



# TRAVEL GUIDE

# NATIONAL PARKS



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## Arizona - The Grand Canyon

There aren't too many people in the world who haven't heard of the Grand Canyon. Ask most people you meet to describe the national park in 3 words and regardless of whether they have visited or not, the likely response is "big", "beautiful", and well, "BIG".



**The Grand Canyon** is a steep-sided gorge that has been carved out by the Colorado River over the course of millions of years.

The canyon spans an impressive 277 miles long and ranges in width from 4 to 18 miles. Its most impressive feature though is its dramatic depth of one mile. All of these measurements, along with the sheer aesthetic beauty of it have contributed to its status as one of the world's greatest natural wonders.

Situated within the Grand Canyon National Park, this is one destination everyone should see at least once in a lifetime.

### *The South Rim*

Easily the most famous part of the Grand Canyon, the South Rim attracts the most visitors and is also perhaps the most photographed section. The South Rim is the most accessible and provides the most amenities in the park.

Averaging 7000 feet above sea level and overlooking some of the canyon's most spectacular sights, the south rim is best visited from November to February in order to avoid the crowds.



### *The North Rim*

The three developed viewpoints from the North Rim offer a sense of looking across the great expanse of the canyon, tending to minimize the effect of its depth.

The highest point of the **North Rim** is Point Imperial, which stands at 8,803 feet above sea level. This easily accessible lookout offers fantastic views of the Painted Desert and the eastern end of the canyon and is one not to miss.

## *The Wildlife*

**The Grand Canyon National Park** is home to a diverse and interesting range of wildlife. In fact there are approximately 355 bird, 89 mammal, 47 reptile, 9 amphibian, 17 fish and thousands of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrate species within the park.

The park is also known to a number of threatened and endangered species, making it an important player in the protection of these animals.

Care should be taken around wildlife in the park as some of the animals can be dangerous.

## *The Seasons*

Summer is the most popular time to visit as the climate is very pleasant. The North Rim is a little cooler due to its higher elevation, while the inner canyon temperatures can be extremely hot. Thunderstorms are particularly prevalent from July through to early September.

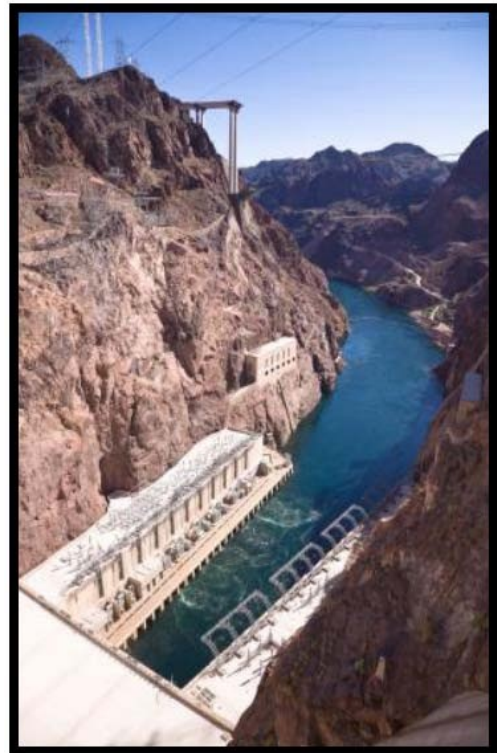
Winter in the Grand Canyon gets extremely cold, and most of the roads that lead to the North Rim remain closed during these months, due to heavy snowfall.

## *Camping*

There are two campgrounds in the **Grand Canyon National Park** that accept reservations; the Mather Campground on the South Rim and the North Rim campground.

The Mather Campground is located within the Grand Canyon Village and is suitable for RVs up to 30-foot in length, but does not offer hook ups.

The North Rim Campground does not offer hook ups either, but does however provide a dump station on site. The grounds are within a close proximity to the wonder of the North Rim, and also offer all the suitable amenities you could possibly need.



