expanding diversity within the ranks of tomorrow's park advocates is critical to the future of this park—and the entire second century of all our parks. The ***Foundation's Youth Conservation Program*** brings teens into the park to work on trail maintenance and even projects benefitting historical sites. In addition, Grand Teton's ***NPS Academy***, a collaboration between the National Park Service and the ***Foundation***, plays an invaluable role in developing tomorrow's national park managers.

Going forward, the ***Foundation*** is poised to launch a campaign to rejuvenate the Jenny Lake area of the park, a popular destination that has sustained a good measure of wear-and-tear from decades of heavy use. Trails need repairs, wildlife habitat must be protected, interpretation can be improved, and the area's rich historic character is the perfect backdrop to share the park's incredible conservation story.

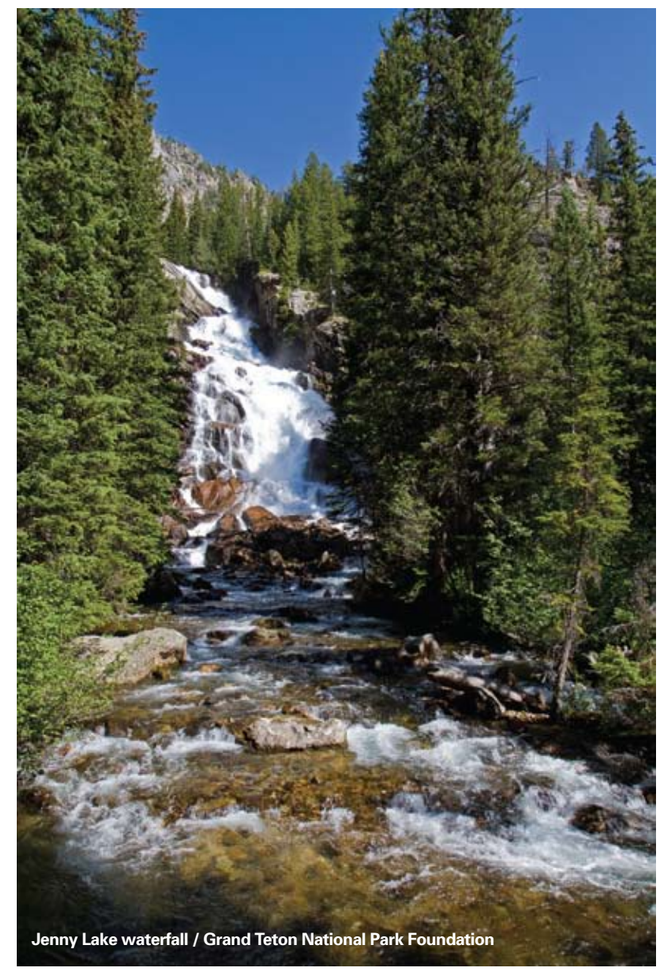
"Helping people connect to Grand Teton has resulted in significant support for our park and our donors feel closer to the interesting things going on here," says Leslie Mattson, the ***Foundation's*** president. "Ultimately, our members and donors understand—they are the reason amazing projects continue to happen in the park."

Best Ways To Support Grand Teton National Park Foundation:

- Cash donations are the best way to support the *Foundation*.
- In-kind gifts. Get creative and do what you can in the way of needed gear or services—a nice option in place of stocks and bonds.
- The *Foundation* has a planned giving program so you can make bequests or beneficiary designations, as well as gifts of stocks or other assets.
- Ask your employer to match your gift. It's an easy way to boost your giving power!
- Spread word of our work. Many people don't understand how groups like ours are improving national parks around the country.

"Through dynamic partners like the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, we're advancing truly innovative and beneficial initiatives that enhance visitor services, support scientific research, and protect the precious resources under our care."

— Grand Teton Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott



Jenny Lake waterfall / Grand Teton National Park Foundation

Bighorn Ram / NPS

Discriminating Explorer: Jenny Lake

The Jenny Lake area not only is one of incredible beauty, set amid nodding pines just below the three Tetons, but it is also one of the park's most peaceful spots. Historic Jenny Lake Lodge with its log guest cabins long has been one of the most inviting areas for vacationing inside Grand Teton. The lodge sits across from String Lake, making hikes and beautiful lake views literally a five-minute stroll from your cabin. Meals here are sumptuous, designed as part of the Jenny Lake experience. By day the dining room's windows frame "the Grand," while come evening the river-rock fireplace's flickering flames dance on the log walls. Great activities are just outside your cabin's door, too—horseback riding, picnicking, hiking, and boating. No wonder many people return year after year to the quaint and charming lodge to unplug and unwind.

Little River / Ian Shive

Wilderness Magic in the East

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Great Smoky Mountains is the country's most visited national park—and not just due to the park's proximity to urban areas. Sure, accessibility is great, but the annual burst of renewal, mile after mile of hiking trails, and rich cultural and natural history are incredibly alluring.

When spring arrives, the massive ridge of this lush temperate rainforest rises like a lime-green wave on the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. There is no doubting this is one of the richest ecosystems on Earth. The result is a kaleidoscope of blossoming mountain laurel, fire azalea, Catawba rhododendrons, rare purple-fringed orchids, and hundreds of other gorgeous wildflowers.

The blooms cascade uphill to the park's roof as the summer wears on. Roam from the Smokies' 870-feet-above-sea-level basement to its 6,643-foot-high rooftop on Clingmans Dome and you will experience climate and ecosystem changes akin to what you'd find hiking the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine.

The 800 square miles of the Smokies—just a little over half the size of Rhode Island—harbor one of the largest intact natural areas in the East. Motorists gaze over it, but hikers savor its inspiring wilderness on more than 800 miles of trails. Besides great trails, 2,100 miles of leaping, cascading streams lure anglers and waterfall fans.

