



Digital Detox in the National Parks

*A ‘Hot Spot’ Here is a Place with a Campfire
Special 4th Graders Visit Park Free Packages for 2016*

PHANTOM RANCH, THE BOTTOM OF THE GRAND CANYON – May 4, 2016 –

Whether you are deep in the Grand Canyon at Phantom Ranch or perched on the South Rim at one of the historic lodges, the night sky is so dark that it’s easy to imagine yourself in another time – a time when the first people roamed the canyon 12,000 years ago. And they did not have iPhones, tablets or WiFi. The only “hot spot” was a fire if they were lucky enough to have one.

The Grand Canyon, like so many national parks, is a place to get as close as you can to getting off the grid, to exhale, to experience the rejuvenating powers of nature, to step away and let nature dictate your schedule.

That's why it's a perfect place to embrace a “digital detox” and go offline and savor the connections – to family, to nature, to deep reflection – that come with turning off the phone, leaving the laptop at home, and being unavailable to everyone but your sentient companions.

At a time when the average American spends more than half of his or her waking life staring at a screen, this is more important than ever.

Here are five national parks (and one value-driven kids program to many of the national parks) where you can replace the beeps, vibrations, rings and dings of the digital life with the call of the wild (which is usually, very quiet and peaceful).

1. Grand Canyon National Park

The Grand Canyon is so isolated from technology and ambient light that amateur astronomers annually hold a sky viewing party at the South Rim because it's so dark. Hike down to the bottom, take a rafting trip, or just explore the historic treats along the rim, including the Hopi House, Lookout Studio and Hermits Rest. Check in at the historic El Tovar, the first upscale hotel built on the rim, or four other lodges, each with a distinctive style ranging from the historic Bright Angel Lodge to the modern Thunderbird Lodge. Even if you want to connect, cell and Internet service are slow and spotty due to the rural location and restricted bandwidth. You’re better off tuning off and embracing nature.

For more information and reservations, visit grandcanyonlodges.com or call 888-297-2757.

1A. The Grand Canyon Railway

Originally completed in 1901, the Grand Canyon Railway departs daily year-round (except Christmas Day) at 9:30 a.m. from Williams, Arizona, (about 30 miles west of Flagstaff, just off Interstate 40) and rolls almost due north to the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park, arriving at 11:45 a.m. The trip measures 65 miles and takes 2 hours and 15 minutes each way. The train arrives back in Williams at 5:45 p.m. When scheduled, the second train leaves Williams at 10:30 a.m. and returns back to Williams at 6:45 p.m. Each train lays-over at the Grand Canyon (steps from the rim itself) for 3.5 hours. There is no WiFi on the train...so it's a throw-back to the good old days when you looked out the window, socialized (but not on a device) and learned how to relax.

For more information or to book a reservation, visit www.thetrain.com or call 1-800-THE-TRAIN (843-8724).

2. Glacier National Park

Remote and stunning, Glacier National Park calls itself the Crown of the Continent. You could spend a week here on your detox and still not see it all. With 700 miles of trails, a hike is a must. So is a drive along Going to the Sun Road, 50 miles through the park's wild interior, winding around mountainsides in northwest Montana. The lodging choices include the historic Lake McDonald Lodge, built in 1913, the Rising Sun Motor Inn, built in 1940, and the Village Inn at Apgar, built in 1956, with stunning lake views. If you're too tempted to check in to your digital life, Glacier National Park is a perfect choice to unplug; cell and WiFi connectivity are extremely limited.

For more information and reservations, visit glaciernationalparklodges.com or call 888-297-2757.

3. Death Valley National Park

The extreme reigns at Death Valley National Park's 3.3 million acres (the largest national park in the lower 48 states) from the lowest spot in North America, Badwater, 282 feet below sea level, to Telescope Peak, the highest point in the park at 11,049 feet and a perfect place to watch the sun rise or set. The park is so removed from civilization that it's one of the only Gold Tier-designated International Dark Sky Parks in the United States where stargazers can actually see the Milky Way with the naked eye. Best of all: Cell phones generally don't have service in the park except at the resort hotels. The place to stay is the Furnace Creek Resort, a true American oasis featuring the historic, AAA Four Diamond Inn at Furnace Creek and the family-friendly Ranch at Furnace Creek.

For more information and reservations, visit furnacecreekresort.com or call 800-236-7916.

4. **Zion National Park**

Zion is a natural theme park with a seeming never-ending variety of rides. Hike the Virgin River through the Narrows with walls 1,000 feet high, go canyoneering through breathtaking slot canyons, climb the sandstone cliffs, or backpack over 90 miles of trails in the park's 146,000 acres. Zion Lodge, offering 76 rooms, six suites, and 40 cabins, is the only lodge in the park. While there is cell phone reception at the lodge and in nearby Springdale, it is spotty throughout the park. So grab a walking stick and take an undisturbed hike up the Virgin River with its wondrous views. Just leave your cell phone behind.

For more information and reservations, visit zionlodge.com or call 888-297-2757.

5. **Yellowstone National Park**

What better place to disconnect from modern communications than Yellowstone, the world's first national park? Grizzly bears, wolves, bison, and elk prowl the grounds so it's a great place to store the selfie stick and break out a serious camera. Whether it is snowshoeing in winter, fishing in the warmer months, or day hiking, there is a long list of activities to clear your head. The lodging options are as varied as the activities – from the Old Faithful Snow Lodge to the historic Old Faithful Inn, dating to 1904. There is cell phone service only in developed areas with lodging, but wouldn't it be more interesting to tell the time by the eruptions at Old Faithful Geyser?

For more information and reservations, visit yellowstonenationalparklodges.com or call 307-344-7311.

No Screens Here Kids – 4th Graders Travel Free

To mark the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service, Austin Adventures will offer a program of **4th Graders Travel FREE in 2016**. The program supports the “Every Kid in a Park” initiative created by the National Park Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service and the White House whereby fourth-grade students across the country have free access to National Parks throughout the 2015-2016 school year. As advocates of this program, award-winning National Parks trip specialist Austin Adventures is waiving trip fees for all fourth graders traveling on any of their National Park adventures in 2016, which represents a significant savings for a family. (*Offer subject to certain conditions, see www.austinadventures.com/find-your-park.*)

Nearly a dozen all-inclusive National Park trips – including Grand Canyon, Kenai Fiords, Bryce,

Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Yosemite, Glacier, Arches & Canyonlands, Black Hills (Mt. Rushmore), Death Valley and Create Lake are featured. All adult rates are per person, double occupancy, for these trips and include lodging, meals, transfers and authentic, personal service from your guides:

For travel experiences available from **Xanterra Parks & Resorts** and its affiliated properties, visit xanterra.com/explore.

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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