



Do's and Don'ts of Reserving a National Park Lodge: Timing is Everything in Securing a Stay

2016 is the Centennial of the National Park Service

DENVER – April 14, 2016 – The famed National Park lodges come with world-class attractions created by Mother Nature: mesmerizing lakes, majestic mountains, river-cut canyons, painted deserts and artistic red rock formations. They are just out the front door, maybe seen through a window or from a deck or porch with a rocking chair. Getting that room or rocking chair is not as easy as it sounds, for there are do's and don'ts that certainly come into play, especially this year – 2016 – the [centennial of the National Park Service](#), when park attendance is expected to soar.

The legendary railroad companies (such as Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe) built many of the grande dame hotels and, in turn, created properties that often featured soaring lobbies, thick log beams and impressive fireplaces. They are temples to the environmental awe of nature. And they are prized accommodations for Americans but also for visitors from around the world.

According to [Xanterra Parks & Resorts](#), the largest park concession management company overseeing the lodges in Glacier, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon South Rim, Death Valley, Mt. Rushmore, Crater Lake, Rocky Mountain and Zion National Parks, here are some tips to maximize your stay at these iconic properties:

DO

Stay in the park for convenience. National parks are big. Death Valley is three million acres and it's not even the largest national park. By lodging inside the boundaries, you eliminate hours spent driving to and from the park. In some cases, that means long lines to get in. That affords you more time to explore and to savor the scenery. Leave your car parked and take advantage of trains ([Grand Canyon Railway](#)), in-park shuttles, walking paths, bicycles, horses, mules and organized guided tours.

Book rooms several months in advance if possible. The Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park; El Tovar in Phantom Ranch and Bright Angel Lodge in Grand Canyon National Park; Glacier Hotel in Glacier National Park; and other well-known historic facilities can be booked eight months or so in advance. Still, between May 1 and late-June and between mid-August and mid-October, it is still possible to reserve a room within days of arrival. Although less famous lodgings often have availability closer to the arrival date, it's still wise to book as far

in advance as possible. National parks accept reservations 13 months in advance. For Yellowstone National Park, however, summer reservations open up May 1 for the following year (May 1, 2016, you can book for May 1, 2017 through October 2017). For winter, reservations open March 15 for the following winter (March 15, 2016, you can book for the winter of 2016/2017). Check out xanterra.com for more information.

Be flexible with dates and hotels/lodges. Doing so gives you a better chance to secure a reservation.

Check for cancellations. Cancellations do occur. The easiest way to check for cancellations is at the individual park website or by calling central reservations at 888-297-2757.

Make dinner reservations ahead of time. A bonus of lodging at a signature property is the ability to book meals at that hotel's main dining room many months in advance. Guests staying at the Grand Canyon's El Tovar, for example, may make dinner reservations at the noted El Tovar dining room six months in advance. Others must wait until 30 days in advance. Many park dining options do not require reservations. To make a reservation, visit the dining section of each park lodge's website; often you must call or email the restaurant directly.

Book guided tours in advance. Select the guided tours you want and book them as far in advance as possible, which also provides more choice when there are multiple departure times. At Grand Canyon National Park, for example, the popular half-day South Rim mule trips on the rim or overnight trips to Phantom Ranch may be booked 13 months in advance.

DON'T

Don't assume a room comes with standard features. Read the descriptions carefully. Amenities vary. Some rooms use shared bathrooms (some of these lodges date back to the turn of the last century); other rooms come with private baths, telephones and coffee makers. Often rooms do not have televisions or air-conditioning, although some may.

Don't pay unnecessary fees. When you book lodging and activities directly with Xanterra Parks & Resorts, the largest operator of park-based hotels, restaurants and stores, you avoid paying third-party booking fees. Furthermore, you'll be dealing with company representatives who know the properties, and in some cases, are based there. For reservations, call 888-297-2757.

Don't unwittingly book the wrong lodging. Some online booking sites often prominently feature accommodations outside the parks and are paid commissions for doing so.



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About Xanterra Parks & Resorts

Known for its “Legendary Hospitality with a Softer Footprint,” Xanterra Parks & Resorts® entities include lodges, restaurants, tours and activities in national and state parks, as well as resorts, a cruise line, railway and tour companies. Xanterra Parks & Resorts has operations in Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Zion, Crater Lake, Glacier, Rocky Mountain and Petrified Forest

National Parks; Mount Rushmore National Memorial; Furnace Creek Resort in Death Valley National Park; and five Ohio State Park Lodges as well as the Geneva Marina at Ohio's Geneva State Park. Xanterra Parks & Resorts also owns and operates Kingsmill Resort in Williamsburg, Va., the Grand Canyon Railway and Hotel in Williams, Ariz., the Grand Hotel in Tusayan, Ariz., Windstar Cruises, VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations, Country Walkers and Austin Adventures.

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