History is steeped deeply in the Smokies, too. As the once-idyllic realm of the Cherokee, Native American legend wraps these mountains like mist. The proud Cherokee past stands out on the Oconaluftee River Trail and just outside the park in the Cherokee Indian's Qualla Boundary reservation.

Settlers began to homestead the Smokies late in the 18th century, and they brought logging that continued into the 20th century. But the landscape has been allowed to revert to the wild since 1934, when more than 1,200 land-owners had to leave their land as the park was established.

The remnants of this Native American and mountain culture make the Smokies the perfect place to explore history. Evidence of times past is everywhere. At dozens of sites interpretive signs and programs recount the lives of those whose early cabins, farms, mills, clapboard churches and houses are found in places such as Cades Cove and Big and Little Cataloochee.

Today you'll discover proof of landscape resiliency—and incredible diversity and cultural history—on display in this rumpled landscape that North Carolina and Tennessee share.

Clingmans Dome Trail / Randy Johnson

Friends Of Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Ideas and Funding for the Future

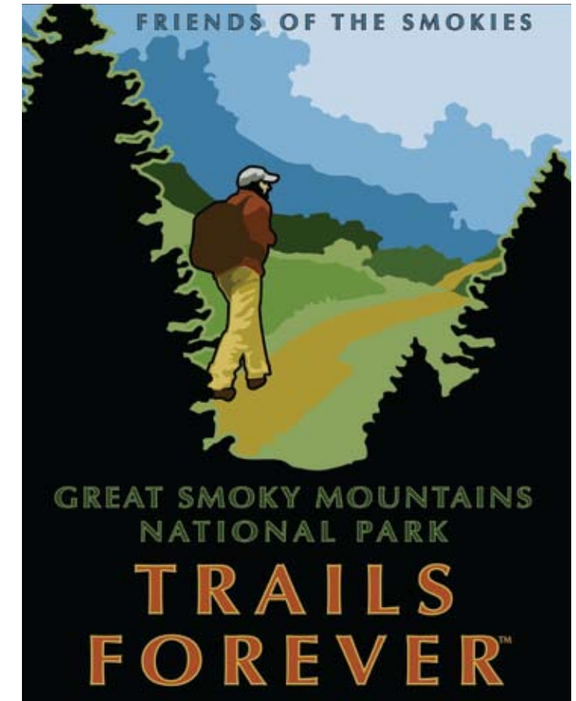
Cove Hardwood Nature Trail / Randy Johnson

A huge, and hugely popular, park requires big ideas and substantial resources to make big improvements—much less put a dent in the list of projects deferred by declining federal budgets.

Some might see the roughly 9 million annual visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park as a great financial resource for the park. But by law the Park Service is prohibited from charging an entrance fee to those traveling the Newfound Gap Road,

"Over nearly 20 years and $37 million, the contributions of the Friends of the Smokies are everywhere. They have supported projects to rebuild all of the our backcountry shelters along the Appalachian Trail, educate hundreds of thousands of area school kids about nature and history, respond to natural resource threats such as the hemlock woolly adelgid—even replacing the 16-foot-diameter water wheel that operates the Cable Mill in Cades Cove."

—Great Smoky Superintendent Dale Ditmanson.



For ALL the trails in the Smokies for ALL time.

Be a part of Trails Forever. Help build a forever trail in Great Smoky Mountains National Park to be enjoyed by generations of hikers. Help build a fund to take care of the Smokies 800+ miles of hiking trails from now on. **Donate. Volunteer. Share the News.**

BEFORE

AFTER

FORNEY RIDGE TRAIL TRANSFORMATION

In 2011 alone, 442 Trails Forever volunteers gave 6,641 hours to making happier trails in the Smokies. We need your support. A gift to Trails Forever makes a great birthday or anniversary gift for your favorite trail companion. An honorarium or memorial is a special tribute gift for hikers you know and love.

The 2012 Trails Forever project is Chimney Tops Trail

To donate or volunteer, visit www.SmokiesTrailsForever.org

Discriminating Explorer: Head to Cataloochee Valley

Visit the truly "quiet side" of the Smokies with a peaceful drive from Gatlinburg to Big and Little Cataloochee valleys, two idyllic settings that retain vestiges of their homesteading days. From Gatlinburg, take Tennessee 73 towards the Cosby Campground, and then jump on Tennessee 32. This narrow, tree-lined, gravel route forces you to relax and enjoy the scenery while leading you from Tennessee into North Carolina without the hectic pace of an interstate. Both of these beautiful valleys once were thriving settlements. Big Cataloochee was one of the largest and most prosperous settlements in the area now occupied by the national park. In 1910 some 1,200 people lived in this lovely mountain valley framed by mountains climbing to 6,000 feet. Most made their living by farming, including commercial apple growing, but an early tourism industry developed in Cataloochee with some families boarding fishermen and other tourists who wished to vacation in the mountains. Today you'll see two churches and several homes and outbuildings that are left in the valleys. The setting is great for picnics or wetting a line, and in fall this is the place to see the park's elk.

Cades Cove / Jim Mowbray

the main route across the park.

Fortunately, ***Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park*** (more often simply ***Friends of the Smokies***) has had great success in making up at least some of the shortfall the park grapples with. Since 1993 the non-profit has raised more than $37 million to support an ongoing list of projects crafted by park staff.

From underwriting a half-million-dollars of exhibits for the new Oconaluftee Visitor Center near Cherokee to supporting the elk in the park, the ***Friends*** never lacks for something to do. Each year the organization spends more than $1 million alone on research, conservation, and educational efforts that have touched virtually all aspects of the Smokies.

