

2002 RECOMMENDED WEB SITES FOR NATIONAL PARKS AND FLORIDA PARKS

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“I knew long ago and rediscovered that the best way to attract attention, help and conversation is to be lost.”

John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*

I. INTRODUCTION

“The Bear is going to get you,” is a famous British saying in golf. Essentially, it means that on the fourth day of a four day tournament, the “bear” of heat, exhaustion and nerves will attack a golfer’s game. Two summers ago, I witnessed a different interpretation of the saying. Camping with my family in Yosemite National Park, the park rangers had given us strict instructions regarding the hunger and ferocity of the park bears. Not even toothpaste could be kept in our cabin as the bears could detect its odor. Everything had to be stored away in a bear proof locker. Before going to sleep, we locked away our provisions, except for an undetected bag of potato chips, which was detected by a hungry, ferocious visitor at three o’clock in the morning. The bear almost got us.

Bears included, summer vacation stories have always been a favorite topic in my family. With the summer approaching, we inevitably reminisce about the trips we have taken in the past. For example, there was the time we drove from Naples, Florida to Seaside Park, New Jersey by way of Toronto, Canada, and an unsuspecting Quaker Village in Kentucky. There was the time my cousin and I painted a barn for enough money to go camping along the Maine Coast, until the money ran out in Canada at the Bay of Fundee Park. There was even a time when my father drove the six of us from Tijuana, Mexico to Vancouver, Canada in less than 16

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days, hitting every national park and seaside vista along the way. Is there a prettier drive in the world than Big Sur?

Thanks to my parents, our summer vacations have proven to be as informative as they have been entertaining. In our travels, my father has never hesitated (notwithstanding fruitless protests from the back seat) to travel more than a few hours out of the way to make it to a national park, or an important point of interest. While at ten years old I might not have been interested in a field where a "last stand" took place, I now realize what my father's goal was. He wanted his kids to have exposure to as many of our country's treasures as possible. Not only were our horizons broadened, we now have the opportunity to take our children to the places our parents so tirelessly extracted from the wrinkled AAA maps. Our parents successfully built a treasure chest of memories.

Following is a review of web sites for some of the national and Florida parks we have visited, as well as other recommendations. By no means is this list meant to be definitive. A cursory inspection of the Web will reveal just how many state and national parks we have at our disposal. Whether this summer, or any season, I invite you to take John Steinbeck's advice and "get lost" in a park.

II. FEDERAL PARKS

Generally, <http://www.nps.gov> is a helpful research site regarding United States National Parks. Its home page has links for everything from a general description of each park, including links to help with travel accommodations, to scientific information concerning the parks.

Acadia National Park

Location: Bar Harbor, ME

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/acad/index.htm> and <http://www.acadia.national-park.com/>

While many of the Park's activities seem to be concentrated around Bar Harbor, a campsite on either peninsula can be a perfect location. Whether you are looking for large, frigid Atlantic waves or sunny camping trails, Acadia has something for everyone. Make sure to take the 27-mile Park Loop Road.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

Location: near Montrose, CO

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/blca/> and <http://www.americansouthwest.net>

The sheer walls of the Black Canyon, carved out by the Gunnison River, bear the appearance of the dramatic Dolomites of Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. While the Canyon is narrow (only 40 feet apart in some places), its depth of 2900 feet provides sufficient space for exploration.

Bryce Canyon National Park

Location: Bryce Canyon, UT

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/brca/index.htm> and <http://www.bryce.canyon.national-park.com/>

The Canyon's colorful limestone, sandstone, and mudstone make a perfect backdrop for the park's natural horseshoe-shaped amphitheaters.

Cape Cod National Seashore

Location: Wellfleet, MA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/caco/index.htm>

Having attended college in the Boston area, I was constantly reminded of the magic of Cape Cod. Instead of taking advantage of its booming summer industry (lobster pound after lobster pound), I visited the Cape on a cold, windy, November day. The time of year is irrelevant. The Cape's lore, including massive sand dunes, and charming cottages, is a special place any time of year.

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Location: near Manteo, NC

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/caha/index.htm>

With its rich history of shipwrecks, fishing, surfing, and other activities, the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," on the Outer Banks, has plenty to offer. Unfortunately, the legendary Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is closed for the remainder of 2002.

Although not a national park, Kitty Hawk, NC is a perfect compliment to Cape Hatteras. A resort area, Kitty Hawk is famous for its Outer Bank setting and quaint clapboard cottages. Kitty Hawk can be researched at <http://www.kitty-hawk.com/>.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park

Location: near Carlsbad, NM

URL: <http://nps.gov/cave/index.htm> and <http://carlsbad.caverns.national-park.com/>

As one of the world's largest underground chambers, Carlsbad Caverns boasts the nation's deepest limestone cave (1567 feet) and several other magnificent formations.

