



GUIDEBOOK CONNECTING YOUTH TO PARKS





Children learning about clothing worn during the American Revolution by Continental Army and camp followers.

*Valley Forge National Historical Park
NPS Photo*

National Park Service

Call to Action

Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement

The National Park System inspires conservation and historic preservation at all levels of American society, creating a collective expression of who we are as a people and where our values were forged.

The national parks also deliver a message to future generations about the experiences that have made America a symbol of freedom and opportunity for the rest of the world. To visit our national parks is to witness American values on full display in extraordinary places that embody certain "unalienable rights" and inspire our nation to succeed. To actively ensure conservation of national parks, public lands, wilderness, and historic places for the enjoyment of future generations is a priceless gift to our children.

CONNECTING YOUTH TO PARKS GUIDEBOOK

Welcome!

Whether you are a frequent visitor to parks, or looking to make your first journey to explore your natural, cultural and historical heritage, participate in volunteer and service-learning activities, enjoy recreational opportunities or just plain relax, this guidebook will help you plan a fun and enjoyable experience.

The purpose of this guide is to help youth organizations find information to plan a park visit using the National Park Service's website NPS.gov and other on-line resources. This guide will help youth and youth leaders prepare for the type of visit that best meet their needs, whether it's a in-park or virtual visit. For in-person visits, this guide will provide pre-visit, during park visit and post-visit tips. To get started just click on the heading of each section, words in bold print or underlined to be directed to the website.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

First, take some time to explore the website of the site your planning to visit. Go to the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov to find a park or national historic site. You can search by zip code, site name, location, activity, topic or event. If you are not located near a national park, consider planning to visit your community parks, museums, and historic sites. You may be surprised to learn of the many places in your own backyard that tell the stories that connect you to our nation's history, or provide fun, learning experiences and ways you can get involved.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S TREASURES

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act creating the National Park Service, a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior responsible for protecting the 40 national parks and monuments then in existence and those yet to be established. Today, the national park system comprises 409 units in all 50 states.

MISSION: National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

FUN FACT:

**What is the largest
national park site?
Wrangell-St. Elias
National Park and Preserve,
Alaska - 13.2 million**

Hidden within our communities across the country are many exciting stories waiting to be rediscovered.



Kids exploring nature.

*Fort DuPont Park
NPS Photo*

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PREVISIT WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Get ready for wildlife, trails, forests, oceans, lakes, historic structures, prehistoric sites and museums. National Parks offer countless opportunities for discovery. We hope you will have fun, make lifelong memories, and develop a deep connection to America's treasures.

Where to begin? After you find the park that you want to visit, search the park's website [Plan Your Visit](#) section. There you will find helpful tips about things to do, places to go, eat and sleep. You will find information about accessibility, equipment rental, directions, operating hours, fees, reservations, and special use permits. Also, you will have access to downloadable park brochures and trail maps.

RESERVATIONS

Many national parks offer field trips, guided tours and other fun opportunities. Check parks websites for details. In some cases you may choose from a variety of self guided ranger tours. Because special programs like class or group field trips or guided programs require the park to prepare for the arrival groups and ensure that the participants are able to access particular areas of the site, it is often necessary to make reservations in advance. Even if there is no required reservation listed on the park's website, it is always a good idea to call ahead if you are bringing groups larger than ten. By calling ahead, you can avoid potential disappointment and delays.

How do I make reservations for camping/lodging in national parks? Not all parks provide this service; many campgrounds are first come, first served. For more information on specific camping and lodging services offered at the park of your interest, search the park's website under "[Plan Your Visit](#)". Another option for scheduling tours to parks is [Recreation.gov](#).

Types of units in the national park system?

