



# The Respite

The official newspaper  
of Rock Creek Park  
Summer/Fall 2009

## Planetarium Launches into Twenty-First Century

A spirit of change is in the air around Washington, DC. In the Rock Creek Park planetarium, it is in the night sky as well. In February of 2009 the stars were dimmed for the last time on the park's nearly 40-year-old projector and a state-of-the-art digital system, the Spitz SciDome, was installed.

Rock Creek Park has had a planetarium since the early 1960s when the space race propelled men and imaginations skyward. An initial projector was purchased by the park to test the public's interest. It proved to be popular and, in 1970, the park installed a more powerful system. Since then, thousands of visitors have discovered the mystery hidden beyond DC's well-lit night skies. With the impressive amount of progress in the world of astronomy since 1970, however, it was time to launch Rock Creek Park's planetarium into the twenty-first century.

"There is a 'wow' factor naturally built into astronomy," notes Rock Creek Park Ranger Andrew Seacord. With the new system, visitors can experience that "wow" factor first hand. Where formerly Mars was a small reddish dot on the domed ceiling, today space explorers at the planetarium will have the sensation of flying to it and even landing on it. They can now peer into craters on the moon, or view mountains on many of the planets in the solar system. From the



Students on a field trip marvel at the wonders of the night sky as demonstrated by the new Spitz SciDome.

comfort of their seats, visitors can view all 88 constellations in detail, or just observe the current night's sky with more pizzazz than ever.

With so much more to explore, visitors may want to return to Rock Creek Park's planetarium again and again. Like the night sky itself, the ways to experience the wonders of the universe with the Spitz SciDome seem endless.

The planetarium is located in the Rock Creek Park Nature Center. Scheduled programs are offered every weekend at 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Young children's curiosity about the night sky is also encouraged with the "Young Planetarium" program offered Wednesdays at 4:00 p.m. For information on program times, or to schedule a group, contact the

Nature Center at (202) 895-6070 or visit our website at [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr).



A ribbon-cutting ceremony opened the new Spitz SciDome to the public on February 28, 2009.

### Welcome from the Superintendent

Winter brought major changes to the only planetarium in the national park system. Gone are the days of whirrs and clanks as our former projector, often referred to as "George," showed thousands of urban children the wonders of the night sky. Now they see more with our new digital projector, which can zoom rapidly from the skies above DC to our solar system's planets and beyond.

I heard the "oohs" and "aaahs" as I sat next to delighted children in the first planetarium program offered during the February 28 grand reopening. The reaction of families and friends of the park, as they learned about the night sky and the beauty that can be found there, reminded me once again why Rock Creek Park is such a valuable resource for the public. It also reminded me why we in the National Park Service strive for its protection and preservation. Whether one visits the park to touch the stars, partake in a hike, or to simply enjoy a picnic along the creek, Rock Creek Park has served as a respite from the surrounding urban environment for over 119 years.

So come join us – visit the new planetarium, view the beauty that the summer and fall forest has to offer, walk in the footsteps of our forefathers, and experience the wonderful opportunities that wait for you in Rock Creek Park.

Sincerely,

Adrienne A. Coleman  
Superintendent

### Where am I?

Can you find me in Rock Creek Park? Answer on page 3



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### Page 2

#### Your Corner of the Sky

Our regular feature helps you see the sky more clearly.

#### Enjoying Deer in the Midst of the City

Why did the deer cross the road? Find out here and learn how to avoid them.

#### A Case of Mistaken Identity

Civil War soldiers finally get their due.

### Page 3

#### Rock Creek Offers Cell Phone Tours

Your cell phone offers a whole new world of discovery in Rock Creek Park.

#### Hats off to Partners and Volunteers

Learn how many have pitched in to help out Rock Creek Park.

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# Rock Creek Park Offers Cell Phone Tours

Your cell phone can now be a source of fascinating history as you stroll Meridian Hill Park, along 16th Street or through Georgetown. Rock Creek Park has just completed walking audio tours of some of its outlying areas. A 16<sup>th</sup> Street tour offers insight about Meridian Hill Park and the statues that line its ornate walkways. A Georgetown tour features the Old Stone House, Dumbarton Oaks Park and more. Tour maps are available at the Nature Center and Old Stone House.

guide you from there. The tours are free, except for the minute charge by your phone company. Let us know your thoughts when you complete your tour, by following the instructions on your phone.



Look for this sign around the park to indicate cell phone tour stops.

To begin a tour, look for the sign (shown to the right) and dial (202) 730-9307. A voice prompt will

# Hats off to Partners and Volunteers

This month, Rock Creek Park would like to recognize the hard work of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC). PATC is a volunteer-based organization that helps maintain the nearly 30 miles of foot trails found in Rock Creek Park. This valuable partnership between PATC and the park dates back to the 1980s. The dedicated individuals of the PATC act as trail overseers and participate in group work parties, volunteering more than 1200 hours last year. To find out more about PATC go to [www.potomacappalachian.org](http://www.potomacappalachian.org).



Volunteers with PATC performing trail maintenance.

steward of public lands, Rock Creek Park invites you to join our talented group of volunteers. There are opportunities to assist the park as an individual or as a group leader in a variety of ways. Contact Volunteer Coordinator Dan Winings at (202) 895-6224, or visit our website at [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr).

In addition to its capable partners, Rock Creek Park enjoys the support of many invaluable volunteers. If you consider yourself a leader and

## Visitor Information

**There are NO entrance fees to Rock Creek Park.**

### Nature Center & Planetarium

The Nature Center is open Wednesday to Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Planetarium is open only during shows. See Monthly Program Schedule for dates and times.

