

Participating in the Passport to Your National Parks Program

The *Passport to Your National Parks* program is a cooperative venture managed by Eastern National Parks and Monuments Association. The Association provides educational products and services to National Parks and other public trust organizations. Operating retail outlets in National Parks and related organizations, the association offers books, maps, prints and other educational items to the public. Eastern National also awards grants to NPS-affiliated areas, including national heritage areas. Since their founding in 1947, they have donated over \$65 million to the National Park Service. For more information, visit <http://www.eparks.com>.

The Passport is a 104-page booklet that gives a regional overview of the National Park System and provides blocks to be stamped at Park facilities. Each stamp is a simple round rubber stamp with the locator name around the edge and a changeable date stamp in the center. Visitors help themselves to a free stamp at the visitor centers or facility to document where they were and when they traveled. The ink colors vary by region. Eastern National also offers collectable colored stamps to stick in the passport.

National heritage areas are eligible to order passport cancellation stamps from Eastern National. The first stamp is free; additional stamps cost \$22.75 a piece. Ink pads and ink bottles are free. More information and a stamp order form can be obtained by contacting Rachel Shumsky at Eastern National 215 283-6900 ex. 158. National Heritage Areas can also obtain passports to sell in their stores by calling the Eastern National Warehouse at 877-NAT-PARK.

A number of national heritage areas already participate in the passport program, including, as of April 2006, the following heritage areas (number of sites where stamps are provided indicated in parentheses):

- Blackstone River Valley NHC -- RI and MA (1)
- Cane River NHA – LA (3)
- Delaware and Lehigh NHC – PA (1)
- Erie Canalway NHC – NY (6)
- Essex NHA – MA (10)
- Illinois & Michigan NHC – IL (8)
- MotorCities NHA – MI (9)
- National Coal HA – WV (4)
- Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley NHC -- CT and MA (3)
- Rivers of Steel NHA – PA (1)
- Schuylkill River NHA – PA (3)
- Silos & Smokestacks NHA – Iowa (17)
- Wheeling NHA – WV (2)

Heritage areas provide their stamps at visitor centers, partner facilities, and offices. Some heritage areas provide slightly different stamps at each site and a special passport insert to encourage collectors to visit all of the sites. Visit <http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/INFO/passport.htm> for a list of cancellation stamp locations.

The passport program has an enthusiastic following. Passionate stamp collectors nationwide attend annual conventions and participate in competitions to collect the most stamps. There are also list serves and discussion groups, some of which include:

- <http://groups.msn.com/NationalParkCancellationStampsPassporttoAmerica>
- <http://groups.msn.com/NationalParkCancellationStampsPassporttoAmerica/ma>
- <http://www.parkstamps.org/>
- http://www.lincon.com/nps/nps_sites.htm

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Participating in the program is free, and just one more way to raise awareness about national heritage areas to stamp collectors and the broader public.