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America's State Parks Join REI to #OptOutside on Black Friday

Raleigh – America's State Parks has joined REI, the nation's largest consumer co-op and specialty outdoor retailer, and its effort to offer the outdoors as a healthy, carefree, natural alternative to the massive Black Friday crowds of holiday shoppers.

In October, REI announced plans to close its doors on Black Friday (November 27) at all 143 of its retail locations, headquarters and two distribution centers. Instead of reporting to work, the co-op is paying its 12,000 employees so they can do what they love most – be outside. The co-op is inviting the nation to join in by choosing to #OptOutside to reconnect with family and friends this Thanksgiving holiday.

Jerry Stritzke, president and CEO of REI, said, "Black Friday is the perfect time to remind ourselves of the essential truth that life is richer, more connected and complete when you choose to spend it outside. We're closing our doors, paying our employees to get out there, and inviting America to #OptOutside with us because we love great gear, but we are even more passionate about the experiences it unlocks."

State parks representatives suggest they have the perfect places for all those who want to "Opt Outside." With more than 10,000 parks, historic sites, trails and more, state park areas are close to home. They offer a convenient and exceptional venue, with magnificent vistas, a tapestry of trails and a myriad of recreational opportunities to rejuvenate the mind and even work off the calories absorbed from the turkey, stuffing, yams, pumpkin pies that may be consumed on Thanksgiving Day. As of today, the following have created a different type of Black Friday promotion:

- Arizona – [limited # of free passes at REI stores in Flagstaff, Paradise Valley, Tempe, and Tucson](#)
- California – [free passes to Redwood State Parks](#)
- Colorado – no fees for parking at any of its 42 state parks
- Kansas – [chance to win free overnight stays](#)
- Massachusetts – free, staff-interpreted hikes at parks across the state
- Minnesota – [free admission to all state parks](#)
- Missouri – [no camping fees \(and, year-round, no entrance fees\)](#)
- Oregon – [waiving \\$5 day-use parking fee](#)

"America's State Parks welcome people who venture out early to get the best deals and need to decompress in the afternoon, as well as those who prefer to avoid the crowds completely and wish to spend the day enjoying the tranquility and peaceful escapes offered in our parks" said Lewis Ledford, executive director of the National Association of State Park Directors. "Parks are a tonic for the mind, body and spirit at any time of the year. These experiences can be unlocked without a key and within a short drive from home virtually anywhere in the country."

America's State Parks are to explore and experience. They encompass more than 18 million acres and provide for grand diversity – both remote and local in their offerings – and provide important contributions to the nation's environment, heritage, health and economy.

In an effort to get even more people to #OptOutside on Black Friday, the platform Meetup.com is making it easy for Outdoor Organizers across the United States to host Meetups – including at many state parks – and anyone who wants to #OptOutside is welcome to join. You can find #OptOutside Meetups near you from the hundreds already scheduled at <http://meetu.ps/2Qx5Fw>.

“There are 4 million Outdoor Meetup members who enjoy all that state parks have to offer, all year long,” said Kristin Hodgson, Communications Director at Meetup. “We are thrilled to join forces with REI and the state parks to encourage people to #OptOutside this Black Friday and grateful to the Meetup Organizers who are leading their members to take part.”

To learn more about the recreational opportunities offered during Black Friday in America’s State Parks, go to <http://www.visitamericasstateparks.org/>. Click on the buttons....

Promoting and advancing the state park systems of America for their own significance, as well as for their important contributions to the nation's environment, heritage, health and economy.