September 2001 Volume 1 - Issue 1

USDA Forest Service

Caring for the Land and Serving People

Special Places

A Travel and Tourism Planner's Guide to Your National Forests

Message from the Chief

America's national forests and grasslands are the "golden crown" of outdoor settings where national and international visitors alike can enjoy a wide variety of premier adventure travel and ecotourism recreation activities. From Alaska's forests and glaciers, Idaho's wild rivers, Utah's and Colorado's ski mountains, New Mexico's Jemez Mountains heritage sites, to Caribbean tropical forests, I invite you to visit your national forests for outdoor fun and experiences of a lifetime.

Dale N. Bosworth

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- *Grassroots Ecotourism—Ozark Ecotours*

Welcome to Our Special Places–Sustainable Tourism, the Leave No Trace Partnership

Welcome to our Special Places promotion of great places to "VISIT US" in national forest and grassland destinations. We are launching this newsletter as a new partnership to share information about our little known treasures and build greater awareness among travel and tourism professionals about what we have to offer and what programs exist to host use of these spectacular public lands. The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, would like to have the travel and tourism industry join us in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable recreation on the land. As visitors leave the beaten track and venture off from our developed facilities, we have adopted a major tool for educating tourists and recreational users on ways to conserve our public lands. This tool is Leave No Trace, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) education program that unites four Federal land management agencies—the Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—with manufacturers, outdoor retailers, user groups, educators, and individuals who share a commitment to maintaining and protecting our public lands for future enjoyment. Sustainable tourism starts with the individual visitor, backpacker, or tour operator.

Leave No Trace, Inc., is a national and international program designed to assist visitors with their decisions when they travel and camp on America's public lands. The program strives to educate visitors about the nature of their recreational impacts, as well as techniques to prevent and minimize such impacts. Leave No Trace is best understood as an educational and ethi-

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Outdoor Recreation Links to the World Wide Web

http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation (recreation information on all forests and grasslands)
http://www.recreation.gov (interagency recreation activities information for Federal land)
http://www.reserveusa.com (National Recreation Reservation Service)

The Greatest Snow on Earth!

Skiers find the "greatest snow on Earth" at the Snowbasin Ski Resort, which is borne out by its selection as the site for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games signature events—the downhill and super g. In addition to an annual 400 inches of fluffy, powdery snow, the resort boasts 3,200 acres of skiable terrain serviced by eight lifts and a 2,900-foot vertical drop. Snowbasin Ski Resort is located on the Ogden Ranger District of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

By February 2002, the resort will offer two new gondolas and a high-speed quad chairlift, a state-of-the-art snowmaking system, and four new day-lodges. A new access road to the resort places Snowbasin only 40 miles from Salt Lake City International Airport.

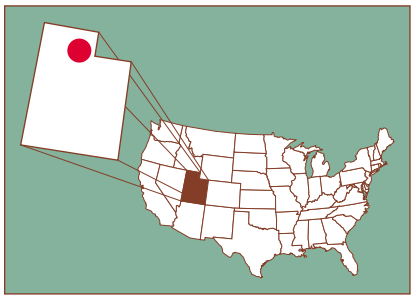
The Snowbasin area also offers marked and groomed trails and many forest roads for cross-country skiing. A snowmobile parking area on Highway 39 is available during the winter months, and scenic Pineview Reservoir offers a number of excellent locations for ice fishing.

The Snowbasin area is a great place to visit in the summer, with many trails for hiking, biking, all-terrain vehicle riding, motorcycling, and horseback riding. Campgrounds abound, with many sites on a first-come, first-serve basis. Reservations are available for single family and group picnic and camping sites through the toll-free National Forest Reservation System at (877) 444-6777. Tourists can also motorboat, sail, windsurf, jet-ski, swim, fish, water-ski, sunbathe, camp, and picnic at the Pineview Reservoir. Hunting and wildlife viewing are also popular throughout the forest.

Several scenic byways provide outstanding views in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. The Ogden River Scenic Byway follows State Route 39 from Ogden, UT, to the eastern forest boundary. Visitors journeying up this narrow canyon can enjoy alpine beauty, excellent fishing, access to Pineview Reservoir, and spectacular fall colors. Driving the 44-mile byway requires approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Portions of the route are closed in the winter, depending on snowfall.

Visitors shouldn't miss the drive along the popular Mirror Lake Scenic Byway, State Route 150. The byway begins in Kamas, UT, and passes through the national forest for 44 miles, ending in Evanston, WY. The Mirror Lake area offers campgrounds and picnic areas, overlooks, interpretive and wildlife viewing sites, 20 trailheads, fishing sites, 37 nonmotorized trails, 3 all-terrain vehicle trail systems, and winter parking areas along this scenic byway. The byway is groomed for snowmobiling in the winter by the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation.

