

## National Parks Extravaganza



If you are looking for an itinerary to tick off many of America's iconic national parks in one go, then look no further than this epic adventure. National parks such as Yosemite, Death Valley, Zion, Bryce Canyon, Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain conjure up images of jaw-dropping alpine scenery, multi-layered canyons and spires carved out of rock and then add the adult playground of Las Vegas and the unique wildlife opportunities in Wyoming and South Dakota to the mix and you are left with a trip you will never forget.

## Day 1/2

After a day or two in the gorgeous 'City by the Bay' head to Newark and collect your Cruise America Motorhome. Head east across the fertile San Joaquin Valley towards one of many highlights on this trip and the magnificent Yosemite National Park and some of the most dramatic geology to be found anywhere on earth. We suggest stopping at the full-service Yosemite Pines RV resort about an hour from the west entrance.

[115 miles to Groveland. Visit Bridal Veil and Yosemite Falls and, if you can, hike the steep trail to Inspiration Point which will reward you with one of the most iconic views of Yosemite Valley.](#)

<https://yosemitepinesrv.com/>

## Day 3

You have a long but spectacular drive today as you head back into Yosemite and take Route 120 across the top of the park. You will reach nearly 11,000ft above sea level at the Tioga Pass and it will feel like you are driving across the roof of the Sierra Nevada mountains. After reaching the town of Lee Vining, head south along Route 395 and into the deserts of the Eastern Sierra. You will be driving through the terrific Owens Valley, said to be the deepest valley in the United States with the mountains either side at least 10,000ft higher than the highway. If you look to your right as you enter Big Pine, you will see Mt. Whitney, the highest peak in the contiguous USA.

[200 miles to Lone Pine. Stop in Bishop for its heady mix of outdoor activities on offer including some of the best rock-climbing opportunities in the world. Visit Manzanar. As a contrast to the natural beauty around you, this was the site of the relocation camp that housed 10,000 internees during WW2.](#)

<https://bouldercreekrvresort.com/>

## Day 4/5

After the alpine peaks of the last few days it is time for something different as you head through the northern reaches of the Mojave Desert and some of the harshest landscapes in the country. Between the months of September and June head through the dramatic and barren Death Valley National Park, otherwise in the summer months of July and August, travel further south through Barstow for your 2 night stop in iconic Las Vegas. Your campground at the Circus Circus is situated directly on the Strip.

[300 miles via Barstow or 232 miles via Death Valley. Spend your day wandering the famous Las Vegas Strip and enjoy the wealth of entertainment options available to you such as Cirque du Soleil which offer different themes shows in several Las Vegas hotels.](#)

<https://www.circuscircus.com/rv-park-1>

## Day 6

After the man-made delights of Las Vegas, it's time to tick off another highlight of the trip as you head to the mighty Zion National Park. Utah's first national park will astound you with its soaring multi-coloured cliffs high over the Virgin River and its deep silent canyons with its hanging gardens.

You may also be surprised by how green and lush this park is compared to other national parks nearby. This park gets very busy in the summer, but a free shuttle bus operates to take you to all the major sites which keeps road traffic to a minimum. We suggest staying at the fabulous Watchman Campground just a few hundred yards from the parks south entrance. It is also one of the few campgrounds operated by the national park system that have electrical hookups. This a great place to spend more than one night so you can enjoy everything the park has to offer and also the appealing town of Springdale nearby.

[150 miles to Springdale. Enjoy the wonderful hikes in Zion such as the signature Zion Narrows hike and the famous and rightly fearsome Angels Landing hike.](#)

<https://www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/watchman-campground.htm>

#### Day 7

Follow the Zion-Mount Carmel Hwy as it zigzags its way out of the canyon. Once through the long tunnels, we suggest parking up and hiking the short Canyon Overlook Trail for staggering views of the canyon you have just left. After Carmel Junction, head north along highway 89 until you reach the jaw-dropping and exquisite Bryce Canyon National Park, one of the geological wonders of the world. You have only driven 80 miles from Zion, but this looks and feels completely different. Contrary to its name, it is not a canyon at all but a stunning landscape of eroded spires (called 'hoodoos') that fill amphitheatres along the edge of the Paunsaugunt Plateau. The most famous of which is the Bryce Amphitheater where most of the park's facilities are. We suggest staying at Ruby's Inn RV park just a few miles north of the park entrance with its full-service amenities.

[70 miles to Bryce Canyon National Park. Take one of the short hikes into the Bryce Amphitheater between Sunrise and Sunset point and spend time with these silent giants of sandstone to appreciate the beauty and serenity of this place.](#)

<https://www.brycecanyoncampgrounds.com/>

#### Day 8

Today the highlight is the drive as much as the destination as you head along the glorious Highway 12 towards Capitol Reef National Park. This road has been designated an 'All-American road' for its sheer beauty and diverse scenery packed into a relatively short distance. Take your time and pull over at the many look-out points to take it all in from the vertiginous "Hogsback" section to the 9000ft summit with views of the vast and wild Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and the Henry Mountains. Once you reach the town of Torrey, head east a short distance to Capitol Reef. Most of the sights can be seen from the 25-mile Capitol Reef Scenic Drive including the parks centrepiece, the magnificent Waterpocket Fold, a 100-mile long geological wrinkle on the earth!

