

## HOW TO ELOPE IN A NATIONAL PARK

By Julia Koslowsky

Eloping is an intimate and meaningful way to start your forever. Every couple wants stunning pictures of their marriage that immediately take people's breath away. National parks offer the most naturally beautiful backdrops and are my personal favorite places for a wedding! Whether you're an adventurous couple who wants to showcase your wild side and experience nature together or you just want a beautiful upgrade from a normal courthouse elopement, eloping in a national park is easier than you think!

Lots of questions can arise about the logistics of a park elopement.

*How much does it cost? Do I need a permit? What do I bring? Who do I contact for everything? What time of day should I get married? HELP!*

Don't forget to breathe! Let's chat through the most important details so you can focus on the most important thing about your elopement: YOU!

### PERMITS & FEES

Most national parks allow weddings and elopements, but you will need a special permit to do so. These range from \$50 to \$300 in cost depending on the park, and you don't want to skip this step. If you don't have a permit, a park ranger could crash your wedding with a fine and shoo you out of the park. Nobody wants that! Because park elopements are so popular now, you'll want to book your permit well in advance! Parks typically require you to request your permit at least three weeks ahead of your desired elopement date. Many parks allow you to book a year in advance and have guests if you want more people than your SO and photographer. My advice? Book your permit as soon as you know you're eloping!

Permits for park weddings can be requested and bought on the [National Park Service](#) website. Double check how far in advance you need to book your date. You will also have to pay the entrance fee to the park per car.

### PARK DOS & DON'TS

DO pack the essentials. Check out my list below for some recommendations!

DON'T leave a trace. Avoid bringing props like glitter or confetti, and stay on the designated trails. That way you help keep the parks clean and erosion-free.

DO wear hiking boots and bring extra clothes! You definitely don't want to hike in heels. Waiting to change into your dress isn't a bad idea either!

DON'T forget to check out restrictions of the park you elope in. Restrictions can differ from park to park regarding number of guests, usable props, chairs, pets, and more.

DO scout out your preferred elopement location! You can look through my past posts for my specific location recommendations. Pinterest is an easy way to visualize your elopement.

## **FINDING THE LIGHT**

The best times to photograph your elopement are sunrise and sunset. Sunrise offers a cooler, whiter light and a less-crowded park. If you're not a morning person, sunrise might not be a good option for you because you will have to wake up and drive/hike in the dark to make it to your destination before sunrise. Sunset light is warm and golden and allows you more time to get ready during the day.

## **WHERE TO STAY**

If you're planning to go hiking in the parks, staying close by will help you adjust to the altitude. You'll already be breathless enough from gazing into your partner's eyes! There are usually always options to camp as well as Airbnbs and hotels. You might even find a cute mountain cabin or lodge to cozy up in for a week or two! Prepare to drive at least an hour into the park to get to your preferred location.

## **PARK PACKING LIST**

Weather can change quickly, and you don't want to get caught unprepared. I recommend bringing these options to keep your elopement smooth and worry-free.

- Hiking boots
- Change of clothes/warm layers
- Jacket
- Umbrella
- Marriage license (can't forget that!)
- Any props you want
- Water & snacks

Eloping is such a special way to begin your life together. I hope this guide inspires you and guides you in your planning. Please reach out if you have questions or need an elopement photographer!