For more information on the Ogden River Scenic Byway, contact the Ogden Ranger District at (801) 625-5112. For information on the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway, contact the Kamas Ranger District at (435) 783-4338 or Evanston Ranger District at (307) 789-3194. Or visit the following Web sites:
http://www.snowbasin.com
http://www.saltlake2002.com
http://www.fs.fed.us/wcnf/index.html
http://www.publiclands.org



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al vehicle hookups are provided or at local hotels and travel to the site each day. The projects vary in length from 2 days to 2 weeks or even longer. The level of accessibility ranges from very difficult to easy, depending on the activity and location of the project.

The Passport in Time Clearinghouse can answer questions about accessibility or physical requirements for any project. Just call (800) 281-9176 (voice, TTY) or (520) 722-2716 (local Tucson number) or send an e-mail to pit@sricrm.com.

To find out more about the program and projects, check the Web site at http://www.passportintime.com. Projects are also announced in the PIT Traveler, published in March and September. The newsletter is free; just contact the PIT Clearinghouse to receive a copy or to be added to the mailing list.

Shasta Cascade Wonderland

President Teddy Roosevelt knew what he was doing when he set aside national forests like the Shasta and Trinity in the early 1900s. Scenic deep canyons and thrilling river rapids, towering granite peaks and cliffs, and numerous lakes provide a wonderland of outdoor adventure for groups and individual travelers alike. Covering an area roughly the size of Ohio, the Shasta Cascade region contains seven national forests, numerous national and State parks, the Trinity Alps Wilderness, and the California Cascade Range, with its huge volcanic peaks—Mts. Shasta and Lassen.

Over 1,400 miles of trails meander through Shasta-Trinity National Forest under a canopy of cedar trees, ponderosa pine, Pacific dogwood, black cottonwood, and Pacific yews. The Pacific Crest Trail cuts across the forest for 154 miles, with stunning views in all directions. Shasta-Trinity National Forest is home to over 400 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Hundreds of miles of clear, cold-running streams offer opportunities to catch native rainbow trout, steelhead trout, and silver salmon.

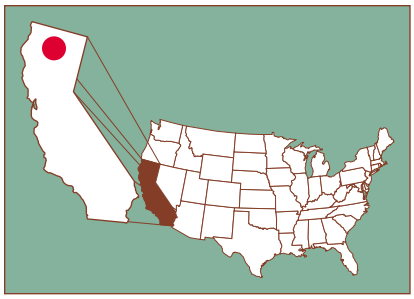
For drivers looking to glimpse the area's grandeur through a windshield, the Trinity Scenic Byway along State Highway 3 offers one of the most beautiful drives in northern California. Self-guided auto tour information is available at the local offices and visitor center. Bicyclists touring along the 50-mile loop circling Mount Shasta can ride alongside glaciers and lava flows.

Outdoor recreation facilities range from primitive to modern. At Mount Shasta Board and Ski Park, snowboarders and skiers can cascade down sculpted terrain like quarter pipes, tabletops, rolls, and jumps. Three triple chair lifts take visitors to the top; 31 trails get them back down. The Shasta and Trinity Units of the National Recreation Area offer some of the best house boating and fishing available in the West. Over 100 miles of the rivers in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest have been designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, providing unique year-around whitewater boating opportunities. Within the boundaries of the national forest, you'll find five wilderness areas. From mountain climbing to whitewater boating, spelunking to gold panning, skiing to just sightseeing, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest has something for everyone.

Tour buses are well accommodated throughout Shasta-Trinity, and fee information is available upon request. Special-use fee arrangements for large groups can be made through the Forest Service. For more information on areas within the national forest boundaries, contact the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Supervisor's Office at (530) 244-2978.

For more information on area commercial guides authorized to provide tours and equipment rentals, visit the following Web site: http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/shastatrinity/nra/links.html.

Information for tour planning is available through the Shasta-Cascade Wonderland Association, 1699 Hwy 273, Anderson, CA 96007. Visit the Web site: http://www.shastacascade.org/ or call Karen Whittaker, Tourism Development Manager, at (530) 365-7500.



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cal program, not as a set of rules and regulations. Clearly, all use has impacts. The goal is to leave the landscape as charming and healthy as we found it when bringing guests into forest and grassland landscapes. The mission of Leave No Trace is to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. It is an educational program about discovering, enjoying, and maintaining the great outdoors for ourselves; our children; and the unique communities of peoples, plants, and animals that inhabit these lands. The message has been tailored for multiple uses and ecosystems. The Leave No Trace, Inc., principles have been adapted for desert ecosystems, tropical rain forests, deciduous forests, caves, coastal environments, and other locations. The skills and ethics booklet series is organized by regions that cover all of North America. Check for your region on the Web site: http://www.lnt.org.

El Yunque–America's Only Tropical Rainforest

If you're looking for an exotic tour location, try the Caribbean National Forest in Puerto Rico. Set aside by the Spanish Crown in 1876 while Puerto Rico was still ruled from Madrid, it is one of the oldest protected areas in the Western Hemisphere. As a result, the forest looks much as it did when Christopher Columbus visited Puerto Rico 500 years ago. Under a damp canopy created by 1,000-year-old trees and in company of giant ferns, bromeliads, and rare orchids, tourists find it difficult to remember they are still in the United States. With its 200 inches of rain per year and more than 1,000 species of plants, this is as accessible and convenient as tropical rain forests get—no passport, vaccinations, or complex travel plans are required for U.S. citizens to visit.

