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ZOOM

in on america

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*The Colorado River viewed from Toroweap Overlook
in the western end of the Grand Canyon
National Park Service photo*

ZOOM In On America

The GRAND Canyon

Grand Canyon National Park, a World Heritage Site, encompasses 1,218,375 acres and lies on the Colorado Plateau in northwestern Arizona. The Canyon, incised by the Colorado River, is immense, averaging 4,000 feet deep for its entire 277 miles. It is 6,000 feet deep at its deepest point and 15 miles at its widest. However, the significance of Grand Canyon is not limited to its geology. Visit the Grand Canyon National Park at www.nps.gov/grca/.



protected (threatened or endangered) plant and animal species. Over 1,500 plant, 355 bird, 89 mammalian, 47 reptile, 9 amphibian, and 17 fish species are found in the park. Regarded as one of the rarest birds in the world, the California condor is the largest land bird in North America with a wingspan of 9 1/2 feet and weighing up to 22 pounds. In prehistoric times, condors ranged from Canada to Mexico, across the southern United States to Florida, and north on the east coast to New York. Due to several factors, the species came close to extinction.

The Park also serves as an ecological refuge. It is home to numerous rare, endemic (found only at Grand Canyon), and specially pro-

Now thanks to a captive breeding program, about 60 condors are soaring over Arizona. Learn more about the Condor Program at www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/condor-re-introduction.htm



Mountain lions inhabit the canyons and forests of Grand Canyon National Park and

are the region's only remaining large predator. In July 2007, Park biologists discovered 3 mountain lion kittens. At five weeks old the kittens had blue eyes, spotted fur and a formidable growl. In a video clip at www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/200710mtlionkit.htm you may watch two of the kittens in their den.

Photos by the National Park Service

The GREATEST Natural Bridge

Rainbow Bridge is the greatest among the known natural bridges of the world, and is unique in that it is not only a symmetrical arch below but presents a curved surface above, thus roughly imitating the arch of the rainbow. The dimensions are 309 feet in the clear from the bottom of the gorge and 278 feet from pier to pier. If it could be arched over the Dome of the Capitol at Washington there would still be room to spare. Visit Rainbow Bridge National Monument in Utah at www.nps.gov/rabr/. Natural bridges are rare, and differ from arches in that they form when a water-course breaks through rock. Learn more about how Rainbow Bridge was formed at www.nps.gov/rabr/naturescience/geologicformations.htm. (© AP photo)



The OLDEST and the LARGEST Trees

The **oldest** living tree in the United States is believed to be a bristlecone pine tree in California named Methuselah, estimated to be 4,700 years old.



The world's **largest** known living tree, the General Sherman giant sequoia in California, weights more than 6,167 tons – as much as 41 blue whales or 740 elephants,

Bristlecone tree (NPS photo)



Visitors pose in front of a giant sequoia tree at Sequoia National Park (© AP photo)

its height is 274 feet, and its girth is 1,020 inches.

Also in California, there are three redwood trees over 370 feet in height, including "Hyperion," estimated at 378.1 feet.

Hiker in a redwood forest (NPS photo)



The **LONGEST** River

At 2,320.7 miles the **Missouri** is America's longest river. It is 2.5 miles longer than the Mississippi River. The Missouri has a history like no other river. It was the great waterway of American Indians, Lewis and Clark, trappers and traders, steamboat captains, and settlers. Visit the Missouri National Recreational River website at www.nps.gov/mnrr/.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

In 1803 President Jefferson appointed Lewis, his private secretary, as leader of the Corps of Discovery, and Lewis offered Clark an invitation to be co-commander. The expedition was to explore the upper reaches of the Missouri

River and by doing so to find the elusive Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. Travel up the Missouri River was difficult and exhausting due to heat, injuries, insects, and the troublesome river itself, with its strong current and many snags. The expedition used a keelboat and two small boats called pirogues to carry their supplies and equipment. They compiled the first general survey of life and material culture of the tribes they encountered. Lewis and Clark also made significant additions to the zoological and botanical knowledge of the continent, providing the first scientific descriptions of many new species of animals, including the grizzly bear, prairie dog, and mountain goat. To learn more about the expedition, please visit: www.nps.gov/mnrr/historyculture/lewisandclark.htm.



Lewis & Clark expedition re-enactors cruise up the Missouri river on a replica keelboat and two pirogues. (© AP photo)



The **TALLEST** Geyser...

