

Mail Order Form and New Travel Hints

Your name:
Shipping address:
City, State:
Zip Code:

Please mail this page and your check to:

Dean Spieth
26706 Buffalo Butte Dr
Hot Springs, SD 57747

For the following item:

Book, The Best Times to See the Greatest Wonders of the West, 3rd edition

Subtotal:	\$19.95
Handling:	0.00
Discount:	-1.95
Total enclosed:	\$18.00

(Note: There is no sales tax in Montana, except in West Yellowstone, Gardiner and Whitefish. You may be responsible for paying taxes outside Montana.)

Please allow up to 1 to 2 weeks for delivery via book rate after receipt of order. Costs above include shipping within the U.S.

Thanks!

p.s. There are a total of 189 color photos and 12 maps in the book.

Be careful about buying used copies on the internet, as many of them are the 1st edition which is obsolete. Sales of fine art photographs have been suspended, although I have included some examples at the end of this file.

Travel Hints

In addition to the advice given in my book, I will use this section to periodically update some travel hints. **Some parks may require reservations for entry**, so check [ww.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) before visiting.

Forest Fires

An issue today is the increasing number of forest fires based on plotting up data from the National Interagency Fire Center, especially in the northwest and California. If there are a lot of forest fires by mid-summer that are affecting air quality and visibility, as one can see on air quality websites and webcams, it is best to cancel your reservations and try another year. Glacier and Waterton National Parks, at the Canadian border, have experienced a large number of fires in this century affecting the Lake McDonald area (2003, 2017), St Mary area (2006, 2015) and devastating all the scenic areas in Waterton Lakes National Park (2017). Fires in 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017 and 2018 sent choking smoke throughout the northwest. Similar problems have occurred near Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks, as well as Mt Rainier National Park and other parks in Oregon and Washington State. However, 2019 had very few forest fires. A good website to watch for air quality conditions is:

<https://gispub.epa.gov/airnow/>

Canada saw the worst fires in its history in 2023. Colorado saw the worst fires in its history in 2020, as did California in 2020 and 2025. Colorado had seen relatively average fire activity except for the exceptionally dry summers of 2002, 2018 and now 2020. Large areas of Rocky Mountain National Park burned in 2020; tourist areas spared include Estes Park, Fall River Valley, much of Trail Ridge Road, and Bear Lake, although you will drive by burned areas along Bear Lake Rd. Areas immediately north and west of Grand Lake also burned. Yellowstone and the Tetons have not seen dramatic fire activity since 1988, although there have been recent fires which have had minimal impact on visitation. The Grand Teton fire at the north end of the park near Flagg Ranch in 2016 required evacuations in that area, but the notable Yellowstone fire activity in 2016 stayed in the northwest areas of the park away from tourist attractions; those incidences should not cause one to cancel plans.

Updates

It is very difficult to keep up-to-date with web site changes, natural disasters like forest fires, and man-made changes. Some changes since the book was published include:

Page 12. The west third of the town of Jasper burned from a forest fire in July 2024. Forests and campgrounds just south of Athabasca Falls (not the glacier) to just north of Maligne canyon also burned.

Page 19. Verify online if an enhanced drivers license can be used in lieu of a passport.

Page 21. Alberta, Canada website, www.TravelAlberta.com.

Page 26. The St Mary Falls area experienced a forest fire in 2015 with dead trees along the trail.

Page 30. Verify online if an enhanced drivers license can still be used in lieu of a passport. The permit requirements for handguns in Canada are extensive, so don't bring them. In mid-September 2024, Many Glacier will be closed for major construction thru 2025 (excepting the hotel), so you may not want to visit there in 2025.

Page 31. Glacier Park, Inc. is now www.GlacierParkCollection.com and a better website for Waterton National Park, Canada is www.MyWaterton.ca/stay. And as mentioned above, Waterton National Park experienced a devastating forest fire in 2017.

Pages 36, 38. The Grand Canyon newspaper, The Guide, is no longer produced, so go online to obtain the latest information. Also, the west rim drive is now only open to cars for a couple months in winter, so plan on taking the park's shuttle, walk or rent a bicycle to see the west rim.

Page 40. The North Rim Lodge burned from a forest fire in July 2025.

Page 45. The iconic Mirage Hotel closed in July 2024.

Page 57. Tickets to go into the cliff dwellings are now online & not available year round. See www.nps.gov/meve .

Page 62. You can make Durango-Silverton train reservations at www.DurangoTrain.com. See the website for the latest phone numbers.

