

TRAVEL DEALS

FEDERAL REC AREAS GIVE FOURTH-GRADERS FREE PASS

BY ALISON DAROSA

It's back to school season, and for **fourth-graders**, getting an education is already paying off. All fourth-graders nationwide (including home-schooled youngsters) can get free admission for themselves, their families and friends, at **more than 2,000 federal recreation areas** — including all national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and marine sanctuaries. Students can go to www.everykidinapark.gov and complete an ultra-simple educational activity to print a personalized pass. (You'll need to print your pass; electronic copies are not accepted. Printed passes can be exchanged at certain parks, including Cabrillo National Monument, for a plastic annual pass to use again and again through August 2019.) Fourth-grade educators can go to the same website to download a class activity and print passes for their students. (Educators include teachers, camp directors and leaders of youth groups and after-school programs.) The passes provide free admission for the fourth-grader and a car full of family and friends at drive-in parks; up to three adults and all kids under 16 get in free at parks that charge per-person fees.

There's still time to nab a sizzling deal in regional deserts: The **Wigwam Resort**, near Phoenix, has rooms starting at \$89 a night — with an end-of-summer sale that includes a \$25 nightly resort credit for dining or golf, a one-time \$25 credit at the resort's new LeMonds-Aveda Salon & Spa, a 20 percent discount at any of three Wigwam golf courses (or for apparel in the pro shop) plus a 50 percent discount on pool cabana rentals Mondays through Thursdays. The offer is valid through September. There's a \$30-per-night resort fee that covers Wi-Fi, parking and fitness classes. The resort has multiple dining venues, pools (including a kids zone with two water-slides), lighted tennis courts, a fitness center, bocce and volleyball courts. Book online at <https://wigwamarizona.com/offers-packages>.

Far View Lodge, the only lodging inside Colorado's **Mesa Verde National Park**, has an end-of-summer deal, with rooms starting at \$109 a night, through Oct. 24, when the lodge closes for the season. The lodge offers 150 rooms with private balconies. (Ask for one of the 60 newly renovated rooms.) Spend your days exploring ancient cliff dwellings and other nearby historic spots. You won't find a TV in your room, but there is free Wi-Fi. The lodge has casual and fine dining restaurants, plus a lounge open from 4 until 10



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Children hike on a forested trail in Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Oregon.

p.m. daily. National park admission fees cost extra. Learn more and book at www.visitmesaverde.com/lodging-camping/far-view-lodge.

Stay two consecutive nights in a Conestoga wagon at **Yosemite Pines Resort** in Groveland and your second night will be free. The deal is valid through the end of this month. Wagons are air conditioned/heated and include a king bed and one or two bunk beds, plus a small fridge, microwave and coffee pot. Bed linens are provided; bring your own towels. Restrooms/showers are nearby. Rates start at \$179 weekdays for a wagon that accommodates four and go to \$269 for Friday/Saturday stays in a wagon accommodating six. Check out the offer at yosemitepinesrv.com/index.php/our-specials. To get the deal, you'll have to book by phone at (209) 962-7690 and use the code WAG-ONINTRO. The resort is 22 miles from Yosemite's west entrance.

Eager to embrace the change of seasons? The historic **Hotel Boulderado**, in the artsy heart of downtown Boulder, Colo., has an exclusive offer for Union-Tribune Travel Deals readers. Stay two nights, with Monday through Thursday arrival through October, and get 40 percent off regular rates. With this deal, you'll pay as little as \$119.40 a night. There's no resort fee, and Wi-Fi is free, but there's a \$20-per-night parking charge. The hotel offers full-service dining as well as casual pub fare and popular lounges. There's an on-site fitness center as well as complimentary access to One Boulder Fitness (oneboulderfitness.com). Check out the hotel and book online at www.boulderado.com. To get the U-T deal, click on "Add Code" on the booking page, then from the "Group Attendee" dropdown menu, choose "Rate Access/Corporate Code." Here's where you'll input our exclusive booking code: BESTSDFALL.

The lakeside **Tamarack Lodge at Mammoth** has a "Fall Colors" package, starting at \$149 a night, that includes accommodations

for two, a two-hour boat rental (or two-for-the price-of-one mountain bike rentals), a copy of the book "California's Fall Color: A Photographer's Guide to Autumn in the Sierra" plus a bottle of wine. A two-night minimum stay is required, and there's a daily \$20 resort fee. Valid through Oct. 14, the deal includes a free dessert for those who dine at the lodge's lakefront restaurant. A bonus: After booking your stay, you'll be emailed a link to purchase Alaska Airlines tickets to Mammoth (MMH) at a 20 percent discount. Book online at www.mammothmountain.com/summer/plan-a-vacation/plan-a-vacation/deals-packages.

