

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK FACT SHEET

ESTABLISHMENT:

The Congressional Act providing for the establishment of Shenandoah National Park was approved May 22, 1926; however, actual establishment did not follow until December 26, 1935.

Formal dedication was held on July 3, 1936, with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt making the dedicatory address.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Following the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains is one of the most beautiful and historic regions of the Southeast, Shenandoah (an Indian name reputedly meaning "Daughter of the Stars") is an elongated park approximately 75 air miles in length from Front Royal to Waynesboro, and generally from 1 to 13 miles in width. It contains approximately 303 square miles. Spur ridges branch out from the mountain crest and blend into the rolling land of the Shenandoah Valley on the west and wooded hills, orchards, and fields of the Piedmont Valley on the east. Between these ridges are deep hollows, well-timbered and drained by streams.

GEOLOGY:

According to geologists, the Blue Ridge represents more than a billion years of Earth's history which gave Nature time to smooth craggy peaks into gentle slopes that on a clear day seem never to end as they stretch into the distance in a cloak of blue haze from which we derive the "blue" in Blue Ridge. The granite rocks of Old Rag Mountain and the granodiorites of Marys Rock are in the billion-year-old class. About one-half billion years ago, volcanic outpourings took place through long fissures or cracks in the Earth's surface, while impressive to see, the mountains of the Blue Ridge are not high according to Western standards, the highest peak, Hawksbill, being 4,049 feet.

SKYLINE DRIVE:

The chief man-made feature of the Park is the famous Skyline Drive, which winds for 105 miles along the crest of the Blue Ridge throughout the length of the Park. There are 75 overlooks along the Drive, and visitors are encouraged to make good use of them, for it is only from the overlooks that they can really appreciate the rich valleys and mountain slopes through well-chosen vistas.

The Skyline Drive was constructed in sections as funds were available. The Central Section was opened to the public September 15, 1934; the North, on October 1, 1936; and the South, on August 29, 1939. Construction costs totaled \$4,572,184. Maximum grade on the Drive is 7%. It reaches its highest point at 3,680 feet at the north entrance to Skyland at Mile 41.7 (mileposts are installed along the entire length of the Drive), and the lowest point is 600 feet near the north entrance at Front Royal, Virginia.

While traveling along the Drive by car is by far the most popular way to see the Park, visitors are encouraged to park their cars and explore some of the more intimate features along 200 miles of foot trails, including a 95-mile section of the Appalachian Trail.

FLORA:

Approximately 95% of the Park is forested, with some 80 species of trees and again that many shrubs, vines, and woody plants. Of particular interest and beauty are the white oaks, dogwood, hemlock, and the ghosts of the blight-killed chestnuts.

While Shenandoah is an all-year Park (except during brief periods following severe ice or snow storms), those who choose early spring will enjoy the beauty of the dogwood and redbud, followed in May by masses of pink azalea and the white pendant blossoms of black locust. In June the pink and white mountain laurel announce the beginning of summer. Autumn brings a blaze of color as the trees begin to change their foliage from summer green to a patchwork of red, yellow, orange, and brown.

WILDLIFE:

There are about 40 varieties of mammals in the Park, the most common being rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, groundhogs, foxes, raccoons, opossums, bobcats, and skunks, with deer and black bear present. More than 200 species of birds have been observed, and at least half of that number are considered to be resident. There are a number of kinds of reptiles, including the rattlesnake and copperhead which are poisonous.

VISITOR FACILITIES:

Every visitor to any National Park should inquire about Visitor Centers. By means of exhibits and orientation programs, these centers acquaint visitors with the major Park features and suggest what to see and do. Shenandoah's oldest Visitor Center is at Dickey Ridge, 4.6 miles south of the Front Royal entrance to the Park. It stresses geologic forces. The Byrd Visitor Center at Big Meadows is near Mile 51.2. This Center, named as a memorial to the late Harry F. Byrd, Sr., was dedicated June 10, 1967. As Governor of Virginia and later United States Senator, Mr. Byrd originated and sponsored much of the State and Federal legislation that made the creation of Shenandoah a reality,

The interior of the Byrd Visitor Center includes a spacious reception lobby with a view of the Big Meadows, information desk, and basement library and workrooms. The 277-seat auditorium has automatic projection equipment for illustrated programs to introduce visitors to Park features, and the museum section contains 20 exhibits displaying artifacts and relics of Indians and pioneers of the Shenandoah region.

