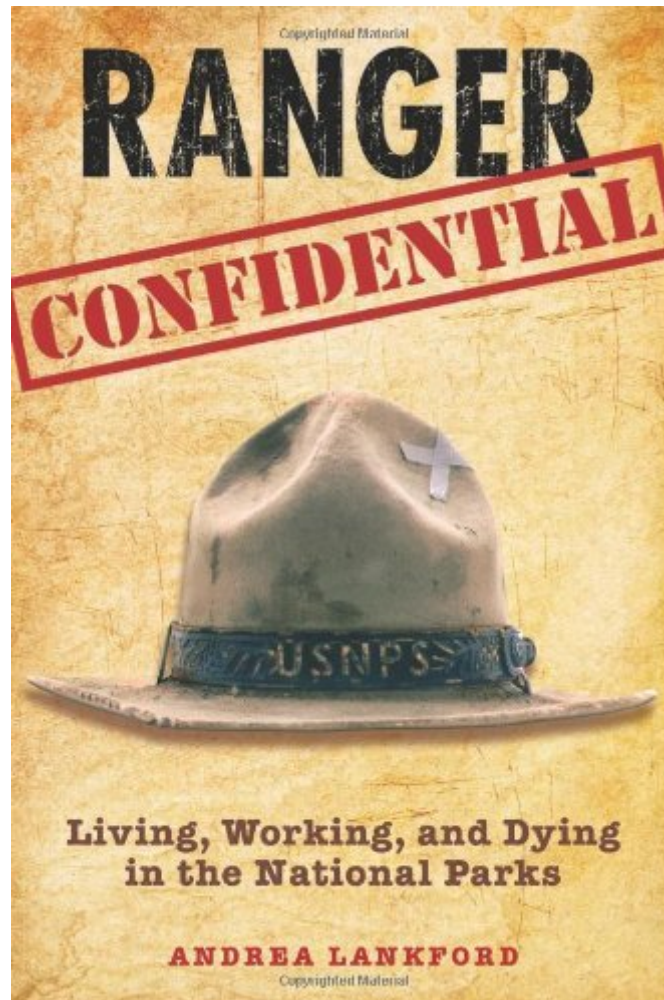




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Ranger Confidential: Living, Working, And Dying In The National Parks



Synopsis

The real stories behind the scenery of America's national parks. For twelve years, Andrea Lankford lived in the biggest, most impressive national parks in the world, working a job she loved. She chaperoned baby sea turtles on their journey to sea. She pursued bad guys on her galloping patrol horse. She jumped into rescue helicopters bound for the heart of the Grand Canyon. She won arguments with bears. She slept with a few too many rattlesnakes. Hell yeah, it was the best job in the world! Fortunately, Andrea survived it. In this graphic and yet surprisingly funny account of her and others' extraordinary careers, Lankford unveils a world in which park rangers struggle to maintain their idealism in the face of death, disillusionment, and the loss of a comrade killed while holding that thin green line between protecting the park from the people, the people from the park, and the people from each other. Ranger Confidential is the story behind the scenery of the nation's crown jewels—Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Great Smokies, Denali. In these iconic landscapes, where nature and humanity constantly collide, scenery can be as cruel as it is redemptive.

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Customer Reviews

While talking about career aspirations with a fellow Army CID Special Agent who just transferred to our office, she mentioned her desire to one day become a Park Ranger. When "Ranger Confidential" popped up in my "Recommended For You" list the next day, I passed along the info to my colleague. A couple of days later I decided to buy this book myself, and I'm very glad that I did. Former National Park Service Ranger Andrea Lankford wrote a very powerful, affecting account of her experiences, co-workers, family and friends during a decade and a half spent serving in our National Parks. She could have told her story in a very superficial, macho, "There I was" fashion, and the anecdotes would have been entertaining, but still nothing special. Instead, Ms. Lankford took the more courageous path, sharing not only what she and her fellow Rangers did, but how they were affected physically and emotionally. Even though I am aware first-hand of the toll being a first responder exacts on our minds and bodies, reading "Ranger Confidential" still hit me like a punch to the gut. My palms sweated while Ms. Lankford recounted rescues and recoveries in the Grand Canyon and Yosemite; one incident she described occurred at the same time my wife and I were riding mules down to Phantom Ranch. I remember thinking at the time, "I sure wouldn't want to be the one having to rappel down those sheer cliffs!" That time-honored definition of courage: "Being scared to death but doing the task anyway" was never more apt when describing what Park Rangers volunteer to do with terrible frequency. Some reviewers have negatively commented about Ms. Lankford's frank commentary on "Ranger Burnout" and Critical Incident Stress among law enforcement Park Rangers. For me, those revelations are what vaulted this book from "Ordinary" to "Truly Special". There are very few who can continually put themselves in harm's way to rescue people who make dumb choices without becoming cynical, and often just plain pissed off. Clearly, most Rangers respect their surroundings and value the ethic of personal responsibility and preparedness, and they respect park visitors who do the same. Ms. Lankford adeptly communicated the sense of frustration, guilt, and even passive-aggressive behavior Rangers have to control when confronted daily by people determined to become victims. The cumulative stress resulting from continually seeing gruesome injuries and deaths pretty much will wear anyone down. Add in the constant risk from human and natural hazards, and even the toughest Ranger can get ground down. "Ranger Confidential" honors us readers by letting us see behind the tan and green facade, at the human beings who have earned the right to wear the "Smokey Bear Stetson". Ms. Lankford's tribute to a fellow Ranger simultaneously brought tears to my eyes and a smile to my face; I've read

none finer. "Ranger Confidential" should be required reading for anyone, male or female, considering employment as a National Park Service Ranger. It wouldn't hurt if most park visitors also were exposed to the valuable lessons Ms. Lankford shares. For everyone else, I believe you will gain a deep appreciation and respect for the men and women who serve in our National Park Service, whether it's at Mount Rainier, Yosemite, Grand Canyon or the Statue of Liberty.

I have never visited any National Park except for the Great Smoky Mountains and after I read this book, I don't want to visit any of them either! Maybe it's because I'm close to 80 years old and not as sure-footed as I once was but I do think that I prefer to read about someone else's adventures than make my own. That said, I thought this book was fascinating, full of all kinds of cool and scary adventures and I never dreamed that being a park ranger was such a tough job. I am honestly impressed with the guys and gals who look after all the visitors who don't seem to want to obey park rules! They have my admiration.

Engaging, interesting, in-depth, and not for kids. I worked at Grand Canyon national park for six months, and this book gave me a whole new respect for park rangers. The credo: "To protect the park from the people, and the people from themselves." is PERFECT.

This book was so interesting that I could not put it down. Took it to Yosemite with me to read in the eve and it was so cool to be in the park where many of these stories happened. I wanted to go visit the SAR office but I felt a tad strange so I didnt go. But this was an amazing book and I loved it!!

A very well written book that tackles the fun and hardships that park rangers have to face in their low-paying, yet extremely rewarding job. I have visited so many national parks and although I have always appreciated the rangers' presence, this book took my respect to them to a whole new level. The narrative, in my opinion, is quite compelling. The humorous stories and one-liners instantly lighten my mood, the thrilling accounts of rescue make me want to read faster just so I can soon find out what happens next but end up soaking myself a little longer, and the ones that describe tragedy effectively makes me emotional. If only the book was concluded in a more impactful manner, I could have said that this is my new favorite book. I'm pretty sure, however, that I will re-read this multiple times in the future.

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