Pay attention as you motor through the park and you'll see ***Friends of the Smokies*** specialty license plates in both North Carolina and Tennessee. Combined plate sales brought the Friends $844,000 in 2011 alone, funds that are invested into the park.

"The license plates fund ***Parks as Classrooms*** where rangers develop programs," says Holly Demuth, the group's North Carolina director. "Students can take a field trip into the park and learn some of their social studies or science there. It's fantastic."

You might not notice it as you enjoy the Smokies, but dollars raised by the ***Friends*** often wind up underfoot. For many years after the Civilian Conservation Corps built the park's most classic trails there was no trail maintenance at all. Now the park and ***Friends of the Smokies*** sponsor a volunteer trail coordinator and, thanks to $4 million in gifts since 2008, an endowed trail fund—***Trails Forever***—that employs a professional trail crew ... forever.

Backcountry crews benefit from 20 acres of land, and a 5-bedroom house that sat on it, that ***Friends of Smokies*** purchased and gave to the park. Now ridgerunners and crews overseen by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy have a base-camp when they come to work in the Smokies.

Best Ways To Support Friends Of Great Smoky Mountains:

Find and fill a donation box. Voluntary donations are a key funding source for the ***Friends***, and the easy-to-find boxes are located at many spots. Drop in a $20, or more, and call it the park entrance fee you didn't have to pay.

Become a Friend of the Smokies. Research shows that Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the nation's number one park in generating economic impact, jobs, and income for area communities. Pay it forward! Join the ***Friends*** and enjoy reduced admission and other perks at local businesses (like Dollywood and Great Smoky Mountains Railroad)! Focus on our designated proceeds program and you can donate to a special project to benefit the park.

Gifts in Kind. Donations of money are important, whether through stocks and securities, a bequest from your will—or in cash. But gifts in kind are welcome too. Think about how your business can help and give the gift of goods (for fundraising events) or services (that reduce our costs).

Volunteer. Lend your muscles and sweat by getting involved with trail crews. It's a great way to help the ***Friends*** help the park, and you'll meet others equally passionate for the Smokies.

Insider Tips:

Wildlife observation. For wildlife fans, the Smokies is a bonanza of observational opportunities. Deer and black bears often roam Cades Cove—an 11-mile loop road closed to cars on Wednesday or Saturday mornings (rental bikes available). Elk often can be seen along the Newfound Gap Road, and in early fall, when the male elk are competing for females, Cataloochee Valley is the best place to be.

Book a site at Cosby Campground. Nicely repaved and refurbished for the first time in decades, this is one of the truly quiet isolated spots in the park. For virgin timber views, hike the campground's nature trail, or take the Maddron Bald Trail and enter the Albright Grove—a faerie forest of towering virgin trees. Also don't miss Henwallow Falls, a little-visited cascade with a vertical drop surpassing many in the Smokies.

Kid's History Hiking. For easy trails that offer historic insight, try the Oconaluftee River Trail/Mountain Farm Museum, near Cherokee, and the Sugarlands Valley Self-Guiding Nature Trail in Tennessee. Each explores scenic settings and the park's past with preserved cabins and barns or evocative ruins. The interpretive plaques on the Oconaluftee River Trail tell stirring Cherokee creation stories.

Ride Your Bike. Cades Cove is the best place for road bikes, but if mountain biking is your forte, the Deep Creek area of the park offers some of the only park trails you're allowed to ride. You'll also find great loop hikes to waterfalls and roaring mountain streams.

Friends of the Smokies sign on the Clingmans Dome Trail encourages visitors to support the park. / Randy Johnson

Those beautiful views you enjoy are helped by the ***Friends***, too. The group helped start and fund the country's largest program to eradicate the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, a pest deadly to the park's hemlocks, so the park's trails may forever pass beneath the tree's inspiring feathery boughs.

Caldwell Fork / Randy Johnson

Funding for these projects trickle in from a variety of areas. Nearly $1 million came to the group from memberships and special events, and in 2011 another $250,000 was raised by contributions left in the ***Friend's*** donation boxes at visitor centers and elsewhere.

Still, the needs seem never-ending. The ***Trails Forever*** and ***Parks as Classrooms*** programs continue to grow and expand, and natural resource threats—such as the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and climate-change impacts on fisheries and vegetation—can bring new needs overnight that ***Friends of Smokies*** will tackle. You can help.

Not Just The Park in Washington's Backyard

Shenandoah National Park

Ivy Creek Overlook / Bob Mishak

When the federal government conceived the idea of a national park close to the nation's capital and accessible to millions, it didn't have to look far for the ideal setting.

Just 75 miles from Washington, D.C., the shimmering blue rill of Shenandoah is the first line of undulating summits on a drive west across Virginia's piedmont. The ridge separates the Piedmont from the Shenandoah Valley—and views of both are not to be missed.

In the decade between the authorization and establishment of Shenandoah National Park, President and Mrs. Hoover constructed their "Summer White House" in these hills, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began building Skyline Drive and over 450 families were relocated from the Blue Ridge so that the state of Virginia could acquire the land it would ultimately donate to the federal government.

Today, this 200,000-acre ribbon of mountains, valleys, and cascading streams is a favorite destination for over a million visitors every year. Skyline Drive remains an iconic feature of Shenandoah, offering stunning views from 75 overlooks along its 105-mile path. Many of the stone walls lining Skyline Drive were hand-built by CCC boys, and infuse a sense of nostalgia throughout the park.

