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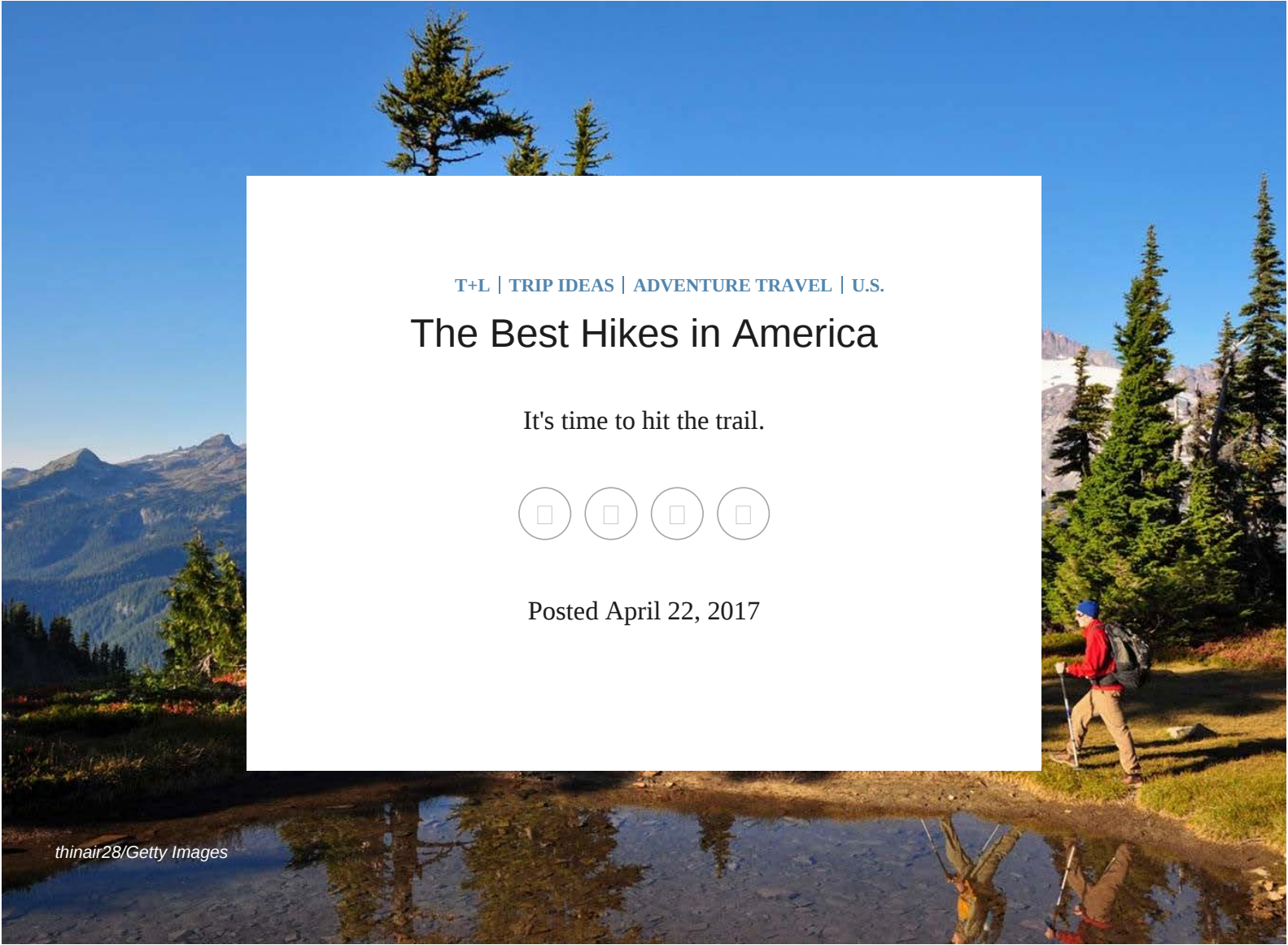
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The Best Hikes in America

It's time to hit the trail.



Posted April 22, 2017

thinair28/Getty Images

by
Stacey Leasca

As famed writer Wallace Stegner once said, [America’s national parks](#) are “the best idea we ever had.” And with warmer weather approaching, now’s the time to start planning a hike around the national or state park nearest you. To help you plan the perfect adventure, [Yelp](#) compiled a list of the best hikes in the U.S. by scouring all comments and ratings on its site.

