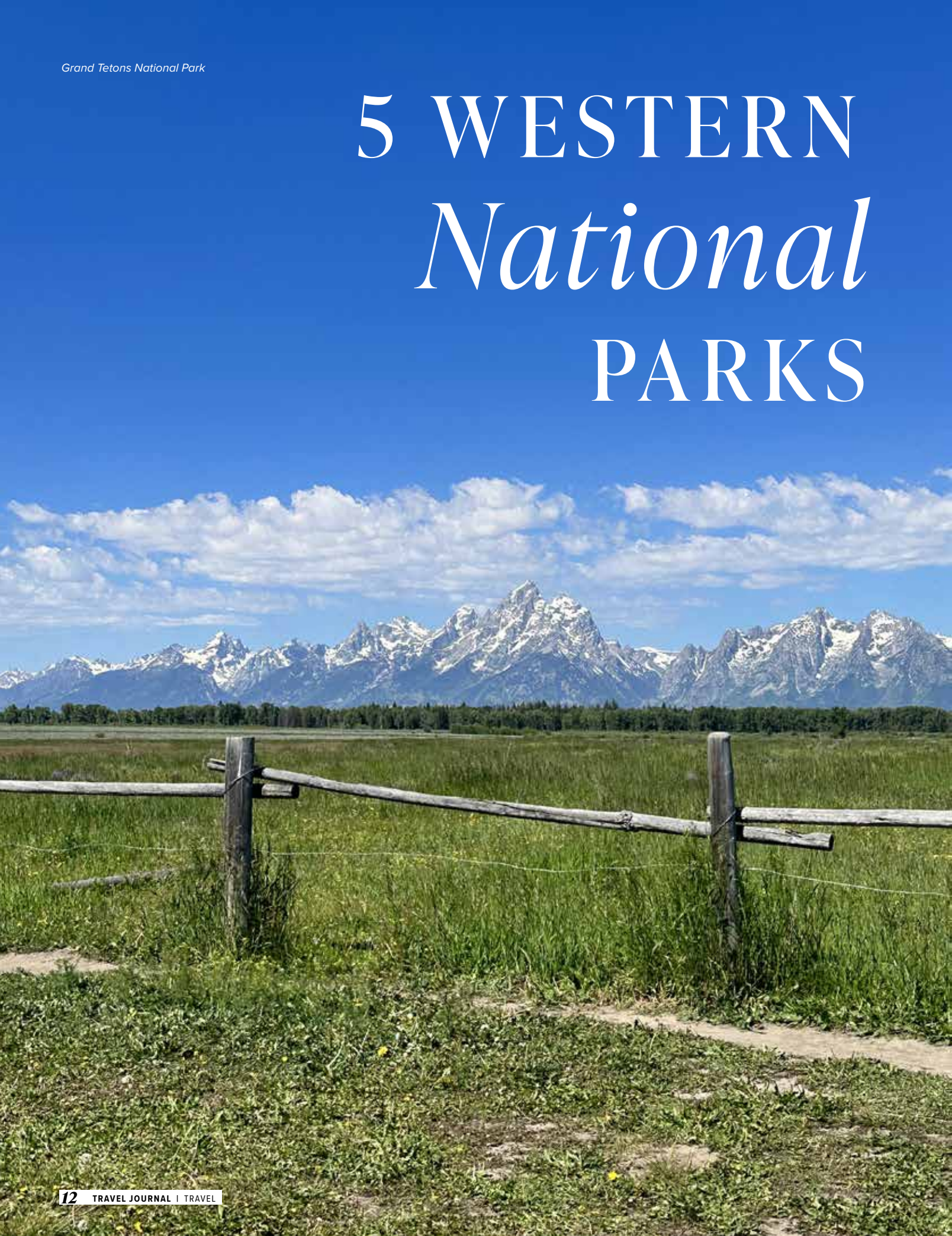


Grand Tetons National Park

5 WESTERN *National* PARKS



Yellowstone National Park

Time for an Outdoor Adventure!

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN LANIER-GRAHAM

There are 40 national parks west of the Mississippi (not including Alaska and Hawaii). These beautiful settings offer great outdoor adventures! Consider getting an annual park pass and taking to the road.

Here are five of our favorite Western national parks.

