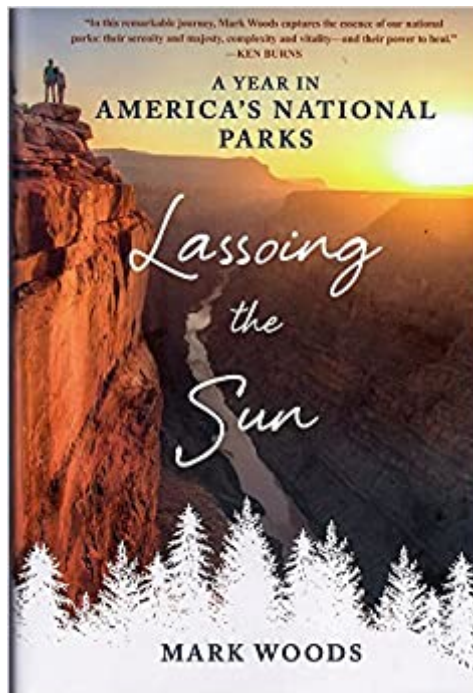




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# Lassoing The Sun: A Year In America's National Parks



## Synopsis

"In this remarkable journey, Mark Woods captures the essence of our National Parks: their serenity and majesty, complexity and vitality--and their power to heal." --Ken Burns

For many childhood summers, Mark Woods piled into a station wagon with his parents and two sisters and headed to America's national parks. Mark's most vivid childhood memories are set against a backdrop of mountains, woods, and fireflies in places like Redwood, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon national parks. On the eve of turning fifty and a little burned-out, Mark decided to reconnect with the great outdoors. He'd spend a year visiting the national parks. He planned to take his mother to a park she'd not yet visited and to re-create his childhood trips with his wife and their iPad-generation daughter. But then the unthinkable happened: his mother was diagnosed with cancer and given just months to live. Mark had initially intended to write a book about the future of the national parks, but *Lassoing the Sun* grew into something more: a book about family, the parks, and the legacies we inherit and the ones we leave behind.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Earnest and heartfelt, [*Lassoing the Sun*] captures how one family handles the joys and sorrows of life, with American's most beautiful landscapes standing in the background."--*Travel & Leisure*

Midlife burnout propelled Woods to spend a year visiting the national parks for a book about their future. But his mother's unexpected cancer diagnosis shifted his focus, resulting in a meditation on both personal and environmental legacy." --*Entertainment Weekly*

If you decide to read only one book in celebration of the National Parks Service Centennial, *Lassoing the Sun* by Mark

Woods would be a solid choice. You will enjoy a pleasant, heart-warming surprise as you turn the pages long into the night, unable to put down the book." -Courtney Miller, 50 Campfires Book Review

“A love letter to family and our national parks that is as big as a son’s heart, as beautiful as the night sky and as stunning as the American landscape.”

Wade Rouse, author of *At Least In the City Someone Would Hear Me Scream* and *America’s Boy* “Lassoing the Sun is a beautifully written reminder that we leave pieces of ourselves -- of our families -- in national parks. Woods shows us that they’re never lost, just held by the wilderness for safekeeping. We find them when we return.”

Ben Montgomery, author of *Grandma Gatewood’s Walk* “Lassoing the Sun is a history lesson that feels like a conversation with an old friend. But more importantly, it is a story of memory, loss, love, solitude, and rediscovering our own compass.”

Neil White, author of *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts* “The guy is so good. And he has such a fresh way of looking at things. I was just thrilled by the way he plans to move the discussion forward.”

Jim Dwyer, Pulitzer Prize winner “A dazzling experience indeed, one that honors the memory of his own mother and her inspiring love of the parks... Woods weaves a timeline that traverses generations, raising more challenges for the future every step of the way.”

Book Page “Beautifully written and it sneaks in plenty of history lessons in a way that feels relevant and satisfying. Woods has done a remarkable thing here. Highly recommended.”

Scene (5 Stars) “Woods makes a clear case for the significant power of the parks on our collective and personal psyches. A deeply heartfelt story about why the national parks remain so integral to the American story.” -Booklist

“This travel memoir will appeal to readers who love the outdoors. Those who would rather stay inside with a good book will be touched by the story of a mother and son saying their goodbyes.” -- Library Journal

“The book that emerged is an extraordinary, beautifully crafted memoir that explores not just our national parks, but our places in them, our families, our legacies and the healing power of nature.” -Mercury News

“Some books come into your life and stay with you. For whatever reason, they strike a chord and fit right in. And while this is rare, it does happen. One book that is forever lodged in my heart is *Lassoing the Sun*.”

