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National Park Service News Release

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Independence National Historical Park

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PHILADELPHIA – The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution articulate principles and values that have challenged, guided, and identified our nation. Books and webpages offer photographs and transcripts of these foundational documents, but a thorough understanding of them requires a look beyond text to context. To situate the Declaration and the Constitution in history, know their authors better, and have a great time, travelers of all ages should visit Independence National Historical Park.

One of many attractions in the city of Philadelphia, the park beckons to those searching for a winter getaway. Visitors in this season avoid summertime crowds and, in January and February, enjoy un-ticketed entry to Independence Hall. In the same two months, you can catch one of the free tours given at the exhibit “People of Independence” in honor of the birthdays of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thaddeus Kosciuszko. A park ranger will introduce you to the two Founding Fathers, the Revolutionary War general, and their contemporaries, whose portraits appear in the exhibit at the Second Bank of the United States.

Independence NHP includes a collection of sites where Washington, Franklin, and others lived, met, and worked. A steel framework or “ghost house” haunts the location of the home in which Franklin lived while participating in the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention. A house once occupied the space delineated by the frame, which rises above a subterranean museum. The museum displays artifacts from Franklin’s life and includes a post office and an 18th-century printing office.

Franklin joined Washington and other delegates to the Continental Congress in Independence Hall, possibly the world’s stateliest delivery room, where the United States was born with the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In the same meeting place, representatives from throughout the new nation wrote the U.S. Constitution. The legislative arm of the government established by the Constitution convened next door to Independence Hall, in Congress Hall, from 1790 to 1800. Both buildings are part of the national park, which also includes archeological exhibits and an archeological lab. Visitors can watch archeologists assemble and process artifacts from 18th- and 19th-century Philadelphia that have been excavated within the park.

The places, objects, and ranger presentations at Independence not only enhance one’s knowledge of the Declaration and the Constitution, they afford insight into the experiences of the people behind these documents. The park, in other words, puts key texts in context and exposes visitors to the texture of late-18th-century life.

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Each week, National Park Getaways help people find new places to reconnect with nature, history, family, and friends. To see previous getaways, visit www.nps.gov/getaways.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.