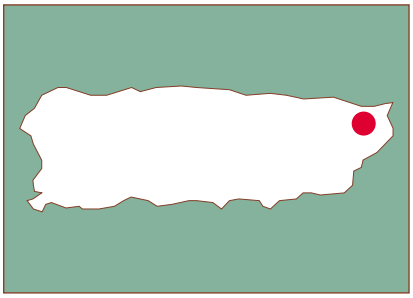
The Caribbean National Forest is located about 25 miles east of San Juan. "El Yunque," as it is locally called, is one of the most popular recreation sites in Puerto Rico. Almost a million tourists visit this highly accessible tropical rain forest each year. El Yunque is the largest remnant of original forest that covered virtually the entire island before 85 percent of Puerto Rico was cleared for agriculture.

Islanders typically visit the forest in the hot summer months of July and August. Most off-island visitors come during the winter and early spring months. Many cruise ship passengers tour into the heart of the forest. Low-visitation times are mid-April through mid-June and September through October. Whatever time of year you visit, the scenic roadways, picnic areas, trails, and the El Portal Rainforest Center will welcome you.

You can learn about the forest and its relationship with other tropical rain forests in the world at the El Portal Rainforest Center. Its unique architecture, spectacular natural setting, exhibits and interactive displays, and helpful interpretive personnel make it a favorite starting point for your visit. A new nature trail starts just outside of the center. The theater's bilingual film gives insight into hidden corners of El Yunque. The gift shop offers a unique selection of books, local arts and crafts, videos, educational items, and souvenirs. For more information call (787) 888-1810.

Forest Adventure Tours offer the opportunity to explore El Yunque rain forest trails with a guide. For information and reservations call (787) 888-1880. If visiting the forest during hurricane season (from June 1st to November 30th), check for local weather broadcasts: (787) 253-7877.

For more information, visit the following Web sites:
http://www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/caribbean/
http://www.gorp.com/gorp/resource/US_National_Forest/pr_carib.HTM
http://www.solboricua.com/elyunque/



NatureWatching on National Forests

The NatureWatch program provides opportunities for people to experience wildlife, fish, and flowers in their natural settings; promotes recreational viewing opportunities; facilitates learning about the environment; and promotes conservation efforts and wise use of natural resources. The NatureWatch program is administered by the Forest Service Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plant Program in cooperation with program sponsors and thousands of partnerships around the country.

Incorporate NatureWatch activities into your tours! For more information on NatureWatch auto tours, site locations, and accessible sites, check the Web site at http://www.fs.fed.us/outdoors/naturewatch/default.htm or call (414) 297-3257.

The Great Lakes of Colorado

The Arapaho National Recreation Area (ANRA) is a scenic water wonderland in the upper reaches of the Colorado River Valley. Adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park, it is about a 2-hour drive from Denver, CO. Lake Granby, Shadow Mountain Lake, Monarch Lake, Willow Creek Reservoir, and Meadow Creek Reservoir are nestled within the ANRA. Adjacent to the ANRA, Grand Lake, with its deep, clear blue waters, is the largest natural lake in Colorado. Together, the lakes and reservoirs are often referred to as the Great Lakes of Colorado.

At an elevation ranging from 8,200 to 11,000 feet, the area offers cool summers and cold, snowy winters. Facilities usually open around May 20 and offer full service until shortly after Labor Day, subject to the weather.

Camping, picnic, and boating facilities are available at most of the lakes. Specific lake characteristics include:

- Lake Granby—the second largest body of water in Colorado—offers power and sail boating, water skiing, wind surfing, and fishing on its 7,256 acres.
- Monarch Lake supports high-quality nonmotorized recreation experiences on its 150 acres.
- Shadow Mountain is a shallow reservoir connected by a canal to Grand Lake, allowing boat passage between the two.
- Willow Creek Reservoir—tucked into the Willow Creek Valley—is oriented toward fishing and canoeing and allows powerboats restricted to a “no wake” speed on its 750 acres.
- Meadow Creek Reservoir—located in the most remote part of the ANRA—is nearly 10,000 feet in elevation and allows nonmotorized watercraft on its 125 acres.

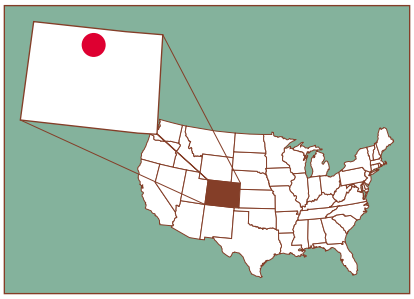
Lodging accommodations are available at both the recreation lakes and in the nearby towns of Lake Granby and Grand Lake. For more information, contact the Granby Chamber of Commerce at (970) 887-2311 or Grand Lake Chamber at (970) 627-3402.

