

MY FAVORITE NATIONAL PARK IN THE UNITED STATES

ENJOYING AMERICA'S DIVERSE LANDSCAPES

America has been blessed with a diversity of landscapes, and nowhere is that clearer than in our national parks. According to the Lonely Planet website, October is the best month of the year to visit national parks in the United States. I don't know that I've ever visited any of them in October, but I have had the pleasure of visiting a handful of our national parks during other times of the year.

My favorite park I've visited is Grand Canyon National Park, specifically the North Rim. It's a bit harder to get to than the South Rim but far less commercialized. You have to drive through Kaibab National Forest for about an hour, and that's only during the times of year it's accessible. Once you get there, there's only one place you can stay: the Grand Canyon Lodge. It was built when Teddy Roosevelt was president of the United States, and consists of a main lodge and a few individual rustic cabins right on the rim of the canyon.

I've been to the North Rim a few times. The first was when I went with my family and my friend Eric when I was a teenager. The next time was with a couple buddies when we graduated high school. We all stayed in one cabin on the North Rim, and it was quite the experience! I remember waking up several times during the night, hearing strange noises and seeing odd shapes moving around the cabin. I figured it was just a figment of my half-asleep imagination, but when I woke up in the morning, I realized that a bunch of ground squirrels were running around on the cabin's roof beams!

Now, to be fair, when I was 18 or 19, I found that cool — but I don't think I would want to have the same experience now! Luckily, there are plenty of ways to get close to nature on the North Rim that don't involve sharing your cabin with squirrels.

My wife and I visited the North Rim again after I was married, staying once more in a cabin at the lodge (though this visit was, fortunately, squirrel-free). Probably one of my favorite parts of that visit was when we took donkeys



down into the canyon. It's a little nerve-wracking, looking over the edge of the canyon from the trail, but nothing beats those views!

In all, the North Rim of the Grand Canyon is probably the most spiritual place I've ever been. There's nothing like the solitary sound of the wind rattling the pines as you gaze out at the vast expanse of the canyon in all its wildness.

I've been to some other national parks, like Zion and Bryce Canyon in Utah, which are both just as surreal to see as the Grand Canyon. I'd love to see a lot more of them. In particular, I would love to visit Alaska and see Katmai National Park. I've heard you can watch bears gorge themselves on salmon there. I know my sons and I would love that, though my wife might need assurances that the bears won't turn on the tourists!

While there are probably all sorts of beautiful places worth visiting all over the world, I can't help but think there is so much to see right here in America. Do you have a favorite national park? If you've got any recommendations for where to go next, please let me know!

-Jim Monast

FRESH TIPS FROM THE LAUNDRY ROOM

The Easiest Way to Clean Your Washing Machine

Despite being designed to clean, your washing machine can be anything but. As water settles in the machine's basin and detergent and grime cling to the edges, it can become a budding environment for mildew and gnarly smells. But with a few simple steps, your machine will smell and function like new.

WHY YOU NEED TO CLEAN YOUR WASHING MACHINE

The most common washing machines are top- and front-loading, and some do a better job of cleaning than others. However, the washing machine isn't where germs and bacteria go to die. In fact, according to Reader's Digest, many home washing machines don't sanitize clothes, and numerous studies have found that these devices can transfer certain germs from one material to the next.

However, by cleaning your washing machine, you can remove bacterial buildup, residue, and mildew buildup. (No more gross smell!) Furthermore, regular cleaning protects it from damage due to grime accumulation.

HOW TO CLEAN IT

Whether you have a front- or top-loading washing machine is a matter of preference, but it also matters when it comes to maintenance. For example, front-loading machines have a rubber lip just inside the door where dirt and hair accumulate. Top-loading machines can collect the same amount of dirt in the softener dispenser.

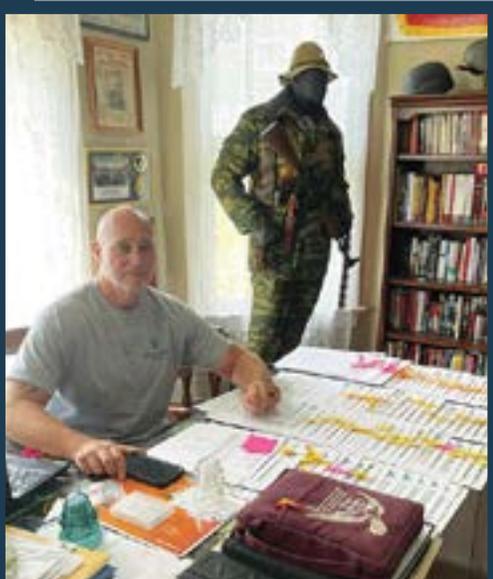
Regardless of the machine's style, baking soda, vinegar, a rag, and hot water are the go-to tools for cleaning your washing machine. Start by running your machine on its hottest cycle for a few minutes, then pause the cycle. (With top-loading devices, you want a pool of water in the bottom of the machine after it's paused.)

Then, YouTube cleaning tutorialist Andrea Jean Cleaning recommends pouring 1/2 cup of baking soda and about 2-3 cups of white vinegar into the machine. (Bleach will work, too!) While the solution sits, scrub the door, detergent trays, and any lips where grime can hide. Then, simply close the lid, finish the cycle, and watch your machine clean itself!

Get more washing machine cleaning tips from your device's manufacturer.