To come to these findings, Yelp ranked the locations in its parks category that had "a large concentration of reviews mentioning the words ‘hiking,’ ‘hike,’ and ‘trail,’ then ranked those spots using a number of factors including the total volume and ratings of reviews mentioning those keywords."

Related: [9 Incredible Hidden Locations in U.S. National Parks Where You Can Avoid the Crowds](#)

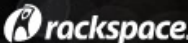
Only two parks were included per state to ensure geographic diversity. Check out the entire list below, and to make a (cheap) trip out of it, see places you can stay for free near U.S. national parks [here](#).

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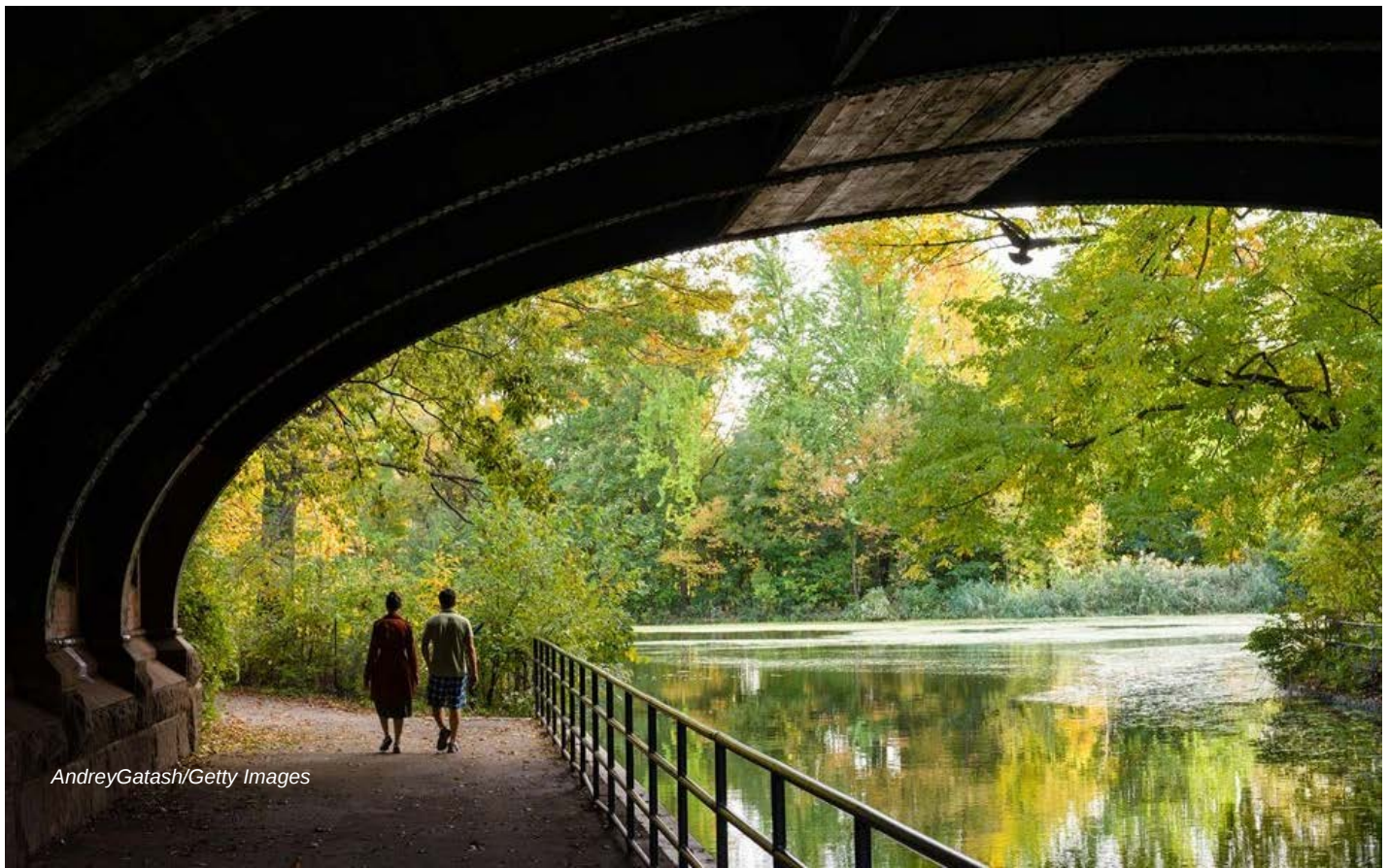
Business Insider



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25. Prospect Park

[Prospect Park](#) in [Brooklyn](#) offers a ton of different activities for park-goers to partake in. From basketball and tennis courts, to bird watching and hikes, there is simply something for everyone. The park has miles of roadways and paths, including a 3.35-mile running lane along Park Drive.