The west entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park along Highway 34 is located just 1.5 miles north of the ANRA. Those visiting the Rocky Mountain National Park should complete their trip with a visit to the scenic lakes of the ANRA. Tour groups will enjoy a wide variety of watersports on these Great Lakes of Colorado. Many of the marinas rent boats of all kinds. Boat-in camping is popular along the northeast shores of Lake Granby. Hiking is also popular, with portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail in the ANRA. Horseback trips are another option on many trails. Rental stables are available in the town of Grand Lake. Mountain biking for all skill levels is popular around Meadow Creek Reservoir and in areas surrounding the ANRA. Bikes are rented in the towns of Grand Lake, Granby, and Winter Park. Backcountry camping is permitted in the ANRA, with access to the Continental Divide.

Cutthroat Bay Group Camp can accommodate up to 2 groups of 50 people in a rustic setting. Reservations are required. Point Park picnic area and fishing pier have facilities that are accessible to all. Reservations can be made through the National Recreation Reservation System at (877) 444-6777. Daily fees are charged for use of the campgrounds.

There is an entrance fee of $5 per day or $10 per weekend (3 days). Golden Eagle, Age, and Access Passports are accepted for admission.

For information on organizing tours in the Arapaho National Recreation Area, contact Bill Dunkelberger, Area Manager, at (970) 887-4127, or contact the Sulphur Ranger District, Arapaho National Forest, 9 Ten Mile Drive, P.O. Box 10, Granby, CO 80446, (970) 887-4100. For trip planning on the Web, use http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf/srd/vvc/camping/arapaho.htm.



America's Best-Known Volcano

Mount St. Helens rumbled to life in March 1980. For 2 months, earthquakes and steam explosions rattled the mountain and the nerves of Northwest residents. Then, on May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted. The entire north face of the volcano collapsed in the largest recorded landslide in history. A tremendous lateral blast swept over ridges, toppling 230 square miles of forest like matchsticks. The eruption lasted 9 hours, turning a lush, forested landscape into a stark, gray moonscape.

Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument was created in 1982 for research, recreation, and education. Within the monument, the environment is left to respond and recover naturally. Scientists and visitors follow the changes in the landscape and volcano, and watch as vegetation and wildlife return to the blast zone.

No where else in the country can you view such comprehensive information on volcanic history as at Mount St. Helens. A full master plan of roads, viewpoints, visitor centers, and recreational facilities have been developed in the monument to encourage visitors to explore and learn about this unique volcanic landscape. Mount St. Helens offers picnicking, camping, and trails of all lengths and levels of challenge. Each year thousands of climbers make the journey to the crater rim. In addition to self-guided opportunities, Forest Service interpreters lead many activities including guided walks and amphitheater talks.

On State Route 504, Mount St. Helens and Coldwater Ridge Visitor Centers are open year-round and Johnston Ridge Observatory is open from spring to fall. Windy Ridge Viewpoint and other sites along Forest Road 99 are generally open from Memorial Day until snow closes the roads. Most trails are accessible from June through October, although some lower elevation trails can be hiked all year.

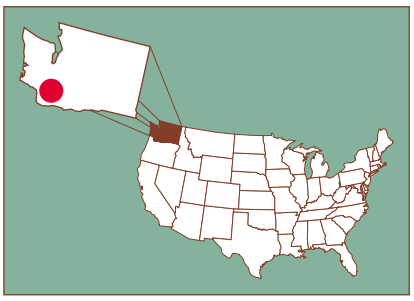
Winter at Mount St. Helens is magical. Many cross-country ski and snowmobile trails await winter tourists. Snow enthusiasts gather at Marble Mountain, Cougar, and Wakepish Sno-Parks, while those seeking shelter from the winter weather visit Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center, lingering to enjoy a cup of hot cocoa in the restaurant.

Tour and school groups are welcome at the monument and are encouraged to schedule visits in advance. Fees are charged at the Monument Visitor Centers, Ape Cave, and Windy Ridge, as well as for climbing the volcano. Golden Eagle, Age, and Access Passports are valid. For information on tours and passes, contact any of the following numbers:

Mount St. Helens Visitor Center:
(360) 274-2100
Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center:
(360) 274-2131
Johnston Ridge Observatory:
(360) 274-2140
Monument Headquarters:
(360) 247-3900

Lodging, food, gas, and other services are located in nearby communities. For information on local offerings and tour support, contact the following attractions and Chambers of Commerce, or visit the monument Web site at http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm.

Hoffstadt Bluffs Visitor Center
(Cowlitz County): (360) 274-7750
Forest Learning Center
(Weyerhaeuser Co.):
(360) 414-3439
Castle Rock: (360) 274-6603
Kelso/Longview: (360) 577-8058
Centralia/Chehalis: (360) 748-8885
Woodland: (360) 225-9552
Stevenson: (509) 427-8911



Discovery in Southeast Alaska

Every good tour operator knows that Alaska is the land of superlatives—whether it is about size, temperature, variety, or uniqueness. The Tongass National Forest and the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center give you a strong sense of this last frontier.