## Arizona - Petrified Forest National Park

**The Petrified Forest National Park** is an intriguing land of scenic wonders and highlights, and a fascinating insight into the science of this incredible natural wood.

This park is home to one of the world's largest and most colorful concentrations of petrified wood. It also boasts multi-hued badlands of the Painted Desert, along with protected historic and archeological sites. Displays of 200-million year old fossils can also be found within the park, making it a playground of fascinating, scientific history.

Petrified Forest National Park is located along Interstate 40 in the state of Arizona. It is divided into two sections, which are connected by the north-south corridor.

The northern area encompasses sections of the Painted Desert, while the southern section is home to high concentrations of petrified wood.

### *Climate*

The weather in this National Park varies all year round. Summers are generally hot, with frequent thunderstorms from July through September. Winters are quite cold due to the high elevation, and snow is a possibility.

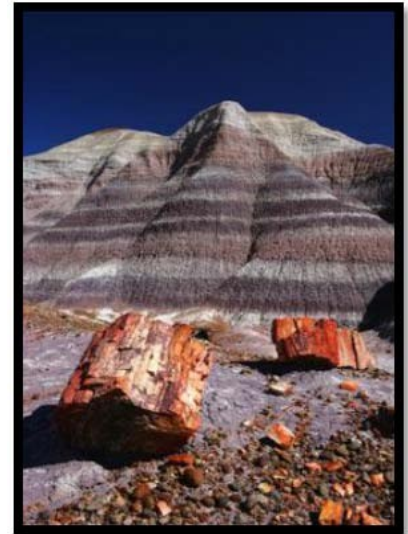
Conditions can change without notice so always be prepared.

### *Things to Do and See*

#### *The Chinle Formation*

The Chinle is a geologic formation that is spread across Arizona, Nevada, Utah and western New Mexico. A spectacular section of it can be found within the Petrified Forest National Park, and this simply cannot be missed while visiting.

The sand formations are spectacular and you don't have to be a geology fanatic to appreciate them. So be sure to bring your camera along, because this is one sight you will not want to miss.



## The Agate House

The Agate House is made almost entirely of petrified wood, making it a sight to remember. It is hundreds of years old and features 8 rooms, some of which have been rebuilt over the years.

Definitely one not to miss!

## Fossils

This National Park is a playground for those seeking fossils of both the plant and animal variety. These fossils tell the stories of ancient ecosystems, allowing you to travel back in time to millions of years ago.

The petrified wood fossils represent trees that were alive over 200 million years ago. Some of these measure over 190 feet, making them masterpieces that simply cannot be surpassed.



## Camping

Unfortunately there are no campgrounds in the **Petrified Forest National Park**, making it only accessible during the day.

However, wilderness backpack camping is allowed and a free permit is required.

## Arizona – Saguaro National Park

**Saguaro National Park** is located in the US state of Arizona and boasts some truly beautiful settings. Positioned around the city of Tucson, this National Park is popular with those wishing to explore the Sonoran Desert, the Tucson Mountains and the Rincon Mountains.



The park spans a total area of 91,440 acres, a majority of which is designated wilderness. Famous for its cactus, the park derives its name from the saguaro cactus, which is of course, native to the region.

For many, the Giant Saguaro is the universal symbol of the American West. Experience these glorious plants, silhouetted by the setting sun and you will discover just how magical this part of the country really is.

Saguaro National Park also protects some of the most impressive forests of these sub-tropical giants, in the world. The wilderness area is equally as impressive and is home to endless acres of untouched backcountry



## Climate

Unlike most National Parks in the United States, the best time to visit Saguaro is in winter. The days are mildly warm, with cool nights that average 40 Degrees Fahrenheit.

Summers get extremely hot, with daytime temperatures exceeding 105 Degrees Fahrenheit. It is important to always wear a hat and sunscreen when out hiking during summer, and be sure to keep plenty of water on person.

