



Foundation Document Overview

Grand Teton National Park | John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway

Wyoming



Contact Information

For more information about the *Grand Teton National Park | John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway Foundation Document*, contact: grte_superintendent@nps.gov or (307) 739-3300 or write to:
Superintendent, Grand Teton National Park, P.O. Drawer 170, Moose, WY 83012

Description



Congress established Grand Teton National Park on February 26, 1929. It was “... dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States under the name of the Grand Teton National Park of Wyoming” (45 Stat. 1314). The establishment of Jackson Hole National Monument in 1943 was an important part of the park’s history as more than 220,000 acres were transferred to the National Park Service (Presidential Proclamation 2578). The park was enlarged to its present size by Congress on September 14, 1950 (Public Law 81-787, 64 Stat. 849). The expansion was “...for the purpose of including in one national park, for public benefit and enjoyment, the lands within the present Grand Teton National Park and a portion of the lands within Jackson Hole National Monument.”

Public Law 92-404 established John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway (the parkway) on August 25, 1972, “...for the purpose of commemorating the many significant contributions to the cause of conservation in the United States, which have been made by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and to provide both a symbolic and desirable physical connection between the world’s first national park, Yellowstone, and the Grand Teton National Park.” Legislation designates the parkway as the 82 miles between West Thumb in Yellowstone National Park and the south entrance of Grand Teton National Park.

Grand Teton National Park is in the heart of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of Earth’s largest intact temperate ecosystems. The park and parkway are home to some of the greatest populations of wildlife in the world and provide more than 330,000 acres of largely pristine habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species as well as hundreds of other ecologically vital native species.



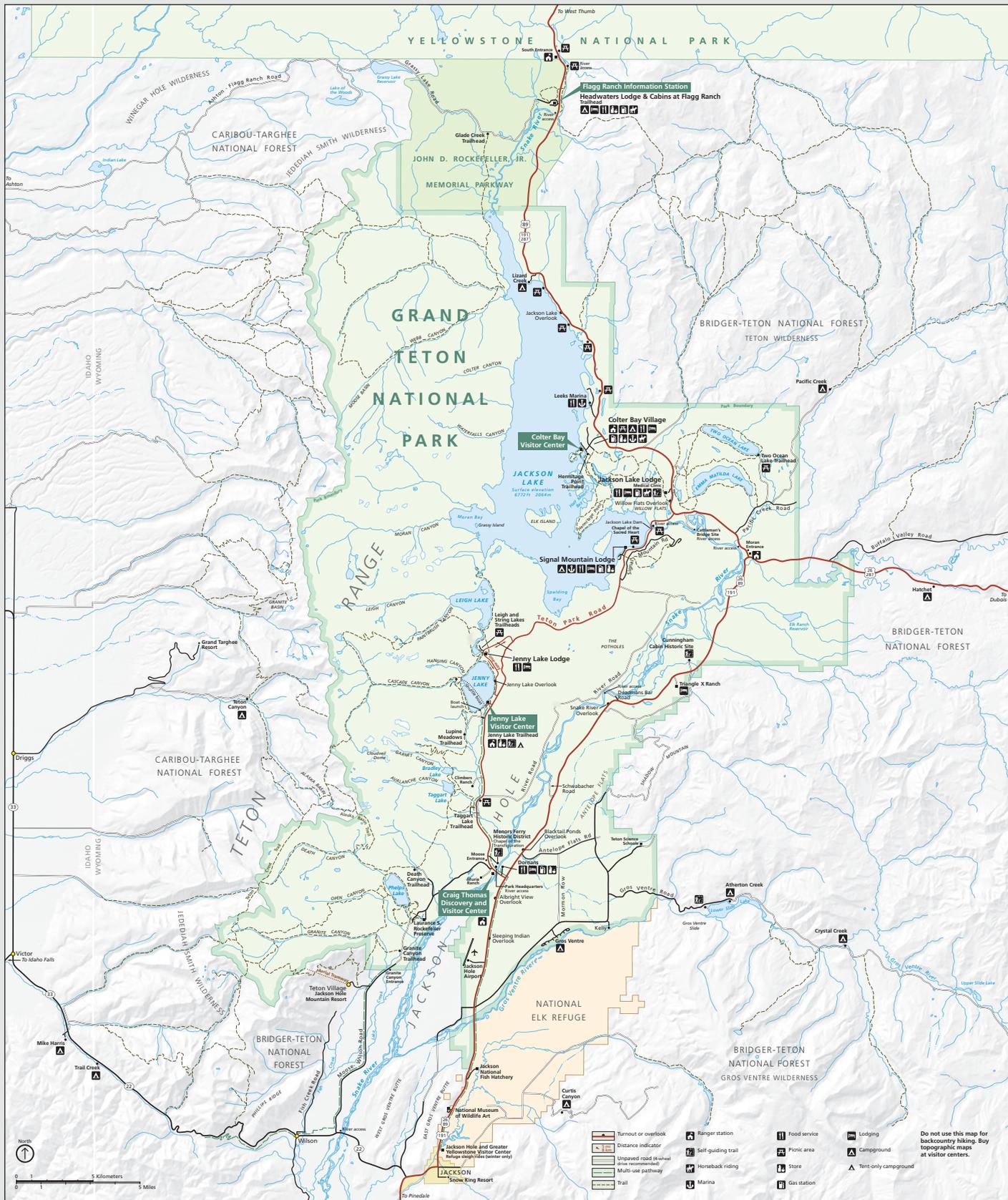
The central feature of the park is the Teton Range, an active, fault-block mountain front with 12 peaks over 12,000 feet, and the highest in the range over 13,000 feet. The park protects 7 morainal lakes along the base of the Teton Range and more than 100 alpine and backcountry lakes. The Snake River bisects the valley of Jackson Hole and is the headwaters of the Columbia River system.

