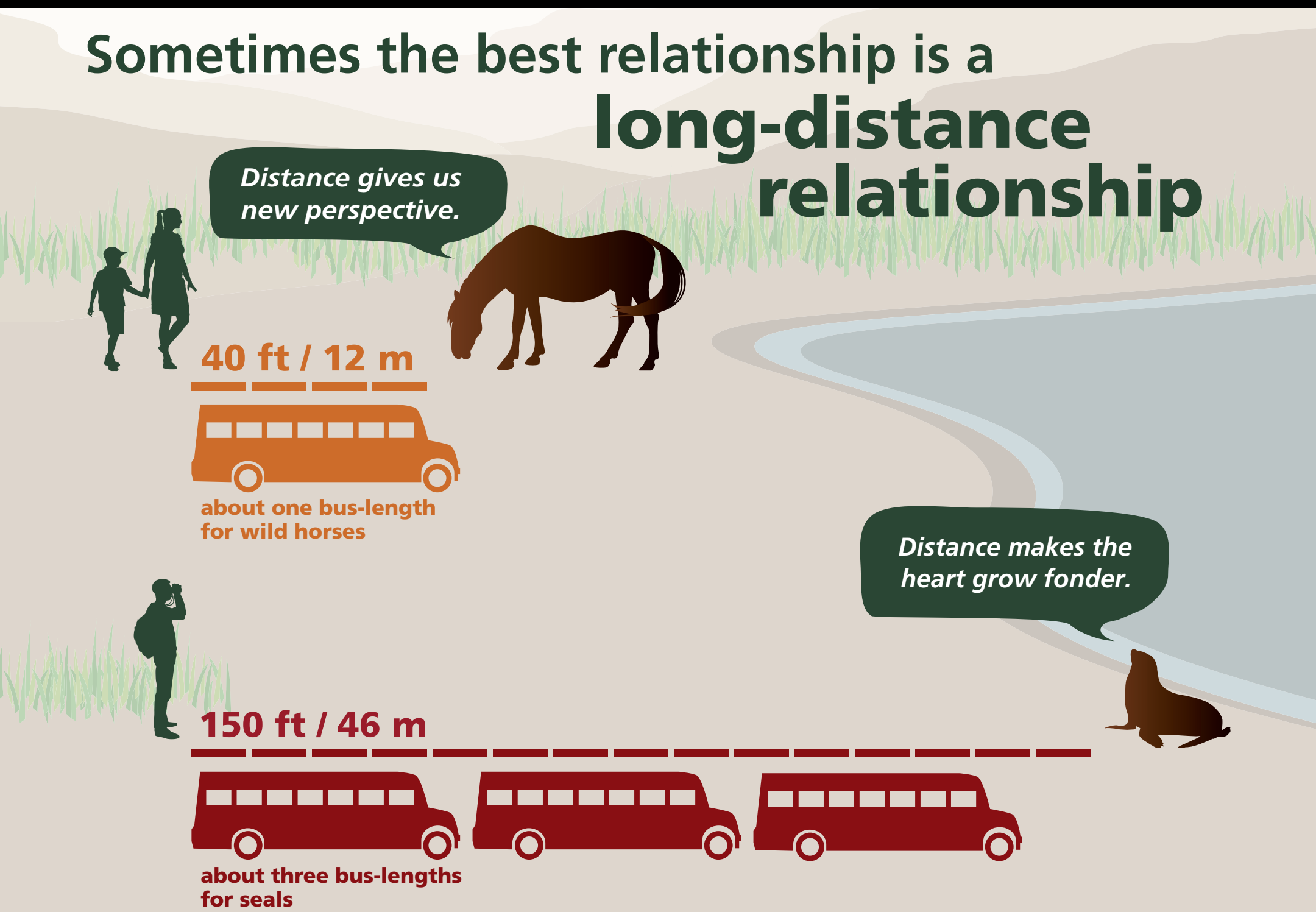
Sometimes the best relationship is a long-distance relationship



While it may seem like a national park is like a zoo or wildlife preserve,

we're a whole different animal.

It's important to get smart, if you want to go wild.

A great experience starts with a little distance

There are few connections with nature that compare to visiting a national park. It has become easy to hide behind a camera, but often the images don't do justice to the beauty that you see when you live in the moment. We think a long-distance relationship is the best kind of relationship because it allows you to stay safe, give animals the space they need, and take in the landscapes that you don't see every day.

Can I approach or pet the animals?

While many of us know that animals with fangs and big teeth, like bears and wolves, are potentially dangerous and very capable of inflicting bodily harm, we often forget that more seeminly docile animals like wild horses and seals can have a fierce a temper. If an animal is stressed, they will react, and you do not want to get in their way if they do. Obey park instructions and squelch the desire to get any closer than the safe distance.

But, what if an animal approaches me?

Wildlife may not know better, but YOU do. Although it may feel flattering, if any kind of wildlife approaches you, back away and maintain that safe distance. It's your responsibility and your safety — help us keep wildlife wild.

What if I want to get an animal's attention?

Calling to attract wildlife is illegal. We know you want a great shot to share with friends, but animals deserve to enjoy the park without disruption just as you do. Just wait a bit and the animal may surprise you with a great, natural pose to capture.

If there's a group of people, is it safer to get closer?

Whether it's just you or 10 people, keep the long distance. As crowds gather (as they often do), wildlife can quickly feel threatened and, in their panic, harm people. This is especially the case as people start to surround the animal(s) because the wildlife may feel trapped. If people around you stop maintaining the safe distance, don't be afraid to speak up. Sometimes, in the moment, anyone could use a gentle reminder that long-distance relationships with wildlife are better for everyone.

Can I feed the animals or give them water?

You can feed horses at petting zoos, but this national park is a really special place where horses and other animals are meant to be wild. Help us keep this place and these animals unique by never feeding them. Even feeding horses grass from the park or other food you think might be harmless is not allowed. This is for their safety as well as yours. Turning on water for horses is unnecessary and is one of the top ways visitors end up hurt since horses will start protecting the water source, chasing down or biting people who come near. Wildlife stay healthier without human intervention.

What if I really want the perfect photo?

The popularity of selfies and watching the world through a camera is posing a new threat to wildlife and humans. Perhaps you even came here to get away from technology and relax. So, use your zoom or put your camera down and take a moment to really appreciate what you see in the park. For more on capturing great photos at the safe distance, pick up our "How to See and Photograph Wildlife" card at the visitor center or see the tips on our website: nps.gov/asis.