## Things to See and Do

### Rincon Mountain District

The Rincon Mountain District is situated on the east side of the park and offers a scenic driving tour, hiking trails, picnic areas and wilderness camping.

The visitor center in this district offers exhibits that focus on the natural and cultural history of the Sonoran Desert. This is the perfect place to visit to gain a sense of the importance of the desert to the wildlife that calls it home.

### Tucson Mountain District

The Tucson Mountain District is located on the west side of the park and also offers scenic driving tours, fantastic walking tracks, picnic areas and interpretive programs.

Much like the Rincon Mountain District, this section of the park also boasts a visitor center that focuses on the cultural and natural history of the park. "Voices of the Desert" is a fifteen-minute program that explores the Native American perspective of the **Sonoran Desert**, and is an interesting watch to uncover the many fascinating aspects of the park.

## Hiking

Hiking in **Saguaro National Park** is the perfect activity for those seeking adventure. Trekking into the rugged wilderness will bring with it challenges that even experienced hikers can find difficult. The terrain here is very rough, but the scenery is untouched and creates a peaceful ambience that is unlike anywhere else in the world.

There are more than 165 miles of hiking trails on offer that range from light strolls to day-long wilderness treks.

## Wildlife

Saguaro cacti are host to a great variety of animals, making this National Park one that is home to a unique array of wildlife. Saguaros attract woodpeckers, red-tailed hawks and white-winged doves.

The drier areas of the park are frequented by pack rats, jackrabbits, mule deer and bighorn sheep, while sex species of rattlesnakes also call the area home.

## RV Camping

Unfortunately there is no drive-in camping available within Saguaro National Park. Backcountry camping is permitted in the wilderness area, but does require a permit fee of \$6/night, which can be purchased from the Rincon Mountain District visitor center.

RV camping is available in nearby county and state parks in the Coronado National Forest.

## California – Yosemite National Park

### Biking Around Yosemite

An RV vacation in California simply wouldn't be complete without visiting the extremely popular, Yosemite National Park.

Yosemite is internationally recognized for its spectacular granite cliffs, waterfalls, clear streams, giant Sequoia groves and impressive biological diversity.





Yosemite is situated in Central California's Sierra Nevada Mountain Range and spans for an impressive 1,170 square miles. However most of the 3.7 million annuals visitors flock to the Yosemite Valley area of the park.

This glacial valley is carved out by the Merced River and boasts spectacular natural attractions like the Half Dome, El Capitan and the gorgeous Yosemite Falls.

The majestic sights of Yosemite have been attracting visitors for generations. With so much natural scenic beauty, it is no wonder it is one of the country's most visited natural attractions.

## Why Bike?

Cycling is a fantastic way to see the **Yosemite Valley** as it allows you to explore parts of it that simply aren't accessible by car.

Over 12 miles of paved bike paths make their way through the valley, while cyclists can also ride on the regular roads if they obey the traffic laws.

Unfortunately, cycling is not permitted off the trail, meaning mountain biking it not an option. However, the paths will take you past some stunning scenery so you won't miss out on the good bits.

The terrain is relatively flat ensuring all levels of cyclists can enjoy easy cruising, while soaking up the idyllic surrounds.

Bikes can be rented from early Spring to late Fall, and are available at Yosemite Lodge at the Falls and Curry Village recreation area.

## Operating Hours and Seasons

The park is open 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, with no reservations required to visit. The Hetch Hetchy Entrance Station is only open during daylight hours, with some roads closed due to snow around November through May or June.

## What to expect in...

### Summer

Summer is a fantastic time to visit Yosemite as it is easily accessible and the climate is warm to hot. Since most of the water flowing here comes from snowmelt, the waterfalls tend to dry up this time of year; however the wildflowers tend to be in full bloom.



## Fall

The park generally remains open through the months of fall, unless it snows heavy enough to cause a closure. The climate varies from hot to cold and water levels tend to remain very low.

