

# Sequoia and Kings Canyon

NATIONAL PARKS • CALIFORNIA

## THE MOUNTAINS AND THE TREES

Tremendous earth upheavals, erosion, the movements of ponderous glaciers and raging rivers, the winds, and changing temperatures—all have had a part in sculpturing this vast region. The great Sierra Nevada is a huge block of the earth's crust which has been uplifted and tilted westward in several major stages. Tilting steepened the slopes, thus increasing the speed and the rate of downcutting of the rivers. With the advent of the great ice age, about a million years ago, canyons approaching their present depths were formed.

Ice age glaciers quarried the canyons wider and deeper, great natural amphitheatres called cirques were gouged into the higher crests, and basins were scooped out and later became lakes. Then the glaciers melted back, and the stage was set for renewed plant growth.

The giant sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) are survivors of an ancient lineage of huge trees that grew over much of the earth millions of years ago and persisted in places that escaped the last ice age. Today, these trees grow nowhere else except in the scattered groves on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. They have thrived here because of a particular combination of physical characteristics, climate, growth habits, and fire. You will find their story and the details of the park's geology at the campfire programs, visitor centers, and wayside exhibits.

## WHAT TO SEE

**Giant Forest, Sequoia National Park.** Some of the finest groups of giant sequoias are at Giant Forest. Here is the General Sherman Tree, largest and one of the oldest of living things. Its age is estimated at more than 3,000 years. Nearby attractions include Crescent Meadow, Crystal Cave, Tokopah Valley, and Moro Rock. Short climbs up Moro Rock and Little Baldy afford superb views of valley, forest, and high mountain scenery.

**Grant Grove, Kings Canyon National Park.** Grant Grove is somewhat separated from the main body of the park. Here is the second largest tree in the world—the General Grant. Another notable giant is the Robert E. Lee. In striking contrast to these living survivors of antiquity is the weathered Centennial Stump, remnant of a tree cut in 1875 to provide an exhibit for the Philadelphia World's Fair. Big Stump Basin, where ancient trees were cut during the logging era, is nearby.

The forty-niners who poured over the Sierra Nevada into California reported that wide-spaced columns of mature trees grew on the western slope in awesome magnificence. The ground was a grass parkland, in springtime carpeted with wildflowers. Deer and bears were abundant.

As a result of overprotection from natural ground fires in these parks, much of the west slope is a dog-hair thicket of young pines, white fir, incense cedar, and mature brush. These thickets are almost impenetrable. The accumulation of ground litter hinders the growth of sequoia seedlings and is a fire hazard to sequoias of all ages.

What should be the management policy here? Should the primitive open forest be restored by periodic controlled burning as a substitute for the fires formerly set by lightning and Indians?

**Kings Canyon and Cedar Grove.** Kings Canyon is a steep-walled valley of the South Fork of the Kings River. Towering peaks rise to heights of 1 mile or more above the stream. Cedar Grove is the center of activity in Kings Canyon and a popular base for extensive trail trips into the high country. Zumwalt Meadow, Roaring River Falls, and Mist Falls are readily accessible.

**The high country.** This is a vast region of mountains, canyons, rivers, lakes, and meadows. Evolution Basin, Simpson Meadow, Tehipite Valley, and Kern Canyon are a few of the places where you can find spectacular and unspoiled scenes. Only by trail can you gain acquaintance with this rugged but friendly country. The Sierra crest, ranging in elevation from 11,000 to 14,495 feet at the summit of Mount Whitney, forms the eastern boundary of the parks. There are several hundred miles of trail; those in the higher elevations are generally open from early July through September.

## THINGS TO DO

Generals Highway (open all year) is the main road that connects Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. It winds through the sequoia belt and covers 46 miles, a 2-hour drive from the Ash Mountain Entrance to Grant Grove. Branch roads will take you to other scenic attractions or within short trail distances of them. From Grant Grove,

Suppression of the cougar, one of the most effective predators on deer, contributed to buildups in the mule deer population. The result has been, in some areas, depletion of many browse plants such as snowbush and bitter cherry. Killing of rattlesnakes in areas heavily used by visitors has apparently brought about a great increase in the population of ground squirrels.

These are only a few of many changes in habit and wildlife populations that have come about since establishment of these parks, partly from Park Service management and public use. Ecologists are seeking more detailed information on these changes, and are doing research to determine what corrective measures must be applied. The Park Service has accepted the need for changes in its overprotective management policy.

you travel 30 miles on Calif. 180 through Sequoia National Forest and along the South Fork of the Kings River to Cedar Grove. The road then continues for 6 miles through the canyon to roads end. Here you are at the foot of solid granite walls that tower thousands of feet above the canyon floor. The road to Cedar Grove is closed from about November 1 to May 1.

**Hiking.** Giant Forest, Grant Grove, and Cedar Grove have self-guiding nature trails. Numerous other trails in these areas wait to be enjoyed. More than 900 miles of trails invite you to visit the high country.

