

# National park jewels draw record crowds



With this being the centennial celebration of the National Park Service, visitors are flocking to popular parks like Yosemite. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

**By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee**

Visitors light up as they step off tour buses at Tunnel View and see Yosemite Valley for the first time. Half Dome and El Capitan, those towering walls of granite, demand attention. From miles away, visitors can watch water pour from Upper and Lower Yosemite Falls and Bridalveil Fall. The Merced River and the meadows provide a peaceful retreat.

“It’s a park that captures the wonder of the world, that changes you by being there,” President Obama said during a visit to Yosemite in June. “There’s something sacred about

this place.”

As the National Park Service celebrates its 100th birthday Aug. 25, visitors are about to break attendance records at Yosemite and other parks for the second year in a row. More than 4 million people visited Yosemite last year, the highest total ever, and the number of visitors through June of this year eclipsed last year’s total for the same period. Likewise, more than 307 million people visited Park Service properties last year, and this year’s figures suggest another record in the making.

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