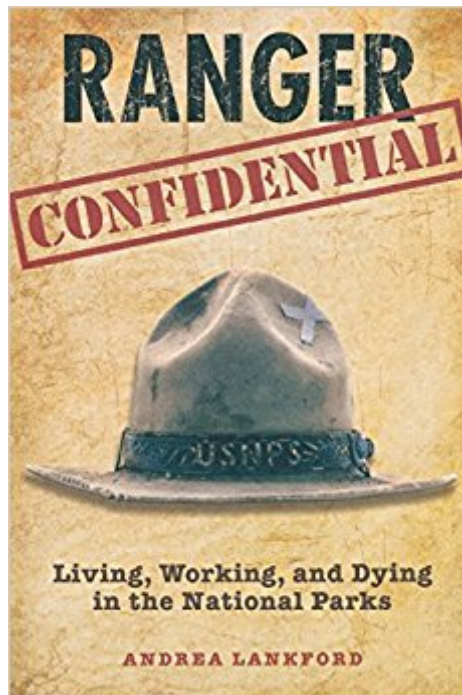




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Ranger Confidential: Living, Working, And Dying In The National Parks



Synopsis

For twelve years, Andrea Lankford lived in the biggest, most impressive national parks in the world, working a job she loved. She chaperoned baby sea turtles on their journey to sea. She pursued bad guys on her galloping patrol horse. She jumped into rescue helicopters bound for the heart of the Grand Canyon. She won arguments with bears. She slept with a few too many rattlesnakes. Hell yeah, it was the best job in the world! Fortunately, Andrea survived it. In this graphic and yet surprisingly funny account of her and others' extraordinary careers, Lankford unveils a world in which park rangers struggle to maintain their idealism in the face of death, disillusionment, and the loss of a comrade killed while holding that thin green line between protecting the park from the people, the people from the park, and the people from each other. *Ranger Confidential* is the story behind the scenery of the nation's crown jewels—Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Great Smokies, Denali. In these iconic landscapes, where nature and humanity constantly collide, scenery can be as cruel as it is redemptive.

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Customer Reviews

While talking about career aspirations with a fellow Army CID Special Agent who just transferred to our office, she mentioned her desire to one day become a Park Ranger. When "Ranger Confidential" popped up in my "Recommended For You" list the next day, I passed along the info to my colleague. A couple of days later I decided to buy this book myself, and I'm very glad that I did. Former National Park Service Ranger Andrea Lankford wrote a very powerful, affecting account

of her experiences, co-workers, family and friends during a decade and a half spent serving in our National Parks. She could have told her story in a very superficial, macho, "There I was" fashion, and the anecdotes would have been entertaining, but still nothing special. Instead, Ms. Lankford took the more courageous path, sharing not only what she and her fellow Rangers did, but how they were affected physically and emotionally. Even though I am aware first-hand of the toll being a first responder exacts on our minds and bodies, reading "Ranger Confidential" still hit me like a punch to the gut. My palms sweated while Ms. Lankford recounted rescues and recoveries in the Grand Canyon and Yosemite; one incident she described occurred at the same time my wife and I were riding mules down to Phantom Ranch. I remember thinking at the time, "I sure wouldn't want to be the one having to rappel down those sheer cliffs!" That time-honored definition of courage: "Being scared to death but doing the task anyway" was never more apt when describing what Park Rangers volunteer to do with terrible frequency. Some reviewers have negatively commented about Ms. Lankford's frank commentary on "Ranger Burnout" and Critical Incident Stress among law enforcement Park Rangers.

I bought this book at the North Rim Lodge after hiking the Grand Canyon rim to rim south to north in May, 2012. Park Rangers are often overlooked and taken for granted by the public, but their jobs are incredibly important. Unfortunately rangers seem to spend much of their time saving National Park visitors (and other park employees) from themselves, and this seems to have the unfortunate effect of wearing down many idealistic young rangers over time until they burn out, become bitter, and, in this case, write a book. Ranger Confidential is interesting when author Andrea Lankford explains what really goes on behind the scenes at such famous U.S. national parks as the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Denali, and others. The stories are disjointed, but it is still interesting to read about clueless hikers, ranger love and loss, park deaths (more than you think), arrests and transporting of prisoners, short haul helicopter rescues, and even tragic park employee suicides. The Grand Canyon averages over 300 rescues a year. When you figure in that most visitors come in the summer, the number actually averages out to several rescues per day during the high season. Despite numerous warnings, signs, and patrolling rangers, people still get in trouble there every day. On our two day rim to rim Grand Canyon hike, for example, we were repeatedly warned not to try to go down to the river and back in one day, and yet we ran into at least five exhausted hikers doing just that. They were in real trouble at the halfway mark heading back, but luckily a ranger station was nearby and they were airlifted out. People routinely underestimate the trip, carry little water, have no map, think their cell phones have service everywhere in the canyon (they do not), etc.

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