

# National Parks of the U.S.



**FIND OUT:** Which park covers the most acres, the park that has the most visitors each year, and much more details in this fascinating look at these 63 national treasures.



OSAGE COUNTY  
**Unterrified Democrat**  
 WEDNESDAY, JAN. 26, 2022 SINCE 1866

We know you will enjoy learning about the 63 National Parks of the United States. Check mark the ones you have visited and circle the ones you want to see.

## Featured

- American Samoa..... page 3
- Badlands ..... page 3
- Big Bend..... page 3
- Black Canyon of the Gunnison ..... page 4
- Canyonlands ..... page 4
- Carlsbad Caverns ..... page 4
- Crater Lake ..... page 5
- Cuyahoga Valley ..... page 5
- Denali ..... page 5
- Everglades ..... page 6
- Gateway Arch ..... page 6
- Glacier ..... page 6
- Glacier Bay ..... page 7
- Grand Canyon..... page 7

- Grand Teton ..... page 7
- Great Sand Dunes..... page 8
- Great Smoky Mts. .... page 8
- Guadalupe Mts..... page 8
- Haleakala ..... page 9
- Hawaii Volcanoes ..... page 9
- Hot Springs ..... page 9
- Joshua Tree ..... Page 10
- Kings Canyon ..... page 10
- Mammoth Cave ..... page 10
- Mesa Verde ..... page 11
- Mount Rainier ..... page 11
- Olympic ..... page 11
- Redwood ..... page 12
- Rocky Mountains..... page 12
- Sequoia ..... page 12
- Theodore Roosevelt... page 13

- White Sands..... page 13
- Wrangell-St. Elias ..... page 13
- Yellowstone ..... page 14
- Yosemite..... page 14
- Zion..... page 14

## Other Parks

- Acadia ..... page 15
- Arches ..... page 15
- Biscayne ..... page 15
- Bryce Canyon ..... page 15
- Capitol Reef ..... page 15
- Channel Islands..... page 15
- Congaree ..... page 15
- Death Valley ..... page 15
- Dry Tortugas ..... page 15
- Gates of the Arctic ..... page 15

- Grand Basin ..... page 15
- Indiana Dunes..... page 15
- Isle Royale ..... page 15
- Katmai ..... page 15
- Kenai Fjords ..... page 15
- Kobuk Valley ..... page 15
- Lake Clark ..... page 15
- Lassen Volcanic ..... page 15
- New River Gorge..... page 15
- North Cascades ..... page 15
- Petrified Forest ..... page 15
- Pinnacles ..... page 15
- Saguaro ..... page 15
- Shenandoah ..... page 15
- Virgin Islands ..... page 15
- Voyageurs..... page 15
- Wind Cave ..... page 15



# National Parks of the U.S.



The United States has 63 protected areas known as national parks that are operated by the National Park Service, an agency of the Department of the Interior. National parks must be established by an act of the United States Congress. A bill creating the first national park, Yellowstone, was signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1872, followed by Mackinac National Park in 1875 (decommissioned in 1895), and then Rock Creek Park (later merged into National Capital Parks), Sequoia and Yosemite in 1890.



natural beauty, unique geological features, diverse ecosystems, and recreational opportunities.

Fourteen national parks are designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS), and 21 national parks are named UNESCO Biosphere Reserves (BR), with eight national parks in both programs. Eight national parks (including six in Alaska) are paired with a national preserve, areas with different levels of protection that are administered together but considered separate units.

Thirty states have national parks, as do the territories of American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands. California has the most with nine, followed by Alaska with eight, Utah with five, and Colorado with four.

The largest national park is Wrangell–St. Elias in Alaska: at over 8 million acres, it is larger than each of the nine smallest states. The smallest park is Gateway Arch National Park, Missouri, at 192.83 acres.

The total area protected by national parks

is approximately 52.2 million acres, for an average of 829 thousand acres.

The national parks set a visitation record in 2017, with more than 84 million visitors and set a further record in 2018 with a 0.1% increase. The most-visited national park is Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee, with over 11.3 million visitors in 2017, followed by Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park, with over 6.2 million. In contrast, only 11,177 people visited the remote Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve in Alaska in the same year.

Many current national parks had been previously protected as national monuments by the president under the Antiquities Act before being redesignated by Congress or as other designations created by Congress; the most recent entirely new park is National Park of American Samoa. A few former national parks are no longer designated as such, or have been disbanded. Other units of the National Park Service (423 altogether) while broadly referred to as national parks within the National Park System do not hold the formal designation in their title.

The Organic Act of 1916 created the National Park Service "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

National parks are designated for their

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# 10 Essentials

## Heading out to a national park? Make sure you pack the 10 Essentials!

- NAVIGATION**  
Map, compass, and GPS system
- SUN PROTECTION**  
Sunglasses, sunscreen, and hat
- INSULATION**  
Jacket, hat, gloves, rain shell, and thermal underwear
- FIRST-AID SUPPLIES**  
First Aid Kit
- HYDRATION**  
Water and water treatment supplies
- ILLUMINATION**  
Flashlight, lanterns, and headlamp
- FIRE**  
Matches, lighter and fire starters
- NUTRITION**  
Food
- EMERGENCY SHELTER**  
Tent, space blanket, tarp, and bivy
- REPAIR KIT AND TOOLS**  
Duct tape, knife, screwdriver, and scissors



# National Parks of the U.S.



## American Samoa



Photo by Tavita Togia of Pola Islands just off the coast of Tutuila Island, American Samoa.