Those who choose to leave their cars and explore Shenandoah are in for wonderful treats. Here ramble 500 miles of hiking trails, including 101 miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Favorite hikes include Old Rag, an eastern outlier, and the 8-mile, cascade-laced loop of Cedar Run and White Oak Canyon. The park has over a dozen easily accessible waterfalls and an incredible array of plant and animal life—some of which are found nowhere else on the planet. Forty percent of Shenandoah's land is federally designated wilderness.

Shenandoah is also a keeper of our nation's history and harbors numerous structures listed on the National Historic Register, including the Hoovers' Rapidan Camp and remnants of Skyland Resort, an elegant yet rustic mountain retreat that operated in the late 19th/early 20th century.

Shenandoah's scenery and iconic historical features make it one of the nation's classic and most beloved national parks.

The Shenandoah National Park Trust: A Solid Base for the Future

As the official philanthropic partner of Shenandoah National Park, ***Shenandoah National Park Trust*** (the Trust) is working to build a community dedicated to the future of this remarkable national treasure. To achieve its mission, the ***Trust*** cultivates private funds while providing the public a growing awareness of this richly historic park's wonders.

Shenandoah National Park Trust provides funding to support the full range of projects and programs its park offers, including natural and cultural resource protection, education, research, infrastructure repair and maintenance, and visitor services.

One project the ***Trust*** funded helped the park recall its roots with a major restoration of Skyline Drive's Old Rag View Overlook. The work sets a precedent for future restorations by replacing old metal guardrails with hardwood rails reminiscent of the chestnut structures the CCC built in the 1930s.

Shenandoah's natural resources are subject to multiple challenges, including air and water pollution, climate change and invasive species. The ***Trust*** is funding numerous projects to help the park address these issues.

Over the years, hazy pollution has diminished the park's

Thanks to the Shenandoah National Park Trust, new guardrails at the Old Rag Overlook artfully and functionally replicate the original guardrails installed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.
Photos courtesy of Library of Congress (top) / NPS (bottom)

Discriminating Explorer: Cabin Camp

Spend a night in the backcountry—but not in a tent (unless you want!). The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club operates six primitive cabins in the park and the public can rent them. Don't expect lux, but the outdoor aficionado who settles into these historic structures will have a truly unique hike-in cabin experience. They're popular, but with advance planning you can spend a rustic week not too far from your car. You'll need to carry in your own provisions to the rustic huts, use an outhouse, and bring your water from a nearby stream, but many of the walks aren't lengthy (a few tenths of a mile away in some cases). The stone hut of Range View Cabin has been open since 1933 and is less than a mile from parking. Pocosin Cabin is just 0.2 mile from your car. That makes it easy to resupply yourself with great food and even some luxuries. Some PATC cabins were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps or were even the homes of early settlers. A stay in a PATC cabin gives you the chance to really see how early residents of the area lived before the park. And they're great preparation for a gourmet meal or overnight stay at Skyland Lodge when you hike back out!

Photos by National Park Service

famous views and has made some of its streams as acidic as lemon juice. The *Trust* is funding development of signage outside the park's air quality monitoring station at Big Meadows and an associated interactive module in the nearby *Harry F. Byrd Visitor Center* to educate park visitors on the problem and encourage efforts to clear the air.

The *Trust* is funding the park's first *Climate Change Education Program*, which is aimed at assessing the fate of the globally rare Shenandoah salamander and other high-elevation species affected by climate change. The effort will feature ranger-led interpretive programs, web-based resources and a classroom component.

Forest restoration and eradication of invasive plant species is a multi-year funding priority for the *Trust*. The goal is to re-establish native species and protect the park's most ecologically important areas.

Trust efforts also help hikers. At Big Meadow's Byrd Visitor Center, park visitors can rent GPS units that display interpretive audio, video, and animated interpretive information at spots on four separate hikes.

Old Rag is the park's most popular and rugged peak—and the *Trust's* recent funding of a summit cache of search and rescue gear has saved lives.

The *Trust* funded a stabilization plan intended to protect one of the park's most historic sites, an 18th-century iron furnace that may have supplied ore to James Madison's iron works. The *Trust* has also invested resources in schematic plans for the "re-envisioning" of the Loft Mountain area, which includes the first LEED-certified environmentally sustainable park ranger contact station and indoor/outdoor meeting and educational space in the park.

The *Trust* raises money through a variety of sources. Including individuals, foundations, corporations and events. It also raises funds—and awareness—of Shenandoah National Park through the sale of license plates that depicts the Blue Ridge Mountains, Skyline Drive and a black bear. Fifteen dollars comes to the *Trust* from every purchase and renewal. In its first year, $45,000 was generated to support the park. The plate is one of the most popular of the 200 specialty plates in Virginia. The *Trust* recently launched a motorcycle version of the plate, with the same $15 donation coming to the organization.

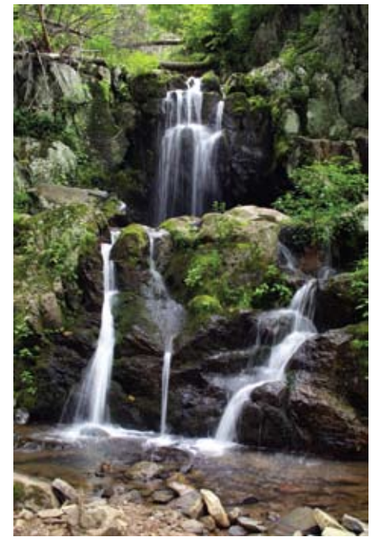
Shenandoah National Park is one of the crown jewels of the national park system. Its partner, ***Shenandoah National Park Trust***, is dedicated to ensuring that it remains that way for generations to come. ■

Insider Tips:

Rapidan Camp. The cabins of this secluded spot are the restored summer fishing retreat of President Herbert Hoover and his wife Lou Henry and a long list of important guests. Informative signs interpret the camp. There's an exhibit in the Prime Minister's cabin and the President's House has been restored and refurnished. Check in at the Byrd Visitor for directions and to know when the exhibits are open and programs underway.

