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# Fido-Friendly National Parks

THE U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE GETS FIDO-FRIENDLY AS IT CELEBRATES 100-YEARS.

BY ANIETRA HAMPER



Bark Ranger  
Cooper on patrol.



*Fido-friendly hiking trails at Lake Mead National Recreation Area.*

**T**HIS YEAR, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CELEBRATES 100-years as the backdrop for the iconic American family vacation. As the National Park Service welcomes more than 292-million visitors each year, 2016 ushers in a new direction and a more expanded definition of family that includes Fido.

Lake Mead National Recreation Area ([nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in Nevada is one of the most recent national park areas to officially become pet-friendly. As of October 2015, pets visiting Lake Mead with their owners can now tag along on trails and other recreation areas. The designation means that the park is now equipped with conveniences to accommodate Fido, like picnic areas that are outfitted with multiple water stations and dog life jackets that are sold in the marinas. The visitor center even has Fido-friendly souvenirs, including bark ranger bandanas.

"For the past century, families have loaded up their cars and traveled across the nation to see America's national parks. The traditional family unit has changed over the past 100-years, and we realize that some families include four-legged kids. We want dog parents to know that they can create family memories at our parks, too," said Christie Vanover, Public Information Officer, Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

There are currently 409 designated national park areas in the United States, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands. Each park has its own policies regarding pets and each rests at a different place on the pet-friendly spectrum.

At Lake Mead, dogs are welcome on all trails and campgrounds, in the backcountry, on the lakes and in the nine wilderness areas at the park. RVers, who often come for an extended stay in the winter, are welcome to bring their dogs.

While dogs are allowed in most areas at Lake Mead, they are not allowed on the swim beaches and they must be on a leash no longer than six-feet at all times.

You can even rent houseboats on Lake Mead and bring Fido. Forever Resorts (<http://www.foreverresorts.com/>) allows dogs on houseboats for a \$100 fee and \$25 for dogs on small powerboats. Pets must be on a leash while on the dock and pet owners must adhere to all pet policies outlined by the park and Forever Resorts.

"We've accommodated pets on our boats for years. After all, we offer a family vacation experience and pets can certainly be part of the family," said Kim Roundtree, general manager, Forever Resorts.

Some parks, like Olympic National Park ([nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in Washington, go a step further to extend the pet-friendly welcome mat.

"Dogs and their human companions are invited to become official Bark Rangers. This program helps

people learn where and how to safely and legally enjoy Olympic National Park with their favorite canine," said Barbara Maynes, Public Information Officer, Olympic National Park.

There are two ways dogs can earn a Bark Ranger badge. Dogs and their owners can participate in a 30-minute program led by a park ranger to take the Bark Ranger pledge and learn the rules of B.A.R.K., which are: B: Bag your poop; A: Always wear a leash; R: Respect wildlife and K: Know where you can go.

**"THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY UNIT HAS CHANGED OVER THE PAST 100 YEARS, AND WE REALIZE THAT SOME FAMILIES INCLUDE FOUR-LEGGED KIDS."**

Dogs can also be awarded badges by rangers on patrol who witness pets and their owners following the B.A.R.K. policy within the park. While dogs are permitted in parking lots, campgrounds, picnic areas and pet-permitted trails, there are some areas that are off-limits so it is important to review the park's pet policy before you visit.

Some national parks have more restrictions when it comes to pets on trails, but they offer conveniences either on-site or in the area that still al-

low you to bring Fido on vacation.

The Grand Canyon ([nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in Arizona has a number of pet-restricted trails, but kennels are available to house Fido while you hike for the day.

The Great Smokey Mountain National Park [nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/pets.htm) in Tennessee, prohibits dogs on backcountry trails, but Fido-friendly communities like Pigeon Forge surround it making it easy to find lodging and kennels.

During 2016, pet owners will find new reasons to visit the nation's national parks and more conveniences for Fido.

