

## **11. America's First and Finest**

America is full of wonderful places to visit and explore, which are rich with history. We have been fortunate to visit some of North America's finest destinations, some of which hold significant titles.

The Shoshone National Forest of Wyoming is the America's first federally-protected National Forest. Covering 2,500,000 acres, the forest was created by an act of Congress in 1891. The *biodiversity* of the Shoshone National Forest is rarely matched in any protected area. Less than 10% of the Shoshone National Forest is utilized for logging, minerals and land lease for cattle grazing. Thankfully, the remaining 90 percent or more, is dedicated as wilderness, reserved for habitat protection, or set aside for visitor recreation.

Great Smoky Mountain National Park, located in Tennessee and North Carolina, is North America's Most Visited National Park. Around 9 million people visit the park each year. Great Smoky Mountain National Park is part of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. This area is world-renowned for its diversity of animal and plant life. The Smoky Mountains are full of history too, and are thought to be among the oldest mountains in the world. Monies to form the park were raised by individuals, private groups and memorial funds. Isn't that amazing?

Devils Tower National Monument, located in Northeastern Wyoming is Americas First National Monument. It was established in 1906 by President Roosevelt. Devil's Tower is truly unique and full of history. The monument is certainly unique, and it's easy to see why President Roosevelt acted quickly to protect it as America's First National Monument. Devils' Tower is actually the core of an ancient volcano, which was exposed through *erosion*.

Yellowstone National Park, located in Northwestern Wyoming, is not only America's First National Park. It is also the first national park in the world. The park was established in 1872 due to the fact that this area is home to the majority of the worlds geysers. Therefore it was apparent how important it was that this region was preserved. Actually, the concept to preserve and protect our resources for future generations started with the forming of Yellowstone National Park.

We are lucky to live in a country that offers so much *diversity* and beauty. We hope you, too, get the opportunity to visit these fascinating places one day! It is good to know what these lands are preserved and protected for future generations to enjoy. Areas such as these are important to protect, as they are natural wonders, and if destroyed, we could not get them back.