



## National Parks, Monuments and Memorials

19 Days/18 Nights

Many of America's greatest national landmarks are located within the four state region, including America's first national park - Yellowstone; the crown jewel of the continent - Glacier; the only National Park named after an American President - Theodore Roosevelt; and the most well known symbol of America - Mt. Rushmore. This is perhaps the region's most popular itinerary.

**Day 1/2:** Begin your journey in Gateway City Denver, CO. Rocky Mountain National Park offers 412 square miles of scenic beauty with waterfalls, meadows filled with wildflowers, scenic vistas and abundant wildlife. Trail Ridge Road through the center of the park is the highest continuous roadway in the world with a restaurant that is two miles above sea level.

*Overnight Denver*

**Days 3/4/5:** Denver to Black Hills of South Dakota

Head north through Wyoming, perhaps stopping at **Fort Laramie National Historic Site**, the first garrisoned post in Wyoming, is located adjacent to the town of Fort Laramie near the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie rivers. It was the most important outpost on the major emigrant trails - the Oregon, Mormon and California. The fort was named in honor of Jacques La Ramie, a French fur trapper who worked in the tributaries of the North Platte in the early 1800s.

Continuing into South Dakota, definitely plan a stop at **Mount Rushmore National Memorial**, the 60-foot-high mountain carving of U.S. presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. The half-mile Presidential Trail around the mountain's base affords spectacular views of the memorial, while the Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center and Museum features exhibits, photographs and artifacts.

Also gaining international renown is the **Crazy Horse Memorial** currently under construction 17 miles from Mount Rushmore. The massive granite carving honoring the Native American warrior will stand 563 feet high and 641 feet long when complete; until then, visitors can view progress on the memorial while taking in the exhibits of the Indian Museum of North America, which houses some 20,000 authentic Native American artifacts.

The strikingly hued spires, pinnacles and geological formations of **Badlands National Park** provide a colorful backdrop for camping, hiking and bicycling amid the diverse wildlife that call the park home.

For a subterranean adventure, visit **Jewel Cave National Monument**. Located near Custer, Jewel Cave boasts the second-longest cave in the world, with nearly 150 miles of crystal-lined passages. Then travel on toward Hot Springs and nearby **Wind Cave National Park**, where rangers lead tours of some of the park's 132 miles of underground passageways, and antelope, bison and prairie dogs roam free aboveground in the park's 28,000-acre wildlife park.

*Overnight Hot Springs, Custer or Rapid City*

### **Days 6/7: Black Hills to Theodore Roosevelt National Park**

Just north of South Dakota's Black Hills is **Theodore Roosevelt National Park**. This national park memorializes the 26th President for his enduring contributions to the conservation of our national resources. Here the Badlands have been shaped by millions of years of wind, rain, erosion, fire and the meandering Little Missouri River. The area was described in 1864 by Gen. Alfred Sully as "hell with the fires out." The main access to the South Unit is through the historic town of Medora. The North Unit entrance is along U.S. Highway 85, and is approximately 70 miles distance by road from Medora.

#### *Overnight in Medora*

### **Day 8: Medora to Billings via Devils Tower**

Devils Tower National Monument was America's first national monument and reaches 364 meters into the western sky. **Devils Tower** is a favorite destination for rock climbers seeking to tackle its hundreds of parallel cracks, some of which reach up to 400 feet long. All climbers are required to register before (and check in after) at the climber registration office. The National Park Service also has implemented a "voluntary climbing closure" during the month of June out of respect for local Native American tribes, for whom Devils Tower is considered sacred.

To the northwest, **Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument** (formerly Custer Battlefield National Monument) serves as a symbol for both sides - the U.S. Cavalry and Native American Indians including the Sioux and Cheyenne, who fought on the banks of the Little Bighorn River.

#### *Overnight Billings*

### **Day 9: Billings to Big Hole National Monument**

The **Big Hole Battlefield National Monument**, near Wisdom, is the site of the 1877 battle between Colonel John Gibbon's troops and Chief Joseph's Nez Perce Indians. One of Montana's three units of the Nez Perce National Historic Park, the Big Hole Battlefield features a visitor center, museum and battlefield tours.

#### *Overnight Butte*

### **Days 10/11/12: Butte to Glacier National Park**

Glacier National Park, in the northwest corner of Montana, features the spectacular 88.5 KM Going-To-The-Sun Road and over 1126 KM of foot and horse trails. Nowhere is Montana's breathtaking beauty and abundant wildlife more apparent than in **Glacier National Park**. Known as the "Crown of the Continent," Glacier offers more than a million acres of towering mountain peaks, tumbling waterfalls, verdant forests and wildflower-strewn meadows. The spectacular scenery creates a picture-perfect backdrop for the park's resident wildlife: From grizzly bears and imposing elk to snow-white mountain goats and bighorn sheep, Glacier is the place to see a diverse array of species in their native habitat. Of course, the park's mountains, lakes and rivers also attract plenty of two-legged visitors, who revel in Glacier's opportunities for outdoor adventure. From hiking the park's 700 miles of trails to fishing, boating and camping, Glacier is as good as it gets.

#### *Overnight Glacier or Flathead Valley*

### **Days 13/14/15: Glacier to Yellowstone National Park**

The world's first national park is Yellowstone National Park, where over 10,000 thermal features and hundreds of animal species run wild. Blessed with an abundance of natural beauty - lakes, waterfalls and scenic mountain vistas to name just a few - Yellowstone is best known for the geysers, hot springs and mud pots that make the park one of the most active geothermal areas on the planet. The most famous of these features is the legendary **Old Faithful**: For more than a century, this extremely punctual geyser has erupted 18 to 21 times a day, shooting water columns more than 130 feet in the air in just 15 to 20 seconds and discharging up to 8,000 gallons of water. Be sure to visit the state-of-the-art **Old Faithful Visitor Education Center**, or stop by the **Old Faithful Inn**: A National Historic Landmark, this 1903 masterpiece of rustic American architecture has served as the design inspiration for many contemporary lodges and resorts.

#### *Overnight Yellowstone*

**Days 16/17:** Yellowstone to Grand Teton National Park

Equally impressive is **Grand Teton National Park**. Located to the south of Yellowstone, Grand Teton offers the wonders of Yellowstone on a more compact scale - the park is about one-sixth the size of its larger neighbor - set against the Grand Tetons, a 40-mile mountain range that is part of the famed **Rocky Mountains**. Popular with hikers and mountain climbers - the Teton range boasts several peaks that reach 12,000 feet or more - Grand Teton also attracts water sports enthusiasts, who enjoy fishing and boating on the park's lakes and rivers. Prefer to simply soak up the scenery? Try a scenic float trip down the **Snake River**, or enjoy a breakfast or dinner cruise on picturesque **Jackson Lake**.

*Overnight Grand Teton or Jackson Hole*

**Day 18:** Grand Teton to Kemmerer

Wyoming's newest national monument, Fossil Butte, was established on October 23, 1972. The monument contains 8,198 acres and protects a portion of the largest deposit of freshwater fish fossils in the world. The richest fossil fish deposits are found in multiple limestone layers, which lie some 100 feet below the top of the butte. The fossils represent several varieties of perch, as well as other freshwater genera and herring similar to those in modern oceans. A large, deep-bodied fish with many curious plates is common. Other fish such as paddlefish, garpike and stingray are also present.

*Overnight Kemmerer*

**Day 19:** Depart to Denver