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

Location: Middlesboro, KY

URL: <http://nps.gov/cuga/index.htm> and <http://www.cumberlandgaptn.com/>

The borders of Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia converge in this break of the Appalachian Mountains, which is touted as the "first doorway to the west."

Denali National Park and Reserve

Location: near Denali Park, AK

URL: <http://nps.gov/dena/index.htm> and <http://denali.national-park.com/>

With North America's highest mountain, Mount Mickenly, 20,320 feet, countless other mountains, glaciers and a complete sub-arctic eco-system, this six million-acre-park is host to grizzly bears, wolves, and moose; not to mention park visitors who come for wildlife viewing, mountaineering, and backpacking.

Dinosaur National Monument

Location: near Vernal, UT & Dinosaur, CO

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/dino/index.htm> and <http://www.american.southwest.net>

This park is home to the critical habitat for the endangered Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Colorado Pikeminnow, Razor Back Sucker, and a large deposit of fossil dinosaur bones.

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Location: Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, AZ, UT

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/glca/index.htm>

Water lovers will enjoy the opportunities that this park offers for boating, fishing, swimming, as well as backcountry hiking and four-wheel drive trips.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Location: San Francisco, CA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/goga/index.htm> and <http://www.llbean.com/parksearch/parks/html/2359gd.htm>

Located minutes away from hip, modern San Francisco, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area provides the perfect juxtaposition between urban and rural. The park includes five campgrounds, the land north and south of the Golden Gate Bridge, Muir Woods, and Alcatraz Island. The park offers pickinicking, fishing, tours, and scenic walks of one of the most naturally beautiful landscapes in North America.

Grand Canyon National Park

Location: Grand Canyon, AZ

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm> and <http://www.thecanyon.com>

Natural amphitheaters, aerial tours, hiking, donkey rides, white water rafting, and nice accommodations are only a few of the numerous attractions that bring people flocking to this natural wonder. A suggestion: one of the Canyon's most magical sights is the sunrise over its walls. Getting up at five o'clock in the morning is a good way to beat the crowds, and the heat.

Grand Teton National Park

Location: Moose, WY

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/gte/index.htm> and <http://www.grand.teton.national-park.com/>

Located in the vicinity of Jackson Hole, WY, at 13,000 plus feet, the "youngest" section of the Rocky Mountains, is as scenic, as it is charming.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

Location: near Hilo, HI

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/havo/index.htm> and <http://www.hawaii.volcanoes.national-park.com/>

Over half of this park is designated as wilderness. The unusual hiking and camping opportunities allow visitors an excellent opportunity to view complex and unique ecosystems. From sea level, to the summit of earth's most massive volcano, Mauna Loa, 13,677 feet, as well as earth's most active volcano, Kilauea, visitors can expect an adventurous stay.

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Location: IA, ID, IL, KS, MO, MT, ND, NE, OR, SD, WA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/lecl/index.htm>

Named after Captain Merriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is located in eleven states: Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. It begins near Wood River, Illinois, and finishes, with a grand finale, some 3700 miles later, in the Washington, at the Pacific Ocean.

Mammoth Cave National Park

Location: Mammoth Cave, KY

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/macv/index.htm> and <http://www.mammoth.cave.national-park.com/>

At 336 plus miles, Mammoth Cave National Park is the longest recorded cave system in the world.

Mount Rushmore National Memorial

Location: Keystone, SD

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/moru/index.htm>

Mount Rushmore's newly opened Presidential Trail allows spectators views of animals and plants, native to Black Hills, SD.

Muir Woods National Monument

Location: near Mill Valley, CA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/muwo/index.htm> and <http://www.visitmuirwoods.com/>

Named after the legendary naturalist, John Muir, this ancient redwood forest is located only a few miles from San Francisco. The park offers hiking, interpretive displays, and, as the website mentions, "solitude." With the backdrop of the Pacific Ocean, this promises to be a very reflective place. John Muir declared: "This is the best tree-lovers monument that could possibly be found in all the forest of the world."

Natural Bridge of Virginia

Location: Natural Bridge, VA

URL: <http://www.naturalbridgeva.com/>

Since I can remember, my father has displayed a black and white picture of his family in front of the Natural Bridge in his office. The natural phenomenon of a solid rock arc inspired Thomas Jefferson to write, "It is impossible for the emotions arising from the sublime to be felt beyond what they are here; so beautiful an arch, so elevated so light, and springing as it were up to heaven, the rapture of the spectator is really indescribable!"