Page 76. In 2023, Mt Evans has unfortunately been renamed to Mt Blue Sky.

Page 83. Part of the Lower Falls can be seen off in the distance from Inspiration Point.

Page 92. The photo is a ground squirrel since there are no stripes on its head, not a chipmunk.

Page 96. You may not be able to enter Yosemite Valley due to traffic congestion unless you have reservations in the valley. See www.nps.gov/yose .

Various pages. When the U.S. unfortunately moved up the start of daylight savings time after Y2K, add one hour for sunrise and sunset times (March only).

Best Hiking and Skiing Socks

Socks manufactured overseas are a real problem these days and wear out quickly. The best socks I've found for hiking and skiing are gray, Fox River Heavy Weight Wick Dry Explorer socks, made in America, although they tend to run a bit larger than advertised. They shrink in hot water.

Lodging

Lodging prices inside the parks have skyrocketed in the last couple decades, way beyond the inflation rate. In places like Yellowstone, there are not a lot of options except to try to find a better rate just outside the park such as in West Yellowstone (the closest town to Old Faithful and the Canyon area), or go camping. There are relatively new hotels inside Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon national parks, yet expensive. Although the east side of Glacier has the nicer views and is less crowded than the west side, the lodging inside the park is quaint and pricey, and improvements are needed on the east side; cabins inside Glacier are not in good shape.

Visibility and Clear Skies

Clear, transparent skies are becoming an issue in the western national parks, especially during fire season. There were very few fires across the western states in 2019, but that is no longer the norm. Increasing populations have led to more pollution and more burning of slash and wood stoves nearly year round. Late spring often has the most transparent skies, but also more rain and possibly snow. Summers tend to be hazy except at the highest elevations. Early fall (or more specifically the last couple weeks of September) is my favorite time of year to visit many parks, if forest fires have subsided by then. Clear, dark skies are also important to view the stars and Milky Way. Look for a US air quality index of less than 10 or 20 for transparent skies.

In order to see these wonders clearly, it is important to have good vision. If you can see 20/20 with glasses or contacts, then it does not make sense to risk a corrective eye surgery that may only achieve 20/40 or worse. If you are extremely near-sighted, with excellent close-up vision without eyeglasses, then you will not likely need reading glasses as you age; if you elect corrective eye surgery, then you have guaranteed that you will need reading glasses when you age, and will likely still need weaker glasses to see sharply at distance. And, as your pupils naturally enlarge at night, you may have poor night vision, as you will likely be looking through corneal areas that were surgically altered.

A Note on the Sharpness of Photos

Although I usually scan my film at 4000 dpi (corresponding to about a 6.4 micron pixel, and close to the resolution of film although some labs do drum scans at 5000 dpi and higher), files are subsequently sized to produce approximately 300 dpi at the print size - the maximum used by Lightjet and Chromira printers. Since the human eye cannot see any better than about one arc-minute of angular resolution, you would have to look at a print from less than one foot with 20/20 vision to see better than 300 dpi. Standing two feet away from a print, you'd be lucky to see 150 dpi. The biggest craters on the moon, like Tycho and Copernicus, are slightly under one arc-minute as viewed from Earth, and no human could resolve craters on the moon until Galileo pointed a small telescope at the moon.

In the first decade of the 21st century, SLR digital cameras of about 20 megapixels finally exceeded the resolution capable of 35 mm film; however, they would have to grow substantially larger to match the resolution available from 6x9 cm and larger film when scanned at 4000 dpi. It is, however, a rare color image that can be scanned at 4000 dpi and not show grain.

In 2015, Canon came out with an “affordable” 50 megapixel full-frame SLR camera (about the size of 35 mm cameras) and pixel size is only 4.1 microns. If their L-series lenses and total system MTF were in fact diffraction limited (which they are not), you'd have to shoot at $f/6.3$ for green scenes (or $f/4$ for red scenes) to achieve diffraction-limited performance, which of course loses depth of field and requires one to buy higher quality lenses. I've bought Canon cameras for many decades and have some L series lenses, and I have used a Canon 7D since 2010 that has small 4.3 micron pixels for wildlife shots. I bought a used Tamron 17-35mm Di LD lens for my 7D years ago, and when used on a 5DSr, it was much sharper than Canon's wide angle L series lenses, with the exception of the Canon EF 24-70 $f/4L$ zoom lens. There is no doubt that these digital cameras outperform 35 mm film cameras, and I have now become convinced that the 5DSr outperforms any medium format film camera, including 6x9 cm. They compete with resolutions from 4x5 inch view cameras.

