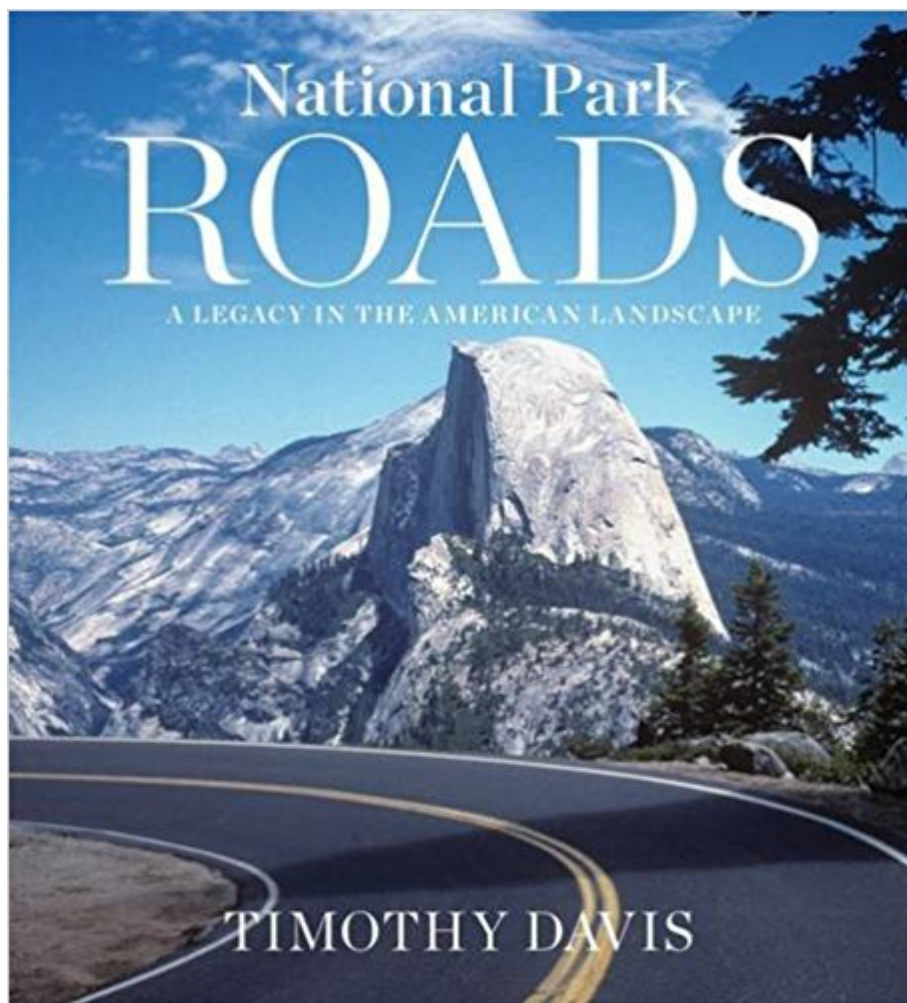


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# National Park Roads: A Legacy In The American Landscape



## Synopsis

From Acadia and Great Smoky Mountains to Zion and Mount Rainier, millions of visitors tour America's national parks. While park roads determine what most visitors see and how they see it, however, few pause to consider when, why, or how the roads they travel on were built. In this extensively researched and richly illustrated book, national parks historian Timothy Davis highlights the unique qualities of park roads, details the factors influencing their design and development, and examines their role in shaping the national park experience—from the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive to Glacier National Park's Going-to-the-Sun Road, Yellowstone's Grand Loop, Yosemite's Tioga Road, and scores of other scenic drives. Decisions about park road development epitomize the central challenge of park management: balancing preservation and access in America's most treasured landscapes. Park roads have been celebrated as technical and aesthetic masterpieces, hailed as democratizing influences, and vilified for invading pristine wilderness with the sights, sounds, and smells of civilization. Davis's recounting of efforts to balance the interests of motorists, wilderness advocates, highway engineers, and other stakeholders offers a fresh perspective on national park history while providing insights into evolving ideas about the role of nature, recreation, and technology in American society. Tales of strong personalities, imposing challenges, resounding controversies, and remarkable achievements enliven this rich and compelling narrative. Key players include many of the most important figures of conservation history—John Muir, Frederick Law Olmsted, wilderness advocates Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, and Ansel Adams, and NPS directors Stephen Mather and Horace Albright among them. An engrossing history, *National Park Roads* will be of interest to national park enthusiasts, academics, design professionals, resource managers, and readers concerned with the past, present, and future of this quintessentially American legacy. As the National Park Service celebrates its centennial, this book offers a fascinating and illuminating account of the agency's impact on American lives and landscapes.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 344 pages

Publisher: University of Virginia Press (August 19, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0813937760

ISBN-13: 978-0813937762

Product Dimensions: 11.4 x 1 x 12.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #443,064 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Highway & Traffic #281 in Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Landscape #366 in Books > Travel > Food, Lodging & Transportation > Road Travel

## Customer Reviews

A gracefully written, impeccably researched, major study of something of importance not only to Americans but to anyone interested in public access to regions of scenic, historical, or ecological significance. National Park Roads will be a major work of lasting value, with no other book remotely on its scale or in its class. (John Stilgoe, Harvard University, author of Train Time: Railroads and the Imminent Reshaping of the United States Landscape) For most Americans, to visit a national park is to experience its roads. While it's easy to lament that fact and to see roads as modern intrusions into otherwise pristine nature, Tim Davis insists that roads and road building sit at the very heart of national park history. Roads shape the view, define the line between preservation and use, and demonstrate above all else that our national parks are landscapes where nature and culture intersect. National Park Roads is a stunning history of the built environment that will change the way we see our national parks. (Paul Sutter, University of Colorado, author of Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement) More than 5,500 miles of paved roads wind through the national park system. You probably haven't given much thought to any of them, but Timothy Davis has. A Park Service historian, Davis has written "National Park Roads," a fascinating and lavishly illustrated book about those paved ways. They may well be the most important development in the history of the National Park Service. (Washington Post) National Park Roads details the history of a relationship as fragile and monumental as Glacier National Park's Going-to-the-Sun Road — full of ups and downs, twists and turns, challenges and beauty. It is a story that many of us take for granted; after all, a park's road serves as a de facto tour guide for most visitors, and that's due to intricate planning and inventive engineering by park leaders for over 100 years. (National Parks Traveler) Davis's book is the culmination of decades of changing attitudes towards the roads that shape the experience of national-park landscapes for many millions of visitors each year. He presents these arteries not as necessary evils but as often deeply moving experiences that, for most, shape and enable the greater part of their visit.... More than a means of transportation, [park roads] have been a primary mode of experience. No one understands this

more completely than Davis. (Foundation for Landscape Studies) This is a must-read for a wide audience of park managers, visitors, and transportation experts, as well as park enthusiasts. There is much to be learned and to be gained from the beautifully produced pages of this book. (Robert Pavlik, California State Park Rangers Association The CSPRA Wave)

Timothy Davis, a historian with the U.S. National Park Service, has published and lectured widely on America's national parks. He is the coeditor, with Todd Croteau and Christopher Marston, of America's National Park Roads and Parkways: Drawings from the Historic American Engineering Record.

The history of gaining access to our National Parks

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