<i>National Battlefields</i>	11
<i>National Battlefield Parks</i>	4
<i>National Battlefield Site</i>	1
<i>National Military Parks</i>	9
<i>National Historical Parks</i>	50
<i>National Historic Sites</i>	78
<i>International Historic Sites</i>	1
<i>National Lakeshores</i>	4
<i>National Memorials</i>	30
<i>National Monuments</i>	84
<i>National Parks</i>	59
<i>National Parkways</i>	4
<i>National Preserves</i>	19
<i>National Reserves</i>	2
<i>National Recreation Areas</i>	18
<i>National Rivers</i>	5
<i>National Wild and Scenic Rivers & Riverways</i>	10
<i>National Scenic Trails</i>	3
<i>National Seashores</i>	10
<i>Other Designations</i>	11
<i>Total Units</i>	413

FUN FACT:

The largest living things in the world are in National Parks: Sequoia trees and Alaskan brown bears (the world's largest living carnivores).

Our history is part of who we were and who we will be.



Youth participating in a Junior Naturalist Program.

*Channel Islands National Park
NPS Photo*

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Checkout the 'Schedule Of Events' page on parks websites for daily scheduled programs and activities.

GETTING TO PARKS

Driving directions, GPS coordinates, maps and public transportation information can be found on each park's website under [Plan Your Visit](#). Depending on your proximity to the park you want to visit, you could plan to walk, hike or bike ride to the site. Park and trail maps can be found under [Plan Your Visit](#)'



Did you know that the National Park Foundation developed a grant program to help youth experience national parks? Visit their website to learn more.

[The Ticket to Ride](#) program provides transportation support for students to visit national parks annually.

NOT NEAR A NATIONAL PARK, NO PROBLEM, TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR.

The next best thing to physically visiting a park, is taking a **Virtual Tour**. These tours provide in-depth experience at many national parks, monuments, historic parks and other NPS sites. You can find the virtual tours in one of two ways. If you're opting for a general park search and want to see a list of all of the national parks that offer a virtual tour, or if you're interested in a specific park, you can find the virtual tour, if available, on the left side of the park's information page under [Photos & Multimedia](#). The tours vary by park and can include things such as park panoramas, educational information, virtual hikes, webcam pictures and eTours.

EXPLORE

NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

The National Trails System is...
...the network of scenic, historic, and recreation trails created by the [National Trails System Act of 1968](#). These trails provide for outdoor recreation needs, promote the enjoyment, appreciation, and preservation of open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources, and encourage public access and citizen involvement.



National recreation trails recognize existing trails that connect people to local resources and improve their quality of life.



The National Water Trail System uniquely connect the nations waterway together into one cohesive national network of exemplary water trails for the public to explore and enjoy through recreation.

FUN FACT:

The North Country National Scenic Trail passes through 109 counties between New York and North Dakota and will be the longest trail in the NPS once completed.

Trails connect people to nature and a healthy lifestyle.



Direct Jonathan Jarvis with Mark Murillo , 2015 George and Helen Outstanding Volunteer Service, Youth Volunteer Award. Mark's most meaningful contribution was the creation of a four-minute, bilingual (English and Spanish) children's video about the park. Mark wrote the script, cast, acted in, and directed the video.

*Chamizal National Memorial
NPS Photo*

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EXPLORE THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ON iTunes UNIVERSITY

Did you know the National Park Service offers Podcasts presented by the National Park Service, and Partners on [iTunes U](https://www.itunes.com/college). These informational segments are available in audio, video, and flash presentations. You can listen in either English or Spanish to narrations of park tours, or watch informative video presentations. Use the [National Park Service iTunes U](https://www.nps.gov/itunesu/) to discover history, explore nature and plan visits to America's national treasures.

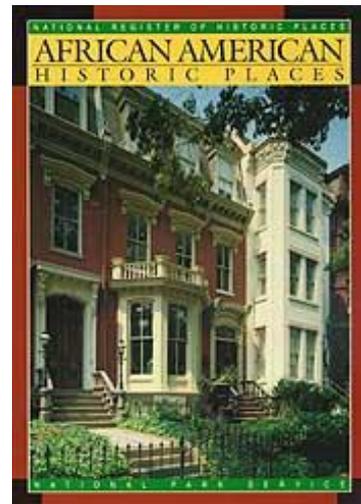
Did you know that the National Park Service offers Annual Entrance Fee Free Days?