24. Washington Park Arboretum

[Washington Park Arboretum](#) is a small hidden gem located near Lake Washington in Washington state. The park is 230 acres filled with a wide array of plants, some found nowhere else in the Northwest. Hike and observe the arboretum's collections of plants, displayed in several thematic gardens, ranging from the ecogeographic gardens in the south end of the park to seasonal gardens such as the Witt Winter Garden.



Kevin Smith/Getty Images

23. Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center

[Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center](#) in Juneau, Alaska is an epicenter of hiking around the Mendenhall Glacier and the Tongass National Forest. The area is a nature-lover's paradise with visitors often spotting bald eagles, sockeye salmon, and black bear cubs. Visitors can choose to hike through dense forests and meadows, explore caves, or even venture on a wooden “boardwalk” trail through swampy bogs, called muskegs. With more than 700 miles of trails, hikers need never see the same sights twice.

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22. Cherokee Park

[Cherokee Park](#) in Kentucky is highly popular among locals and tourists alike. Its main feature is a 2.4-mile scenic loop that takes visitors through rolling hills, open meadows, and woodlands of the Beargrass Creek valley. With its family-friendly atmosphere and range of paths to take, it's the perfect place for hikers of all ages.



21. Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument

[Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument](#) in New Mexico, located 40 miles southwest of [Santa Fe](#), is one of the newer parks in America after being established in 2001 by then-president Bill Clinton. The park has several trails, including a 1.2-mile hike which leads up through a slot canyon to a lookout point that offers stunning views of the tent rocks from above. For a closer look, the park also has a 1.3-mile loop trail that leads past the tent rocks' base.



20. Shenandoah National Park

[Shenandoah National Park](#) in Virginia is located just 75 miles from the hustle and bustle of Washington, D.C. The park consists of 200,000 acres of protected lands that are home to deer, songbirds, and a clear, star-speckled night sky. The park also has more than 500 miles of hiking trails, including 101 miles of the [Appalachian Trail](#). Each trail offers something new, including waterfalls, viewpoints, and deep forests.



19. Mount Rainier National Park

[Mount Rainier National Park](#) in Washington state is home to one of the most iconic mountains in the world. Mount Rainier rises 14,410 feet above sea level straight into the clouds. But the summit of the mountain isn't the only hiking opportunity in the park. The park has more than 260 miles of maintained trails that lead visitors through peaceful old-growth forest, river valleys, and subalpine meadows.



18. Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

[Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#) provides visitors with the once-in-a-lifetime experience of getting up close and personal with the extreme heat of a volcano. The park has several trails available to visitors, including Earthquake Trail & Waldron Ledge, which is an easy 1-mile hike that allows visitors to take in the beautiful ocean views, and the Halema'uma'u Trail, a 1-mile hike descending 425 feet at the southern edge of Kīlauea Caldera that takes visitors through a rain forest.



17. Town Lake Metropolitan Parks

The [Town Lake Metropolitan Parks](#) in [Austin, Texas](#) offer visitors the chance to run, hike, walk, or bike around the lake at varying distances. Following a hike, visitors can also try their hand at kayaking, paddle boarding, or canoeing in the lake.



16. Great Smoky Mountains National Park

[Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#) in Tennessee and North Carolina is world-renowned for its diversity of plant and animal life and sprawling mountains to hike and explore. The park even has a “[Hike the Smokies](#)” challenge, which rewards hikers who have explored 100+ miles of the park with exclusive mileage pins. The park has miles of official and backcountry trails with views of waterfalls and old-growth forests.



Rob Crandall/Alamy

15. Billy Goat Trail

[Billy Goat Trail](#) is a moderate 4-mile hike located in Maryland, just minutes from [Washington, D.C.](#) Here, hikers can experience the raging Potomac River and the rocky crags of [Great Falls](#). The hike is incredibly popular, so visit early to beat the crowds.



14. Central Park

[Central Park](#) in [New York City](#) gives visitors a totally unique hiking — yes, hiking — experience. For the best peek at untouched nature within the busy tourist attraction, hike through the four-acre [Hallett Nature Sanctuary](#) just south of Wollman Rink. Closed to the public in 1934 by Robert Moses, it only reopened for exploring in May of 2016.