Generous residents of Virginia and nearby states contributed many artifacts and relics needed to complete some of the exhibits. The exhibit theme is "The Man and the Mountain," that is, the influence of the mountains on man and man's influence on the mountains.

VISITOR ACTIVITIES:

From mid-June until Labor Day, Ranger-Naturalists conduct a schedule of daily hikes and nightly campfire programs. Ask any Park employee for a Visitor Activities Program if you want to participate in any of these free Park

Service sponsored events. Trips will be held, rain or shine, if at least ten people attend. Be sure to wear comfortable hiking shoes. In the spring and in the fall, a Park Naturalist gives illustrated talks at the Byrd Visitor Center at Big Meadows.

For the do-it-yourself visitor, the self-guiding nature trails are popular. One nature trail from Skyland leads to the 4,010-foot summit of Stony Man Mountain. The Swamp Nature Trail, in the Big Meadows area, winds through a variety of habitats; while the trail to Dark Hollow Falls is the most popular with those in good physical condition. Self-guiding trails are also near the campgrounds at Matthews Arm in the North District and at Loft Mountain in the South District.

PUBLICATIONS ON THE PARK:

The Shenandoah Natural History Association of Luray, Virginia, sponsors the sale of maps, slides, and colored pictures - also guides and publications on the natural history of the Park. These are sold at the Dickey Ridge and Byrd Visitor Centers, Park Headquarters, or by mail from the Association. All profits are used to assist the Park's expanding and active interpretive program.

CONCESSIONERS:

Concessioner-operated facilities include overnight accommodations, restaurants, camper supplies, gift shops, rental horses, and gasoline filling stations. The main Park concessioner is the Virginia Sky-Line Company, Inc., of Richmond and Luray, Virginia. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club of Washington, D. C., has a concession permit for rental of five closed trail-side shelters. In addition there are 21 open shelters, including the four Byrd's Nests which were constructed from funds donated by the late U. S. Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr.

CAMPING:

Camping is limited to 14 days between the period of June 1 through October 31. There are no utility connections for trailers, but sewage disposal stations for trailers holding tanks are located at Big Meadows, Loft Mountain, and Matthews Arm.

Campers should take note of the fact that bear often visit campgrounds in search of food. Keep all food locked in trunk of car (including ice chests) when not in use.

FISHING:

All Park waters are open for trout fishing only from noon the first Saturday in April to October 15. Only artificial lures with a single hook may be used except the "Fish for Fun" Rapidan and Staunton Rivers where only artificial lures with single barbless hooks are permitted.

PETS:

Permitted in Park only when on leash or otherwise under physical restrictive control.

SPEED LIMIT:

Park speed limit is 35 miles per hour unless otherwise posted.

FEES:

Annual - \$7.00 Golden Eagle Passport will admit purchaser and all persons accompanying him in a private noncommercial vehicle April 1, 1968 - March 31, 1969.

Daily - \$1.00 per vehicle (private, noncommercial vehicle includes driver and all occupants therein).

Daily - \$0.50 per person (other than private, noncommercial vehicle),
(Daily permits good only in Shenandoah National Park.)

All persons under 16 years of age exempt from fee payment. No additional charge is made for camping or picnicking.

VISITATION:

While the summer months are those of highest visitation, October consistently brings record crowds because of the fall color. Highest travel month on record was July of 1965 with 438,600 visits. Highest weekend on record was October 12 and 13, 1963, with 80,843 visits.

This fact sheet is intended to present highlights only. For further information consult the official Park folder or write the Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park, Luray, Virginia 22835.