The Tongass is America's largest national forest, with almost 17 million acres. It has some of the smallest and largest critters and plants—from the shrew to the brown bear, from tiny bog orchids to towering spruce. The national forest encompasses about 2,000 islands, over 5,000 glaciers, and 33,000 miles of coastline. In short, it's a place to inspire the soul!

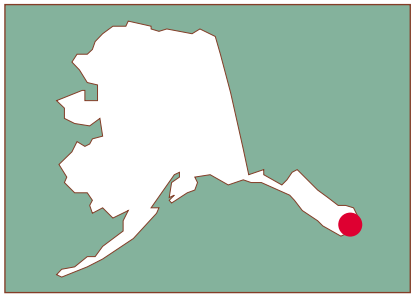
During the summer months, thousands of visitors travel the ferries of southeast Alaska. The Tongass National Forest has interpreters on board the ships 7 days a week from June 1st through Labor Day to bring alive the wonders of Alaska. One of four Alaska Public Lands Information Centers located around the State, the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center is a key visitor resource. It is located in downtown Ketchikan, just 2 short blocks from the cruise ship dock and 2.5 miles from the ferry terminal.

As tourists enter the spacious lobby, they're surrounded by authentic red cedar totem poles that represent the three tribes of Southeast Alaska: the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian. An information desk, center store, trip planning room, movie, and series of world-class exhibits await perusal. Interpreters are available to answer questions and offer programs. For many visitors, the first stop after the lobby is to view *Mystical Southeast Alaska*, an award-winning 14-minute program that combines slides, video, and original music in an orientation program on southeast Alaska. From the theater, visitors go to nearby exhibits, which highlight the ecosystems, natural resources, and people of southeast Alaska. The trip planning room is designed like a wilderness lodge, where visitors can plan travels to any of the six geographic regions of Alaska. Before going back into the lobby, many people stop at the Alaska Natural History Association (ANHA) Bookstore, which features books, videos, maps, educational resources, and gift items that highlight topics featured in the center.

If you are interested in taking groups into this remarkable area, contact the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center and start them out right!

Southeast Alaska Discovery Center
50 Main Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901
E-mail:
r10_ketchikan_Alaska_Info@fs.fed.us
Phone: (907) 228-6220
TDD: (907) 228-6237
Fax: (907) 228-6234

Web sites:
http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/discoverycenter/index.html
http://www.nps.gov/aplic/center/index.html



Lewis and Clark

If you're looking for a theme tour of westward expansion, Native American history, and the indomitable spirit of human discovery, this is the place! The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail brings to life the experiences of the great expedition in the early 19th century to discover a "Northwest Passage" from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

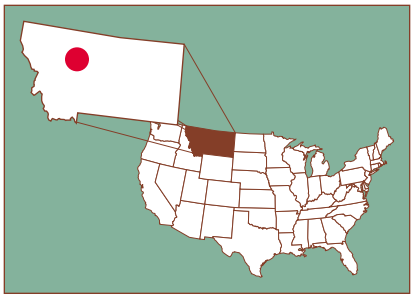
Located on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River in Montana's Giant Springs Heritage State Park, the 25,000-square-foot interpretive center includes a huge exhibit hall, a 158-seat theater, a hands-on education room, and a retail store. Easy trails invite visitors down to the river.

Exhibits chronicle the 1804 to 1806 journey of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, with a focus on their interactions with the Plains Indians. A two-story diorama portrays a portage around the great falls of the Missouri River, and two-story windows overlook the river. The theater features a 30-minute introductory film. Native plants can be viewed by traveling on an outdoor trail. At the living history area along the banks of the Missouri River, demonstrations of expedition daily life and native cultures occur during the summer.

The center is gearing up for the 4-year commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial from 2003 to 2006. A variety of workshops and classes are offered, lasting from a 1/2-day to 3-day sessions and covering topics from event planning to the 19th century Indian material culture. Each workshop requires advance registration and a small fee. Attendance is limited. The interpretive center also offers regularly scheduled interpretive programs on expedition-related topics such as medicine, food, diplomacy, and wildlife, as well as current-interest demonstrations on portaging, pitching a teepee, plant study, and various orientation and outdoor skills. Call for current program listings.

Entry prices range from $5 for adults, to $4 for seniors and students, to $2 for youth (6 to 17 years). Children age 5 and under enter free. Groups with more than 20 paying adults may arrange for a discount. Educational tours are also offered during the school year. For more information or to make a group reservation, call the interpretive center at (406) 727-8733. Interpretive tours are offered daily during the spring, summer, and fall. The center is fully accessible to individuals with disabilities and also offers parking for tour buses.

For further information, contact the center at: P.O. Box 1806, Great Falls, MT 59403-1806, or visit the Lewis and Clark Web site at http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lewisclark.lcic.htm. Other Web sites with information about Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and their expeditions include:
http://bicentennial@lewisandclark200
http://www.lewis-clark.org
http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark



From Relics to Rentals: Recycled Forest Service Cabins for Rent!