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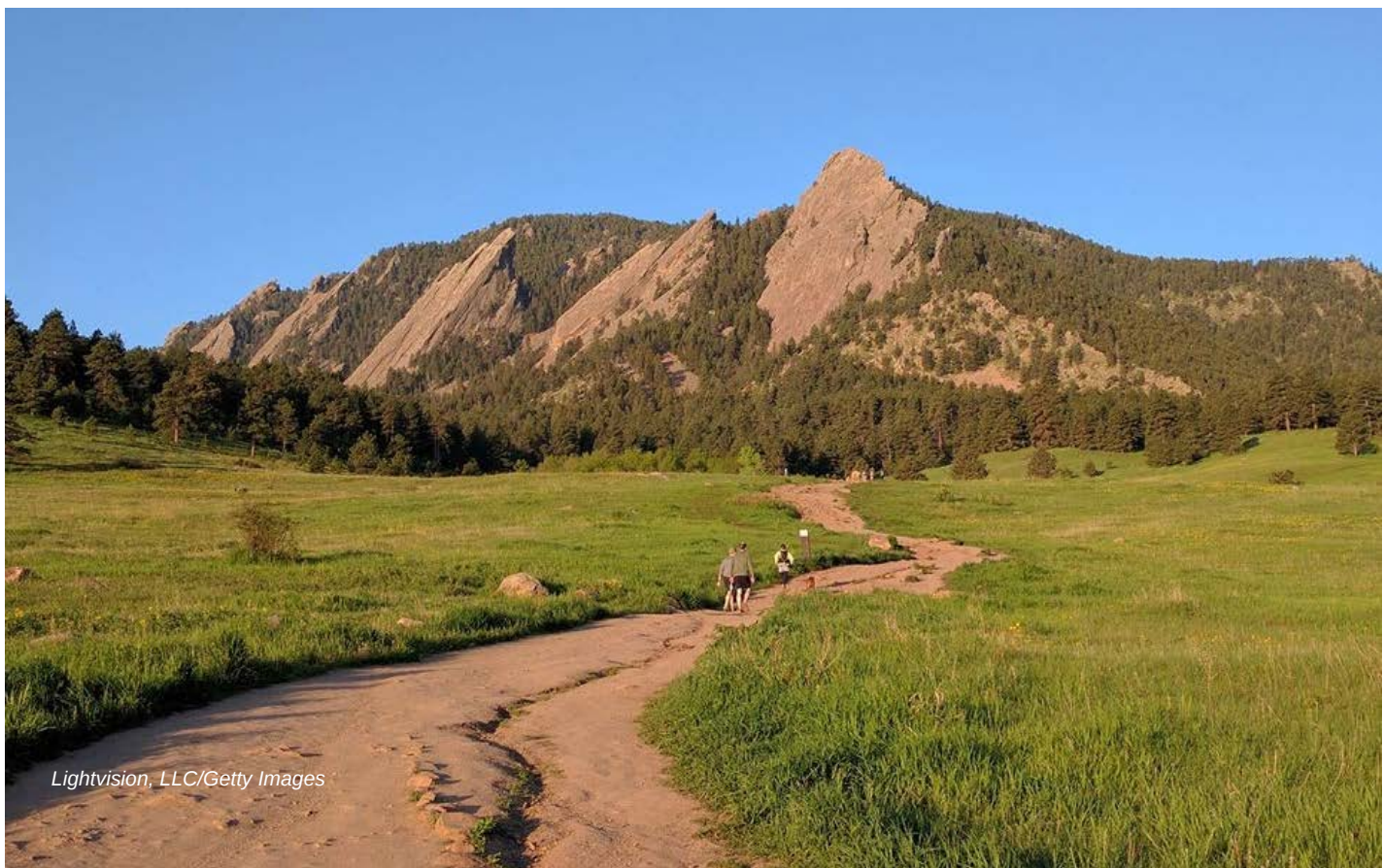
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13. Ha'ena State Park

Kalalau Trail in [Ha'ena State Park](#) on the island of Kauai runs just about 11 miles along the island's north shore from Ke'e Beach to the Kalalau Valley. Visitors be warned: The trail is very difficult and dangerous. The trek takes hikers through streams and hills and provides stunning views of the crystal blue oceans surrounding the island.