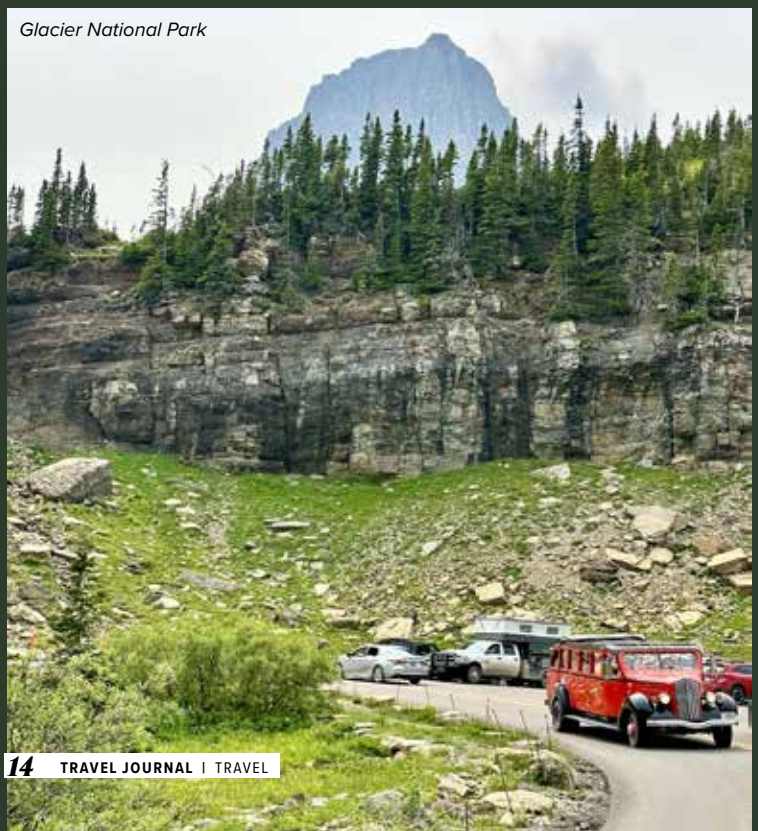
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Grand Tetons National Park



Glacier National Park



Glacier National Park

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING

Grand Teton National Park is near the mountain resort town of Jackson, Wyoming. It covers about 310,000 acres and features the soaring peaks of the Teton Range. I recommend entering the park north of Jackson on U.S. Highway 191.

The scenic drive offers breathtaking vistas of the Teton Range, with the tallest, Grand Teton, soaring to 13,775 feet. I suggest taking the Jenny Lake Scenic Drive, a 30-minute side route that meanders along the east shore of Jenny Lake.

Continue to the Colter Bay Visitor Center, home to the Indigenous Arts and Cultural Demonstration Program. After leaving the visitor center, drive ten miles along the John D Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway to Yellowstone National Park.

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING, IDAHO AND MONTANA

Yellowstone National Park stretches over 2.2 million acres through Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. Its most recognized icon is Old Faithful, which erupts about 20 times daily. While waiting for the famed geyser, visit the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center.

Take time to stop at the other geysers along the drive. Each is different, and watching the natural bubbling cauldrons is fascinating. Yellowstone Falls is also worth a stop. The dizzying view of the powerful falls left me speechless.

If you're looking for a place to stay in the park, I recommend Canyon Lodge & Cabins (**YellowstoneNationalParkLodges.com**). There are several types of accommodations and dining options, all in the heart of Yellowstone.

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Grand Canyon National Park.
Photo by William Graham



Grand Canyon National Park.
Photo by William Graham

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, MONTANA

Glacier National Park is probably the most beautiful national park I've visited. The splendor of Montana comes to life in the million-acre park with its glacier lakes, high mountains, and abundant wildlife.

While you must have a reservation to enter Glacier between 6 a.m. and 3 p.m., there are ways around it. We stayed in nearby Hungry Horse, only ten minutes from the Apgar (west) entry. We headed back each afternoon at 3 to explore for a couple of hours before sunset. If you book a stay at the classic Lake McDonald Lodge, you don't need vehicle reservations—however, the lodge books up months in advance.

My favorite way to see Glacier is via the park's Red Bus tours (**GlacierNationalParkLodges.com/red-bus-tours**). Glacier has a fleet of historic red buses, lovingly restored to take you up the steep, narrow Going-to-the-Sun Road. We were happy not to have driven the road, but instead, we could sit back and watch the wonders unfold around us.

SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK, ARIZONA

Saguaro National Park in Tucson is split into two districts—the Rincon Mountain District, east of Tucson, and the Tucson Mountain District, west of town. Together, they cover 500 square miles, and the Rincon Mountain District backs to the Saguaro Wilderness Area.

The paved Cactus Forest Loop Drive in the east and the graded dirt Bajada Loop Drive in the west offer the best introduction to the park. There is some primitive camping in the park, or you can book a stay at one of the accommodations we recommend in the Weekend Getaways article on page 8.

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, ARIZONA

Of course, our state's most famous national park is Grand Canyon National Park. The 1.2-million-acre park encompasses 278 miles along the Colorado River. The South Rim is the most popular tourist destination but extremely busy during summer. Fall is ideal. Shuttle buses run along the South Rim or bypass driving in the park by taking the Grand Canyon Railway (**TheTrain.com**) from Williams to the South Rim.

Stop by El Tovar for lunch or dinner and to see the classic old lodge.

Avoid crowds by visiting the North Rim, open from mid-May through mid-October. It is much less busy and offers breathtaking views.

Want to hike the Grand Canyon? The rigorous multi-day hike requires planning, preparation, and reservations about a year in advance.



Saguaro National Park