The park also displays evidence of a rich human history dating back approximately 11,000 years. Early American Indians used the landscape and its resources for subsistence; they hunted, fished, conducted ceremonial activities, and left traces in their pathways and campsites. Hundreds of archeological sites have been found in the small portion of the park that has been surveyed.

More recent developments in the valley of Jackson Hole left their mark through an array of new roads and facilities, as well as nearly 700 historic structures, districts, and landscapes, many of which are still in use. These include former livestock ranches, dude ranches, and “hobby” ranches; homesteads such as the Mormon Row Historic District; visitor accommodations such as Jenny Lake Lodge and Jackson Lake Lodge; the park’s original headquarters located at Beaver Creek; and the Murie Ranch, which was owned and occupied by noted naturalist-conservationists Adolph, Olaus, and Mardy Murie.

Popular visitor activities include hiking and backpacking, camping, fishing, biking, horseback riding, picnicking, auto touring, boating and paddling, wildlife watching, and winter sports. Visitation to the park and parkway is supported by local gateway communities and through partnerships with several nonprofit organizations, commercial services providers, and other land management agencies.

Park Map



Purpose

The purpose of GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK is to preserve and protect the spectacular scenery of the Teton Range and the valley of Jackson Hole; protect a unique geologic landscape that supports abundant diverse native plants and animals and associated cultural resources; protect wildlands and wildlife habitat within the Greater Yellowstone area, including the migration route of the Jackson elk herd; and to provide opportunities for enjoyment, education, inspiration, and scientific investigation compatible with these resources for present and future generations.



Significance

Significance statements express why Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The iconic mountain landscape of the Teton Range rises dramatically above the flat valley of Jackson Hole creating a compelling view that has inspired people to explore and experience the area for thousands of years. The sudden rise of rugged peaks contrasts with the horizontal sagebrush flats. Glacial lakes at the foot of the mountains reflect and expand the view. The awesome grandeur of the ever-present Teton Range under changing weather and seasons provides the superlative setting for unmatched visitor experiences.
- Grand Teton National Park preserves the landscape of one of the world's most impressive and highly visible fault block mountain ranges that abruptly rises up to 7,000 feet above the valley floor along an active fault (the Teton Fault) formed from the collision of tectonic plates. The range is juxtaposed with landscapes shaped by glacial processes and braided river geomorphology. The Teton Range is one of the continent's youngest mountain ranges, yet exposes some of the oldest rocks on earth.

The purpose of JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR. MEMORIAL PARKWAY is to commemorate the many significant contributions of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to the cause of conservation and provide both a symbolic and desirable physical connection between Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park.



Significance



- Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway are within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the largest, intact temperate ecosystems on Earth. Within the park and parkway this diverse ecosystem is composed of alpine, forest, sagebrush, wetland, aquatic, and other ecological communities where natural processes continue to function with little human alteration.
- The Snake River Headwaters flow through an iconic landscape of stunning canyons, open meadows, broad vistas, striking mountains, glacial lakes, and sage flats. These landscapes provide spectacular settings undeveloped by humans that create a distinctive sense of place and offer world-class recreational opportunities. The rivers and associated habitats of the Snake River Headwaters are critical to the sustainability of a full complement of native plants, wildlife, and aquatic species. In addition to the abundant natural resources, the cultural resources of these rivers reflect thousands of years of diverse people, cultures, and uses, which continue to carry cultural significance to American Indian tribes and others.