Annual Fee-Free Dates:

January - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
April-National Park Week
August-National Park Service Birthday
September -National Public Lands Day
November- Veterans Day

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL -The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass Program

A pass is your ticket to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites. Each pass covers entrance fees at national parks and national wildlife refuges as well as standard amenity fees at national forests and grasslands, and at lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation. Click on the passes below to learn more about access passes for seniors, people with disabilities, military, volunteers and the annual park pass.



Do you know about the groundbreaking exploits of Colonel Charles Young, a military hero who was the first African American superintendent of a national park? How about York, the slave who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their historic journey to the west? Or the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, a friend and business associate of Orville Wright? Find out more about them and many other notable African Americans.

FUN FACT:

Robert G. Stanton was the first African American to be appointed as the Director of the Park Service, serving 1997-2001.

About 268 of our the 412 national parks NEVER charge an entrance fee.



Hey fourth graders! See America's natural wonders and historic sites for free through the Every Kid in a Park Program. [Learn more here.](#)

NPS Photo

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DURING YOUR PARK VISIT MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EXPERIENCE

First, before you go, check the weather forecast. Make sure you are prepared for the weather and the activity to want to explore. You will be able to find park alerts on the park's homepage. Most parks also have Facebook and Twitter accounts, and may post information about park trail and road conditions.

When you arrive to the park, begin at the park's visitor center where park staff and volunteers are available to assist you with your visit. At the visitor information desk you will get a orientation to the park's resources, information about guided and self guided programs and activities options. You can pick up the park map and stamp your [National Parks Passport](#). At the visitor center you will also find restrooms, food, gift shops and in most cases museums. Additionally, you will also be able to view the park's orientation film.

There are a variety of outdoor activities you may be able to enjoy. Some parks offer bikes and kayaks rental services through a concessionaire. You may also have lunch in the park's picnic areas. Remember if you have a group size larger than ten people, you should call ahead.



Eastern National is a non-profit cooperating association which operates park stores at over 130 National Parks and related sites. Eastern National also operates [eParks.com](#). Collectively the online storefronts represent our brick and mortar locations and other parks as well.



2016 ANNUAL NATIONAL EVENTS

- Jan 18: MLK Day of Service
- March 26: Cesar Chavez Day
- April 10-16: National Volunteer Appreciation Week
- April 16: National Junior Ranger Day
- April 16-24: National Park Week
- April 22: Earth Day
- May 21: Kids to Parks Day
- June 1-30: National Outdoor Month
- June 4: National Trails Day
- June 12-16: National History Day
- August 25: National Park Service 100th Birthday
- September 24: National Public Lands Day
- October 14: National Fossil Day
- November 11: Veterans Day

FUN FACT:



Passport® To Your National Parks-Makes it easy to learn about and explore all of our national park sites.

Partners help provide visitors with programs that enable them to enjoy outdoor recreation and learn about environmental and cultural resources.



Junior Ranger Aida, ready to assist new up-and-coming Junior Rangers.

**Indiana Dunes
National Lakeshore**

*Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
NPS Photo*

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PLAY OUTDOORS HEALTHY PARKS HEALTHY PEOPLE US

Healthy Parks Healthy People US is an approach that incorporates active living, environmental sustainability and well-being for all species. Although Healthy Parks Healthy People US is housed within the National Park Service, it extends from the largest national parks to your own back yard. Staying active, exploring the outdoors, and doing your part to conserve our environment are all facets of Healthy Parks Healthy People US.

Check out some helpful resources:

Let's Move Outside offers some great resources for finding where to go and what to do!

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention offers information about staying healthy.

The Presidents Active Lifestyle Award Challenge (PALA) rewards individuals for getting the recommended weekly amount of physical activity. You can sign up as an individual or a group.

LEAVE NO TRACE



[Leave No Trace](#) is a national program which promotes the protection of our nation's cultural and natural resources through education, research, and partnerships.