Nonetheless, the bottom line is how well the new cameras perform. Alex Nail performed some detailed comparisons of the Canon 5DSr versus aperture and other cameras in 2015, and found that its small 4.1 micron pixel performs sharpest at $f/8$ and $f/9.5$, proving that the best lenses and total system are not yet diffraction limited since one would otherwise lose resolution above $f/6.3$. In fact, Alex didn't see much reduction in sharpness at $f/11$ with the Canon 5DSr. Diffraction limiting aperture (DLA) really doesn't mean much unless the total system is capable of achieving diffraction limited performance. It will be interesting to see how well future cameras perform as they approach 100 megapixels. Manufacturers are now going mirrorless (no SLRs) using digital displays as the “viewfinder”.

Smaller pixels collect less light for scenes (unlike point source targets like stars), so the signal is less, and hence the signal-to-noise ratio is lower. Some have stated that the noise becomes worse, but it is really the signal that decreases proportional to pixel area. Detector read noise is more dependent on the speed of the readout and electronics design, and dark current noise actually decreases as pixel size is reduced (which can be further reduced by cooling the detector).

Fine Art Photos

These photos are printed on a high quality Lightjet or Chromira printer using FujiFlex supergloss paper (polyester base like Cibachrome) or Fuji Crystal Archive Paper depending on your mount selection earlier.

Cover, 93-15V#3CoverWildGooseIsGlacier
Wild Goose Island in Glacier National Park
Original file size 317 MB Velvia 6x9 scan
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24
20x30
24x36 obtains maximum resolution @ 300 dpi



p 2, 93-32#14DelArch
Delicate Arch at sunset in Arches NP
Original file size 312 MB Velvia 6x9 scan
Portrait orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24
20x30
24x36 obtains maximum resolution @ 300 dpi



p 10, 01-6#16PeytoLakeBanff
Peyto Lake at mid-morning
Banff National Park, Canada
Original file size 260 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x10
11x14
16x20
20x24



p 14, 93-15#1BowLakeBanff
Bow Lake and Bow Glacier at sunrise
Banff National Park, Canada
Original file size 280 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x18



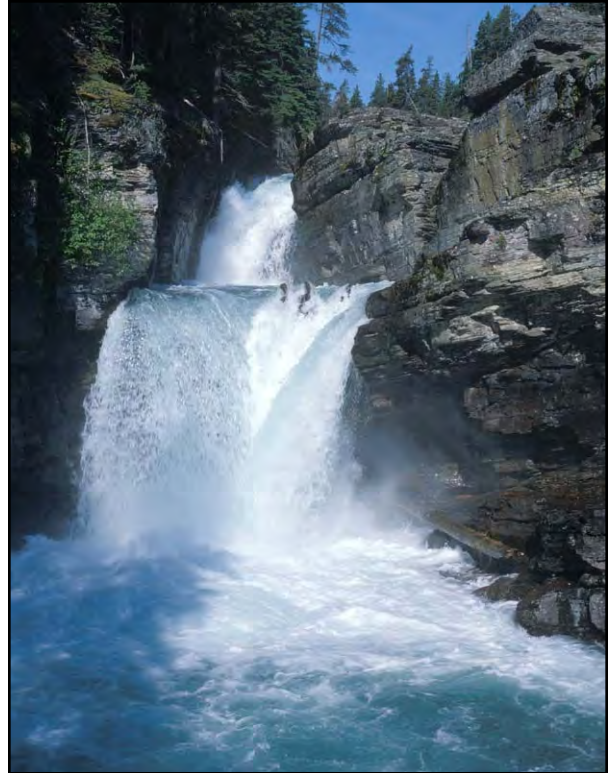
p 22, 93-22#3ReynoldsMtGlacier
Reynolds Mt from Going to the Sun Road
Glacier National Park
Original file size 309 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Portrait orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24
20x30
24x36 obtains maximum resolution @ 300 dpi



p 26, 87-7#10StMaryFallsGlacier
St Mary Falls off Going to the Sun Road
Glacier National Park
Original file size 160 MB from 645 Ek64
Portrait orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24



p 30, 92-4#11ManyGlHotel
Mt Gould & Many Glacier Hotel at sunrise
Glacier National Park
Original file size 319 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24



p 39, 94-48#10YakiPtGrCan
Yaki Point at sunrise, Grand Canyon
Original file size 320 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24
20x30
24x36 obtains maximum resolution @ 300 dpi



p 47, 94-21#7SunsetPtBryce
Sunset Point in Bryce National Park
Original file size 299 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24
20x30



