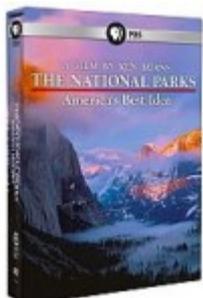


National parks come to life on small screen

By Kathryn Reed



The United States is a world leader in many areas. One area that often goes unrecognized is the contribution to the preservation of open space.

It was March 1, 1872, that the first national park in the world was created. President Ulysses S Grant created Yellowstone National Park that day.

Now there are nearly 400 parks in the United States.

Other countries soon followed in setting aside undeveloped land for the preservation for generations to come.

The history of the U.S. park system, the struggles, the evolution and the people who made it all a reality come to life in "The National Parks: America's Best Idea." The six-part film by Ken Burns first aired on PBS last fall. Now the series is available for rent on DVD.

Even though I learned a ton from the hours of video, I have to admit I fell asleep through parts of the first four discs. I don't know if it was the music, scenery, soft voices or just my state of mind.

Of course it could have been the editing and redundancy. I love Yosemite, and would say it's my favorite national park, but I was ready to move on from this granite splendor long

before the filmmakers were.

With that negativity said, without hesitation I recommend watching the first, fifth and sixth DVDs. Yes, you will be missing a tremendous amount if you skip half of the videos, but you'll still learn a ton.

With so many national parks and monuments in California and Nevada, it makes me want to get off the computer and into the Jeep to start exploring and rediscovering places I haven't visited in years.

The photography is incredible – and not just because the subject matter is stunning to begin with. The cinematography is exquisite. The research is superb. The message is incredible.

The history can be a bit much to take at times, just because there is so much of it. I would suggest watching the first few videos in more than one sitting. This will ward off the sleepiness as well as help you grasp everything.

With only a fraction of the parks mentioned throughout the series, I have to admit it makes me curious about the hundreds of others in the system.

Road trip?

For more information about the series, [click here](#).