Leave No Trace builds awareness, appreciation, and respect for America's public lands by teaching minimum impact skills and wilderness ethics.



The arrowhead was authorized as the official National Park Service emblem by the Secretary of the Interior on July 20, 1951. The Sequoia tree and bison represent vegetation and wildlife, the mountains and water represent scenic and recreational values, and the arrowhead represents historical and archeological values.

FUN FACT:

More than 300 million people visit the National Parks in 2015.

2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service.



Youth volunteer The Building Trades class is a partnership between the park and the local school district. In addition to providing students with job skills, Building Trades teaches practical applications for geometry, math, physics, and language arts.

*Denali National Park
NPS Photo*

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BRINGING THE PARKS INTO YOUR CLASSROOM OR CLUB

National Parks are a wealth of curriculum based experiences, aligned with local, state or national standards of learning. Using parks as an outdoor classroom offers fantastic learning opportunities for you and your students. The National Park Service offers distance learning programs through the web, audio or video conferencing. Please bear in mind that there may be limitations to the scope and technical compatibility between the park programs and those at your school or club. Contact the park you plan to visit for details.

BRINGING A RANGER TO YOUR CLASSROOM OR CLUB

The National Park Service is committed to providing opportunities for students to make meaningful connections to the national parks. The chance to meet and visit with a real park ranger can be a powerful experience. Rangers can come to schools or clubs as much more than traditional guest speakers. They come prepared to contribute to your curriculum-based programming by addressing standards using park examples. This requires some discussion between the teacher and the ranger in advance of the visit. In some cases, park scientists or other experts may be available as well as park rangers. Please note that ranger participation in your classroom may be limited by time, distance and subject area. Contact the park to arrange an in person visit. Remember, if an in person visit is not possible a virtual visit may be another option using new technology.

For Kids

How about a little time travel? Take a fabulous trip through more than 3,000 years in The Great American Landmarks Adventure. You'll start with a 1,500-year-old cave painting and end up on the moon in 1969. From the first shots of the American Revolution through the Cold War of the late 1950s, learn about some of our nation's heroes in American Defenders of Land, Sea & Sky. Explore, learn, and have fun at Kids Zone!



FUN FACT:

Did you know National Park Service made Junior Rangers music?

[Click here to learn more.](#)

"National parks are amazing places where exercise is disguised as adventure, and we sneak in some learning too." - National Park Service Director Jarvis



NPS staff interact with eager local middle school students through the “Making the Caribbean Connection” educational program

*Essex National Heritage Area
NPS Photo*

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TEACHING WITH HISTORIC PLACES Heritage Education Services Program

Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP) uses properties listed in the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places to enliven history, social studies, geography, civics, and other subjects. TwHP has created a variety of products and activities that help teachers bring historic places into the classroom.

Did you know the National Park Service have a Teacher-to-Ranger-to-Teacher Program? This growing program allows teachers to be park rangers for the summer, then bring what they learned back into the classroom. To learn more clicking here.

TEACHING WITH MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

The National Park Service Teaching with Museum Collections Program provides lesson plans for educators to use National Park Service collections in student-centered activities. Teaching with Museum Collections object-based learning emphasizes the links between the "real things;" - National Park Service collections and America's history. Collections connect students to their past, rich and varied cultures, momentous events, inspiring ideas, and the places where the nation's history happened.

TRAILS FOR EVERY CLASSROOM

Trails for Every Classroom (TTEC) is aimed at providing the inspiration, knowledge and skills to transform classroom teaching into effective, fun and exciting place-based education.

The National Park Service **American Latino Heritage** projects explore how the legacy of American Latinos can be recognized, preserved, and interpreted for future generations.



The National Park Service, as a storyteller of our Nation's past, is committed to connecting and amplifying American Latino stories throughout national parks and communities across the United States.

FUN FACT:

Cesar Chavez co-founded the National Farm Workers Association.

*Stories recount the challenges and opportunities faced by
Individuals, communities, and nations.*



Teens participating in a beach cleanup through learning during their field trip to Gateway National Recreation Area.