Pecos National Historic Park

Location: Pecos, NM

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/peco/index.htm>

The park, which preserves 12,000 years of history, includes the ancient pueblo of Pecos, two Spanish Colonial Missions, and Santa Fe Trail sites.

Petrified Forest National Park

Location: Petrified Forest National Park, AZ

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/perfo/index.htm> and <http://www.petrified.forest.national-park.com/>

The park, located in northeast Arizona, features one of the world's largest and most colorful concentrations of petrified wood, as well as the Painted Desert.

Point Reyes National Seashore

Location: Point Reyes, CA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/pore/index.htm> and <http://www.pointreyes.net/>

The intense energy of the Pacific and the historic Point Reyes Lighthouse (not to mention the area's giant oysters), make this coastal area, north of San Francisco, unforgettable.

Redwood National and State Parks

Location: Del Norte & Humboldt counties, CA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/redw/index/htm>

Similar to Muir Woods, the Redwood parks provide visitors an opportunity to view trees, up to 2000 years old, and 300 feet tall.

Rocky Mountain National Park

Location: near Estes Park and Grand Lake CO

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/romo/index.htm> and <http://www.rocky.mountain.national-park.com/>

The image of gigantic, snow-capped mountains, for as far as the eye can see, will be permanently etched in your memory. Not far from Denver, this park is an absolute treasure to the National Park system.

Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

Location: Cornish, NH

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/saga/index.htm> and <http://www.sgnhs.org/saga.html>

Located in the rolling hills of New Hampshire, Saint-Gaudens features the home, gardens, and studios of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, an Nineteenth Century American sculptor. From the end of June, through the end of August, concerts are performed from the sculptor's house, every sunny Sunday afternoon at two.

Saratoga National Historic Park

Location: Stillwater, NY

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/sara/index.htm> and <http://www.audubon.org/iba/saratoga/.html>

Located in eastern Saratoga County, along the western bank of the Hudson River, this historical site commemorates the Revolutionary Army's halting of the British Army in 1777. Another popular attraction, near Stillwater, NY, which also involves animals, is the legendary Saratoga Race Track.

Sequoia & King's Canyon National Park

Location: Near Three Rivers, CA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/seki/index.htm> and <http://www.sequoia.national-park.com>

Visitors to Sequoia and King's Canyon National Park will get a wide variety of sites: everything from mountains and deep canyons, to trees that are older than our country.

Yellowstone National Park

Location: Yellowstone National Park, ID, MT, WY

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/index.htm> and <http://www.yellowstone-natl-park.com>

Yellowstone National Park allows visitors the opportunity to see bears, wolves, bison, elk, mountainous terrain, clean water and air, thousands of hot springs, and, of course, the famous geyser, Old Faithful

Yosemite National Park

Location: Sierra Nevada, CA

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm> and <http://www.yosemite.com> and <http://www.yosemite.org>

As a high school student, I used to keep an Ansel Adams print of Half Dome, and other Yosemite sites, in my bedroom. Two summers ago, I was fortunate enough to see the sites in person. It is difficult to comment on the sheer beauty of this park, and all of its natural wonders. Waterfalls, rock formations, vistas and meadows provide visitors with days of activities. Needless to say, almost every site in the Park could be a famous print.

III. FLORIDA PARKS

For a general overview of Florida State Parks, visit: <http://www.floridaparks.com>, <http://www.florida-outdoors.com/parks.htm>, <http://www.thingsToDo.com/states/FL/nationalparks/>, and <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/index.asp>. Each site provides a list of Florida's parks, activities and links to help with travel plans.

Apalachicola National Forest

Location: near Gadsden County, FL

URL: <http://ww.southernregion.fs.fed.us/florida/forests/apalachicola.htm>

Located in the Florida Panhandle, visitors can camp, hike, bike, or take a canoe trip down one of the Forest's rivers. Those who take a canoe trip into the Gulf of Mexico are rewarded with the opportunity to eat at some of the best oyster bars in the country.

Big Cypress National Preserve

Location: Ochopee, FL

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/bicy/index.htm>

Vast strands of Cypress trees cover over 700,000 acres of preserved land. Big Cypress Preserve, set aside because of its importance as a watershed to Everglades National Park, was founded in 1974.

Biscayne National Park

Location: Homestead, FL

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>

The Keys' notorious turquoise water, exotic fish and wildlife rich environment make this sun-drenched South Florida park a memorable vacation destination. John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park is located nearby, and can be researched at <http://www.pennekamppark.com/home.htm>.

