

Yosemite closed as Google fetes park's birthday (Update)

October 1 2013

Google feted Yosemite's 123rd birthday by devoting its search doodle to the world-famous park Tuesday—just as it and other tourist landmarks like the Grand Canyon closed due to the US shutdown.

Clicking on the signature doodle brought up a page of headlines about Yosemite National Park joining all other US national parks in closing due to the budget standoff on Capitol Hill.

Below was the link to Yosemite's own website, which was also down. "Because of the federal government shutdown, all national parks are closed and National Park Service webpages are not operating," it told surfers.

"Anyone who's hoping to arrive, even for a day visit, would see gates closed and would be turned away," National Park Service chief spokesman Mike Litterst said, according to the Los Angeles Times. "There won't be any access."

The company that operates over 1,000 rooms in the park, DNC Parks & Resorts at Yosemite, was working to warn tourists of the shutdown before they arrived, while guests already staying there would have to leave within 48 hours, company spokeswoman Lisa Cesaro told the newspaper. She did not immediately respond to request for further comment.

Meanwhile the Grand Canyon, also among the biggest natural tourist

attractions in the western US, began turning away visitors from 6:00 am, while guests already staying in lodging in the park, like Yosemite, were being given 48 hours to leave, a spokeswoman said.

"Having to turn anyone away is hard," said spokeswoman Kirby-Lynn Shedlowski, adding: "We're just trying to maintain an orderly shutdown and closure of the park."

The Grand Canyon usually gets 18,000 visitors a day in October, she said.

"I'm disappointed. But what do I do with this?" tourist Esteban Estevez, on a two-week vacation from Argentina, told the Arizona Republic newspaper online. "I was thinking this stuff with shutdown would be later, not when I'm here."

The Yosemite shutdown was the latest blow this summer for the California park, which draws millions of tourists from the United States and around the world every year to see its spectacular landmarks including the majestic Half Dome and El Capitan rock formations.

Two of the four main roads into the park were closed in late August due to the so-called Rim Fire, which scorched over 257,000 acres (402 square miles) of forest outside and inside the northern edge of the park, which is about 200 miles (320 kilometers) east of San Francisco.

Spokespeople for Yosemite itself did not respond to request for comment by phone or email Tuesday. One automatic reply, from spokeswoman Kari Cobb, said: "Because of the federal government shutdown I have been furloughed. I cannot check email messages until the government re-opens."

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