

The Crossroads of America!

See what makes the Great Plains great. Go West beyond the Gateway Arch. Embrace the rugged wild of the Badlands. From the Civil War to Civil Rights, to the homes of our Presidents, parks tell the stories that shape our journey as a nation.

Wilbur Wright and Orville Wright found their aviation outlet in Dayton, Ohio. Through accomplishments and failures, they took flight.

Mount Rushmore National Memorial is visited by nearly 3 million people each year. The massive granite sculpture depicts the faces of four U.S. Presidents.

Throughout his life, Charles Young overcame countless obstacles. His ascent to prominence, rising from through the military ranks to become one of the most respected leaders of his time.

The Au Sable Light Station at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore is one of many lighthouses preserved on Lake Superior.

Bison herds can be found at Wind Cave National Park, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Badlands National Park, and Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve.

The banks along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers are favorite wintering areas for hundreds of bald eagles, as well as home to countless year-round resident eagles.

Homestead National Historical Park commemorates passage of the Homestead Act of 1862, which allowed claims up to 160 acres in exchange for five years of residence and the cultivation of the property.

Hikers on a section of the Trail of Tears that passes through Buffalo National River.



Things to Know

Most areas are open year-round. Operating times of visitor centers and other facilities vary from park to park. See park websites or the NPS App for entrance fees. Fees may or may not be charged for services and activities.

Hunting is permitted only in designated areas and regulated by state and Federal law. A state fishing license is required. Watercraft use is subject to state and U.S. Coast Guard regulations. Some areas may allow leashed dogs on trails or in the backcountry. Check park websites for more information.

Play it Safe

Enjoy views from overlooks, but avoid unprotected ledges. Keep your children close to you.

Wear appropriate footwear to prevent slipping or falling on trails. Prevent water-related accidents by observing safety messages. Always wear a personal flotation device (PFD) while on water.

Animals in parks are wild creatures, no matter how tame they may appear. For your own safety, and theirs, keep your distance. Do not feed or pet the wildlife.

Be aware of road, weather, and water conditions. Drive appropriately. Bring plenty of water.

National heritage areas are part of our country's landscape and recognized for their unique contributions to the American experience. Eight areas have been designated in the Midwest.

Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor

The first national heritage area, this canal was built in the 1830s and 1840s along the portage between Lake Michigan and the Illinois River. The portage had long been used as an American Indian trade route. Later it transformed Chicago into a critical transportation hub. www.canalcor.org

MotorCities National Heritage Area

Experience Michigan's rich automotive and labor history from the Model T to Daimler Chrysler. Discover the legends of Henry Ford and General Motors. Learn about the long, and sometimes tenuous, relationship between labor and industry. www.motorcities.org

National Aviation Heritage Area

Find a rich collection of aviation legacies in the "Birthplace of Aviation." Visit the bicycle shops that fostered the Wright Brothers' flying ambitions. Tour museums of complex spacecraft that carried astronauts to the moon. The National Aviation Heritage Area is full of history & tradition. visitnaha.com

Northern Plains National Heritage Area

The remaining free-flowing Missouri River in North Dakota is the ancient homeland of the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians. The beauty of the buttes, breaks, and woody draws drew these cultures and influenced the history they share. www.northernplainsheritage.org

Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway

Explore the canal that enabled shipping between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. The canal opened up the frontier settlement of Ohio. Then it vaulted Ohio into national commercial prominence in the early 1830s. www.ohioanderiecanalway.com

Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area

Explore a 37-county region in northeast Iowa. Partnerships and activities celebrate farm life, agribusiness, and rural communities past and present. Silos and Smokestacks tells the story of American agriculture and its global significance. www.silosandsmokestacks.org

National Trails

California National Historic Trail

In the 1840s and 1850s, over 250,000 emigrants traveled West. Their quest—the gold fields and rich farmlands of California. Follow in their footsteps and view over 1,000 miles of trail ruins and traces across 10 states. www.nps.gov/cali

Ice Age National Scenic Trail

Set foot on unique glacial features from the last Ice Age. Winding through Wisconsin, this 1,200-mile route follows terminal moraines of the most recent glaciation. The trail links six units of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve. www.nps.gov/iatr

Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail

70,000 Mormons traveled this route from 1846 to 1869 escaping religious persecution. Follow their stories across five states—Illinois to Salt Lake City, Utah—over 1,300 miles. www.nps.gov/mopi

North Country National Scenic Trail

The longest national trail links scenic, natural, historic, and cultural areas across seven states. Visitors experience a variety of landscapes and communities over 4,200 miles. www.nps.gov/noco

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Thirty-one men, one woman, and a baby traveled from the plains of the Midwest to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. From 1804 to 1806 the "Corps of Discovery" opened a window into the west for the young United States. www.nps.gov/lecl

Pony Express National Historic Trail

Follow the route used to carry mail nearly 2,000 miles. Riders on horseback traveled from St. Joseph, Missouri and San Francisco, California in 1860-1861. www.nps.gov/poex

Santa Fe National Historic Trail

Thousands migrated westward to the Oregon country beginning in 1841. See more than 2,000 miles of trail ruins and traces in six states. All are reminders of the sacrifices, struggles, and triumphs of early American settlers. www.nps.gov/oreg

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

Commemorate the survival of the Cherokee people who, in 1838-1839, were forcibly removed from their homelands in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee to live in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. www.nps.gov/trte

Nine major trails in the National Trails System cross parts of the Midwest.

