




When our team sat down to plan our annual awards feature, we were at a loss. Each fall, our editors comb through a year’s worth of ratings, reviews, and data to identify the best-of-the-best in travel around the world. But we found ourselves asking, what should that look like in 2020? How could we possibly judge a business or an attraction based on three months of business as usual...and another seven months of anything but?

We decided we couldn’t, but we discovered something even better along the way. The businesses we love overwhelmingly met the moment: Restaurants fed newly-unemployed members of their communities; hotels housed frontline medical workers; museums became polling places—and even a beloved Coney Island amusement park found a way to help. (You’ll just have to read on to find out how!)

It turns out, small businesses and industry giants alike were showing us all, in real-time, what it means to build community and support our country during a crisis. Their pivots were meaningful, surprising, and often clever, all with the end goals of staying afloat, protecting their people, and making a difference during a year that’s been challenging for so many reasons.

Our package honors those that have made such an impact—and notably, we’re sticking close to home. Whereas our previous years’ award winners have spanned the globe far and wide, we recognize that 2020 has kept most of our readers close to home—something that can almost seem foreign for travel-lovers. This year, we’ve decided to honor American establishments that genuinely make America great. You might find that many of our winners are in your own backyard. Take the time to discover them alongside us—and root for them today, tomorrow, and into the future.

- Molly Fergus, VP & General Manager, and Laura Ratliff, Editorial Director



2020 HISTORY CHOICE
tripadvisor

Innovators

Seeing is believing, right? That's a tough ask when you're a museum in a city on lockdown. These 22 winners, primarily traditional, hands-on attractions, creatively pivoted to virtual programming or other tactics to keep visitors entertained and engaged even during the darkest days of the pandemic. Meanwhile, others have found unique ways to cater to our new normal....

[View Winners >](#)



Canvan Images / Getty Images

Badlands National Park

ADDRESS:

25216 Ben Reifel Rd.
Interior, SD 57750

PHONE: (605) 433-5361

WEB: [Visit website](#)

Badlands National Park, the land of stone and light, kept intrepid kids in mind when considering virtual experiences of the park. The first-ever virtual Badlands National Park Service Junior Ranger Program took place via video conference this past September; kids got the chance to become Junior Rangers by completing a “Pick Your Own Adventure” activity with a park ranger to earn a Junior Ranger Badge.

Families can also listen to the “Good Rangers, Bad Lands” podcast, which has episodes led by cultural resource managers, museum curators, park rangers, and wildlife biologists. Other kid-friendly options include a Badlands virtual field trip, a curriculum-based conference that educates viewers on the park’s geologic features and fossils. You’ll learn about the wild animals in the park, like the prairie dogs, mule deer, antelope, bison, coyotes, and bighorn sheep. Current programs include Ancient Ecosystems, best suited for third and fourth graders; Fossil Express, catered to third graders; and Bison Banquet, geared toward most grades.

The BNP website has a slew of informative and educational articles that are easily digestible as well. You can dive into geological formations and how the buttes came into formation, get a deeper understanding of prairie dog colonies, and gain knowledge around the indigenous populations that call the park home.

And newly implemented virtual tours of the Badlands allow park lovers to take a tour of the park from the comfort and safety of home. See the major highlights around the park via Google Earth, which includes images and need-to-know information. Overlooks, trails, points of interest, and wayside exhibits are all available for free through this platform. If anything, this feature will give you the opportunity to learn about the park and plan for your future in-person adventure.

The park is currently in a phased approach to reopening. Access to the Ben Reifel Visitor Center at Cedar Pass has been limited and the South Unit of the park, including the White River Visitor Center, has been closed. The park has permitted visitors to the north unit of the park, with open access to roads, trails, and campgrounds.

- [*Wendy Altschuler*](#)

ALSO LISTED IN: [Badlands National Park, South Dakota](#)