For 100 years America’s parks have provided opportunities for Americans to explore nature. What started with one park, Yellowstone, grew into a system of 35 national parks and monuments by the time the National Park Service was established in 1916. The tremendous popularity and clear value of protected public lands has continued to drive the creation of new parks, bringing the number today to more than 400 parks. There are park areas in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.

Over the years national parks have served as road trip, picnic, and outdoor recreation destinations. They’ve provided opportunities for solitude and camaraderie, extreme adventures and quiet reflection. Our nation’s system of protected outdoor spaces has something for everyone, and it belongs to all Americans.

This centennial year, the Sierra Club, together with the Obama administration and others, is working to ensure more Americans have the chance to get outside and enjoy all our public lands have to offer. Whether it’s the majestic lands surrounding the Grand Canyon or a neighborhood green space, the wild is where you find it and we want everyone to be able to experience it.

Throughout the coming year the Sierra Club will be hosting outings, educational programs and exhibits. We’ll be promoting awareness campaigns, including the Obama administration’s Find Your Park and Every Kid in a Park initiatives, to help people find and connect with their parks. And we’ll be advocating for expanding our conservation legacy to fully reflect the America of today.

Spending time outside lowers stress, strengthens health, improves academic performance and builds community ties. It also provides the intrinsic benefits of a personal connection to special places.

As we look to the next century of conservation, the hope is that all Americans can see themselves as participants and stewards of our public lands near or far. Join us in celebrating our parks—get outside and invite someone to join you!

You can learn more about our public lands and parks at [www.sierraclub.org/nps100](http://www.sierraclub.org/nps100).