



Quiz:

- Who protects the environment from foreign invaders (tamarisk, Russian olive and zebra mussels) and the public from being ravaged by bears, mountain lions, or their own naiveté?
- Who takes your entrance fee for admittance to some of the most beautiful scenery in the world one day and could be doing trail maintenance or firefighting the next?
- Who can deftly answer questions about the difference between an arch and a natural bridge, or why the Great Salt Lake is salty or how fast a bison can run?

If you said PARK RANGER, you're right! There are 391 national parks and sites in the United States that were visited by 276 million people in 2006. In Utah there are over 40 state parks and museums that draw about 5 million visitors. Ensuring that visitors enjoy the facilities, obey the rules, and come to no harm are thousands of park rangers who have at least a bachelor's degree, enjoy working with the public and have passed an accredited law enforcement entrance exam. Many of them start out as volunteers as a way to enter this competitive field.

They work in urban, suburban and rural areas all over the nation. More than half of the rangers employed by the federal government work east of the Mississippi River.

Two well-known park rangers were Gerald Ford, the only president to serve as a ranger in the National Park Service and who added 18 areas to the National Park System during his tenure, and Edward Abbey who was a ranger at Arches National Park in the

Ranger

Gatekeeper to Nature

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1960s. And don't forget the most famous ranger of all, Smokey the Bear who has been the voice of reason when it comes to preventing wild fires since the 1950s.

Whether in a national, state or local entity, a park ranger's duties are varied. The focus can be patrol and enforcement, interpretation and education, fee collection and administration or any combination of those duties.

Law enforcement rangers have police powers and enforce both national laws and park regulations. Crimes committed in national parks are federal crimes. According to FBI statistics America's national parks are safer than the rest of the country. In 2006, there were 1.65 violent crimes per 100,000 people in national parks compared to 469 per 100,000 in the rest of the U.S. Park rangers not

only protect us from the outdoors, they protect the outdoors from us and us from one another. Interpretive rangers are guides to the natural, cultural and historic worlds. They usually have master's degrees in one of the natural sciences or history, and spend much of their time developing and providing educational programs that explain the scientific, historic, cultural and natural features while fostering a visitor's stewardship toward area resources.

Generalist rangers collect entrance and camping fees, explain park rules and often take part in trail maintenance and fire control. Even though they mostly work outside, there are rangers who work in offices and do administrative work especially as they advance toward managerial positions. Uniformed rangers, regardless of their primary duties, are usually expected to

be experts on all the resources under their care.

A recent job listing on statejobs.utah.gov for an entry-level park ranger listed duties such as patrolling on foot, vehicle, vessel, OHV; search and rescue; investigating accidents and crimes; developing and providing interpretive and educational programs; collecting fees; basic accounting; general maintenance of grounds, buildings and mechanical devices; and supervising seasonal employees, interns and volunteers. The starting pay was \$16.07 per hour.

That is a varied list of duties. And it is this variety, plus the fresh air and beautiful surroundings that inspired one ranger to remark that while the pay is not extraordinary, the fringe benefits are priceless: clean air to breathe, stillness, solitude and space. 