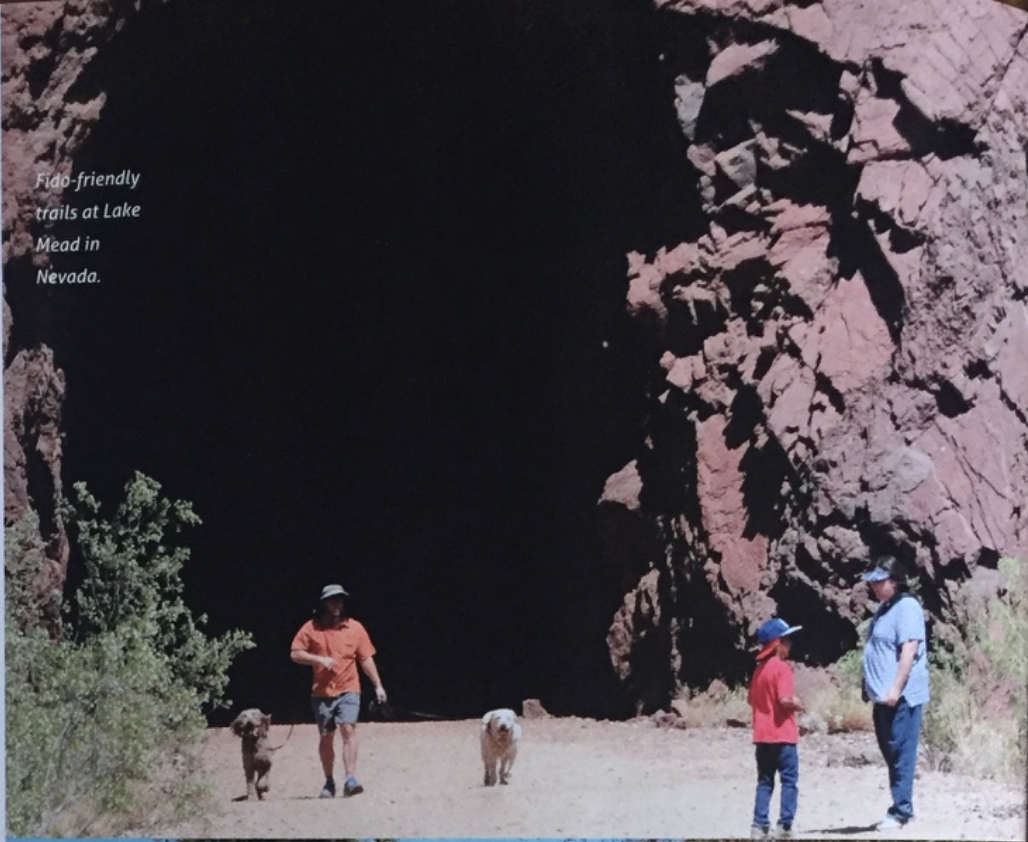
"Some people don't know that many parks are dog-friendly. During our Centennial celebration, we have a concerted effort to let people know that it is okay to bring their dogs to many parks," said Christie Vanover, Public Information Officer, Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

It is important for pet owners to understand and respect that even with the expanded pet-friendly direction of the National Park Service, some restrictions remain in place in order to protect your pet and park resources.

In some parks, like Yellowstone, which has pet restrictions on trails, your pet could become prey for predators like bears, coyotes and owls. Dogs can disrupt the natural behavior of wildlife by leaving behind the scent of a predator and pet feces can negatively impact natural water quality.

Before you plan your national park vacation with Fido, be sure to research the specific pet policies at the park you wish to visit. 📌

Fido-friendly trails at Lake Mead in Nevada.



Fido-friendly trails at Olympic National Park.

#### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PET POLICIES

Each National Park has its own pet-policy, which can be found by going to the Plan Your Visit/Pets section of the park you plan to visit. A complete listing of national parks can be found at [nps.gov/index.htm](http://nps.gov/index.htm).

More Fido-friendly national parks:

**ACADIA NATIONAL PARK** ([nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in Maine features 100-miles of pet-friendly trails.

**SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK** ([nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in Virginia has 500-miles of pet-friendly hiking trails and campgrounds.

**CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK** ([nps.gov/cuva/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/cuva/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in Ohio features forests and meadows and 20-miles of Towpath Trail following the Ohio & Erie Canal that are all Fido-friendly.

**GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK** ([nps.gov/grsa/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/grsa/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in

Colorado offers a unique landscape to explore with Fido. Dogs are permitted up to the top of the first tall ridge of dunes between High Dune and Castle Creek Picnic Area.

**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK** ([nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/pets.htm](http://nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/pets.htm)) in California restricts pets to the Wawona Meadow Loop trail, but leashed dogs are permitted in most other areas of the park including roads, bike paths, campgrounds and sidewalks.