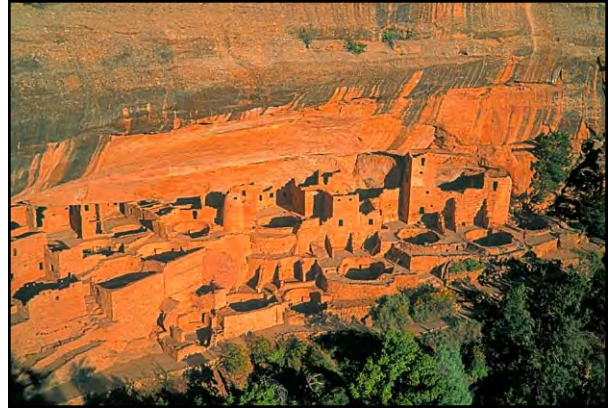
p 48, 88-10#12JennyLakeGrTeton
Teewinot Mt sunrise reflection in Jenny Lake
Grand Teton National Park
Original file size 149 MB from 645 Fuji 50
Portrait orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24



p 57, 93-27#10CliffPalaceMV
Cliff Palace House at Sunset
Mesa Verde National Park
Original file size 311 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24
20x30



p 63, 93-24#10SneffelsMV
Sneffels Range near Ridgway, Colorado
Original file size 304 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24



p 75, 89-36#1MaroonBells
The Maroon Bells near Aspen, Colorado
Original file size 149 MB from 645 Fuji 50
Landscape orientation

8x10
11x14
16x20



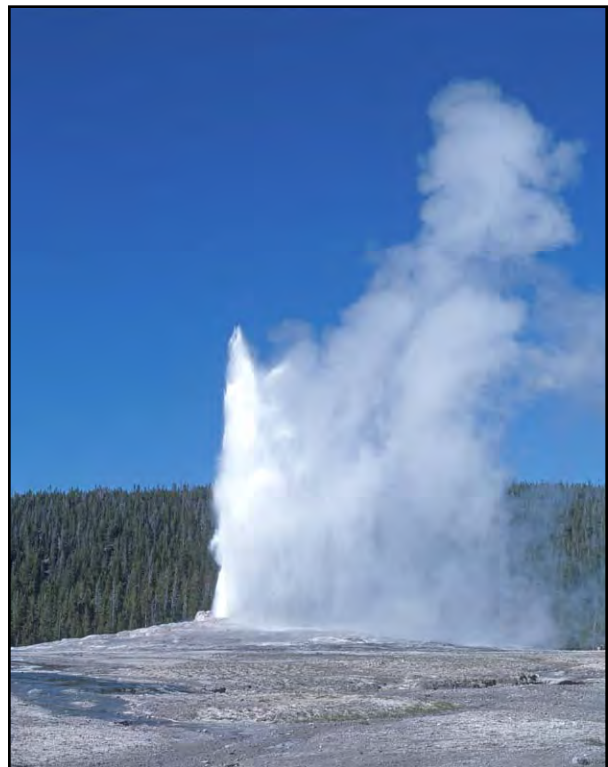
p 75, 87-24#15AspensTwinLks
Aspens near Mt Elbert Lodge from Hwy 82
above Twin Lakes, Colorado
Original file size 158 MB from 645 Fuji 50
Portrait orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24



p 78, 88-9#10OldFaithfulYellowstone
Old Faithful Geyser
Yellowstone National Park
Original file size 150 MB from 645 Fuji 50
Portrait orientation

