



# The National Parks: America's Best Idea

*Dayton Duncan, Ken Burns*

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The companion volume to the twelve-hour PBS series from the acclaimed filmmaker behind *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, and *The War*

America's national parks spring from an idea as radical as the Declaration of Independence: that the nation's most magnificent and sacred places should be preserved, not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone. In this evocative and lavishly illustrated narrative, Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan delve into the history of the park idea, from the first sighting by white men in 1851 of the valley that would become Yosemite and the creation of the world's first national park at Yellowstone in 1872, through the most recent additions to a system that now encompasses nearly four hundred sites and 84 million acres.

The authors recount the adventures, mythmaking, and intense political battles behind the evolution of the park system, and the enduring ideals that fostered its growth. They capture the importance and splendors of the individual parks: from Haleakala in Hawaii to Acadia in Maine, from Denali in Alaska to the Everglades in Florida, from Glacier in Montana to Big Bend in Texas. And they introduce us to a diverse cast of compelling characters—both unsung heroes and famous figures such as John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and Ansel Adams—who have been transformed by these special places and committed themselves to saving them from destruction so that the rest of us could be transformed as well.

*The National Parks* is a glorious celebration of an essential expression of American democracy.

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