Hawksbill Mountain. This highest peak in the park (4,049 feet) offers spectacular views from rocky cliffs and a stone observation platform. The Shenandoah Valley to the west and the park's most distinctive summit, Old Rag and the foothills to the east, create one of Shenandoah's most impressive views. A stone shelter (no camping) sits on the peak.

Old Rag. No one can claim Old Rag is a best-kept-secret. It's very popular, so real care should be taken to come midweek and off-season. The reward for those who do will be a big loop hike that takes in the mountain's rocky ridge trail, probably Shenandoah's most rugged ramble. This is the park's classic climb.



Doyles River Falls / John Mitchell, NPS

"For several decades, available funding has failed to keep pace with our national parks' needs—forcing our parks to do more and more with less and less. The outlook for federal funding is uncertain. For that reason, our parks are increasingly dependent on their non-profit partners to help keep our parks vibrant and healthy."

— Shenandoah Superintendent Martha Bogle

Best Ways To Support the Shenandoah National Park Trust:

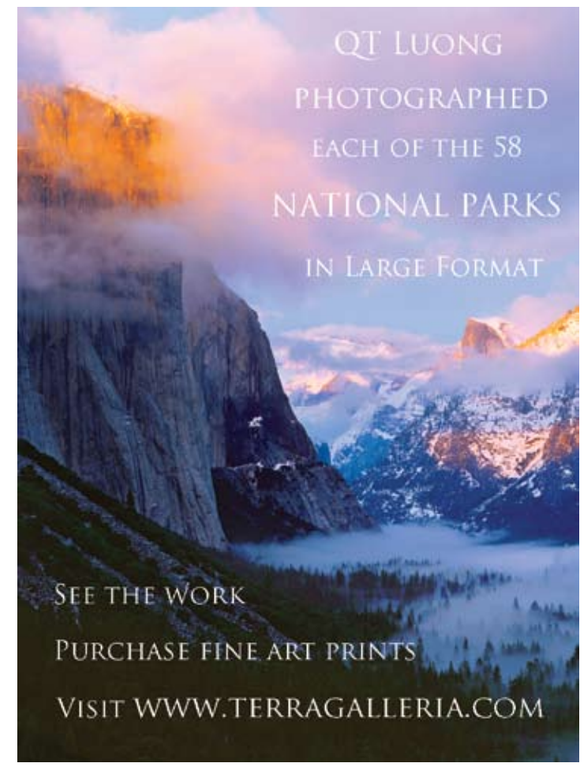
Purchase a Shenandoah National Park license plate for your car or motorcycle.

Check-in—at any of the classic park lodges. The lodging fee at Big Meadows Lodge, Skyland Resort, or Lewis Mountain's historic cabins includes $1 per room per night for the *Trust*, unless you request to have that removed from your bill.

Hike your way to higher impact for the park. Join the *Trust* and your membership includes automatic membership in the Hundred Mile Club. When you reach 25, 50, 75 and 100 miles, the *Trust* sends great gifts. To help you reach your hundred miles, the *Trust* has regularly scheduled, guided hikes and The Shenandoah Scramble on Saturday, September 22, 2012 is a hiker's fundraising event that will bring hikers together for food and fun in Shenandoah National Park.

Friend the *Trust* on Facebook and follow on Twitter—and encourage your friends and theirs to join and support the *Trust*.

Engage the *Trust* in a diverse range of gifting options that include cash and stocks, a gift in your will, or in memory or in honor of someone special.



Yellowstone Bison / Ian Shive

A World Leader

Yellowstone National Park

There is no more iconic park in the world than Yellowstone National Park. Its earth-shaking geothermal features, wondrous scenery, and rich fount of wildlife are unmatched, and its role as the world's first national park continues to drive and indeed inspire the parks movement globally.

Spanning 2.2 million acres largely located in northwestern Wyoming, Yellowstone is a precious and astonishing nature preserve, one that constantly delights and challenges visitors to learn more about the natural world. Here you'll find Old Faithful and more than 10,000 other geothermal features, the world's greatest collection. You'll catch glimpses of wolves, bears, moose and bison as they've roamed America's Serengeti for centuries. And the adventurous have expansive wilderness lands for exploration, retrospection, and introspection.

In Yellowstone you walk among geysers, hot springs, mudpots and fumaroles that bubble to the surface, fueled by a magma pocket not far below ground level. There are thick lodgepole pine forests, aspen glades, and vast rolling meadows. Mountains rise more than 11,000 feet above sea level, while the colorful canyon cut by the Yellowstone River plunges more than 1,000 feet.

So flush with wildlife is this park—along with the wolves, bears, moose and bison, there are elk, mountain lions, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, Canada lynx, coyotes, fox and even wolverines—that there is no better place to indulge in a game or three of wildlife bingo.

Fittingly, the Museum of the National Park Ranger stands in Yellowstone near the Norris Geyser Basin. Located in the original Norris Soldier Station, this museum tracks the development of the park ranger profession from its roots in the military traditions that guarded Yellowstone through early rangers and to the present array of National Park Service staff with their specialized duties.

Befitting the park's venerable standing, *Xanterra Parks & Resorts* sees that you have a wide range of lodging available, from plank-built cabins with woodstoves for warmth to presidential suites. Whichever mode of accommodation you choose, though, you'll come away from a Yellowstone visit with an appreciation of a quintessential national park that many visitors call their favorite.

