



Eagle Rock, Grand Canyon National Monument/Photo by permission of Julius Reque

## National Park Service Centennial Celebrating 100 Years Of Service

By John Rainey, GreenPlay, LLC

On August 25, 2016, the National Park Service turns 100! While the Centennial is celebrating the achievements of the past 100 years, it is really about the future. It's about starting off the second century with a renewed commitment to what President Woodrow Wilson signed into law to, "... conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and ... leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

The National Park Service and National Park Foundation are working closely with partners and stakeholders across the country to ensure that the Centennial is more than a birthday. Their goal is for

people of all ages to embrace the opportunities to explore, learn, be inspired, or simply have fun in their 412 national parks. They also want people to understand how the National Park Service's community-based recreation, conservation, and historic preservation programs positively impact their communities.

To help celebrate the upcoming National Park Service Centennial, the National Park Foundation and the National Park Service kicked off the "Find Your Park" initiative to inspire people to connect with, enjoy, and support America's national parks. People can participate by visiting [www.FindYourPark.com](http://www.FindYourPark.com) or by using #FindYourPark on social media.

First Lady, Michelle Obama and Former First Lady, Laura Bush are co-chairs for the 100th Anniversary. They are challenging every American to get out and find their park and experience wonders like Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty and Gettysburg, to name a few. "I do this every single day, because to find my park, all I have to do is get out of bed," says Mrs. Obama. "That's right. The White

House is actually a national park." And she finds another park connection in her family's history. Her great grandfather worked as a pullman porter. The Pullman National Monument in Chicago, IL, showcases stories that about the Industrial Revolution and the labor movement's struggle for civil rights.



Also, as part of the celebration, President Obama has launched a national initiative called Every Kid in a Park with the Park Service whose purpose is, "...to help engage and create our next generation of park visitors, supporters, and advocates." Beginning last September, all 4th grade kids have free access to national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, and more. Find out more at [www.everykidinapark.gov](http://www.everykidinapark.gov).

Many parks are planning to celebrate the centennial in a variety of ways. One event, The American Solar Challenge, begins on July 30, and this year, the solar cars in the eight-day, 1,800-mile road race will make official stops in nine different National Park sites in seven states as they make their way from Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Brecksville, Ohio, to Wind Cave National Park near Hot Springs, South Dakota. Numerous national historic sites will also serve as checkpoints along the way (see the full list [here](#)), but the official rally stops will offer a traveling exhibit, activities, and an up-close look at the cars.

Another major event on the books is party at Yellowstone National Park - the world's first national park. The party on Aug. 25 will celebrate the National Park Service and the Gardiner Gateway Project, which is improving and transforming the area around the landmark Roosevelt Arch at the park's north entrance in Gardiner, Montana.

More information about National Park Service centennial events is available at [http://findyourpark.com/find#centennial\\_events](http://findyourpark.com/find#centennial_events)



### A Rich History Rocks On

The national park idea dates back to the mid 1800s. Following the Lewis & Clark expedition, all eyes fell on the American Frontier. Early expansion beyond colonial territories exploited and commercialized much of territory to the west. Roads, canals, dams, and settlements sprung up across the country. Many people em-



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braced the concept of “manifest destiny,” which held that settlers were destined to expand across and civilize North America. This coincided with the growth of the industrial revolution and the expansion of railroads and the telegraph across the country.

Also at this time, there was a counter-movement toward naturalism and environmentalism espoused by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. There was great interest in the majestic natural landscapes as portrayed by Hudson River School artists like Frederic Edwin Church and Albert Bierstadt. The epic size of their landscape paintings reminded Americans of the vast, untamed, but magnificent wilderness areas in their country.

Concern with the protection of the environment became a new issue in the mid 19th century, pitting competing interests. On the one side were the lumber and coal companies who called for maximum exploitation of natural resources to maximize jobs, economic growth, and their own profit. On the other side were conservationists like John Muir (founder of the Sierra Club) and Theodore Roosevelt. They formed a coalition of outdoorsmen, sportsmen, bird watchers, and scientists who emphasized the value of natural beauty for tourism and ample wildlife for hunters. They argued

that careful management would not only enhance these goals but also increase the long-term economic benefits to society by planned harvesting and environmental protections.

Concerned by the prospects of commercial development in the Yosemite Valley, a group of prominent citizens advocated for its protection, and in 1864, worked with the General Land Office in the Interior Department to prepare a bill creating the Yosemite Grant. On June 30, 1864 Abraham Lincoln signed this bill into law. This was the first instance of park land being set aside specifically for preservation and public use. This set the precedent for creation of Yellowstone as the first national park in 1872 by President Grant, followed by ceding Mariposa Grove to California as a state park two years later.

