



# Exploring the world one app at a time

By Andrew Piasecki

The same things that prevented **Ben Cline '07 BFA** from being focused on his studies during his first years at NMU—an obsession with skiing and exploring the outdoors—are ironically responsible for his success today. Cline is one of three founders and owners of Rally Interactive, a creative agency based in Utah that creates top-selling, award-winning apps for National Geographic and other clients.

One of the first apps created by Rally was for Canyon Country National Parks, developed in 2011 for Utah.com. Apple featured this app soon after it was released because of its popularity. Due to this recognition, National Geographic approached Rally to create a National Parks app. “We had previously been planning on creating different reputations for all of the National Parks, so we were happy to team up on this,” says Cline, especially with National Geographic paying for the app develop-

ment. “They chose which parks would be included based on the number of visitors the parks had per year.”

Profiles have been released for 25 of the parks, including Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Zion, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain, Glacier, Arches and Great Smoky Mountains, among others. The iPhone and iPad apps feature visitor information, guides of what to see and do, maps, photo galleries, suggested photo hotspots and tips, editor’s picks, park secrets, tools to customize your own itinerary and virtual “stamps” to collect once a park has been visited.

Cline hopes to continue working with National Geographic to release profiles for the remaining national parks.

In the meantime, Rally has just released a new series of City Guides apps for National Geographic, targeting the more metropolitan tourist. Included in the initial guides for London, Paris, Rome and New York are local



tips and city secrets, point-by-point walks, in-a-day suggestions, food and drink locales, nearby attractions, conversion calculators and more. A recent review in the *Los Angeles Times* had this to say about the City Guides: “The app is sleek, packed with smart info and even a little bit mysterious. Searching through it for secrets was a fun, discovery-packed journey in itself, with tidbits of info where you least expected them. I liked the ‘Did You Know?’ section best, not only for the secrets and trivia, but also for practical info.”

Not bad for a creative director who was once more interested in snow than software.

In an interview with Awwwards, a website celebrating the works of web designers, Cline said, “Some would say ski racing was more or less my unofficial major throughout college. That was until my NCAA eligibility ran out, at which point I made the decision to hang up the skis, finish my degree and get on with a career.” Cline was no slouch when it came to skiing, however. He was a junior national champion (2002) and as a member of NMU’s Nordic ski team, placed 11th in the U.S. National Championships (2003) and 6th in the North American Continental Cup Series (2006), among other impressive finishes.

He says that his Northern professors were “crucial in getting me focused and staying focused,” and adds that “students are inspired by their teachers to find ambition and passion toward their work.” He credits his electronic



App designer Ben Cline on the slopes in Utah.

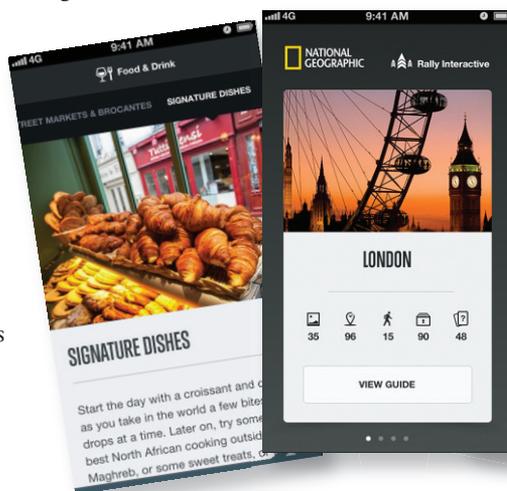
friends’ couches. He then headed west to Salt Lake City to become an interactive designer and art director at other agencies, building flash games and websites, before starting his own firm, BenCline.net.

He teamed up with friends to form Rally Interactive in Park City at the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains, where incidentally the skiing is great. The rallyinteractive.com website describes the company’s mission in simple terms: “We’re here to help you build digital things.”

In addition to the National Geographic apps, the company has developed desktop, tablet and mobile apps for Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort, an e-commerce site for Kühl, an outdoor clothing company, and has done work for Intel and Audi.

Rally has been given an Apple Design Award and won twice for Apple Store Best Apps of the Year.

Cline may not have as much time as he would like to explore and enjoy the outdoors as his company continues to grow, but at least he’s making it easier for others to do so by creating apps about things he loves. ■



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**—Los Angeles Times review**