Yellowstone Park Foundation: Working For Wonderland

As Congress continues to look for ways to cut federal spending, non-profit organizations such as the ***Yellowstone Park Foundation*** are becoming invaluable for the direct funding they provide the national parks. Often without their help trails would go without maintenance, wildlife research would dip, and facilities would deteriorate. Today, social trails that have upset the pristine scenery of campgrounds are being erased, fisheries are being restored, and a world-class visitor education center has arisen near Old Faithful thanks to the ***Foundation***.

In recent years the ***Foundation*** has directed $3 million to $5 million each year in funding for a wide variety of park projects, such as wildlife studies and a program to teach visitors how to avoid trouble with wildlife. They provide annual support for the ***Yellowstone Youth Conservation Corps***, a residential work program for teens that integrates stewardship, environmental education, leadership skills, and recreation. Two particularly noteworthy efforts the ***Foundation*** shouldered in recent years were a $15 million campaign to underwrite the new visitor education center at Old Faithful, and a $1 million rehabilitation of historic Artist Point overlooking the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

Some of the ***Foundation's*** work, such as the ***Old Faithful Visitor Education Center*** and ***Artist Point*** improvements, are highly visible and visitor friendly. Other projects may not be quite as visible but are equally important and beneficial to the public nonetheless. For instance, the ***Foundation*** has raised $2 million to rehab more than 100 miles of hiking trails, provided funds for conservation of the park's collection of rare art, documents, and specimens, and contributed $170,000 for the first two years of a comprehensive, five-year ***Yellowstone Raptor Study*** that will inventory the park's birds of prey, such as owls and golden eagles.

Contributions large and small combine to fuel the ***Foundation's*** presence in the park. Throughout the year you can help support wildlife research by "adopting" one of Yellowstone's iconic native species in the form of a plush animal. In return, along with knowing your dollars will support this research, you'll receive educational materials on the animals as well as a personalized "adoption

Thomas Moran was so awestruck by the beauty and wildness of Yellowstone that he filled sketchbook after sketchbook with images, such as this one of Castle Geyser in the Upper Geyser Basin. His stunning paintings of the Lower Falls of Yellowstone helped convince Congress to designate Yellowstone as a national park. Image via NPS

Click the icon for a video about the Yellowstone Wolf Project

Discriminating Explorer: "Bus" Tour

Step into the past with a tour aboard one of Yellowstone's historic "Yellow Buses," cousins to Glacier National Park's Red Jammers. These vehicles served the park from the 1930s through the '60s. They were refurbished to meet modern safety standards and today are used by **Xanterra Parks & Resorts** to offer opportunities for guided exploration of the park. The top rolls back to offer open-air touring on warmer days, and the windows roll down too, making them perfect for road-side wildlife photo ops. And the drivers are great park interpreters! Once the ride is over, head over to picturesque Lake Hotel for dinner and drinks. Before dinner, enjoy the string quartet that often performs in the hotel's Sun Room, just off the dining room. Finally, while summer might be popular due to school vacations, fall is the best season in Yellowstone, thanks to cool weather, colorful forests, and highly visible wildlife.

The Norris Geyser Basin, the hottest thermal area in the park, is also one of the most colorful. / Kurt Repanshek

certificate" that make these pets perfect presents for kids.

Your dollars also can go to the ***Foundation's Sponsor A Bear Box*** campaign that puts bear-proof storage boxes in campgrounds; helps purchase collars that enable researchers to follow wolves through the park; or even supports a program that enlists volunteer anglers to help with monitoring Yellowstone's fisheries.

"Many people don't know that there is a way to become directly involved in caring for Yellowstone," says Karen Bates Kress, president of the ***Foundation***. "We offer a way for individuals, foundations, and corporations to become stewards of Yellowstone. As the official fundraising partner of Yellowstone, we offer tools to help people spread the word about donating via our website, such as free e-postcards and a brand-new feature where people can become a ***Yellowstone Park Foundation*** fundraiser and customize their own fundraising page on our site. Most often, our work is 'behind the scenes' in the park. But there are more than three million visitors to Yellowstone each year, and we know there are many more people who would be eager to become involved if they knew about the ***Yellowstone Park Foundation***."

Looking ahead, the ***Foundation*** is concentrating on raising a significant amount of funds over the next several years to support the park's Native Fish Conservation Program, a vital project in light of the non-native lake trout invasion of Yellowstone Lake, recent years of drought, introduction of disease, and the impact of climate change on the park's native fish. Yellowstone's fisheries extend beyond streams and lakes to affect terrestrial species, such as bears, that rely on the fisheries.

In short, the ***Yellowstone Park Foundation's*** diverse good works aspire to reach as far as this park's hold on the imagination of the world's people. ■

Insider Tips:

Don't be intimidated. A huge park at more than 2.2 million acres, Yellowstone can be daunting to visitors. But it doesn't need to be.

Cool off in summer with a dip in the Firehole Swimming Area located a mile south of Madison Junction on Firehole River Drive.

Explore the short (0.6 mile) Fountain Paint Pot Nature Trail, a great walk for the entire family that shows off more than a dozen geothermal features.

Check with the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center for the next eruption of Castle Geyser. This icon goes off every 9-11 hours, shoots water 60-90 feet high, and performs for about 20 minutes.

A Youth Conservation Corps crew hits the trail in Yellowstone / NPS

Rise early, before dawn, to reach the Lamar Valley in time to see wolves, elk, bison and other wildlife, then head back to your lodge for a quiet breakfast while everyone else hits the road.

Yellowstone grizzly bears / NPS

On rainy days, retreat to the second floor mezzanine lounge at the Old Faithful Inn with a warm drink, a good book, or to play a game of checkers.

