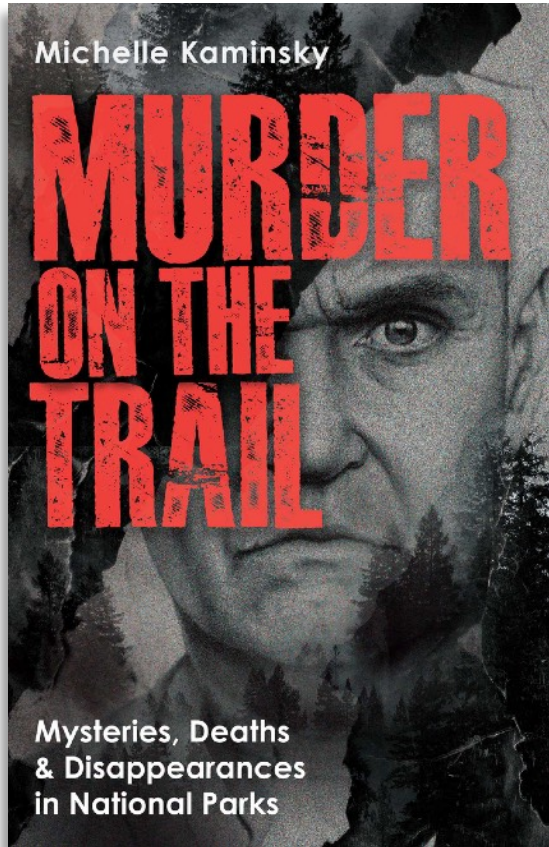




FROM YOSEMITE TO THE GRAND CANYON: MURDER ON THE TRAIL CHRONICLES TRUE CRIMES IN AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS



Murder on the Trail: Mysteries, Deaths, and Disappearances in National Parks (Featuring Gabby Petito, Toni Henthorn, Gary Michael Hilton, and More)

by Michelle Kaminsky

Ulysses Press

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***What dangers lurk in the wilderness?
What could happen if you wander off the trail?***

Discover the fascinating true crime stories that lay within the majestic landscapes of the United States' national parks, including the National Forest Serial Killer Gary Michael Hilton, the vanlife tragedy of Gabby Petito, murders in Yosemite, and more.

From the depths of the Grand Canyon to the towering peaks of Yosemite, [*Murder on the Trail: Mysteries, Deaths, and Disappearances in National Parks \(Featuring Gabby Petito, Toni Henthorn, Gary Michael Hilton, and More\)*](#) [Ulysses Press; December 2025] by Michelle Kaminsky tells the chilling stories of killers, mysterious disappearances, and other harrowing crimes that have occurred in US national parks, including those involving:

- Cary Stayner, Yosemite Park Killer
- Gary Hilton, National Forest Killer
- The tragic story of vanlifer Gabby Petito
- Toni and Harold Henthorn
- And more.

With meticulous research and compelling storytelling, best-selling true crime author Michelle Kaminsky guides readers through the hidden dangers, sinister secrets, and terrifying realities that lurk in America's most treasured natural wonders.

"The nine cases in this book span nearly a century of US history in national parks, from Bessie and Glen Hyde's mysterious disappearance in 1928 to Gabby Petito's murder in Grand Teton in 2021," Kaminsky says. "This timeline reveals how both the parks and their dangers have evolved. The earliest cases—the Hydes in the 1920s and Dennis Martin in 1969—occurred when national parks were less developed, with fewer visitors and limited technology."

For lovers of true crime and the great outdoors, this gripping book is a must-read for anyone drawn to the dark side of nature's most breathtaking, remote, and (mostly) serene landscapes.

"This collection tells the stories of people who met tragic fates while exploring some of the country's wildest and most unforgettable terrain," she says. "May their lives never be forgotten, and may their memories continue to remind us that extreme beauty can also hold a hidden darkness that always demands our utmost respect."

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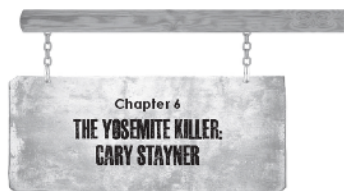
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Established in 1890, Yosemite National Park is nearly 1,200 square miles UNESCO World Heritage Site nestled in California's Sierra Nevada mountains. The park protects significant cultural resources, including sites important to the Ahwahneechee people, who lived in the valley for thousands of years. It is also a prime wilderness area for rock climbing, hiking, photography, and appreciating its natural wonders. The towering granite monoliths of El Capitan and Half Dome, cascading waterfalls, ancient sequoia groves, and transcendent mist of Yosemite Falls draw about four million visitors a year.