Cape Canaveral National Seashore

Location: near Titusville and New Smyrna Beach, FL

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/cana/index.htm>

Located on Florida's Atlantic Coast, the Cape Canaveral Seashore presents its visitors with numerous opportunities for fishing, surfing and horseback riding. The Seashore also boasts over 1045 species of plants and 310 species of birds.

Castillo De San Marcos National Monument

Location: St. Augustine, FL

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/casa/index.htm>

Completed in 1695, the Castillo De San Marcos National Monument is the first permanent European settlement in the continental United States. On the shore of Mantanzas Bay, the park consists of the fortress and surrounding grounds.

Dry Tortugas National Park

Location: near Key West, FL

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/drto/index/htm>

A 70 mile boat ride away from Key West, this cluster of seven islands, composed of coral reefs and sand, is surrounded by crystal clear Gulf water. Fort Jefferson, on Garden Key, was built in the 1800's for its strategic location in the Florida Straits.

Everglades National Park

Location: near Miami, Homestead and Naples, FL

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/ever/index/htm>

Spanning most of South Florida, Everglades National Park is the only subtropical preserve in North America. Visitors can expect to see several types of birds, such as the Great Blue Heron, coexisting alligators and crocodiles, wave upon wave of sawgrass and large cypress swamps. Visitors to the southwest part of the Park are encouraged to search out Shark Valley at <http://www.nps.gov/ever/visit/tramroad.htm>.

Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary

Location: near Big Pine Key, FL

URL: <http://thefloridakeys.com/dive/divesites/looe.htm>

Looe Key is a natural reef located five miles south of Big Pine Key. Activities such as skin diving, snorkeling and fishing make Looe Key one of the most spectacular sanctuaries in the country.

Naples Conservancy Nature Center

Location: Naples, FL

URL: <http://www.naplesdowntown.com/attrnatc.htm>

Located on the Gordon River, visitors can either walk around the center's grounds, or take boat excursions into the surrounding mangroves. A branch of the Naples Conservancy is located on the way to Marco Island, FL, which gives visitors a more in depth look at the "door to the Ten Thousand Islands." Sandfly Island, located near Everglades City, FL, will provide visitors with an even more in depth look at the Ten Thousand Islands. A Sandfly excursion can be researched at <http://www.florida-outdoors.com/8canoe-gc.htm> and <http://www.everglades.national-park.com/boat.htm>.

National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp

Location: near Naples, FL

URL: <http://naples.com/corkscrew/> and <http://www.florida-everglades.com>

Located near Naples, Florida, Corkscrew Swamp contains the world's largest remaining old-growth Bald Cypress forest.

Ocala National Forest

Location: Orlando, FL

URL: <http://www.r8webcom/florida/forests/ocala.htm> and <http://www.gorp.com/dow/southern/ocal.htm>

Located near Orlando, Ocala National Forest receives more visitors than any other National Forest in Florida. Hiking, biking and camping are among the recreational activities.

Osceola National Forest

Location: near Lake City, FL

URL: <http://www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/florida/forests/osceola.htm>

Visitors can participate in hunting, beach activities and camping on Hog Pen Landing.

St. George Island State Park

Location: St. George Island, FL

URL: <http://www.floridaparks.com/stgeorgeislandstatepark.htm>

St. George Island presents its visitors with a relaxing beach environment, and an opportunity to eat superb seafood. The famous Chili Cookoff takes place on the island each March.

St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

Location: near Port St. Joe, FL

URL: <http://www.geocities.com/stjoestatepark/page2.htm>

Surrounded by St. Joseph's Bay to the east, and the Gulf of Mexico to the west, the park is home to migratory birds, nine miles of white sand beaches, striking sand dune structures, and lucky tourists. This park was named Best Beach in America by Stephen Leatherman, a.k.a. "Dr. Beach," for 2002. See www.drbeach.org.

St. Vincent Island

Location: St. Vincent Island, FL

URL: <http://www.floridaparks.com/brokeatoesoutdoor.htm> and <http://www.stvincentislandecotours.com/>

When touring the Florida Panhandle don't miss this gem of an island. A National Wildlife Preserve directly west of St. George Island, it is only accessible by boat and hosts a variety of wildlife such as a herd of Indonesian Sambar Deer, the endangered Red Wolf, as well as a multitude of birds and other species. Completely protected from development, this barrier island is home to one of the most beautiful and secluded beaches in the world which is rarely visited by tourists.