- From prehistoric times to the present day, numerous diverse cultures, cultural trends, and values have influenced and been influenced by the Teton Range and Jackson Hole valley, and are reflected in the park's built heritage and ancestral landscape. The park and parkway represent two of the most notable conservation stories of the 20th century, which continue to inspire present and future generations. The formation of the park, a process that took more than half a century, was a struggle between private economic interests and a concern for conserving the Teton Range and valley floor.
- Within the park and parkway, visitors can experience solitude, wilderness character, and a rare combination of outdoor recreational and educational activities, world-renowned wildlife and landscapes, and the cultural amenities of a vibrant community. Opportunities to view an impressive array of wildlife are extraordinary, including grizzly bears, gray wolves, North American bison, pronghorn, and one of the world's largest elk herds. Visitors of all abilities and interests can enjoy opportunities for physical, emotional, and inspirational experiences.
- As part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the park and parkway offer easily accessible and unparalleled opportunities for scientific research and educational study of temperate zone natural systems and processes in a range of elevations, and human relationships to these systems. The relatively pristine landscape serves as "control" or baseline for scientific study.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Scenery.** The park and parkway contain an exceptionally wide array of scenery that can be viewed throughout the seasons. The iconic peaks of the Teton Range, its high elevation canyons, and its system of winding rivers and morainal, alpine, and backcountry lakes offer stunning views. Other exceptional scenic landscapes within the park and parkway include forests, sagebrush flats, and wet meadows and wetlands. These diverse scenic landscapes and clean, clear air provide visitors with ample opportunities to view the natural beauty and wildlife of the park and parkway.
- **Geologic Features and Processes.** Powerful ongoing geologic forces shape the park, parkway, and nearby Yellowstone National Park. Regional heat from the earth's mantle combined with local heat from the plume of magma under Yellowstone have lifted and cracked the earth's crust. Earthquakes generated along one of these cracks—the Teton fault—tilted the Teton Range skyward while dropping the valley of Jackson Hole. As the mountains were rising, massive glaciers flowed south from Yellowstone and alpine glaciers carved out U-shaped canyons and piedmont lakes ringed by glacial moraines. The glaciers melted, washing soil from the valley floor, and leaving behind an outwash plain covered with cobbles and carving terraces that step down to the modern Snake River. Today, small earthquakes occasionally shake the region, suggesting the power of future mountain-building. Remnant glaciers serve as reminders of the powerful and massive glaciers that shaped the landscape. All the while, rainfall and freeze-thaw cycles cause landslides and rockfalls.



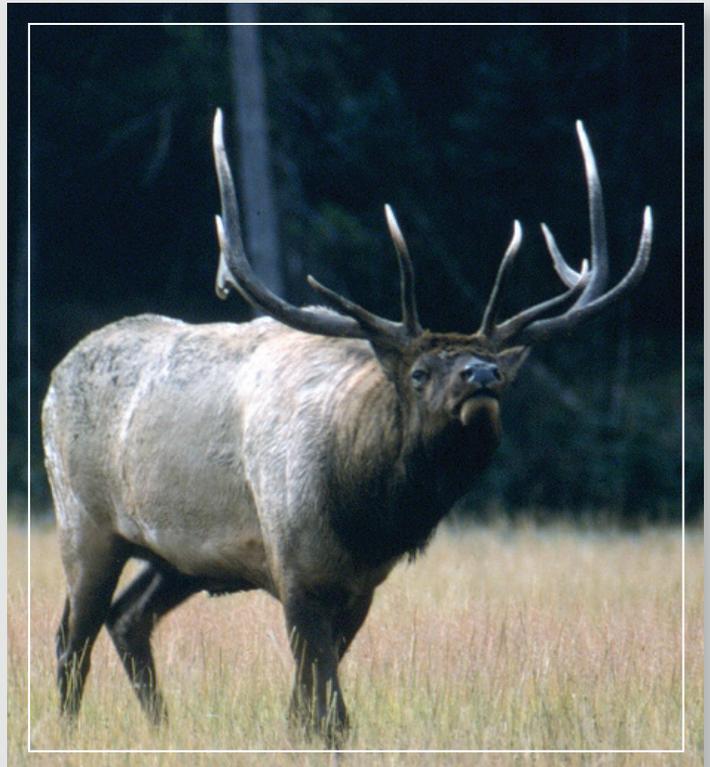
- **Ecological Communities and Natural Processes.** The ecological communities of the park and parkway are vitally connected to the larger Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and flourish through this connectivity. The extreme local topography, ranging from the rugged peaks of the Teton Range to the valley floor of Jackson Hole, and the lakes and streams that flow from the range, shape these communities and foster diverse vegetation and wildlife. Natural processes, including natural disturbances such as fire and landslides, as well as predator-prey interactions and long-distance migrations, exemplify a healthy, evolving landscape and ecosystem. Access to these dynamic ecological communities provides an opportunity for scientific and educational study and visitor enjoyment.
- **Aquatic Resources and Processes.** The park and parkway contain portions of the designated wild and scenic Snake River Headwaters and associated floodplains and riparian areas. There are complex systems of high-value wetlands throughout the park. Meltwater from mountain snowpack, remnant glaciers, and streams drain the high elevation areas, providing clean, cold water inputs to stream and lake habitats critical to native aquatic species such as the cutthroat trout. The upper Snake River drainage is the only place where native Yellowstone cutthroat trout and Snake River cutthroat trout coexist. The diverse aquatic communities in the park and parkway also provide important habitat for beaver, water birds, and other wildlife, as well as outstanding recreational opportunities for visitors.