8x10
11x14



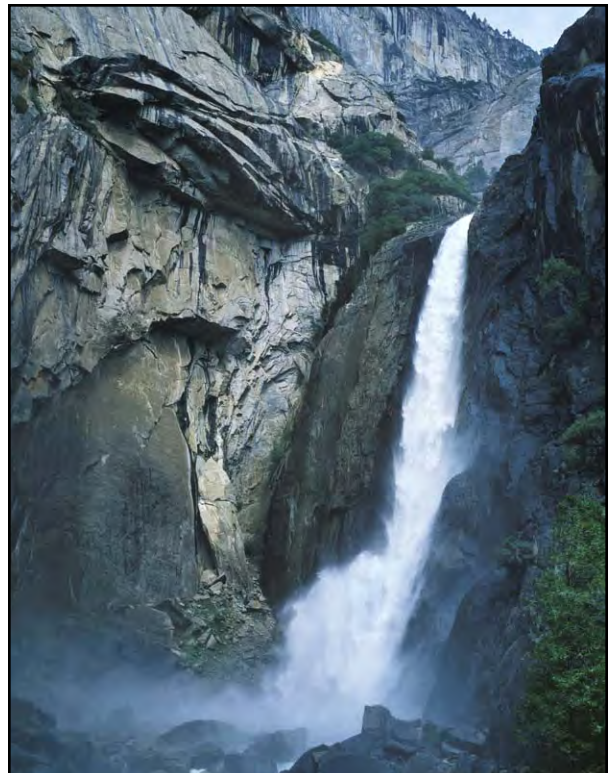
p 94, 89-6#8YosemiteFalls
Upper & Lower Yosemite Falls
Yosemite National park
Original file size 150 MB from 645 Fuji 50
Portrait orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24



p 98, 89-10#9LowerYosFalls
Lower Yosemite Falls closeup
Yosemite National Park
Original file size 161 MB from 645 Fuji 50
Portrait orientation

8x12
12x18
16x24



p 99, 94-15#31 Yosemite Valley
Yosemite Valley west entrance near tunnel
Yosemite National Park
Original file size 310 MB from 6x9 Velvia
Landscape orientation

8x12
12x16
16x24



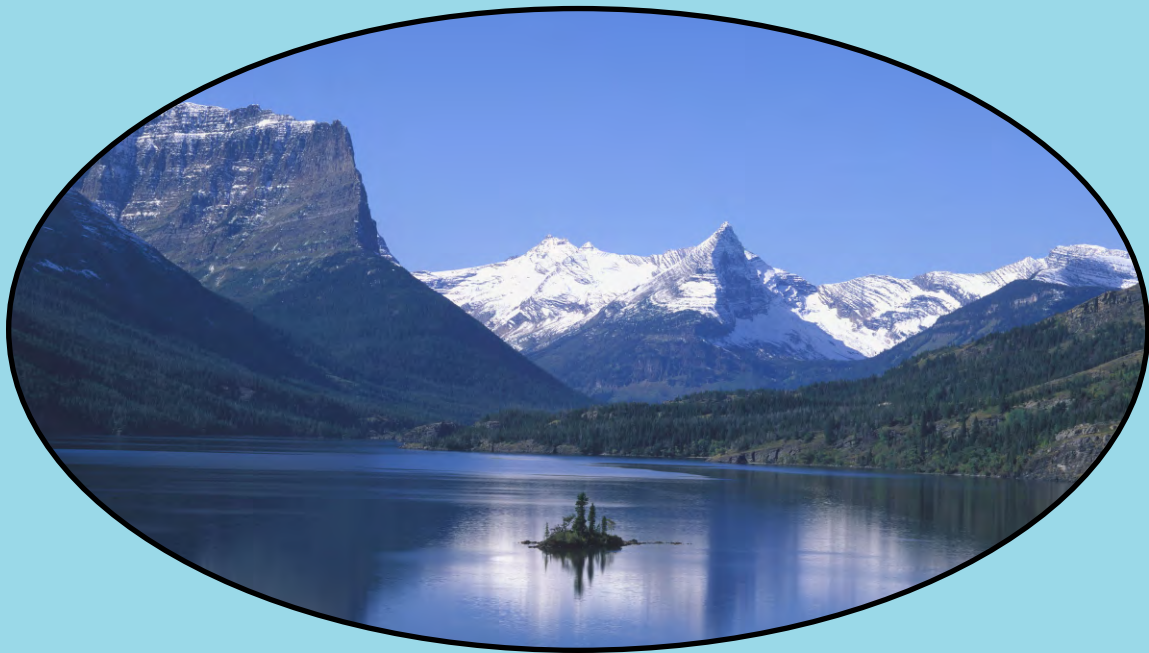
p 104, 87-30#4 Golden Gate
Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco
Original file size 151 MB from 645 Ek64
Portrait orientation

8x10
11x14



Others may be available upon request.

The Best Times To See the Greatest Wonders of the West



by
Dean Spieth
Glacier Photo Publishing

3rd Edition

A True Sightseer's Guide
Best National Parks
Best Times of the Day
Where To Find Wildlife

Must See Areas
Best Turnouts
Best Months
Weather

Copyright © 2014 B. Dean Spieth.
Glacier Photo Publishing

3rd edition

No portions of this book, including text and photographs, may be reproduced in any form without written approval from the author.

