

Volunteers in Parks

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Illustrations by Greg Harin

You are a Very Important Person

Americans have enjoyed a love affair with their national parks since Yellowstone, our first national park, was created in 1872. Now you can help the National Park Service care for your parks—by joining the 70,000 people yearly who volunteer their time and talents to help us safeguard this heritage.

As a Volunteer in Parks—VIP—you work side by side with the National Park Service staff. And as a VIP you are truly a Very Important Person. You show people how to enjoy their parks so future generations can too. Think how much you will learn about a park by contributing to its successful operation.

VIPs work in parks from Maine to Hawaii, from Alaska to Florida, in big cities and small towns—or even in remote wilderness. What are your options? We have more than 360 national parks. And whether you work behind the scene or face to face with park visitors, as a VIP you can make a real difference for parks and people. Parks are different from zoos and museums. Parks are the real places where our nation's story continues to unfold.

Become a VIP and put yourself at the heart of the park experience. Help pass on our priceless parklands legacy to coming generations. Join with the National Park Service as a VIP this year. As a Volunteer in Parks you can make a difference in your life and the lives of others as you help the national parks perpetuate their promise.



How to be a VIP

1 Complete the Volunteer In Parks Application and mail it to the park(s) where you would like to volunteer.

You may, of course, apply to more than one park. The mailing address of the VIP Coordinator in each park is listed on this brochure. Be specific in describing your talents, skills, and job interests. Each park has its own needs and is looking for volunteers with the skills and talents to accomplish certain tasks. The more specific you are, the better the VIP coordinator will be able to determine whether the park has a VIP job suited for you. Include a letter if you feel the application does not permit you to provide enough information about yourself, or if you have questions about the park's VIP program. Be sure to state whether you will need park housing; remember, housing is rarely available. If you could live in your own motor home, trailer, or tent in the park, say so.

2 The VIP coordinator will review your application and contact you, usually by mail.

If your particular talents and skills appear to be ones that the park needs, you will be contacted to discuss further details. Sometimes a park finds that there is no match between an applicant's abilities and the park's needs at that time. Volunteer applicants will be notified, if this is the case.

If selected to join the ranks of VIPs, you and the National Park Service employee who will supervise you will sign an agreement. This agreement will describe your duties and responsibilities, outline a tentative work schedule, and detail other conditions of the working arrangement. And then, after appropriate training and ori-

entation, you will begin work as the newest volunteer for the National Park Service. As one of thousands of Volunteers in Parks, you will be truly a VIP—a Very Important Person.

Additional information for international volunteers. After being selected as a VIP by a park, international volunteers must attain proof of insurance and apply for a J-1 Visa from the U.S. embassy or consulate in their home country. Once a park notifies the National Park Service Office of International Affairs that an international volunteer has been accepted, the International Volunteer In Parks Coordinator will assist the volunteer in the J-1 Visa application process.

For those with access to the World Wide Web. The National Park Service provides current information about the Volunteer In Parks program on ParkNet, the National Park Service page on the Web. Be sure to visit the National Park Service's Volunteer In Parks area at <http://www.nps.gov/volunteer> on the Web. An electronic application form is provided so that you can apply to become a VIP right from the Web! All applications submitted via the Web will be e-mailed directly to the VIP Coordinator in the park. If the park finds that there is no match between an applicant's abilities and the park's needs, electronically submitted applications will be forwarded to a national bulletin board where VIP Coordinators from every park can review the application.

About Volunteers in Parks

"Every day is a learning experience. I've never had a dull day."

Volunteer, Boston National Historical Park, Massachusetts

Who are VIPs?

The many men and women who serve with the National Park Service as Volunteers In Parks are a diverse group—park neighbors, college students, retired couples, business managers, farmers, engineers, scientists, teachers, lawyers, architects, doctors, artists, and more. What they all have in common is that each has a talent or skill that is needed in a park. While most VIPs volunteer as individuals, organized groups, too, can volunteer.

Persons under 18 years of age may become VIPs with the official permission of their parents or guardians. We welcome Volunteers In Parks from all over the United States and every country in the world.

"The park is my neighbor. I want it to be protected, and cared for. Anything I can do to take part in helping the Park Service, I'm for it."

Volunteer, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, North Carolina

What do VIPs do?

Volunteers in Parks are playing an ever-increasing role in the national parks, and you may be surprised at the variety of jobs that they do. Here is just a sampling:

- work at an information desk answering visitors' questions and handing out written information
- present living history demonstrations in period costume
- write or design visitor brochures
- serve as a campground host
- build fences, paint buildings, and make cabinets
- take photographs or work in a darkroom
- give guided nature walks and evening campfire programs
- assist with the preservation and treatment of museum artifacts
- maintain trails
- design computer programs for park use
- conduct oral history interviews
- give environmental education programs to children
- demonstrate arts and crafts skills

- organize photograph and slide files
- prepare and conduct special park events
- pick up litter along roads, trails, seashores, and rivers
- inventory underwater resources such as shipwrecks on diving expeditions
- assist resource managers and researchers by making wildlife counts, planting trees, and taking part in other projects

As even this brief list demonstrates, there are many jobs that require a wide variety of talents and skills. Once selected, VIPs are often given training to acquaint them with the specific tasks they will be asked to perform and to acquaint them with the park.