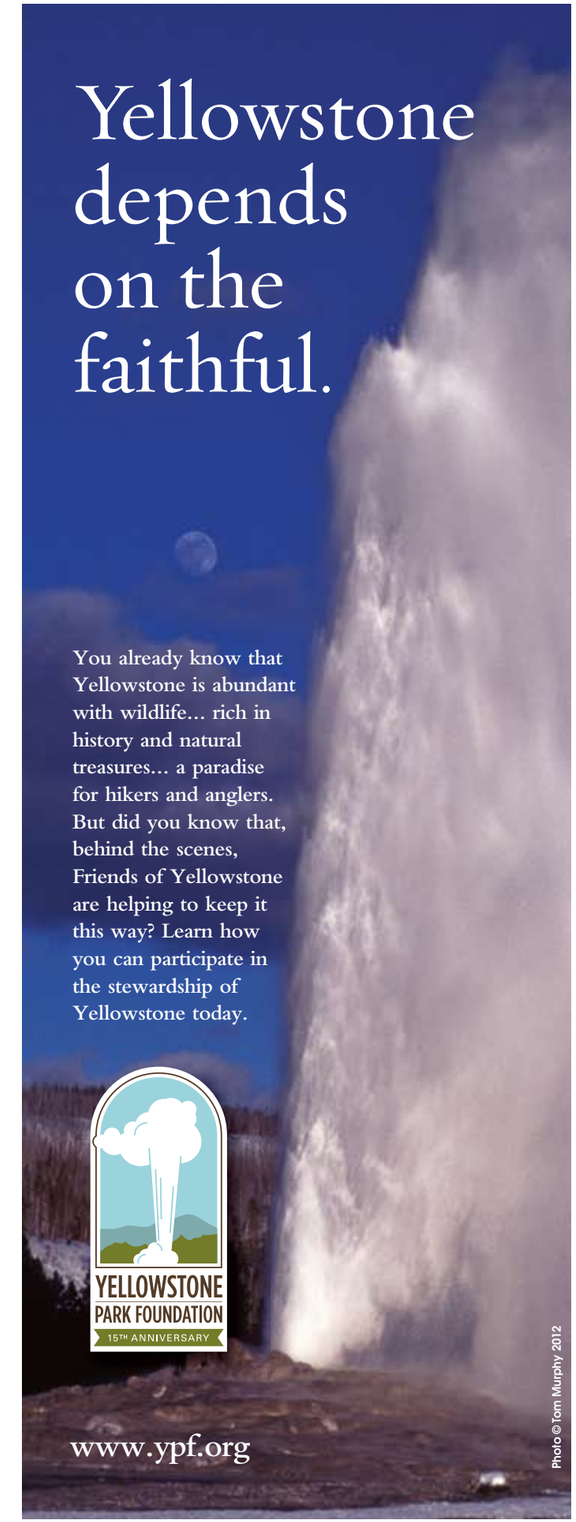
Stop for a picnic lunch at the Yellowstone River picnic area 1.5 miles west of Tower. After lunch, walk south of the picnic tables for dramatic (and often overlooked) views of the Yellowstone River Canyon. Eagles, elk, bison, grizzly and black bears can often be spotted nearby.

Best Ways To Support the Yellowstone Park Foundation:

- Cash contributions of all sizes are greatly appreciated.
- Include the ***Foundation*** in your will.
- Collar a wolf. For $2,500 or $5,000 you can put a VHF or GPS collar on one of the park's wolves for tracking. For $50, you can help contribute to the purchase of a VHF or GPS collar.
- Join the 1872 Society. With annual giving of $1,000 or more your donation can make a long-running difference.
- Adopt some park wildlife. Through the ***Foundation's*** adoption program, your dollars go towards wildlife research, and you get a plush animal in return.

"At Yellowstone National Park we would not be where we are today on the reintroduction of wolves, wildlife health, youth engagement and education, the fisheries program, or the preservation of over 12,000 years of human history in the park without the support of the Yellowstone Park Foundation."

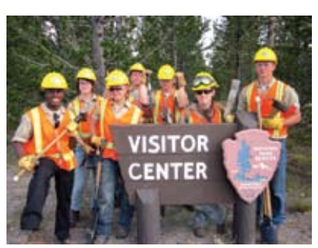
— Yellowstone Superintendent Dan Wenk



National Park Friends Group 101

Friends of the Smokies' Trails Forever volunteers like Sandra and Jay Aldrich helped reconstruct the Forney Ridge Trail.

Big Bend Ultra Run is sponsored by the ***Friends of Big Bend National Park***.



Yellowstone Park Foundation volunteers fan out across the park.

While there are nearly 400 units of the National Park System, there are only about 150 groups today that view themselves as friends groups working to benefit the parks. Interested in creating a friends group, or need help getting your organization out of the blocks? The ***National Park Foundation*** is there to help.

Dan Puskar at the ***Foundation*** says there is a significant array of materials and help the ***Foundation*** can offer you. Among the on-line resources the ***Foundation*** offers are templates to help your group create a development plan, or a marketing communications plan, he says. The ***Foundation*** also hosts webinars on topics ranging from membership programs to working with Social Media and even "making the 'perfect ask' in fundraising," he says.

Through the ***Park Partners Project***, the ***Foundation*** each year works directly with a small number of friends groups on all the facets of operating a successful organization. Among the groups the ***Foundation*** is working with this year are ***Friends of Arches and Canyonlands National Parks: The Bates Wison Legacy Fund***, the ***Shenandoah National Park Trust***, ***Voyageurs National Park Association***, and ***Friends of Minute Man National Historical Park***.