Steamboat, a popular attraction in Yellowstone National Park, is the world's tallest active geyser with a height of 300 feet. It erupts without much warning and with no pattern observed. The last eruptions were in May 2005, April 2003, and May 2000. When active, it can erupt as frequently as every four days, but it has been known to skip 50 years. View more photos of the 2005 eruption at www.nps.gov/archive/yell/tours/thismonth/may2005/jimsteamboat.htm (National Park Service photo)

Established in 1872, **Yellowstone National Park** is America's first national park. It is home to a large variety of wildlife including grizzly bears, wolves, bison, and elk. With half of the earth's geothermal features, Yellowstone holds

the planet's most diverse and intact collection of geysers, hot springs, mudpots, and fumaroles. Its more than 300 geysers make up two thirds of all those found on earth. Check out these pages to learn more about Yellowstone National Park: Yellowstone InDepth Videos: www.nps.gov/archive/yell/yellowstoneinddepth/episode1.htm; Old Faithful webcam: www.nps.gov/archive/yell/oldfaithfulcam.htm; Geothermal Resources: www.nps.gov/yell/naturescience/geothermalresources.htm; The Geyser Study and Observation Association: www.geyserstudy.org/

...and the **TALLEST** Waterfall

With a total drop of 2,425 feet,

Yosemite Falls is the tallest waterfall in the United States. It is actually made up of three separate falls: Upper Yosemite Fall (1,430 feet), the middle cascades (675 feet), and Lower Yosemite Fall (320 feet).

Yosemite National Park, one of the first wilderness parks in the United States, is internationally recognized for its spectacular granite cliffs, waterfalls, clear streams, giant sequoia groves, and biological diversity. It was designated a World Heritage Site in 1984. Visit Yosemite National Park at www.nps.gov/yose/.

The Park is home to hundreds of American **black bears**. These bears have a voracious appetite. They also are incredibly curious and have an amazing sense of smell. This combination tempts them to seek the visitors' high-calorie food. Despite their name, most black bears in Yosemite are not black in color. Most are some shade of brown, ranging from almost blond, to reddish brown, to a dark chocolate color. (National Park Service photo)



(© AP photo)

The HIGHEST and the LOWEST Places



The sun sets as Mt. McKinley casts its reflection on Reflection Pond (© AP photo)

Mount McKinley, located within Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska, is the highest mountain on the North American continent. Measured from the 2,000 foot lowlands to its snowy summit at 20,320 feet, the mountain's vertical relief of 18,000 feet is greater than that of Mount Everest. Denali, the "High One," is the name Athabascan native people gave the massive peak that crowns the 600-mile-long Alaska Range. Visit the park on the web at www.nps.gov/dena/.

The "Big Five"

Denali is well-known for its diversity of wildlife. A goal for many visitors to the park is to see the "big five": the moose, the caribou, the Dall sheep, the wolf, and the grizzly bear. More at www.nps.gov/dena/naturescience/mammals.htm



Visitors look out over Zabriskie Point. (© AP photo)

Badwater Basin, in Death Valley National Park, is the lowest place in North America and one of the lowest places in the world at 282 feet below sea level. Death Valley: The name is forbidding and gloomy. Yet in the valley, much of it below sea level, you can find colorful badlands, snow-covered peaks, beautiful sand dunes, rugged canyons, and the hottest driest spot in North America. Web site: www.nps.gov/deva/

Zabriskie Point

Looking out from Zabriskie Point, you are surrounded by almost unearthly, desert landscapes. These are badlands. Everywhere you look, you see bone-dry, finely-sculpted, golden brown rock. What processes work to form this spectacular scenery? Learn at www.nature.nps.gov/geology/usgsnps/deva/ftzab1.html

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Glossary (with page numbers where the words appear in the text)

badlands - any section of barren land where rapid erosion has cut the loose, dry soil or soft rocks into strange shapes (4)

cascade - a steep high usually small waterfall, especially one part of a bigger waterfall (3)

fumeroles - steam vents and the hottest hydrothermal features in Yellowstone. They have so little water that it boils and flashes to steam before reaching the surface. (3)

geyser - hot spring that periodically erupts, shooting scalding water and steam into the air (3)

hot springs are produced by the emergence of heated groundwater from within the Earth. (3)

mud pot - a type of hot spring containing boiling mud, usually sulfurous and often multicolored (3)

rugged - large, rough, and strong-looking (4)

snags consist of dead trees that remain standing or leaning against another tree. (3)

Native Americans About Nature

- We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children. (*tribe unknown*)

- Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it. (*Arapaho*)

- All plants are our brothers and sisters. They talk to us and if we listen, we can hear them. (*Arapaho*)

- When we show our respect for other living things, they respond with respect for us. (*Arapaho*)

- Listen to the voice of nature, for it holds treasures for you. (*Huron*)

- When a man moves away from nature his heart becomes hard. (*Lakota*)

- All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life. He is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. - *Chief Seattle*

- Man has responsibility, not power. (*Tuscarora*)