## Winter

During the winter months, the snow falls heavily in Yosemite, creating a place of peace and solitude. During this time, the Tioga Road is closed, with restrictions also placed on the roads between Crane Flat and Tioga Pass, and Glacier Point. Most of the park is covered in snow and water levels are low until the ice begins to melt.

## Spring

The waterfalls are at their best during the months of Spring, making this the perfect time to visit Yosemite. Tioga and Glacier Point roads can remain closed until late May, and tire chains are still recommended. Exploring the rushing creeks, majestic cascades and pumping waterfalls can be enjoyed in warm weather, with winter storms making an appearance only occasionally.

## California – Sequoia National Park

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Pleasantly positioned in the Southern Nevada of California, Sequoia National Park is a must-see while in this part of the US.



Famous for its namesake, this National Park is home to one of the world's most impressive collections of Sequoia trees. It is also home to the largest tree on earth, the General Sherman tree.

Spanning an impressive 404,051 acres, the park boasts giant forests that are the resting place of many of the world's largest trees.

The vast majority of the park is roadless wilderness, with its back country boasting a vast expanse of high-alpine wonders. This stunning scenery will continue to amaze you for the duration of your visit here, and makes for a dramatic backdrop whilst camping in your RV.

## Park Attractions

### Tunnel Log

This popular attraction is a tunnel that has been cut through a fallen giant sequoia. The hole that was cut in it in 1938 measures 8-feet tall and 17-feet wide. However, these measurements give you only just an idea of how big this tree actually is.

### Moro Rock

Located right in the centre of the park, this granite dome stands at the head of Moro Creek and boasts a 400-step stairway to its peak.



## Weather

Temperatures vary by elevation within **Sequoia National Park**, so be prepared for conditions to change drastically and unexpectedly. In general the winters are mild and wet, while the summer is hot and dry.

## What to Do

There is a lot to see and do in Sequoia National Park, and this extends to much further than the giant Sequoia trees. The Crystal Cave Tour will allow you to explore the underground wonderland of the park, while also marveling at the gorgeous waterfalls that are sprinkled throughout it. Ash Mountain is also well worth a visit and the Giant Forest Museum never fails to please!

## Wildlife

The foothills region of the park is abundant with wildlife, with bobcats, foxes, ground squirrels, rattlesnakes and mule deer commonly frequenting the area. Bears and mountain lions have been known to wander these parts so make sure you keep an eye out and cover your food at all times.

## Camping

The park offers 14 campgrounds, which mostly work on a first-come, first-served basis. Group campgrounds are popular for RV travelers, and popular grounds include the Sunset Campground, Canyon View Campground, and Dorst Campground.

## California – Death Valley National Park

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Famous for being the hottest, driest and lowest place in North America, Death Valley National Park is an intriguing place to visit all year round.

Death Valley is located east of the Sierra Nevada in the arid Great Basin and covers a total area of 5,262 square miles. The park is richly steeped in a strong mining history



This desert park is home to streams of sand dunes, spectacular snow-capped mountains, multicolored rock layers, water-fluted canyons and 3 million acres of wilderness. It may be the harshest desert in the United States, but it is also one of its most beautiful. While visiting spend some time exploring historic mining sites, discovering shadowy canyons and absorbing the beauty of the sun-drenched salt flats.

**Death Valley** is visited by more than 770,000 visitors each year, who are all seeking to discover the striking geological features, diverse desert wildlife, richly history sites and the majesty of the clear night sky's stars.

### *Climate*

**Death Valley National Park** is known for its dry, sunny weather all year round. Summers are extremely hot and dry, while winters are mild with occasional storms.

The best time to visit is undoubtedly in winter, as the days are cool and the mountains are usually snow-capped. Spring is also a popular time to visit. The days are warm and sunny and there are gorgeous spring wildflowers out in full bloom.



