

**The Day (Connecticut)**

# Welcome to Golden Arches National Park

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A new plan to bring in food trucks, offer Amazon deliveries and expand Wi-Fi service at national parks has one major problem: It doesn't go far enough.

After all, what's the point of visiting Yellowstone, Bryce Canyon, Zion and other scenic destinations if you can't enjoy — make that demand — the continued convenience of tasty, unlimited and, most important, instantly accessible refreshment?

That's certainly how I felt one scorching afternoon a few years ago when my son Tom and I clambered up the Mist Trail at California's Yosemite National Park. Unfortunately, I had gulped down the last drop in my water bottle, heedless that we still faced several difficult miles of backpacking to reach our wilderness camp in Little Yosemite Valley.

"Boy, what I wouldn't give for a Starbucks Mocha Frappuccino right now," I gasped.

Though parched, I did manage to stagger the rest of the way — but someone must have been listening, because just last year the Seattle-based coffee giant finally opened its first national park store in Yosemite. About time!

Sure, a bunch of tree-huggers (actually, more than 25,000) signed a petition slamming the Park Service's approval of the franchise, claiming the spread of commercialism clashed with the park's environmental ethos, but those protests had about as much punch as a cup of chamomile tea.

Anyway, here's my beef: The Yosemite Starbucks is tucked away down at the park's base lodge, not up at higher elevations. What good is that when you're on a ridge, dying of thirst, or just have an insane craving for gingerbread biscotti?

It makes much more sense to have trailside coffeehouses every quarter-mile or so — a national park version of highway rest stops. You wouldn't necessarily need baristas or bakers, just a few servers.

Before I go into the next phase of my idea — the really genius part that will have government bean-counters wonder why THEY didn't think of it sooner — some background:

The U.S. Interior Department's "Made in America" Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee not long ago suggested introducing the aforementioned Amazon deliveries, food trucks and upgraded Wi-Fi in response to a Trump administration plan to cut next year's national park budget by nearly half a billion dollars.

Now, Amazon has been experimenting with the use of drones to make home deliveries. What better place for a remote-controlled flying device to drop off a caramel brulee latte than a national park, with all its wide-open space?

These drones also could be used to bring hikers whole meals from food trucks now under consideration. After all, you can't drive an unwieldy vehicle over narrow, rocky footpaths. Maybe

ATVs could help out, too.

Starbucks is just the beginning. Every national park from sea to shining sea should have its own Popeye's, Burger King, Papa Johns, Taco Bell ...

The proposed expansion of Wi-Fi service would even allow hikers order ahead using their smart phones.

These initiatives not only would better serve park visitors but also would bring in much-needed cash. Now that I think about it, why should taxpayers kick in even one dime to keep parks running when businesses could do the job much more efficiently?

I'm sure corporations would pay handsomely for naming rights, just as they do for football bowl games and sports stadiums.

In some cases, it wouldn't be too much of a leap: Arches National Park could become Golden Arches National Park; Grand Canyon, the Grand Latte Canyon; Big Bend, the Big Mac Bend; Smoky Mountains, the Smoked-Rib Mountains; and so on.

I say it's time for the government to bring home the bacon.