*Gateway National Recreation Area
NPS Photo*

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HANDS ON THE LAND

America's national forests, national parks, national wildlife refuges, waterways, and other public lands comprise nearly one-third the area of the United States, and thus offer unique teaching and learning opportunities. Hands on the Land, a national network of field classrooms, connects students, teachers, families, and volunteers to these special places all across America. Within the communities of Hands on the Landsites, public, non-profit, and private partners customize hands-on experiences using local natural, historical, and archaeological settings to bring classroom learning to life.

NIGHT SKIES - GLOBAL EXPLORERS PARTNERSHIP

Learn about our collaboration with a nonprofit group challenging students across the country to engage with the night sky!

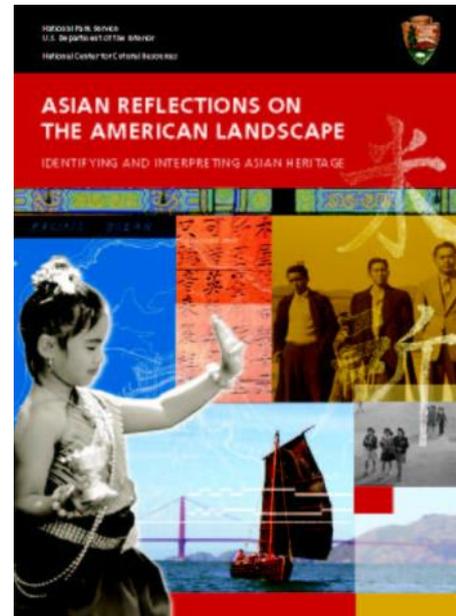
NATIONAL FOSSIL DAY

National Fossil Day is a celebration organized to promote public awareness and stewardship of fossils, as well as to foster a greater appreciation of their scientific and educational value.

BIOBLITZ

A BioBlitz is a 24-hour event in which teams of volunteer scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members work together to find and identify as many species of plants, animals, microbes, fungi, and other organisms as possible.

Did you know about Japanese Americans internment camps of World War II?



The National Park Service, as a storyteller of our Nation's past, is committed to connecting and amplifying **Asian American and Pacific Islander** stories throughout national parks and communities across the United States.

FUN FACT:

Did you know that Chinese immigrants help to build the railroads across the country.

National parks contain many of our nation's most treasured landscapes.



AmeriCorps member joined park staff in teaching Girl Scouts of Southeastern Pennsylvania about fossils and natural resources on National Trails Day.

NPS Photo

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ENHANCING STEM LEARNING

Research Learning Centers (RLCs) provide the opportunity for educators to bring real-world, place-based science to students in accordance with state education standards. Whether bringing park-based science into your classroom, or bringing your class into a park, RLCs can help create an engaging and relevant experience for your students. RLC curriculum-based programs include lesson plans, pre- and post-visit activities, classroom programs, and teacher guides. In addition, many RLC websites contain research data, project summaries, and media that can be incorporated into your own lesson plans. Many RLCs also offer teacher professional development workshops, field seminars, teacher-ranger-teacher programs, and related activities on a variety of topics and for a variety of grade levels.

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATIONISTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

The Department of the Interior (DOI) is leading collaborative efforts to provide opportunities in STEM Education and to pave STEM career pathways. Learn more by clicking the heading above.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Take advantage of the teacher development opportunities in your national parks! There's no better way to bring math, science and history into real life than to experience them in action. Many of these workshops are designed to help teachers use park resources in the classroom, or to prepare classes for a park visit. Most workshops are accredited and can be taken for college credit. Contact your local national park for details.