**Horseback riding.** In summer you can rent saddle horses and pack animals at corrals near Wolverton (Giant Forest), Grant Grove, and Cedar Grove; and in Owens Valley, which is on the east side of the Sierra; and at many other places around the park's borders.

**Fishing.** Almost all lakes and streams in these parks contain brook, brown, rainbow, and golden trout. The most popular fishing spots are along the Kings River and the forks of the Kaweah River. You can buy a California fishing license at the stores. Certain closures and special regulations are in effect from time to time, so, before you fish, check at a visitor center, at a bulletin board, or with a park ranger.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

**Camping.** Camp only in a designated area. In the back country, camp and build fires only where others have camped before. Pack out all unburnables. Permits, required for back-country travel, can be obtained at park ranger stations.

**Pets.** You may take your pets into the parks, but to protect park wildlife, keep them under physical control at all times—caged, leashed, or confined in your car with ample ventilation. Do not take them on park trails, to campfire programs, or into visitor centers, stores, or eating places.

**Smoking and fires.** Do not smoke while walking along the trails. Break your match and put smokes out before moving on. Never leave a campfire unattended; always extinguish it with water.

**Park features.** Leave unharmed all natural features—flowers, trees, rocks, minerals, and wildlife—for others to enjoy. Preservation is a matter of law, consideration for others, and good citizenship.

**Driving.** Some mountain roads are crooked and steep—so always drive well to the right. Drive slowly and shift into second or low gear to control your speed. Continuous use of your brakes may cause them to overheat, possibly resulting in loss of control of your car. Obey posted speed limits. No motor vehicles are permitted on any trail.

**Hiking.** Avoid over-exertion. Accustom yourself gradually to strenuous hikes and to the higher elevations of the mountains. Stay on the trails. Avoid trips alone. Tell one of your party or a park ranger where you are going and when you expect to be back. Be cautious of high water.

## NATURALIST SERVICES

**Guided trips.** Schedules for naturalist-conducted walks through the big-tree areas and to important scenic points in summer are posted on bulletin boards. Most walks can be completed in one-half day or less. Tours through Crystal Cave are conducted daily, mid-June through Labor Day, from 9:30 a.m. until 3 p.m.; steep 1/2-mile walk to cave entrance; wraps needed; entrance fee.

**Campfire programs.** Illustrated talks on various aspects of the two parks are given at evening campfire programs in summer at Lodgepole, Grant Grove, Dorst, and Cedar Grove. Weekly programs are posted.

**Visitor centers.** Both Lodgepole and Grant Grove

have information and exhibits on the sequoias, park wildlife, geology, history, and Indians. Maps and publications are for sale.

## FACILITIES

**Lodges and cabins** (European plan). Giant Forest and Grant Grove Lodges open late May-Oct.; Camp Kaweah, cabins and motel-type rooms, all year; cabins at Wilsonia and motel-type rooms at Stony Creek, all year.

**Housekeeping cabins.** Camp Kaweah and Meadow Camp at Grant Grove, late May-Oct.

**Trailside Camp.** Bearpaw Meadow Camp on the High Sierra Trail, wood-platform tents, meals in dining tent, 11 miles from Giant Forest, late June-early Sept.

**Reservations** for lodges and cabins should be made by writing to Sequoia and Kings Canyon Hospitality Service, Sequoia National Park, CA 93262; and Kings Canyon Lodge, Wilsonia Lodge, and Stony Creek Village, at Kings Canyon National Park, CA 93633.

**Campgrounds** have running water, toilets, fireplaces, and tables. Gasoline stove recommended. Firewood sold by concessioner. Camping permitted only in designated campgrounds and at established campsites along the trails. Potwisha, Lodgepole, and Cedar Grove camps are best suited to trailer use, but have no electrical or sewer hookups. Dumping stations are at Lodgepole and Grant Grove. Occupancy limited to 14 days; no reservations can be made. Most campgrounds open from June 1 until closed by snow in October. Winter camping at Potwisha.

**Food and supplies.** The cafeteria at Giant Forest is open all year. The coffee shop at Grant Grove and the dining room at Giant Forest Lodge are open from late May-October. The coffee shops at Wilsonia and Stony Creek are open all year.

**Stores.** General supplies and curios may be purchased at Giant Forest, Lodgepole, Grant Grove, Stony Creek, and Cedar Grove in summer. Limited staples are available at Giant Forest, Stony Creek, and Wilsonia in winter.

**Equipment Rental.** Saucers, snowshoes, and ski equipment at Wolverton.

**Post office.** Lodgepole, Sequoia National Park, CA 93262, open all year; Grant Grove, Kings Canyon National Park, CA 93633, summer only.

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**Wildlife.** Do not get near wild animals even though they may appear tame. Some have become accustomed to humans, but they are still wild and may seriously injure you if you approach them. Regulations that prohibit feeding, teasing, touching, or molesting wildlife are enforced for your own safety.

## ADMINISTRATION

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Headquarters of the superintendent is at Ash Mountain. His address is: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Three Rivers, CA 93271.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, park and recreation areas, and for the wise use of all those resources. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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