### *Things to See and Do*

Death Valley is an impressively vast stretch of land that boasts over 3 million acres of designated wilderness. The park boasts an unsurpassed terrain, unique historic sites, incredible plants and amazing animals. In fact, there is no other place on earth quite like it.

## Scotty's Castle

**Death Valley Ranch** or, more lovingly referred to as Scotty's Castle, can be found in the far northern end of the park. Step back in time as you uncover a mystery hideout and getaway that was built with money from rich secret mines in the area.

The building itself is truly remarkable, and a tour is a must!

## Sand Dunes

The sand dunes that rise above Mesquite Flat are an impressive 100 feet tall and are particularly beautiful in the early morning and late afternoon. However, at moonlight they are at their most beautiful, and simply cannot be missed.

Sliding down the dunes is a particularly popular past time, purely because it is just so much fun!



## Hiking

There are literally thousands of hiking possibilities in **Death Valley National Park**. However, due to the harsh and dry conditions, it is best just to stick to some of the shorter walks. Some of the easy trails will lead you around Grand Canyon, Salt Creek, Titus Canyon Narrows and Badwater Salt Flats.

For those seeking something a little harder, but not too strenuous, popular trails include the Darwin Falls, Gower Gulch Loop and Mosaic Canyon trails.

## Wildlife

Despite the extremes in climate, Death Valley National Park is home to a truly diverse range of wildlife including 56 mammals, 36 reptiles, 5 amphibians, 6 fish and nearly 400 bird species.

Animals you may come across during your exploration include the bighorn sheep, kit fox, antelope ground squirrel, desert woodrat, black-tailed jackrabbit and kangaroo rat.

## RV Camping

There are 9 designated campgrounds within Death Valley National Park. The grounds most suitable for RVs include Furnace Creek, Mesquite Spring, Stovepipe Wells, Sunset and Texas Spring Campgrounds.

## California – Mojave National Preserve

The Mojave National Preserve is characterized but its remarkable sand dunes, its volcanic cinder cones, its untouched Joshua Tree forests and its endless fields of gorgeous wildflowers.

The park spans an impressive 1.6 million acres, with much of this considered wilderness area. The landscape is interrupted by canyons, mountains and mesas, along with the occasional abandoned mine, homestead and rock-walled military outposts.



Mojave is perfect for RV travelers wishing to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, and discover peace and solitude that is so often hard to come by in the United States.

Experience desert life at its best and uncover hidden civilizations, resting by stunning volcanic ranges and jagged terrain. The awe-inspiring beauty and intrigue of this park is sure to have you coming back for more, time and time again.

### *Climate*

As Mojave is a desert area, visitors to the park should expect bright, clear skies and seasonally strong winds. The temperature varies greatly between the night and day, with the weather at night quite cool, compared to the usual heat during the day.

At areas of low elevation, the temperatures can soar above 100 degrees F. and this typically begins in May and can last all the way through to October. Therefore it is wise to pack the appropriate clothing to prevent unwanted sunburn.

### *Things to See and Do*

#### *Cinder Cones and Lava Flows*

RV travelers can venture down Kelbaker Road, which will take you across the rugged terrain of lava flows and volcanic cinder cones, natural wonders that are thought to date back over 7 million years ago.

The Cinder Cones National Natural Landmark is a beautiful sight, set amongst a rugged landscape that delights the senses and will leave you breathless.

## Kelso Dunes

These massive dunes are an extremely popular attraction within the park, and it's not just their size that draws the tourists in. The dunes boast strange phenomena that are known as "singing" or "booming". When the moisture content is right they emit a low thrumming sound as sand slides down the slopes, providing an interesting attraction and a somewhat eerie atmosphere for tourists.



## Hiking

**Mojave National Preserve** offers a wealth of walking opportunities for avid hikers and those just wanting to see a bit of the park up close. Some of the developed trails include the Lake Tuendae Nature Trail, Teutonia Peak Trail and Rock Spring Loop Trail. Each of these trails is relatively short and easy and ideal if you have a spare morning or afternoon.