Fundamental Resources and Values



- **Cultural History and Resources.** The park and parkway tell important stories that illustrate the evolution of human relationships with the Teton mountain range and Jackson Hole. These stories reveal how the rugged mountains, rivers, sagebrush flats, wildlife, and the harsh climate have shaped humans, and how people have in turn shaped and protected those same resources on a landscape scale. The park tells the story of the American West and the American Indian communities who traversed and used the landscape. Archeological sites represent approximately 11,000 years of human presence on the landscape, and ethnographic resources give cultural meaning to natural features. Significant historical contexts tell the history of homesteading, environmental conservation, and dude ranching and tourism (significant to the establishment of Jackson Hole National Monument). These important historical contexts are memorialized in five nationally significant historic properties, including the Murie Ranch and Jackson Lake Lodge National Historic Landmarks, and the Bar BC Dude Ranch, Snake River Land Company Office and Residence, and Menor's Ferry / Maud Noble historic districts.
- **Visitor Experiences in an Outstanding Natural Environment.** The park and parkway provide an excellent area in which visitors may immerse themselves in the spectacular natural setting of the Teton Range. Easy access, a range in the level of ability from beginner to expert (e.g., from a simple stroll to a moderate hike, a backcountry expedition, or technical mountaineering) and a wide range in the type of activities (such as boating, horseback riding, fishing, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, or leisurely driving) make spectacular recreational experiences available to a variety of people. The ability to be in the park and parkway throughout the day and night and year round allows visitors opportunities to experience an infinite combination of light, color, dark night skies, clean and clear air, natural sounds, smells, weather, seasons, variations in vegetation, movements of wildlife, and wilderness character.

- **Natural Soundscapes and Night Skies.** Because of the diversity of habitats and wildlife species, the park and parkway have abundant and varied natural sounds that not only enhance visitor experience, but serve a critical ecological role. Spring's early morning bird chorus heralds the arrival of migrants and the resumption of breeding activities for many species of wildlife. Territories are defended and mates are attracted through the use of songs and calls. In the wetland areas, amphibians join the chorus for the same purposes. Summer brings thunderstorms and the sounds of insects during warm afternoons. Elk bugling in the fall portends the upcoming winter season with both its winter snow storms and impressive silent nights. The sound of flowing water from the Snake River and its cascading tributaries and the common sound of wind pervades the forests and sagebrush flats year-round. These sounds add depth and meaning for visitors, as does the opportunity to hear nothing—the sound of natural quiet. The park and parkway have historically had some of the clearest night skies in the country due to low humidity and isolation of the area. Naturally dark skies provide refuge for wildlife and are vital in sustaining migratory patterns, breeding, and feeding habits. Dark skies are important to visitors who experience stargazing, night walks, full moon hikes, and other nighttime activities.



Other Important Resources and Values

Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Recommended, Potential, and Eligible Wilderness.** Grand Teton National Park protects 122,604 acres of recommended wilderness and 20,850 acres of potential wilderness, as recommended in the 1972 wilderness suitability study by the National Park Service, and subsequent NPS recommendations in 1978. Together, these lands account for about 46% of Grand Teton National Park. A wilderness eligibility assessment was completed in 2013 for lands within the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway. The assessment determined that 21,500 acres (about 91%) of the parkway is eligible for possible inclusion in the national wilderness preservation system.
- **Other Historic Properties.** The park and parkway protect a wide range of other historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These properties, which include historic structures, cultural landscapes, and archeological sites, represent historic and prehistoric contexts that are significant on the state and local levels, rather than nationally. Examples of these properties include, but are not limited to, the Mormon Row, Beaver Creek, and Colter Bay historic districts.
- **Park Museum and Archive Collection.** The park's museum collection tells the unique story of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway through art, objects, scientific collections, and paper-based records. The David T. Vernon Collection, a collection of high quality American Indian items from approximately 100 tribes from all over the United States, is curated offsite and exhibited at the park. The park's archival collections document the complex history of the park and parkway, including photographs, maps, early summit registers, administrative records, and other significant archival resources.