AN AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL HERO

We recently had a client come through our doors with a story that blew me away. Scott King is a retired Marine who has served across the world, including two tours in Afghanistan. Since returning stateside,



Scott has involved himself in many community efforts. He's an instructor for Krav Maga at his local YMCA and also works for the city of Jackson, Ohio. He was injured while working his route for the city. That's when we met him and learned of his extraordinary efforts during the difficult withdrawal from Afghanistan.

While in Afghanistan, Scott created many relationships with various Afghan agents that helped him understand the struggle of the common citizen. Through these relationships, he helped many escape danger through Special Immigration Visas. These visas allowed threatened foreign agents of America to leave their country. Scott writes letters to the U.S. Embassy and State Department as a representative of each individual and requests that their information be further evaluated.

As the situation in Afghanistan further developed, Scott put his efforts into overdrive to help as many people as he could. Scott dedicated time before and after work to write as many of these letters as possible. He has written well over 150 letters that represent 150 people whose families were directly threatened by the Taliban. These letters have effectively saved the lives of many people and garnered Scott quite the reputation.

The Afghans who contact Scott through various channels all call him "Padshah," the Dari Persian word for king. He constantly gets messages from the people that reveal their harsh living conditions and include pleas for help. Many of these people even send messages praying for Scott and his family, even though they are struggling during these times.

Scott has made an impact and saved the lives of well over 150 people. Nobody asked Scott to accomplish this feat, but he has continued to do anything he can to help. Scott King is not only a true American hero; he is an international hero — and an all-around great guy! Semper Fi!

FIXING HOMELESSNESS



How One Missouri Realtor Transformed Her Community

Homelessness has plagued our country for decades. A woman from Springfield, Missouri has taken her community's homeless problem into her own hands and has been met with great success.

For 9 years, Linda Brown and her husband put together a nightly shelter for homeless members of their community. They provided a place for them to eat, take showers, use a computer, and participate in various games and activities. Linda soon realized that the new friends she made at the shelter had to return to camps on the street when they locked up for the night. This did not sit well with her, and she knew that she could do more.

Through her experience in the real estate industry, Linda learned of an abandoned mobile home property. Linda and her husband then raised \$4.75 million and bought the property, which did not need to be rezoned and already had the infrastructure and utilities in place. They crafted 31 tiny homes designed to house

chronically disabled homeless community members. From there, Linda worked with the residents, even helping one man overcome his addiction and offering him a job.

Eden Village is driven by the philosophy that an individual's cause of homelessness cannot be determined until their immediate housing needs are met. Linda provides her residents with housing and utilities that only cost \$300 per month, but she also provides them with a community center that even includes a medical office. Most residents receive government disability checks that more than cover the \$300 needed for rent.

Now that Eden Village is successful, Linda has moved on to creating more villages that serve the same purpose. Eden Village 2 has entered the design stage and is planned to house 24 residents on an area of donated land. After that, Eden Village 3 is bound to be Linda's most ambitious project yet, as it plans to house 80 residents. Linda does not plan to stop until she has reached her goal of 5 villages across her city of Springfield.

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ANSWER

NIBBLES WITH NUG

ONE-PAN VEGGIES AND CHICKEN



Inspired by Tasty.co

INGREDIENTS

- 1 sweet potato, cubed
- 1 lb Brussels sprouts, halved
- 2 apples, sliced
- 4 chicken thighs
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp rosemary
- 2 tbsp thyme

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. On a baking sheet, add potatoes, Brussels sprouts, and apples. Layer chicken thighs on top.
3. Drizzle with olive oil. Then season with salt, pepper, garlic, rosemary, and thyme.
4. Turn chicken over and add seasoning to the back side. Return skin-side up before baking.
5. Bake for 30 minutes, and broil for 5-10 minutes afterward.

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FUN FOR ALL THIS FALL

5 CORN MAZE SAFETY TIPS

Fall brings apple cider, pumpkin patches, fun seasonal outfits, and corn mazes. Unless you are visiting a “haunted” corn maze, you and your family probably won’t be chased by a chainsaw-wielding serial killer while you try to navigate through. However, safety risks are still present. Here are five safety tips to keep the fun coming during your next corn maze experience.

FOLLOW THE RULES.

At the entrance to each corn maze, there should be a sign stating the rules for visitors. For the safety of yourself, your children, and others, be sure to read each rule and follow along. Always accompany your kids in the corn maze – it is a maze, after all!

WATCH FOR TRIPPING AND FIRE HAZARDS.

Keep your eyes peeled for any obstacles on the path, including holes, bumps, ruts, and corn stalks. While navigating a maze, it can be easy to forget to look down while searching for the exit. To prevent fires, you should also avoid smoking and never use matches or lighters.

WEAR PROPER FOOTWEAR.

Ensure that you and your family all have proper footwear, preferably closed-toed shoes, while exploring the maze. You never know what kind of critters or potentially harmful hazards may appear in your path.

EAT BEFOREHAND AND STAY HYDRATED.

Be sure to eat before setting out into the maze and don’t bring any glass bottles with you, as it can be dangerous if broken. Furthermore, do not consume alcohol before or while enjoying your time at the corn maze.

BE PREPARED.

Accidents can happen, usually at the most unexpected times! It is important to always have a first-aid kit handy. Be sure to call 911 in an emergency and let staff know what is going on.

As long as safety is the top priority this fall, fun will be had by all!