Lightvision, LLC/Getty Images

12. Chautauqua Park

[Chautauqua Park](#) in Boulder, Colorado has been around since 1898, when Boulder citizens approved a bond issue to purchase 80 acres of land. The park has miles of hiking, and those strong enough to make it to the top are rewarded with stunning views of Boulder from above.



11. Smith Rock Park

[Smith Rock State Park](#) in [Oregon](#) has hikes ranging from 2 to 7 miles and easy to moderately difficult elevation. The park suggests visitors arrive early in the morning for sightings of geese and duck on the banks of the river, and later in the afternoon to catch a glimpse of a beautiful blue heron perched on a rock in the river. If you look closely, you may even spot a cougar or two.



10. Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

[Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area](#) in Nevada offers shorter distance hikes, with the longest trail measuring in at 6 miles, but don't let the short distance fool you. Many of the hikes at Red Rock Canyon are labeled as difficult, and it can take upward of 4 to 5 hours to complete just a 5-mile hike. Along the different routes hikers and visitors can try and spot the desert wildlife, including lizards, toads, and hawks soaring above.

9. Grand Canyon National Park

[Grand Canyon National Park](#) in Arizona may just be the most iconic and famous national park in the country. The park has a plethora of hiking options, including easy vista point hikes at the canyon's edge and expert-only hikes from rim to rim measuring in at about 20 miles. The canyon provides stunning views for miles above the rim and sights that must be seen at the base, where the Colorado River rages through.

8. Acadia National Park

[Acadia National Park](#) is dubbed the first eastern U.S. national park. Acadia has hikes from easy to strenuous, each offering different views of the bays and tiny islands off the coast of Maine. The park remains open year-round, but it does experience limited closures in the harsh winter months. [Check for hours of operation here](#).

7. Glacier National Park

[Glacier National Park](#) in Montana is the headwaters for streams that flow to the Pacific Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and Hudson's Bay. The park has several hikes, including more than a dozen options ranging from easy to difficult around [Many Glacier](#). The park is home to 71 species of mammals, from the tiny pygmy shrew to the majestic elk, and a variety of birds and reptiles for visitors to spot along the way.

6. Bryce Canyon National Park

[Bryce Canyon National Park](#) in Utah may offer one of the most unique sites of any hiking adventure. The park is home to hoodoos, which are odd-shaped pillars of rock left standing from the forces of erosion. In fact, Bryce Canyon is the largest collection of hoodoos in the world. Bryce Canyon offers hikes for all levels, including backcountry options for those looking for a little added adventure and moonlight tours for the night owl hikers.

5. Multnomah Falls

[Multnomah Falls](#) in Oregon is a 611-foot-tall roaring waterfall that is accessible via an easy 5- to 10-minute hike. The falls, which according to [legend](#) was created to win the heart of a young princess who wanted a hidden place to bathe, is visible from below or above on a bridge sitting 542 feet high. Locals suggest arriving before 9 a.m. for a relatively private viewing experience.

4. Zion National Park

[Zion National Park](#), Utah’s first national park, is famous for its massive cream, pink, and red sandstone cliffs, free-standing arches, and hiking trails suitable for all experience levels. Hikers should attempt to head out for sunrise and sunset to snap breathtaking photos of sunlight splashing off the cliffs and into the rivers below. Try the [Upper Emerald Pool trail](#) for an easy hike leading to sparkling waterfalls.

3. Rocky Mountain National Park

The [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)'s 415 miles of Colorado wilderness encompasses lakes, mountains, and spectacular hiking. In fact, the park has more than 300 miles of hiking filled with wildflowers, wildlife, and wide open views. Along the way expect to see various species of birds, reptiles, and perhaps even a bear or two.

2. Point Lobos State Natural Reserve

The Point Lobos State Natural Reserve in California's picturesque Carmel-by-the-Sea has more than a dozen trails for visitors to explore. On each trail, hikers can experience a new view of the reserve and stunning ocean vistas. As a reserve [dedicated to preserving the wild](#), visitors and hikers can expect pristine and untouched nature around every corner.

1. Yosemite National Park

The Half Dome day hike in [Yosemite National Park](#) in California offers visitors a true adventure into the wilderness along the 14- to 16-mile round-trip trail. Visitors, however, are warned on the [national park’s site](#) that this trail is exclusively for well-prepared and experienced hikers, as the elevation gain of 4,800 feet can feel overwhelming. In total, the hike usually takes between 10 and 12 hours to complete.

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