Imagine yourself as the sole smoke spotter for 100,000 acres of land, alone on a mountaintop while summer lightning flashes in dizzying bolts all about you. Or, perhaps you are the Lone Ranger charged with riding and protecting a whole mountain range with your trusted steed as your only companion. Relive the drama of our early forest rangers as you enjoy our many restored authentic cabins and lookouts on national forests and wilderness areas.

In these modern times of plugged-in communication, these sites are no longer necessary for managing the land. Because the sites are too valuable and close to the heart to destroy, a public rental program was developed to protect and maintain them, and to offer the experience of staying in the wild in the historic cabins and lookouts of early rangers.

There are now over 400 Forest Service-maintained structures available for daily or weekly rental around the country. Most can be reached only by foot, ski, snowmobile, or horseback. "Off the beaten track" definitely applies here! From administrative cabins still used today in Alaska, to quasi-luxury cabins with private springs in Florida, the great outdoors of national forest cabins awaits you. Check out the following Web sites for phone numbers or to make online reservations for these one-of-a-kind treasures:

http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/permits/cabinrentals.htm
http://www.reserveusa.com/cabins/index.html
http://www.camprrm.com/rental_cabins.htm

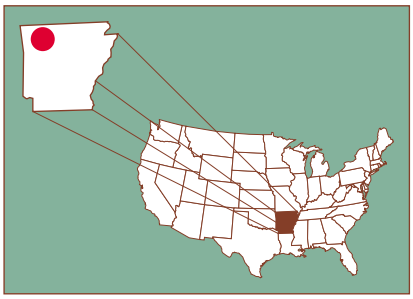
Grassroots Ecotourism: Ozark Ecotours

If you are planning a trip to the Ozarks of Arkansas and are looking for a unique, locally based, authentic ecotourism experience in the heartland of America, then you must try Ozark Ecotours. Located in the landscapes around Jasper, AR, these tours were developed to provide highly interactive educational tours into the natural and cultural history of the Ozark Mountains. Each tour is designed to provide tourists with ecological and cultural interpretations that support and protect the Newton County natural resources and cultural heritage and the Ozark Mountain culture. Some tours may explore remote natural springs and waterfalls, native history sites, or seldom known native plants. Each has a special theme and is tailored for high interaction with the group participants. As an expert in birding, history, native lore, or hidden gems of the forest, each local guide is well versed in interpretation techniques and how to keep visitors close to the real experience of the land and culture they are traveling through. These tours are very limited and special opportunities to help support the preservation of Ozark culture and to enjoy a wonderful, intimate experience in these natural landscapes.

Tours can be arranged for groups of 6 to 12 people as custom tours. They are ideally suited for small van tours or individual groups looking for that unique tourism experience. The entire Ozark Ecotours effort is community driven and is a great example of truly authentic ecotourism principles set into action.

To find out more information on prescheduled tours or how to book a custom tour, contact:

Ozark Ecotours, P.O. Box 513, Jasper, AR 72641-0513
Voice: (870) 446-5898
FAX: (870) 446-2701
Toll Free: (877) 622-5901
Web site:
http://www.ozarkecotours.com



Hidden Gems: Scenic Wonders–Smaller Crowds

These "lesser known" national treasures of the National Forest System possess great facilities for both group tours and smaller parties that are looking for true backcountry Americana locations, "far from the madding crowds."

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

On the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (NRA) straddles the Snake River as it winds its way down the boundary between Idaho and Oregon. In Hells Canyon one can find some of the most rugged, spectacular wildlands on Earth—including, at 7,800 feet (2,800 meters), the deepest gorge in North America and the wildest whitewater stretch of the Snake River. The Hells Canyon Wilderness encompasses nearly one-third of the NRA. Hells Canyon State Scenic Byway (a newly designated All-American Road) passes through part of the canyon, offering breathtaking vistas. Hells Canyon NRA includes a diversity of plant and animal communities, over 1 million acres of pristine land, archaeological sites of irreplaceable value, scenic beauty, and recreational opportunities galore.

Drawn by relatively mild winters, lush forage, and plentiful wildlife, Chief Joseph's band of Nez Perce Indians

lived in Hells Canyon. Today, the walls of the canyon are like a museum, displaying evidence of the Indians' early settlement in pictographs and petroglyphs.

Hunters, anglers, and casual observers appreciate the variety and abundance of fish and wildlife. Scenic vistas abound; countless undeveloped sites await discovery. If you are seeking a more developed setting, choose from 900 miles of constructed hiking trails and 25 designated camping areas. Whether you seek a wilderness hike or a scenic drive, a rafting thrill or tranquil water, a campsite away from civilization or one in a bustling campground, Hells Canyon NRA has plenty to discover!

This year Hells Canyon NRA celebrates its 25th anniversary, as well as the designation of the Hells Canyon State Scenic Byway as an "All American Road." Make your plans now to join in the celebrations!