Volunteers should be in reasonably good health so that they can successfully carry out their volunteer duties and responsibilities. A medical examination, paid for by the Federal Government, may be required for some jobs. Disabled individuals are encouraged to volunteer.

"I'm fully retired and I want to give back to this country some of the things that it's given to me. I wouldn't volunteer if I didn't enjoy it."

Volunteer, Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia

Working as a VIP

As a volunteer, you will not be paid by the Federal Government. But you will have the benefit of working in a national park, and there will be other rewards as well. You may meet people from all over the United States and abroad. You may be able to make the most of a talent that you have. And you may develop new skills and gain experience that will enrich your life and assist you in present or new careers.

Some parks reimburse volunteers for some out-of-pocket expenses, such as local travel costs, meals, and uniforms, but not all parks have the funds to defray these costs. Some of these costs, and perhaps other expenses related to volunteer work, may be tax deductible.

You may work a few hours a week or month, seasonally, or full-time. You may work weekdays, weekends, during the day, or at night. The amount of time to be volunteered will be agreed on by you and your supervisor before you start. Time worked as a VIP does not count toward Federal Civil Service time if you should later become a federal employee.

Although as a volunteer you are not considered a federal employee, you are eligible for compensation for medical expenses if you are injured while performing your official volunteer duties. Also, if you should be sued for property damage or for personal injury that occurs while carrying out these duties, the Federal Government will defend you (under the Federal Tort Claims Act). Volunteers from other countries must have proof of insurance before being accepted as a VIP.

Park housing is rarely available for VIPs. Some of the larger parks may have available space, but this is the exception, not the rule.

Parks may require that you wear a special uniform. Whether you wear a uniform or not, as a VIP you will be a representative of the National Park Service, and your performance will be a source of pride for yourself and for the Service.

Volunteer Application for Natural Resources Agencies			Instructions: We suggest that you photocopy this form before you begin. Mark "x" in appropriate boxes. For other items, either print or type responses. Mail application to the park where you wish to volunteer.		
Name (last, first, middle)		Age	Telephone		
Street Address (include apartment number, if any)		City, State, Zip Code		E-mail Address	
Areas of Interest					
Listed here are some areas of interest and skills needed for volunteer jobs. Please mark those that apply to you and give details of your experience in the space below.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology	<input type="checkbox"/> Soil science		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and crafts	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency medical assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports and recreation		
<input type="checkbox"/> Backcountry maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> Fish and wildlife management	<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> Trail construction and repair		
<input type="checkbox"/> Campground hosting	<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign languages	<input type="checkbox"/> Legislative affairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor programs and services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Cartography	<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising	<input type="checkbox"/> Libraries/research	<input type="checkbox"/> Word processing		
<input type="checkbox"/> Computers (hardware/software/networks)	<input type="checkbox"/> Geology	<input type="checkbox"/> Military history	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing/editing		
<input type="checkbox"/> Construction (roads/buildings)	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic design	<input type="checkbox"/> Museums/exhibits	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Database administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Historic clothing and furnishings	<input type="checkbox"/> Natural history	<input type="checkbox"/> Photography (slides/film/video)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Desktop publishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Historic preservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Public relations	<input type="checkbox"/> Search-and-rescue operations		
<input type="checkbox"/> Disability access/sign languages	<input type="checkbox"/> Horticulture				
Additional information (attach more pages if necessary):					
References					
Please provide the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of two persons familiar with your abilities, knowledge, or work experience.					
Name		Telephone			
Address					
Name		Telephone			
Address					
Availability					
Please tell us about your availability for volunteer service:					
Starting/ending date:		Days of week and working hours:			
A note about lodging: Most parks are unable to provide lodging. Please indicate here if you will require assistance in finding lodging nearby.					
Yes, I will need assistance with finding lodging. <input type="checkbox"/>					
Public Burden Statement					
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Department of Agriculture, Clearance Officer, OIRM, Room 404-W, Washington, DC 20250; and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (OMB# 0596-0080), Washington, DC 20503.					
Notice to Volunteer					
Volunteers are not considered to be Federal employees for any purposes other than tort claims and injury compensation. Volunteer service is not creditable for leave accrual or any other benefit. However, volunteer service is creditable work experience.					
Privacy Act Statement					
Following information is provided to comply with the Privacy Act (PL 93-579), 5 U.S.C. 301 and 7 CFR 260 authorize acceptance of the information requested on this form. The data will be used to contact applicants and to interview, screen, and select them for volunteer assignments. Furnishing this data is voluntary.					
Signature (please sign in ink)				Date	

