

Our national parks are national treasures, which, for nearly a century, have embodied our nation's shared natural and cultural heritage. Today there are 397 National Park units across the country, including 14 in North Carolina – in fact, most Americans live within a few hours of a park making it easy to [plan a visit](#) .

Our own Blue Ridge Parkway is the most visited unit of our national park system. Nearly 20 million people visit the Parkway each year, generating \$2.3 billion in economic activity in North Carolina and Virginia. I was honored to speak at a 75th anniversary celebration for the Parkway, and have been pleased to join colleagues on both sides of the aisle in [efforts to protect the Blue Ridge Parkway for future generations](#)

As we gear up for the centennial year of our national parks in 2016, we will need to address the Park Service's major maintenance backlog. I have consistently supported robust funding for land acquisition and for sustained funding for operations and maintenance at the Park Service in order to protect our treasures.

Information about specific National Parks in North Carolina and around the United States can be found at the [National Park Service website](#) .

### **Fee Free Days**

North Carolina residents should know that during 2013, the [National Park Service has announced 11 fee free days](#) . On these days, the National Park Service will waive admission at any parks charging admission fees so that all families will have the opportunity to enjoy this unique piece of our heritage. A list of fee free\* days is provided below:

- January 21 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)
- April 22-26 (National Park Week)
- August 28 (National Park Service Birthday)
- September 28 (Public Lands Day)
- November 9-11 (Veterans Day weekend)

*(\*Fee waiver includes: entrance fees, commercial tour fees, and transportation entrance fees. Other fees such as reservation, camping, tours, concessions, and fees collected by third parties are not included unless otherwise stated.)*