However, if you wish to see a little more of the park in its untouched form, there are several recommended routes that aren't established trails but are highly suitable for experienced hikers.

Explore Keystone Canyon and experience spectacular views, while spotting the odd pinyon pine, juniper and turbinella oak. Piute Creek is another popular area to explore and will expose you to the ruins of Fort Piute, which was built and manned in the 1880's to protect mail and travelers on the Mojave Road.

## Wildlife



Contrary to the common belief that deserts have little in the way of wildlife, the Mojave Desert is actually home to a vast diversity of wildlife that continues to amaze visitors time and time again.

Coyotes, snakes, lizards and lots of rats like to wander the desert sands of the Mojave. Mule deer are also important to the Mojave Desert, and is home to one of the most significant habitats for these creatures in the country.

## RV Camping

Mojave is known as camper's paradise, with most camping facilities operating on a first-come, first-served basis.

The most suitable campground for RVs is the Hole-in-the-Wall campground. Surrounded by sculptured volcanic rock walls, this is a great base camp for those wishing to explore the nearby Mitchell Caverns in the Providence Mountains State Recreation Area.

Facilities include vault toilets, trash receptacles, potable water, fire rings, picnic tables and a dump station. Unfortunately no hook-ups are available.

## California – Joshua Tree National Park

Joshua Tree National Park is nestled on 800,000 acres of immense, virtually untouched land, and is home to a rugged terrain and unforgiving landscapes.

This land is delicate and very fragile, and is a special habitat for some of the country's most unique flora and fauna. Two very different kinds of desert come together here; one dominated by the abundant creosote bush, the other, extensively habituated by the Joshua Tree.

The park also boasts an impressive array of geological features. Twisted rocks and exposed granite structures frequent the landscape, interrupting the otherwise flat terrain. The beauty lies in the uniqueness of this setting and is as its most awe inspiring at sunrise and sunset.



The solitude of this park really is what makes it so special and the perfect destination for an RV holiday. **Joshua Tree National Park** is perfect for those who know what nature is truly all about and will continue to delight those people for years to come.

## Climate

The best time to visit the park falls within the months of Spring and Fall. The temperatures during these times are very pleasant and the days are typically very clear.

Summers can get very hot and winters see the occasional snow. Come prepared for changes in weather and temperature, as these can often change without notice.



## Things to See and Do

### Wildflower Viewing

The wildflowers that bloom in Joshua Tree National Park are beautiful and offer a delightful array of color and vibrancy to the park.

Wildflower season usually begins with the large cream-colored blooms of the Joshua trees in late February. This is followed by a vast array of colorful annuals which bloom at lower elevations within the park. The cacti usually start flowering in April or May, making this an ideal time to visit.

### Hiking

The park offers a total of 12 self-guiding nature trails that range in length and difficulty. If you are after a short trail that still offers exposure to the fantastic natural highlights of the park, some of the best short tracks includes the Arch Rock trail, Cap Rock trail and Cottonwood Spring trail.

For those seeking something a little more extreme, great options include the Lost Palms Oasis, Mastadon Peak and Ryan Mountain trails.

### Wildlife

During the day, don't be surprised to come across a wide array of birds, lizards and ground squirrels. However, it is at night that the real desert animals come out to play. Snakes, bighorn sheep, kangaroo rats, coyotes and black-tailed jack rabbits frequent these parts, with dusk and dawn the best times to spot them.

While camping in the park it is important to keep food covered at all times, to prevent these wildlife from wandering into your camp.



### RV Camping

**Joshua Tree National Park** does not offer hook ups for RVs, however some sites do offer dump stations. Black Rock and Cottonwood campgrounds both offer water, a large number of sites and are extremely affordable.

Backcountry camping is also permitted for those wishing to escape to the true wilderness. Discover interesting rock formations, plants and wildlife as you venture right into the heart of this incredible park.

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