Please note you will need a "Northwest Forest Pass" when parking

at several trailheads serving the Hells Canyon NRA on the Oregon side. They may be purchased from Forest Service offices or local vendors for $5 per day. Many of the roads leading to Wilderness trailheads and viewpoints are single lane and suitable for low-speed use only. Call (541) 426-4978 for road conditions before entering.

For group information, visit the Web site: http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/feedemo/welcome.html or contact the Hells Canyon NRA.

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area
88401 Hwy. 82
Enterprise, OR 97828
(541) 426-4978

Satellite offices are located at Clarkston, WA: (509) 758-0616, and Riggins, ID: (208) 628-3916.

For additional trip planning information, contact the Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center at (541) 426-5546 or TDD (541) 426-5609.

The following Web sites offer information about recreational activities and outfitter/guide services:
http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/w-w/rog/recrep/recrep_hcnra.htm
http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/w-w/hcnra.htm
http://www.gorp.com/gorp/resource/us_wilderness_area/or_hells.htm
http://www.tcfn.org/tctour/parks/HellsCanyonNRA.html
http://www.ohwy.com/id/h/hellcnra.htm

Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed and Toadstool Geologic Park

A visit to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed is perfect for the adventuresome small group. Here you can glimpse a current archeological excavation in progress. Interpretive materials and guided tours explain why this is such an important discovery and encourage visitors to develop their own theories about what happened to the bison. The site is located in the shadow of Nebraska's picturesque Pine Ridge, overlooking this unique site within the Oglala and Buffalo Gap National Grasslands. Here you can still imagine how dinosaurs roamed the land and see the prairie landscapes that early settlers found when they carved pathways to a new life in the late 1800s.

Hours:
Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m : May 15 - September 30

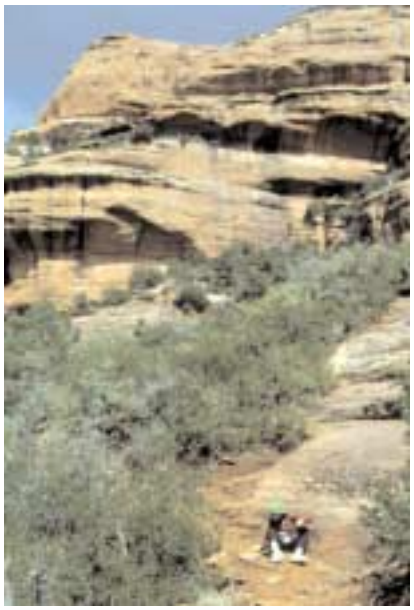
Excavation Session Dates:
Session 1: May 29 - June 7
Session 2: June 12 - 21
Session 3: June 26 - July 5
Session 4: July 10 – 19

Fees:
Adult: $3
Children 6-12: $1
Under 6: Free
Group rates and tours are available by calling (308) 432-0300 (off season) and (308) 665-3900
when the facility is open.

Near Crawford, Nebraska, it's only a few miles to the moonscape of Toadstool Geologic Park. Toadstool Geologic Park is noted for unusual geologic formations and scientifically valuable fossil deposits. It also contains the longest known mammal trackway of the Oligocene epoch. This 1-mile-plus trackway is featured in a new interpretive kiosk and a self-guided trail brochure. A 1-mile-loop trail from the campground highlights many examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations. A reconstructed sod house provides a look into the past when homesteaders on the prairie used the only abundant building material available. A $5 camping fee or a $3 per vehicle day-use fee is charged from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

For information, check http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska/hudsonmeng.html.

Sedona's Red Rock Country



The magnificence of Red Rock Country has been 330 million years in the making. Traveling from the Mogollon Rim high on the Colorado Plateau to the depths of Oak Creek Canyon, you pass through a rich geologic record, similar to that of the upper Grand Canyon. Like pages in a great book, horizontal layers of rock tell stories of ancient oceans and swamps, floodplains, vast deserts of sand, and violent volcanic eruptions.

The splendor of Red Rock Country is obvious even through the windshield of a quickly moving vehicle. Unified by Oak Creek—the vital riparian link between the Mogollon Rim and the Verde Valley—this splendid and unique landscape is a geologic wonder and a living crossroads between time and space. The stream is the lifeblood of the area, and the magnet that draws regional visitors from the desert valleys to the cooler environment of the Red Rocks. People have come to this area for more than 10,000 years. Nestled in Red Rock Canyons are outstanding rock art sites, impressive pueblos, cliff dwellings, and other remains of prehistoric cultures that once inhabited the area.

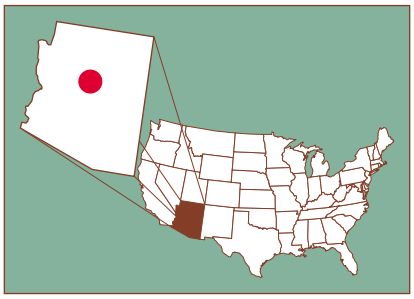
Red Rock Country boasts three federally designated wilderness areas, marked by colorful cliffs and soaring pinnacles, dry desert, thick pinyon-juniper forests, and lush riparian areas. With nearly 200 miles of trails, camping and hiking is allowed in all wilderness areas. Parking is very limited at most trailheads; buses are not recommended.