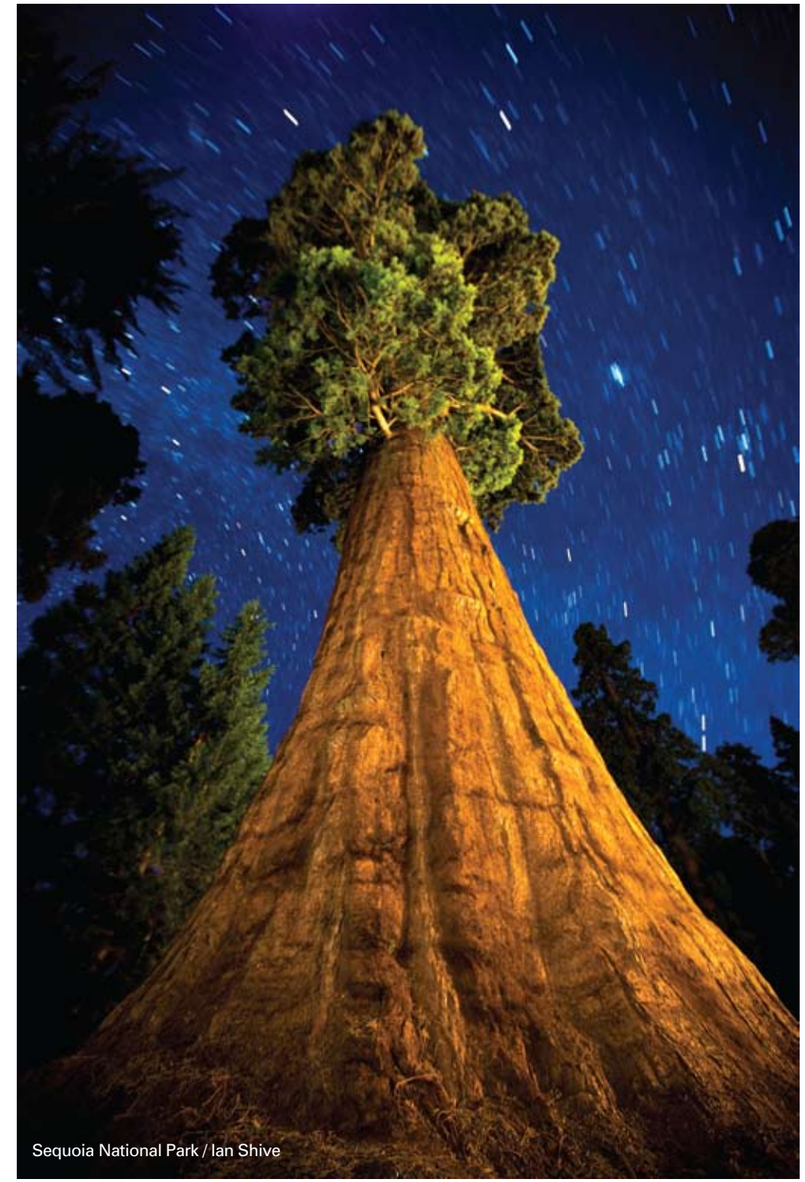
"We're really trying to help groups increase their own capacity, so that they can achieve their mission better," says Puskar. "And if their mission is increasing philanthropic resources, providing promotional support, in some ways being the face of the park within their community, that's helping the ***National Park Foundation*** achieve its mission of increasing resources for the parks."

In short, the ***Foundation*** stands ready to help you:

- Organize a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
- Craft a management structure
- Develop membership materials
- Coach you on fund-raising
- Connect you with your peers, both established and starting out.

"If there are real grassroots efforts out there that are trying to form a friends group, we would welcome them calling the Foundation," says Dan Puskar of the National Park Foundation. "But I also would say if you're interested in starting a friends group you should be talking to your park superintendent. You should be talking to the folks that you know at that park.

"One of the things we know for sure is that the best and strongest friends groups are not only those that know great things about non-profit best practices and management, but they also have strong relationships, work hand-in-hand with their parks, from the superintendent on down, to be able to set priorities and to be able to work together on donor recognition and stewardship. You can't do it unless you're working hand-in-hand."



Sequoia National Park / Ian Shive

Join The *Essential Friends* Movement

Essential Friends is an annual publication of ***National Parks Traveler***. In 2013, let us tell your group's story. Or let us feature your destination or business advertisement in support of friends groups—a portion of the cost of every ***Essential Friends*** ad goes to the friends group of the advertiser's choice.

Get To Know Your Parks—And Their Friends

Keep national park friends groups in mind the next time you head out to visit a national park. They provide a vital and indispensable service to the parks that benefits us all. Their fundraising ads are now being featured on ***National Parks Traveler***. If you can't make it to your favorite one of these parks in summer 2012—consider a visit of financial support.

Acadia National Park
www.nps.gov/acad
Friends of Acadia
www.friendsofacadia.org

Big Bend National Park
www.nps.gov/bibe
Friends of Big Bend National Park
www.bigbendfriends.org

Blue Ridge Parkway
www.nps.gov/blri
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
www.brpfoundation.org

Glacier National Park
www.nps.gov/glac
Glacier National Park Fund
www.glacierfund.org

Grand Teton National Park
www.nps.gov/grte
Grand Teton National Park Foundation
www.gtnpf.org

Great Smoky Mountains National Park
www.nps.gov/grsm
Friends of the Smokies
www.friendsofthesmokies.org

Shenandoah National Park
www.nps.gov/shen
Shenandoah National Park Trust
www.snptrust.org

Yellowstone National Park
www.nps.gov/yell
Yellowstone Park Foundation
www.ypf.org

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