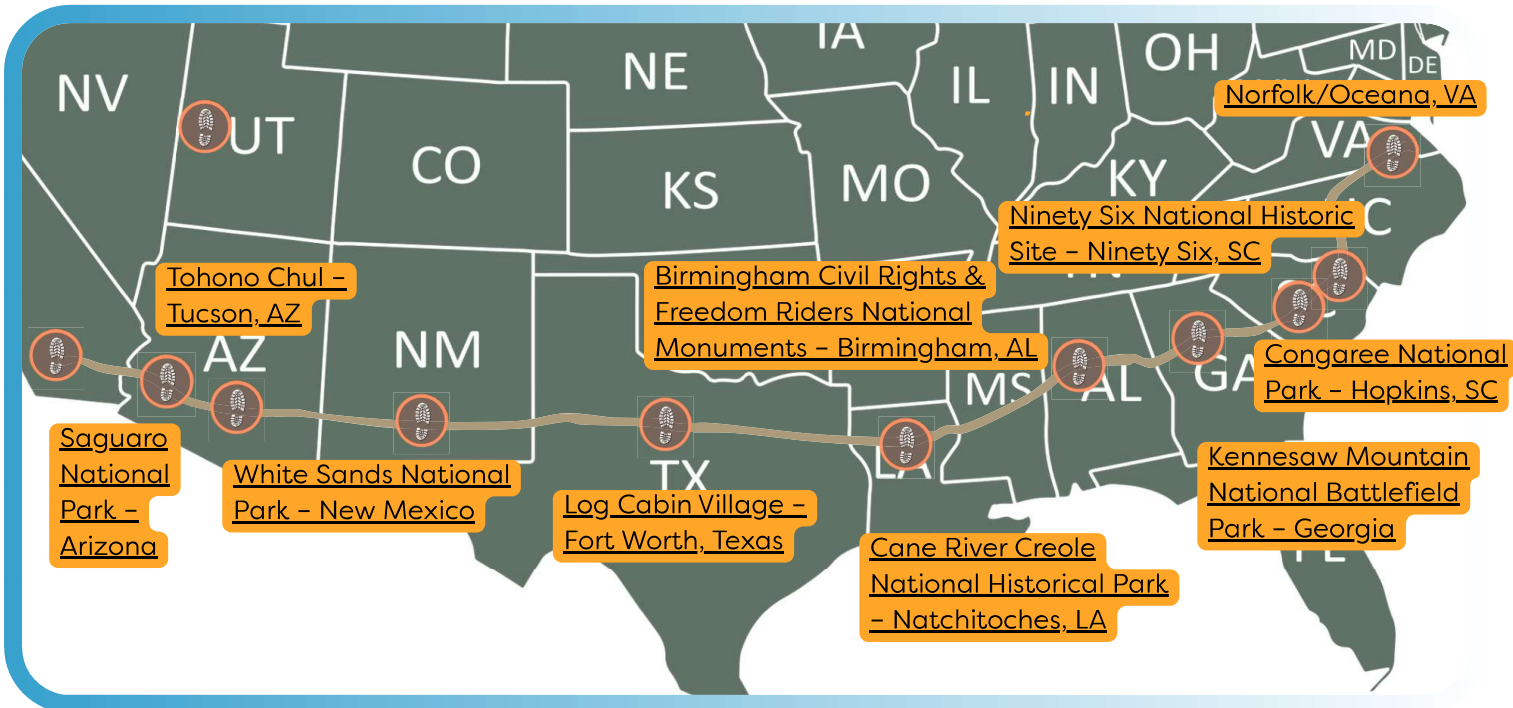




San Diego, CA ↔ Norfolk or Oceana, VA

Moving from coast to coast is no small feat—but this route is packed with hidden gems, quiet trails, and creative outdoor stops that make even long days on the road feel lighter. Whether you're crossing the desert or the Deep South, these moments in nature offer a chance to breathe, explore, and reconnect.



Tohono Chul - Tucson, AZ


Stroll shaded paths through desert gardens bursting with cactus blooms, hummingbirds, and art tucked into quiet corners. Tohono Chul is a peaceful oasis where families can explore winding trails, watch butterflies flit by, and learn how plants and animals thrive in the Sonoran Desert.