[120 miles to Fruita. Stop at Kodachrome Basin State Park with its 67 pillars of rock called sand pipes, found nowhere else on earth. Enjoy the scenic beauty of Highway 12.](#)

<https://www.nps.gov/care/planyourvisit/fruitacampground.htm>

#### Day 9/10

The next 2 days are long drives as you transition from the red rocks and canyons of southern Utah to the alpine peaks and meadows of Wyoming. You will have just under 500 miles to cover as you travel due north mostly along Interstate 15 into Idaho before crossing over into Wyoming. Salt Lake City

makes a convenient stop approximately halfway and the KOA campground is just 14 blocks from downtown. Continue on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day to the Colter Bay RV park situated within the majestic Grand Teton National Park.

475 miles to Colter Bay over 2 days. Trace your family tree at the world's largest genealogy library in Salt Lake City. Visit Antelope Island State Park for its bison, bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope that roam wild around the park. Stop at the popular and appealing town of Jackson, Wyoming for its lively atmosphere and beautiful setting.

<https://koa.com/campgrounds/salt-lake-city/> & <https://www.gtlic.com/rv/colter-bay-rv-park>

Day 11/12

You only have a short drive today, so we suggest spending some time to enjoy Grand Teton National Park. The campground is set on the shores of Jackson Lake with the dramatic mountain peaks behind so set off early for one of the great hikes into the park. In the afternoon head up into Yellowstone National Park and spend the next few days enjoying the magnificence of the world's first National Park. The main park road is over 140 miles in total length, and you will often see traffic jams involving bear, bison and moose sightings so it's not something you can complete and see all in one day. Therefore, we suggest at least a few days to explore properly.

45 miles to Yellowstone National Park. See Old Faithful shooting its thousands of gallons of water at predictable intervals. Visit the Norris Geyser Basin for the Steamboat Geyser and the Madison area for the famous and psychedelic colours of the Grand Prismatic Spring.

<https://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/campgrounds.htm>

Day 13

Enjoy some more time in Yellowstone before heading out of the park through the stunning Shoshone Canyon and to the small town of Cody. Arrive in good time so you can take in the Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, five world-class museums in one detailing the history of the American West. Also enjoy some family fun at the Cody Nite Rodeo. The only rodeo in the world that operates nightly through June, July and August.

95 miles to Cody. Take in the Cody Nite rodeo which is open every night in the months of June, July & August and enjoy a family-fun evening.

<https://koa.com/campgrounds/cody/>

Day 14/15

Spend the next 2 days travelling across Wyoming stopping at Devils Tower National Monument, this towering geologic feature is known the world over as one of the locations for the cult movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Overnight in central Wyoming before travelling to the Black Hills region just across the border in South Dakota.

318 miles to Spearfish. Explore the sacred monolith that is Devils Tower and learn how it means so much to many different people.

<https://koa.com/campgrounds/buffalo-wyoming/> & <https://koa.com/campgrounds/spearfish/>

## Day 16

You only have a short drive today so you can pick and choose what you would like to see in this beautiful and varied region. Stop by the fantastic manmade structures, such as the well-known Mt Rushmore and the not so well-known but equally impressive Crazy Horse Monument. Whilst in Custer State Park, we can personally recommend the fabulous Bluebell Campground.

80 miles to Custer State Park. See the Statues of Presidents in Rapid City. Explore the gold-rush-era buildings and recently built casinos of Deadwood and learn about the history of the American Bison and the Northern Plains people at the fantastic Tatanka Museum which was founded by Kevin Costner who spent time here filming the movie *Dances with Wolves*. TIP: If you have a few extra days, we would certainly recommend you extend your stay in South Dakota and the visit beautiful and dramatic Badlands National Park.

<https://gfp.sd.gov/csp-campgrounds/>

## Day 17

A long drive awaits as you head through rolling hills and vast farmlands of eastern Wyoming. This area is cowboy country so you may well see cattle being rounded up by men and women on horseback.

240 miles to Cheyenne. Visit the capitol building and the State Museum in Cheyenne. If travelling in late June, look out for the fabulous Frontier Days Festival that runs for 10 days and includes Rodeos, concerts, chilli cook-offs and much more. Do book campsites in advance at this time.

<https://koa.com/campgrounds/cheyenne/>

## Day 18

Even though this is the last full day of your RV adventure, you still have one of the highlights waiting for you. Continue into the state of Colorado for your last night of this fabulous itinerary and to Estes Park, the gateway town to the mighty Rocky Mountain National Park.

86 miles to Estes Park. Drive the Trail Ridge Road across the top of the park and feel like you are driving over the roof of the world at over 12,000ft with its spectacular endless views of mountain peaks and deep valleys.

<https://www.jellystoneofestes.com/>

## Day 19

Just a 55-mile drive back to the Cruise America depot in Denver to return your motorhome.

Depart: San Francisco, Las Vegas or Denver.

Duration: 19 days

Distance: 2349 miles.