Theodore Roosevelt had more influence on the National Park System than any other president. He doubled the number of sites within the National Park system. From 1901 to 1909, he signed legislation establishing five new national parks: Crater Lake, Oregon; Wind Cave, South Dakota; Sully's Hill, North Dakota (later re-designated a game preserve); Mesa Verde, Colorado; and Platt, Oklahoma (now part of Chickasaw National Recreation Area). The Antiquities Act of 1906 had even a broader effect. This Act enabled President

Roosevelt, and succeeding Presidents, to proclaim historic landmarks; historic or prehistoric structures; and other objects of historic, cultural, or scientific interest in federal ownership as national monuments.

Often called the “conservation president,” Roosevelt was not shy about using his new executive authority. By the end of 1906, he had proclaimed four national monuments: Devil’s Tower, Wyoming, El Morro, New Mexico, Montezuma Castle, Arizona, and Petrified Forest, Arizona. He also used his new authority to protect a large portion of the Grand Canyon as a national monument in 1908. By the end of his term, he had preserved six predominantly cultural areas and twelve predominantly natural areas in this manner.

Over the course of more than 150 years, this once-radical idea has evolved into a comprehensive national park system, with the dual (sometimes competing) missions to make the parks accessible to all and to preserve them for future generations.

Today, the National Park Service includes 412 areas covering more than 84 million acres in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

Recently, President Obama proclaimed the newest monument: the Stonewall Inn



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in New York City. The monument protects 7.7 acres in the Greenwich Village neighborhood, including Christopher Park. It’s the first monument to honor the gay-rights movement, marking the place where a 1969 protest “awakened the national consciousness to the humanity of LGBT equality”, according to presidential advisor Valerie Jarrett.

### Managing Success

The success of campaigns like the National Park Service’s Find Your Park and others from state tourism offices has created a huge demand. Last year, a record 305 million people visited national parks. As the Park Service likes to point out, “That’s more people than went to every single Disney park, NFL, NBA and MLB game and NASCAR race combined.”

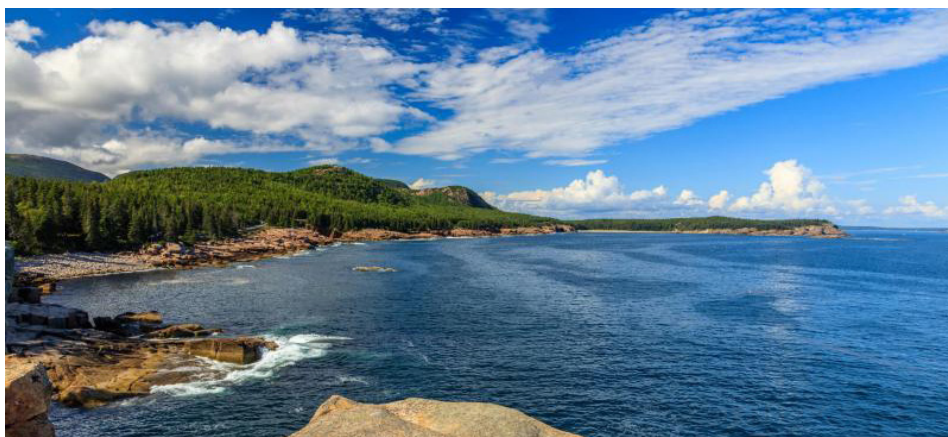
The great American road trip is back. AAA says that more than 38 million Americans traveled over Memorial Day weekend.

Spurred by low gas prices and international unrest, Americans are looking closer to home for vacations and entertainment. “Americans are ready to travel in numbers not seen in more than a decade,” said Marshall Doney, AAA President and CEO. And many of these travelers are going to National Parks venues, creating long lines, packed campsites, and busy trails.

According to a recent story on National Public Radio (NPR), “This rising attendance has created an extreme pressure on many parks. Traffic and air pollution are getting so bad that some parks have had to ban cars. The mission of the Park Service is to keep these public lands open and accessible. More visitors getting out into nature is a good thing. But it’s straining infrastructure and budgets. There’s a nearly \$12 billion backlog on maintenance. Many parks are understaffed and the number of human-wildlife conflicts is on the rise. So are we loving our national parks to death?”

Joan Anzelmo is a retired park superintendent in Jackson, Wyoming, who is now working with the Coalition to Protect the National Parks. She says “we’re getting used to having to make reservations for concerts and other popular activities, and we might need to start thinking that way for some of our most popular national parks. If we want to have these places for another 100 years and beyond, you might not be able to do everything at the same time. There may need to be certain kinds of modest limits on what you can do or how you can access certain areas of a national park.”

The future of the National Park Service continues into the 21st Century with a team of unsung heroes. Some are rangers who lead tours and provide for visitor safety. Others maintain, clean, and repair our parks. And even further behind the scenes, are a legion of administrators, historic preservationists, archeologists, and ecologists striving to discover more about America’s past, so that it can be preserved and passed on to future generations.



Arcadia National Park, Maine. Photo by permission of NPS / Kristi Rugg

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