CAREERS IN PARKS

The NPS offers opportunities to work in 409 national parks and in partnership with communities across the country to preserve our history and create places for outdoor fun. From full-time permanent careers, to seasonal positions, to internships that let students explore career choices, to volunteer positions, you can work with us - in an "office" like no other. Our more than 20,000 employees include:

- Ecologists
- Electricians
- Facility managers
- Fish biologists
- Forestry technicians
- Gardeners
- Geologists
- Historians
- Human resources specialists
- Hydrologists
- Information management specialists
- Landscape architects
- Maintenance mechanics
- Masons
- Museum professionals
- Park police
- Park rangers

National Park Service grants help protect our nation's significant historic and cultural sites and preserve our diverse cultural heritage.



Youth volunteer to lend a hand to care for natural, cultural and historical resources on National Public Lands Day.

*Valley Forge National Historical Park
NPS Photo*

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VOLUNTEER IN YOUR NATIONAL PARKS

Youth are a big part of helping to preserve and protect America's natural and cultural heritage. If you're seeking volunteer and service-learning opportunities for your youth group, start by searching the park's [Get Involved](#) section of the website. Look for one-time and reoccurring group opportunities. You may want to also call or email the Volunteer Coordinator at the desired park to inquire about the types of group projects that are available and appropriate for youth. Before you call, be prepared to share the number of people in your group, age range, dates your available to volunteer, duration of time your group is available and if you have any special needs you would like to request. Its always a good idea to give the park as much advance notice as you can for planning purposes. When youth get involved, they help to ensure that national parks and programs are relevant but also gain knowledge about resources and learn news skills.

You can also find volunteer opportunities for all natural resource agencies at [Volunteer.gov](#).



ANNUAL VOLUNTEER PASS-FREE for volunteers who donate 250 service hours with federal agencies that are participating in the Interagency Pass Program. Contact your local federal recreation site for more information about volunteer opportunities visit [Volunteer.gov](#).



Over 444,000 people volunteer annually to help the National Park Service fulfill its mission.

As of 2015, volunteers donated over 7.9 million hours of service to the Volunteers-In-Parks Program nationwide helping in some of the following areas:

- Administration
- Campground Host
- Cultural Resource Management
- General Management
- Interpretation
- Maintenance
- Natural Resource Management
- Protection/Operations/
- Law Enforcement

FUN FACTS:

The Volunteers-In-Parks Program was enacted in 1970 .

Youth account for an estimated 40% of National Park Service volunteers.



Energy Conservation Corps member assisting with building weatherization projects.

*National Park Service, Northeast Region
NPS Photo*

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WORK IN NATIONAL PARKS

Working for the National Park Service can be the opportunity of a lifetime. It can provide opportunities to experience some of our nation's crown jewels, discover its less-known natural wonders, develop a new perspective on our heritage, and understand the complexities of managing our natural resources. It is challenging and rewarding.

YOUTH SUMMER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are thousands of opportunities for high school, college, and graduate school students to work with the National Park Service. Many of these jobs are filled at the park level-so contact the park that interests you, but others are advertised and recruited nationally by the National Park Service or in partnership with several national organizations the interest and involvement of the next generation who will help us care for our nation's environment and preserve history.

INTERNSHIPS IN PARKS

We invite students to consider internship opportunities in some of the most beautiful areas of the country. Internships can provide learning opportunities through activities such as wilderness and career development. Many parks and central offices offer opportunities for Internships. If you are looking to learn more about internships in a park, we suggest that you find a park that interest you and contact them directly.



As a member of Youth Conservation Corps, teens will have a personal role in protecting the nation's precious resources.

Chances are you will see wildlife or history before your eyes, stand on a mountaintop or gaze at an ancient ruin, while meeting new friends and learning new skills.



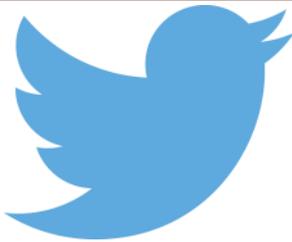
Being a Scout Ranger is fun! You can be outdoors and discover something new. Learn more by clicking on the patch above.

The Youth Conservation Corps is the National Park Service oldest youth employment program.

National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
Interpretation, Education and Volunteers
www.nps.gov



Share your memories with us using social media.



Instagram

STAY CONNECTED