### Peirce Mill

Peirce Mill is closed due to renovations. Peirce Barn, next to the Mill, serves as a visitor contact station and bookstore. The Peirce Barn is closed, except for scheduled programs. Please check upcoming program schedules for these dates and times.

### Old Stone House

The Old Stone House is located at 3051 M Street in Georgetown and is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. The Eastern National bookstore located in the front of the house is open daily, noon to 5:00 p.m.

### Park Regulations

Fires permitted only in grills or fireplaces; visitors may bring grills and use them in designated picnic areas only. Parking is allowed only in designated parking areas. Dogs must be on leash in all park areas.

### The following are prohibited in all areas of Rock Creek Park:

- Camping
- Viewing of wildlife with artificial light
- Swimming, wading, and bathing
- Removing or damaging natural or cultural resources
- Alcoholic beverages
- Washing vehicles

## Contact Information & Phone Numbers

Facility	Address	Phone
Nature Center	5200 Glover Road, NW	202-895-6070
Peirce Barn	Beach Drive and Tilden Street	202-282-0927
Old Stone House	3051 M Street, NW	202-426-6851
Carter Barron Amphitheatre	16th Street and Colorado Ave.	202-426-0486
Thompson Boat Center	2900 Virginia Ave, NW	202-333-9543 202-333-4861
Rock Creek Horse Center	5100 Glover Road, NW	202-362-0117
Tennis Center	3149 16th Street, NW	202-722-5949
U.S. Park Police	1800 Beach Drive	202-610-7505

# Ranger Led Programs

### Junior Ranger Camps

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Nature Center

Children will explore woodland trails, examine the wildlife in Rock Creek and make new friends. Registration is required. Contact the Nature Center for dates and times. Ages 7-12.

### Rock Creek Park Day

Saturday, September 26

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Nature Center

Ranger led programs, horseback riding, puppet shows, and more.

### Ranger led Horseback Tours

Call Horse Center for times.

Tour leaves from Rock Creek Park Horse Center and travels south along Rock Creek. Participants must be at least 12 years old and weight limits apply. Reservations must be made by credit card at least 24 hours in advance. Fee \$35. For further information call (202) 362-0117.

### Young Planetarium

See program schedule for times.

Nature Center Planetarium

An introduction to the night sky.

Ages 4 and up.

### Summer/Fall Night Sky

See program schedule for times.

Nature Center Planetarium

View the brightest stars, planets, and constellations and learn their stories. Ages 5 and older.

### Exploring the Universe

See program schedule for times.

Nature Center Planetarium

Topics include the sun, moon, stars, planets, and other space phenomena. Ages 7 and older.

### Exploring the Sky

Once a month, April - November.

Times vary, call for details.

See the stars and planets through a telescope. For stargazers of all ages.

### Creature Feature

4:00 p.m. Fridays

Nature Center

Assist a park ranger in feeding the Nature Center's live animals. All ages.

### Peirce Mill Updates

Contact Nature Center for times.

Peirce Barn

Discover what's happening at Rock Creek's last remaining mill. All ages.

### Nature and History Walks

Locations and times vary.

Experience the natural and human history of Rock Creek Park on these ranger led hikes. Distances and ability levels vary. Ages 7 and older.

### Children's Programs

4:00 p.m. Thursdays

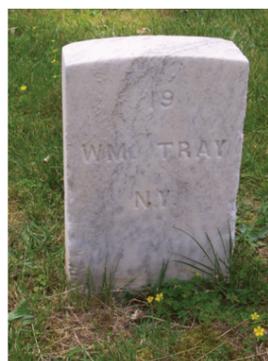
Nature Center

Join a ranger for interactive lessons on Rock Creek Park. Ages 3 and up.

### Contact the Nature Center at

202-895-6070 or visit

[www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr) for more details.



**Answer to "Where Am I?" from page 1. The tombstone is found in Battleground National Cemetery. Read about the surprising discovery found here in "Soldiers' Identity Revealed," page 2.**



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Rock Creek Park  
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Washington, D.C. 20008

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## Rock Creek Park Updates

- **Join us for Rock Creek Park Day on Saturday, September 26, 2009.** Help us celebrate Rock Creek Park's 119th birthday with free festivities from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Nature Center and Planetarium. Activities include ranger led programs, horseback riding, planetarium shows and more. Contact the Nature Center at (202) 895-6070 for details.
- **Seeking Junior Rangers!** Rock Creek Park offers two options for children to become Junior Rangers. Every July and August the park offers two-day Junior Ranger Camps. Geared for students ages 7-12 the programs include hikes, games, hands-on history programs, stream observations and more. Contact the Nature Center starting in May to register. If a 2-day program doesn't fit your schedule, at any time of year children can complete a Junior Ranger Activity Book, for ages 6 to 9. An Advanced Junior Ranger Book is geared for ages 10-15, though adults are also welcomed.
- **Don't miss out on a night of music, dance or poetry under the stars at the Carter Barron Amphitheater.** Information about summer offerings and tickets is available at (202) 829-8001 or at [www.nps.gov/rocr](http://www.nps.gov/rocr). The season begins June 12.
- **Did you know that 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy?** This year-long global celebration, sponsored by the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO commemorates the 400th anniversary of Galileo's ground-breaking use of the telescope. Join the celebration by visiting the Rock Creek Park planetarium.
- **Rock Creek Park is the perfect place to participate in "National Public Lands Day"** on Saturday, September 26. The park offers miles of trails, dozens of picnic areas, boat and bike rentals, horseback riding, a golf course, tennis courts, and more. Call (202) 895-6070 for information.



Children test their mettle on a climbing wall during Rock Creek Park Day.