 **Family Tip:** This site participates in [Blue Star Museums](#), so military families enjoy free admission.



Saguaro National Park - Arizona

Iconic cactus silhouettes greet you just outside Tucson. Walk a short trail, count how many different shapes of saguaros you see, and enjoy the desert's surprising stillness. This is a peaceful pause amid the heat, and a great spot for sunrise or sunset family photos.

 **Pro Tip:** Active duty military, Veteran, and Gold Star families enjoy special benefits, including a free America The Beautiful Pass, which can be obtained at most national parks that collect fees using a military ID.



White Sands National Park – New Mexico

Glittering dunes stretch as far as the eye can see in this dreamlike landscape. Let your kids race down the hills on a sled while you take in the surreal beauty. It's one of the most joyful ways to get the wiggles out and a reminder that your PCS can have its own kind of magic.

Mindful Minute: Close your eyes for one full minute and feel the sun, sand, and breeze on your skin and notice what shifts. And, be sure to wear sunglasses because the glare on the famous white sands is bright.



Log Cabin Village – Fort Worth, Texas

Step back to the 1800s at this living history museum, where authentic log cabins and costumed interpreters bring frontier life to vivid detail. Families can wander between historic buildings, watch blacksmiths at work, or try hands-on activities that show what daily life was like in pioneer days.

Family Tip: This site participates in [Blue Star Museums](#), so military families enjoy free admission.



Let kids churn butter, play old-fashioned games, or simply explore the shady grounds imagining what hidden treasures might have been tucked inside these rustic cabins.

Cane River Creole National Historical Park – Natchitoches, LA

Set along a scenic river, this site tells the story of Creole culture and rural life. The grounds are expansive and quiet, which is perfect for an afternoon picnic or a reflective walk among the buildings. Savor the Spanish moss and stillness.



Birmingham Civil Rights & Freedom Riders National Monuments – Birmingham, AL

Journey through Alabama's living history with stops that honor the brave souls who fought for equality. In Birmingham, stand on streets where peaceful marches changed the nation, then visit Anniston to see the Freedom Riders site where a bus was attacked yet hope rolled on. These powerful places invite meaningful family conversations about courage, justice, and building a kinder future. Take a quiet moment together to reflect on how small acts of bravery can ripple through generations.



📍 **Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park – Georgia**

Rolling trails, sweeping views, and Civil War history come together at this Georgia landmark. Hike or drive to the summit for panoramic vistas, then wander leafy paths where stories of resilience still echo. It's a peaceful spot to stretch your legs, reflect as a family, and take in the beauty that surrounds old battle lines.

📍 **Ninety Six National Historic Site – Ninety Six, SC**

Wide open fields and an old earthen star fort invite exploration and imagination. You can let the kids run ahead while you enjoy the quiet hum of the South Carolina countryside. Snap a family photo by the log cabin and pause for deep breaths under the hardwoods.



Mindful Minute: Sit on a bench and listen to the soundscape—birdsong, breeze, and your own breath.

📍 **Congaree National Park – Hopkins, SC**

Just outside Columbia, Congaree's towering bald cypress and rich green canopy offer a quiet and shaded (pew) escape from highway noise. You can walk the accessible boardwalk loop, or if you have time, rent a canoe to paddle through the flooded forest. Just 30 minutes in nature is guaranteed to calm nerves and reset moods.



📍 **Final Stop: Norfolk/Oceana, VA**

As you settle into your new surroundings, keep the connection to the natural world—and your sense of adventure—alive! Whether it's a weekend hike or a picnic in a local park, you've already started your next chapter connected to nature. Check out nearby gems like [First Landing State Park](#) or [Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge](#) for easy trails and coastal scenery, explore splash-friendly gardens at [Norfolk Botanical Garden](#), or go a little wilder at [False Cape State Park](#). There's so much outdoor wonder right in your new backyard waiting to be discovered.

Don't forget to share your PCS journey with [#MilitaryFamiliesOutdoors](#), and visit [MilitaryFamiliesOutdoors.com](#) for more ideas and wellness stops to make your move a little less stressful—and a lot more memorable.