ISBN 978-0-9639514-2-7

First edition printed as 0-9639514-0-8.

This edition is dedicated to my dad, mom, and wife.

Cover photo of Wild Goose Island along the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park, Montana.

High end color prints of some of the photos are also available. Please visit the web site or write to the address below.

www.GlacierPhotoPublishing.com
547 Winters Lane
Stevensville, Montana 59870-6978

Files created in QuarkXpress and Photoshop.

Printed in China by P. Chan & Edward, Inc.

The Best Times To See the Greatest Wonders of the West

A True Sightseer's Guide

**by
Dean Spieth**

3rd Edition

Glacier Photo Publishing

Foreword

This book identifies the best spots and best times to see the greatest wonders of the West, including the United States and Canada. It initially concentrated on the Rocky Mountain Region, and was then expanded to include the best wonders within the Mountain Time Zone, such as the Grand Canyon in Arizona and Arches National Park in Utah. Finally, the book would not be complete without including Yosemite National Park in California, one of the country's earliest and finest parks. Care has been taken to limit the recommendations to only those spectacular wonders that you would travel thousands of miles to see. Other areas and national parks of significance are included within sections entitled Nearby Wonders, within each of the major chapters.

Be sure to write to the park superintendents for free information several months before your visit, or check the parks' websites. The addresses are given in each chapter. These park publications will provide the latest information on activities, lodging, safety, and road closures. Once you reach the park, be sure to pick up the free park maps that are part of your entrance fee. These detailed maps are superb, and the maps within this book are intended to supplement the detailed maps.

Many of the recommendations within this book may help to alleviate some of the peak congestion periods within the North American parks. Oftentimes the best viewing is in the morning, whereas most park visitors are out in the afternoon. For example, the magnificent Icefields Parkway in Canada, the eastern half of Glacier National Park, the Canyon Area of Yellowstone, the Tetons, and the eastern half of Rocky Mountain National Park view best in the morning. In Glacier National Park, spectacular reflections occur in the lakes at sunrise. In the Grand Canyon, Monument

Valley, Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, and most of the cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde, red sunsets illuminate park wonders better than all other times, just when most park visitors are eating their evening meal. Unfortunately, sunlight does not illuminate Yosemite Falls until late morning; however, peak visitation occurs in July and August when many of its falls are nearly dry.

Other national park books cover different subjects. There are a number of excellent history books on the national parks, which are available in bookstores, libraries, and at the national parks. There are a number of colorful picture books, but these usually do not provide sightseeing tips. Several travel guides will give you current lodging and cost information, as in the AAA Tour Books. Therefore, specific lodging is not identified. I do, however, recommend scenic areas for staying the night. Some guidebooks identify every feature in the national parks without prioritizing the most scenic areas as herein.

This book identifies the best turnouts, the best months, as well as the time of the day when sightseeing will be best for those memorable moments. Hints on where to find wildlife, as well as an overview of lodging and park activities, are included in separate sections within each chapter. Although weather cannot be predicted precisely, wet and dry seasons, and cloudy and clear seasons are identified. Average high and low temperatures and approximate sunrise and sunset tables are given for each month of the year, so that you can plan your activities. I extend my best wishes for a great vacation!

Dean Spieth

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	ii
Arches National Park, Utah.....	2
Banff and Jasper National Parks, Canada.....	10
Glacier National Park, Montana.....	22
Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona.....	34
Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.....	48
Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado.....	56
Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.....	66
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.....	78
Yosemite National Park, California.....	94
Index.....	106

This sightseer's guide identifies the best wonders of the West, including national parks, natural wonders, and man-made wonders. This book also identifies the best spots, the best turnouts, the best months, and even the best times of the day to be at the greatest wonders of the West. Locations and times to find wildlife are identified. Recreational activities are highlighted, and areas for lodging and camping recommended. Typical weather conditions are noted, including skies, temperatures, and sunrise and sunset tables for each month of the year. With this valuable information, you will be able to maximize your enjoyment of your next western experience.

- **The Greatest Wonders of the West**
- **The Best Spots and Months for Your Vacations**
- **Where to See Wildlife**
- **The Best Times for Overlooks**
- **Sun, Rain, and Snow Seasons**
- **Waterfall Seasons**
- **The Best Weeks for Fall Colors**
- **Sunrise and Sunset Times at Beautiful Locations**
- **Nearby Wonders and Activities for More Fun**
- **Cost Saving Hints**

www.GlacierPhotoPublishing.com

