

Hidden in plain sight

Places you know, places you've never imagined

MULTIPLE U.S. FEDERAL AGENCIES and their partners take care of the largest expanse of public lands and waterways within the United States, and they work hard to provide fresh information about visitor destinations and experiences. For many international and domestic visitors, these spaces represent new, exciting and unexplored opportunities.

Visitors to public lands and water navigate these destinations on foot or by mountain bike, raft, car, canoe or kayak. And others seek underground and underwater adventures via caving and diving. These breathtaking land and water scenes are always a photographer's delight, and their extraordinary cultural and heritage appeal is equally compelling.

Here are some destination ideas and online resources to help you explore the United States and find your *next* newest adventure.

The Bureau of Land Management/Department of the Interior (BLM)

BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land and waters that offer breathtaking landscapes from coast to coast. If there is such a thing as "classic" Western American landscapes, they likely lie within the realm of BLM, which manages more fish, wildlife and plant habitat than anyone in the United States.

Whether you want a slow scenic cruise or an extreme adventure, BLM offers one-of-a-kind experiences with stunning views. Explore those landscapes, one story at a time: <https://steller.co/mypubliclands/my-public-lands-roadtrip>.

Few realize that more than one tenth of BLM lands and waters are part of a relatively young conservation system known as the National Conservation Lands (https://www.blm.gov/nlcs_web/sites/), most of which are open to hunting and fishing. See National Geographic's National Conservation Lands 15th- Anniversary map: https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NLCS_Natgeo_Map_EN_2016.pdf. These lands and waters are among America's best-kept secrets.

If you like to explore by bike, you can check out BLM's top 20 mountain biking locations and interactive trail maps, developed in partnership with the International Mountain Biking Association: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/mountainbike>.

BLM preserves the United States' past by managing a tremendous number and wide diversity of cultural heritage resources. You can visit BLM's Cultural Heritage and Paleontology photo album and see extraordinary photos, such as the ancient reptile track from Prehistoric Trackways National Monument in New Mexico. Scroll over each photo to find its location: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mypubliclands/sets/72157673785323281>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Department of the Interior (USFWS)

USFWS manages a Wildlife Refuge System that offers unique visiting, viewing and learning opportunities focused on wildlife and their habitats.

For itinerary ideas, maps, a state-by-state list of wildlife refuges, an events calendar, and information about specific activities, such as birding, fishing, trails, photography and coastal resources go to <https://www.fws.gov/refuges>.

Visitors who enjoy public lands and waters managed by the U.S. Forest Service can find more than 150,000 miles of trails; 10,000 developed recreation sites; 57,000 miles of streams; 122 alpine ski areas; and 338,000 heritage sites.



A campsite beside the Rio Grande in New

Credit: BOB WICK, U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The U.S. Forest Service/Department of Agriculture (USFS)

USFS manages and protects 93 million acres of land encompassing 154 national forests and 20 grasslands in 43 states and Puerto Rico.

Visitors who enjoy these vast and scenic public lands and waters can find more than 150,000 miles of trails; 10,000 developed recreation sites; 57,000 miles of streams; 122 alpine ski areas; 338,000 heritage sites; and specially designated sites that include 9,100 miles of byways, 22 recreation areas, 11 scenic areas, 439 wilderness areas, 122 wild and scenic rivers, nine monuments, and one preserve.

You can help your groups pick a spot, choose an activity and go play. Use the USFS online resource: <https://www.fs.fed.us/visit/destinations>.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Department of Commerce (NOAA)

NOAA manages an extraordinary National Marine Sanctuary System as part of its overall mission. The system includes a network of 13 parks that provide idyllic settings for a variety of recreational activities, from diving, fishing, surfing, swimming and kayaking to tidepooling, whale watching and wildlife viewing. Enjoy NOAA's online guide for exploring national marine sanctuaries:

<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/visit/>.

For information about where and how to enjoy diving, you can read "Dive into Your Sanctuaries" at <http://www.americasgreatoutdoors.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Dive-into-Your-Sanctuaries.pdf>.

Or try immersing yourself in the ocean and your national marine sanctuaries without getting wet. The virtual reality voyages — found online at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/vr/> — use 360-degree images to highlight the amazing habitats, animals and cultural resources your clients can find in each national marine sanctuary.

Select which sanctuary you want to visit, scroll through the gallery and click on a panorama to start your dive.

American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA)

America's public lands and water federal agencies are intertwined with American Indian tribal lands and waters, and they provide fantastic visitor experiences.

AIANTA acts on behalf of all 567 federally-recognized tribes and Native Hawaiians to support and promote authentic American Indian Country tourism. Visit <https://nativeamerica.travel/> to get ideas for programs based on destinations and types of experiences.

You are encouraged to get out there and explore the vast and wonder-filled public lands and waterways available for recreation of all varieties.