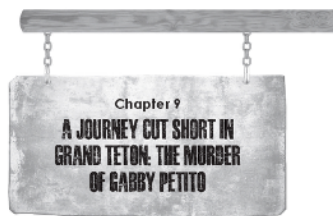
In the early months of 1999, as families posed for photographs against the park's breathtaking vistas and lakes, an unseen force was at work. In this instance, the recording would not be complete, however, without delving into what transformed Stayner into the park's predator that he became. His peculiar personal history—a bizarre twist of fate that links him to a notorious California kidnapping case—adds a further deeply unsettling element to his crimes.

His younger brother Steven had been abducted as a child and held captive for seven years before making a dramatic escape. Steven became a national hero through media attention and a movie-of-the-week, while Cary's path took him in the opposite direction, toward unfathomable violence. This juxtaposition of brothers—one who was a victim, celebrated for his resilience, and the other, a perpetrator, condemned for his depravity—provides a layer of psychological complexity that continues to haunt those who study this case.

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CARY STAYNER

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A sense of adventure and a dream to become a social media story-teller drew twenty-two-year-old Gabrielle "Gabby" Petito from the East Coast westward on a tour of the country's national parks. In the summer of 2021, she set out with her fiancé, Brian Laundrie, in her prized reconditioned van. She became part of the travel community—people who converted vehicles into mobile homes, allowing them to travel indefinitely and work remotely.

Gabby's following grew steadily as she shared their travels through some of the country's most beautiful landscapes, including the monstrous sand deposits of Great Sand Dunes National Park, Zion National Park's red-etched cliffs, and the otherworldly terrain of Bryce Canyon National Park. When not out adventuring, Gabby edited her photos and videos from inside the cramped quarters of the van.

On August 25, Gabby posted her last Instagram carousel—a series of photos featuring her beaming four-month-old son holding a crocheted pumpkin in front of a lustrous sunset. The caption read, "Happy Halloween!" There was no notice to followers that she would be taking a break—no indication that anything was amiss. After that post, Gabby went silent. She had simply vanished from social media and, as her loved ones would soon realize, also from their own worlds.

When Brian returned to his parents' house in Florida with the van alone on September 1, with no explanation as to where Gabby was, the silence began to roar.

What followed was a case that highlighted the complex intersection of national park beauty, the digital age, and domestic violence. A disturbing police encounter in Moab, Utah, captured on body camera footage, revealed the behind-the-scenes of Gabby and Brian's life together when she wasn't recording, and the images are both tragic and haunting.

By the time the public saw that video, Gabby was already gone, but she had also left behind additional recordings—some of which had already been published on her Instagram and YouTube accounts. It wasn't that Gabby's posts weren't true, but—as is often the case on social media—they didn't tell the whole story of what she was experiencing on the road with Brian.

Gabby's disappearance quickly dominated the media, and in turn, from law enforcement personnel to social media sleuths, people across the country dove into the task of piecing together what had happened to her. Now, Gabby's spirit lives on through the Gabby Petito Foundation, established by her loved ones to honor her memory and raise domestic violence awareness. But to better understand Gabby's story, it's essential to go back and trace how she ended up on that body cam footage, on the side of the road in Grand Teton National Park with the person she trusted most in the world—the person who would soon end her life.

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GABBY PETITO

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle's true crime writing is driven by a lifelong fascination with criminal minds, motivations, and MOs. Her books include *Serial Killer Trivia* (2019), *Serial Killer Trivia: Cold Cases* (2021), and *The Big Book of 1980s Serial Killers* (2024). Michelle is the mom of a human kid and a rescued hound, and she is probably listening to a true crime podcast right now. You can find her at michkaminsky throughout social media.

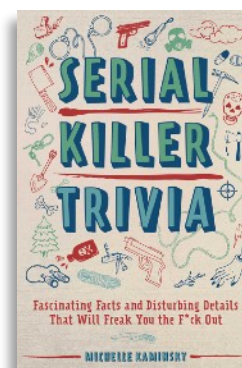
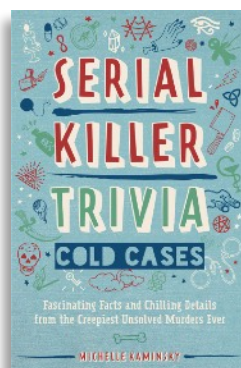
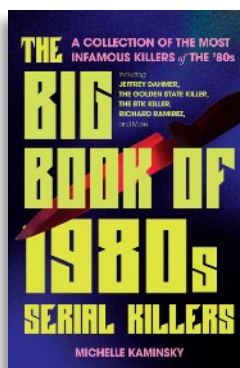
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Review copies of *Murder on the Trail* are available upon request. For excerpts and/or interview queries, please contact Kourtney Jason at kourtney@pacificandcourt.com.