The **Big Bear Lake** community honors "America's Heroes" with free admission to its annual **Oktoberfest** on opening weekend, Sept. 8-9, over the weekend of Sept. 15-16 and on closing day, Nov. 3. All active military and veterans, law enforcement and firefighters, as well as their immediate family members, are invited. You'll need to show a badge or ID to get in. The Big Bear Lake Oktoberfest, in its 48th year, is one of the largest and most popular in SoCal. Learn more about the event, including general admission prices, at bigbearevents.com.

DaRosa is a freelance travel writer. Find more of her articles at www.AlisonDaRosa.com. Prices quoted here are subject to change. Restrictions and blackout dates may apply, and all deals are subject to availability.



STÉPHANIE CROHIN AP

A bath and mural at Mikoku-yu onsen in Sumida ward, Tokyo. Artwork and immaculate tilework are part of the beauty of Japanese bathhouses.

BATHING

FROM E10 large towel and a small one.

- Go through the entrance for your gender. (You might want to memorize the characters for "man" and "woman" in advance.)
- In the changing room, undress and put your clothes in a locker. This part should feel familiar to anyone who's been to a gym.
- Leave the big towel in the locker but take the small one with you. Use it for washing and/or to dry yourself a bit after your bath so you don't drip onto the changing room floor.
- The bathroom has individual washing stations. The station may already have a stool, or you can take one and a wash basin from a stack. The basin is the traditional way to wash and rinse yourself, but now there are also hand sprayers.
- Wash thoroughly. The bath is just for soaking;

since the water there is shared, you're expected to be clean first. Be careful not to splash your neighbors.

- Tie up long hair. You don't want it to dangle into the shared bath.

Now you're ready to soak! At this point you'll still be carrying your small towel, which brings up another rule: Never put your towel into the bath. If you've seen Japanese bathing on TV, people will usually be covered with towels, but that is only for filming. The most traditional thing to do with the small towel is fold it and rest it on your head while you're bathing.

Finally, sento and onsen have traditionally prohibited tattoos, which are associated with organized crime. These restrictions are loosening. Sento are usually fine with them, but super sento and onsen resorts may not be, so check in advance.

Lombardi writes for The Associated Press.

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5-day Fall Colors of Scenic Yosemite

October 7-11, 2018

\$1,225 per person, dbl. occ.

Experience Fall in the scenic Sierra Nevada Mountains on this fabulous excursion to beautiful Yosemite National Park. You'll check in for two nights at the Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino just outside the park and spend two days exploring this beautiful region. You'll take a narrated tram tour through Yosemite Valley, enjoy lunch at the Majestic Yosemite Hotel, and embark on a narrow-gauge railroad excursion aboard the Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad. Your tour also includes one night at Wonder Valley Ranch in the foothills of the mountains, a visit to the fascinating Forestiere Underground Gardens, 11 meals, one night in Bakersfield with an evening performance at Buck Owens' Crystal Palace, and a visit to the Autry museum in Los Angeles.

5-day Enchanting Grand Canyon Railway

October 7-11, 2018

\$1,395 per person, dbl. occ.

Relive the romance of the Old West on this spectacular excursion that includes a round-trip day-journey to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon aboard the Grand Canyon Railway. While at the Grand Canyon you'll embark on a narrated driving tour and enjoy lunch along the way. You'll also spend a night at the London Bridge Resort in Lake Havasu where you'll take a scenic boat tour through the beautiful Topock Gorge and the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge. Your tour also includes 12 meals, a visit to the General Patton Memorial Museum, and hotel accommodations in Phoenix, Williams, and Lake Havasu.



6-day Branson for the Holidays

November 3-8, 2018

\$2,195 per person, dbl. occ.

Experience holiday cheer and old-fashioned hospitality when you travel with us on a 6-day journey to the heart of the Ozark Mountains. During this excursion you'll see some of the region's most popular holiday entertainment including Clay Cooper, the Andy Williams Ozark Mountain Christmas Show, the Texas Tenors and more! Fly from San Diego to Kansas City where you'll stay one night and enjoy a guided city tour. Next, it's on to Branson to enjoy a four-night stay at the luxurious Chateau on the Lake Resort, featuring sweeping views of the surrounding mountains and Table Lake. Your Ozark Christmas vacation includes home pickup and return, round-trip air from San Diego to Kansas City, eight meals and seven fabulous shows.



5-day Cabo San Lucas: Paradise, History & Culture

November 11-15, 2018

\$1,995 per person, dbl. occ.

Take in the rich history and scenic beauty of this southern Baja paradise. In Cabo you'll explore Spanish Colonial architecture and visit the historic 1730 Jesuit Mission during a guided city tour, take a narrated glass-bottom boat tour and enjoy a sunset dinner cruise. You'll take a side-trip to La Paz where you'll visit the Cathedral of La Paz and the Museum of La Ballena. We'll also stop in the artisan village of Todos Santos to enjoy an included lunch at the iconic Hotel California. Tour includes round-trip air, 7 meals, and 4 nights at the beachfront Hilton Los Cabos Hotel.



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