Wandering Educators “I recommend *Lassoing the Sun*! If you love natural histories, memoirs, travelogues, this book is a great blend of these genres. Mark Woods’ ties our lives to our landscapes. He celebrates our commitment to the national parks model and holds us responsible for sustaining this particularly American legacy.”

Local Ecologist: Book Review “Author Mark Woods will keep you turning the pages of this moving personal journey to some of America’s iconic and little-known national parks.”

National Park Journal

MARK WOODS is the Metro Columnist for the Florida Times-Union, the daily newspaper in Jacksonville, FL, and recipient of the Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship. He lives in Jacksonville, FL.

I've been reading Mark's column in the Florida Times Union for many years and have felt some similarities in our backgrounds. I was eager to read his book and am happy to say it was as wonderful as I hoped it would be. It's part travelogue, part tribute to his parents and his family, and part a call to action to make sure our national parks are maintained and cherished. His writing is like a pleasant conversation with an old friend. He shares just enough of his personal story to make the reader care and empathize but never gets maudlin. He made me miss my father even more and to be thankful that my parents piled my two brothers and I in the old station wagon for trips to so many of our national parks. In my father's eulogy I said we never passed a historical marker without stopping to read it and to ponder the significance of the site. I am so grateful for those trips and to Mark for bringing them to life again with his stories of discovery and remembrances. Bring back your own childhood memories, or create new ones by following Mark's journey on your own.

Mark is a colleague of mine at The Florida Times-Union. I have always enjoyed his thoughtful columns, and when I heard he had a book coming out, I was eager to grab a copy to show support. Because the book is about the National Parks, I wasn't sure at first how much I would get out of it since I'm not particularly an outdoorsy person. However, my concerns were misplaced. "Lassoing the Sun" is so much more than a book about parks; Mark does a beautiful job weaving in tales about his family, the emotional loss of his mother and telling the story of his journey without making it feel at all like a typical story about finding yourself after a loss. This book made me want to get outside and explore the National Parks near me and beyond. I highly recommend reading this.

This is a well-written, emotionally resonant book. It is a memoir about the author's parents and the values they shared with their children. It also has fascinating discussions with people who are connected to each of the parks the author visited. He has an ability to weave the stories of people into the stories of parks. This is a National Park book that doesn't feel like eating your broccoli as you learn what you should like about the NPS; instead, you tag along with interesting people who are passionate about 9-11 history, or preserving silence, or night skies, or hiking, or birding.

This book is unique. Mark Woods ( whose column in the Florida-Times Union I have been enjoying for years and the reason I bought it) has woven a story about our national parks and the loss of a

loved one (his Mom). It made me ache at times for those who are no longer with me and at other moments, I just wanted to put the book down, and make a reservation to one of the treasured places he writes about in lovely detail. Woods has a way of describing the sights, sounds and sensations of the parks that make it feel more like reading letters from a friend on a mid-life roadtrip than an impersonal travel guide. If you love national parks, add this to your list. Even if you aren't an outdoors nature child, this makes great armchair traveling (without the discomfort he describes at times that you can almost feel as with the mosquitos at one park). Most importantly, this book makes you really think about what is going on in our national park system. His discussions about finding silence in our noisy world ( very thought provoking) and the 9/11 Memorial in Pennsylvania (very touching) are just a few of its highlights. The last chapter made me laugh and cry. I highly recommend this book.

Just finished this in the middle of yet another sleepless night after losing my dad. While the book is about losing a parent, specifically your last parent, that's not what makes it such a great book. Woods' writing makes readers feel like we are right there with him walking solo along the cables to Yosemite's Half Dome or experiencing the absolute and surreal silence of Haleakalã's crater. I love the park choices he made--broad enough to show the diversity of our national parks and limited enough to make us curious to try to visit those parks and others. A gem of a book that popped into my favorite top ten reads.

This book is far more than a travelogue. It is a tribute to our National Parks, and more. It is a deeply personal memoir of the joy and the healing that comes with breathing the rarified air, being humbled by the power of the scenery and entering a natural habitat where we are merely respectful visitors. Additionally, it is a fantastic read presented to us by an extraordinarily gifted writer.

Not what I expected, but better. The real story is how our national parks impact our lives. A great read, full of personal insights that changed the way I see and hear what's around me

I stumbled upon this book by sheer chance while browsing my local Barnes & Noble Bookstore last month. I have been to a few national parks, but my love for them was truly awakened when I went to Zion National Park last year. My time in Utah sparked a quest to visit as much national parks as I can in my lifetime, and Mark's book has only reinforced my desire. You will laugh, cry and fall in love not only with our national parks, but with your family and life all over again after reading this.

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