Within a short drive of Sedona, AZ, several Forest Service campgrounds and picnic areas provide recreational opportunities for groups and family campers. Most campsites and all picnic sites are available on a "first-come, first-served" basis. Campground reservations are accepted at some locations. Campgrounds fill up early, so calling ahead is recommended. Dispersed camping outside of campgrounds is prohibited in much of Red Rock Country.

Many driving routes are "must see" drives, including Highway 89A into Oak Creek Canyon from Flagstaff, Highway 89A to Sedona from Cottonwood, and Highway 179 to Sedona from I-17. All routes feature spectacular views of Red Rock Country. Buses are welcome on these scenic routes.

Offering comprehensive information and education services, five visitor centers welcome tourists to the Red Rock Country. A Red Rock Pass is required for parking in the national forest.

For more information call the ranger station at (520) 282-4119, or contact Coconino National Forest, Sedona Ranger District, P.O. Box 300, 250 Brewer Road, Sedona, AZ 86339. For complete trip planning assistance, check the following Web site: http://www.redrockcountry.org



Blanchard Springs Caverns

Come experience a "living" cave where glistening stalactites, stalagmites, columns, and flowstones slowly form and change—the result of minerals deposited by dripping water. Visitors can stroll through large, beautifully lighted rooms with paved trails. For over 25 years, spectacular cave formations have drawn visitors to Blanchard Springs Caverns. Located on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, the caverns offer a close-up view of a little known subterranean world.

Blanchard is a three-level system, but only two levels of the caverns are open for guided tours. Open year-round, the Dripstone Trail Tour travels about a half-mile through huge rooms and sparkling formations. It is accessible to people with strollers and, with assistance, individuals in wheelchairs.

Although rates to tour the cave are subject to change, they range from $5 to $9 per person, with discounts available for Golden Age or Golden Access Passports. Discounts are also available for groups of 10 or more when reservations are made in advance. Call (888) 757-2246 between 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. (c.s.t.) for current rates. Guided tours are available, some with assistance by agency tour staff.

The visitor center is open from 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and is fully accessible.

RV campers will enjoy Blanchard Campground, with 32 sites, and the Gunner Pool Campground, with 27 sites.

Blanchard Springs Caverns and recreation areas are located 15 miles northwest of Mountain View, AR.

For information or tour reservations, contact:

USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 1279, Mountain View, AR 72560, (870) 757-2211, or toll-free (888) 757-2246.

For Web site information, visit http://www.fs.fed.us/oonf/ozark/recreation/bsc_main.htm.

Heritage Sites: It's About Time!

National forests are not just about natural vistas and wonderful recreation sites, they also shelter the stories of our past. Ancient pueblos, ceremonial kivas, totem poles, ancient villages, obsidian quarries, ghost towns, gold mines, Basque tree carvings, homesteads, lookouts, and lighthouses are all part of our historic landscape. Uncovering their stories can be quite an experience. The Forest Service offers a number of ways to experience this history, from staying in a historic lookout or cabin, to volunteering to help agency archaeologists, to visiting sites and learning preservation skills from the Forest Service staff of heritage professionals.

Heritage Expeditions

Heritage Expeditions are educational tour programs about historic and prehistoric sites on national forests. Some even offer training courses designed to teach traditional skills. Upcoming Heritage Expeditions include a hiking and camping trek along Oregon's historic Santiam Wagon Road; Horsemanship & Packing clinics in Montana; and a bus and hiking tour in northern California, which takes you

by prehistoric rock art, stone tool quarries, Indian battlefields, and Basque Sheepherders' carved tree art.

Want to learn how to stabilize historic buildings? How about cooking in a Dutch oven? Driving a team of mules? It's all waiting for you in Heritage Expeditions! Fees vary according to the type and length of the expedition. A 1-day course on Dutch Oven Cooking is $90, you get to take home the cookbook and 10-inch dutch oven! The 5-day hiking and camping trek along the Santiam Wagon Road is $375.

For more information about Heritage Expeditions and current offerings, call (530) 233-8730 or visit the Web site: http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/heritage/expeditions.shtml.

Passport in Time

Passport in Time is a volunteer program that invites the public to work alongside Forest Service archaeologists and share in the thrill of discovery through archaeological and historical research. It is better suited to the individual traveler who wants a very "hands on" educational vacation.

Adventurous Passport in Time volunteers have helped stabilize ancient cliff dwellings in New Mexico, excavate a 10,000-year-old village site in Minnesota, restore a historic lookout tower in Oregon, clean vandalized rock art in Colorado, survey for sites in the rugged Montana wilderness, and excavate a 19th-century Chinese mining site in Hell's Canyon, ID.

Because Passport in Time is a volunteer program, there is no fee to participate. The program now includes sites on 117 national forests in 36 States. Many projects involve backcountry camping where volunteers are responsible for their own food and gear. Others offer, often for a small fee, meals prepared by a "camp cook." Volunteers may stay at campsites where recreation-

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