Communities, Grants, & Programs

The National Park Service works with communities to promote conservation, preservation, and recreation through programs, including: Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance; Land and Water Conservation Fund; National Historic Landmarks Program; and others. Learn more at www.nps.gov/getinvolved/communities.htm

nps.gov/midwest

Native AMERICA



Effigy Mounds National Monument, Iowa

Located on the bluffs above the Mississippi River, Prehistoric Woodland Indians constructed mounds in the shapes of birds and animals. Even more common were shapes of cones and cylinders. The site offers superb panoramas as well as insight to these ancient cultures. www.nps.gov/efmo

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Ohio

The prehistoric Hopewell culture lived in the Ohio River Valley from about 200 BCE to CE 500. The culture constructed earthen mounds of various shapes and enclosures. The mounds offer insight into the lives of the Hopewell people. www.nps.gov/hocu

Indigenous dances and other traditions are preserved by descendants of early Plains cultures.



Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, North Dakota

Situated at the junction of the Knife and Missouri Rivers, Northern Plains Indians maintained an agricultural lifeway in earthlodge villages. Sacagawea was living at the Knife River Villages at the 1804 arrival of Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery. She proved a valuable member of the expedition. www.nps.gov/knri

Pipestone National Monument, Minnesota

View ancient pipestone (catlinite) quarries—used by American Indians for hundreds of years. American Indian artisans carve ceremonial and traditional pipes from the soft, red stone. www.nps.gov/pipe

A copper cutout of a stylized bird, made by the people of the Hopewell Culture over 2,000 years ago.

PRESIDENTIAL PARKS

Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Missouri

President Truman took America from its traditional isolationism into the age of international involvement. Experience his political career and final years as a former president. A man of modest ambition, Truman never forgot where he came from. www.nps.gov/hstr

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, Iowa

Born in a two-room cottage, Herbert Hoover could have been any small town boy. This place reveals how family, faith, education, and hard work can open a world of opportunity to a child of simple beginnings. www.nps.gov/heho

James A. Garfield National Historic Site, Ohio

In 1880, James Garfield used his front porch as a platform to greet thousands during his presidential campaign. Today, the porch serves as a gateway to the story of the 20th President. www.nps.gov/jaga

Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, Indiana

Abraham Lincoln grew from youth to manhood in southern Indiana. Many character and moral traits formed and were nurtured here. His mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, is buried here. www.nps.gov/libo

Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Illinois

At the center of a restored 1860s neighborhood stands the only home Lincoln ever owned. We know Lincoln as the 16th President. But he was also a spouse, parent, and neighbor. He experienced the same life, hopes, dreams, and challenges still experienced by people today. www.nps.gov/liho

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, Missouri

In 1843, Civil War general and future 18th President, U. S. Grant met his wife Julia Dent. She lived at her family's farm located on 10 acres in present-day suburban St. Louis. This began an association with the property that lasted until his death in 1885. www.nps.gov/ulsg

President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site, Arkansas

Explore the formative years of President Clinton's childhood. The home served as the center of Clinton's family life for his first 10 years. Clinton's extended family provided him with his first notions of "social justice." This theme carried throughout his political and post-presidential work. www.nps.gov/widc

William Howard Taft National Historic Site, Ohio

High atop one of Cincinnati's most prominent hilltops stands a two-story Greek Revival house. Here 27th President, and 10th Chief Justice, William Howard Taft was born and raised. Hard work, a good education, and an interest in civic duty made the Taft family leaders over the years. www.nps.gov/wiho



Outdoor ADVENTURES

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Wisconsin

Twenty-one islands and 12 miles of mainland host a unique blend of cultural and natural resources. Visitors can hike, paddle, sail, or cruise to experience these jewels of Lake Superior. Within the boundaries is the largest collection of lighthouses in the country. www.nps.gov/apis

Buffalo National River, Arkansas

Free-flowing for 135 miles, the Buffalo River is one of the few remaining undammed rivers in the lower 48 states. Journey from running rapids to quiet pools. Be surrounded by massive bluffs as you cruise through the Ozark Mountains. www.nps.gov/buff

Missouri National Recreational River, South Dakota

Imagine a 100-mile stretch of North America's longest river. It is a vestige of the untamed American West. Enjoy the wild, winding, mighty Missouri River that continues to flow as nature intended. www.nps.gov/mnrr

Niobrara National Scenic River, Nebraska

The 76-mile section of the Niobrara River in north-central Nebraska flows through mixed environments. The valley's mix of boreal, eastern woodland, and Rocky Mountain forest types are unique. Tallgrass and sand hill prairies add even more diverse scenery. www.nps.gov/niob

Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Missouri

One hundred thirty-four river miles provide year-round canoeing and john-boating through Missouri's timbered Ozark region. Discover huge fresh-water springs, numerous caves, and historic structures. www.nps.gov/ozar

Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway, Wisconsin

Grab your paddle. Head to the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. Together they offer over 200 miles of water to glide and rush through a forested landscape. Paddle, boat, fish, and camp among this wild and scenic beauty. www.nps.gov/sacn

Fort Larned National Historic Site, Kansas

Discover a complete and authentic army post from the 1860s-1870s. This well-preserved fort on the Santa Fe Trail shares a tumultuous history of the Indian Wars era. The sandstone buildings sheltered troops known as the Guardians of the Santa Fe. www.nps.gov/fls

Fort Scott National Historic Site, Kansas

Explore Fort Scott's role in the opening of the west, "Bleeding Kansas," and the Civil War. Established in 1842 to keep peace in the "permanent Indian frontier." The fort is partly restored and reconstructed to that era. www.nps.gov/fosc

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Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio

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Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska

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Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota

The Little Missouri River shaped this wild and broken land. As a young man, the 26th President ranched and hunted during the 1880s. The rugged landscape and strenuous life that he experienced shaped his conservation policy. www.nps.gov/thro

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