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10 Ideas for Celebrating the Southeast's Special Places

In August 2016, the nation will celebrate "America's best idea," the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service, which was achieved when President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the Organic Act of 1916. The National Park Service (NPS) is comprised of 409 areas covering more 84 million acres in every state, territory, and the District of Columbia. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and even the White House. While the Centennial offers a tremendous marketing hook for driving tourism to local communities and federal lands, dedicated efforts must be taken to ensure that this national event pays dividends for states and local communities.

Here are 10 ideas for celebrating and showcasing the Southeast's special places this summer:

- ★ Fly the Centennial Flag. It's a great way to show support for the national parks, and as a community effort a demonstration of the scope of the tourism/outdoor economy.
- ★ Organize a flag raising ceremony to kick off the Centennial celebration locally. Invite elected officials and the press.
- ★ Post the narrated photo essay, "Celebrating the Special Places of the Southeast" to the organization's websites and social media. Share widely with the local tourism community.
- ★ Create a Find Your Park map for your community that highlights the national park sites in the area. Or ask the local AAA office to create a special Trip Tik of the national park sites in the area that can be shared with tourism organization in the community to promote visitation.
- ★ Make a game of it. Create a Find Your Park game board that requires kids to collect a stamp or icon at each of the community's national park sites and return to the local destination marketing organization or visitor center to receive a prize.
- ★ Tell your story. Compile from local park leaders, tourism leaders, and community leaders the stories of their favorite site or experience in the Southeast and what makes it so special. Post to the website and social media.
- ★ Create a giant birthday card and invite members of the community to sign it in the weeks leading up to the National Park Service's 100th birthday on August 25. Present it to local park leadership as a sign of the special bond with the community.
- ★ Organize a special fam trip for local press and elected officials to highlight the area's national park sites, summer travel opportunities, and to reinforce the scope of the tourism/outdoor economy.
- ★ Compile a calendar of events and experiences offered by local parks this summer and promote it on the website and social media.
- ★ Organize a 100th birthday party at a local park site.



*"Celebrating the Special Places
of the Southeast"*

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