**Location:** American Samoa  
**Date Established as park:** October 31, 1988  
**Area:** 8,256.67 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 60,006

**Description:**

The National Park of American Samoa is a national park in the United States territory of American Samoa, distributed across three islands: Tutuila, Ofu, and Ta'ū. The park preserves and protects coral reefs, tropical rainforests, fruit bats, and the Samoan culture. Popular activities include hiking and snorkeling. Of the park's 13,500 acres, 9,000 acres is land and 4,500 acres is coral reefs and ocean. The park is the only American National Park Service system unit south of the equator.

The area is home to flying foxes, brown boobies, sea turtles, and 900 species of fish.

The volcanic islands of Samoa that dominate the acreage of the national park are composed of shield volcanoes which developed from a hot spot on the Pacific Plate, emerging sequentially from west to east. Tutuila, the largest and oldest island, probably dates from the Pliocene Epoch, approximately 1.24 to 1.4 million years ago, while the smaller islands are most likely Holocene in age.

The islands are not made up of individual volcanoes, but are rather composed of overlapping and superimposed shield volcanoes built by basalt lava flows. Much of the lava that erupted has since broken into angular fragments known as breccia. The volcanoes emerged from the intrusion of basaltic dikes from a rift zone on the ocean floor during the Pliocene Epoch, and were heavily eroded during the Pliocene and early Pleistocene Epochs, leaving behind trachyte plugs and exposed outcrops of volcanic tuff throughout the park.

Ta'ū island, the youngest of the islands included within the national park, is all that remains from the collapse of a shield volcano during Holocene time. This collapse produced sea cliffs over 3,000 feet high on the north side of the island, some of the highest such escarpments in the world.

## Badlands



Photo by Dennis Warden

**Location:** South Dakota  
**Date Established as park:** November 10, 1978  
**Area:** 242,755.94 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 970,998

**Description:**

Badlands National Park is an American national park located in southwestern South Dakota. The park protects 242,756 acres of sharply eroded buttes and pinnacles, along with the largest undisturbed mixed grass prairie in the United States. The National Park Service manages the park, with the South Unit being co-managed with the Oglala Lakota tribe.

The Badlands Wilderness protects 64,144 acres of the park as a designated wilderness area, and is one site where the black-footed ferret, one of the most endangered mammals in the world, was reintroduced to the wild. The South Unit, or Stronghold District, includes sites of 1890s Ghost Dances, a former United States Air Force bomb and gunnery range,[8] and Red Shirt Table, the park's highest point at 3,340 feet.

Authorized as Badlands National Monument on March 4, 1929, it was not established until January 25, 1939. Badlands was redesignated a national park on November 10, 1978. Under the Mission 66 plan, the Ben Reifel Visitor Center was constructed for the monument in 1957–58. The park also administers the nearby Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. The movies *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *Thunderheart* (1992) were partially filmed in Badlands National Park.

For 11,000 years, Native Americans have used this area for their hunting grounds. Long before the Lakota were the little-studied paleo-Indians, followed by the Arikara people. Their descendants live today in North Dakota as a part of the Three Affiliated Tribes.

Animals that inhabit the park include: badger, bighorn sheep, bison, black-billed magpie, black-footed ferret, black-tailed prairie dog, bobcat, coyote, elk, mule deer, pronghorn, prairie rattlesnake, porcupine, swift fox, and white-tailed deer.

## Big Bend



Photo by National Park Service Digital Image Archives of Santa Elena Canyon in Big Bend National Park.

**Location:** Texas  
**Date Established as park:** June 12, 1944  
**Area:** 242,755.9 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 970,998  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Big Bend National Park is an American national park located in West Texas, bordering Mexico. The park has national significance as the largest protected area of Chihuahuan Desert topography and ecology in the United States, and was named after a large bend in the Rio Grande/Río Bravo. The park protects more than 1,200 species of plants, more than 450 species of birds, 56 species of reptiles, and 75 species of mammals. Additional park activities include scenic drives, programs led by Big Bend park rangers, and stargazing.

The area has a rich cultural history, from archeological sites dating back nearly 10,000 years to more recent pioneers, ranchers, and miners. The Chisos Mountains are located in the park, and are the only mountain range in the United States to be fully contained within the boundary of a national park. Geological features in the park include sea fossils and dinosaur bones, as well as volcanic dikes.

For more than 1,000 miles, the Rio Grande/Río Bravo forms the boundary between Mexico and the United States, and Big Bend National Park administers approximately 118 miles (190 km) along that boundary.

Because the Rio Grande serves as an international boundary, the park faces unusual constraints while administering and enforcing park rules, regulations, and policies. In accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the park's territory extends only to the center of the deepest river channel as the river flowed in 1848. The rest of the channel and the land south of it lies within Mexican territory. The park is bordered by the protected areas of Cañón de Santa Elena and Maderas del Carmen in Mexico.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Black Canyon of the Gunnison

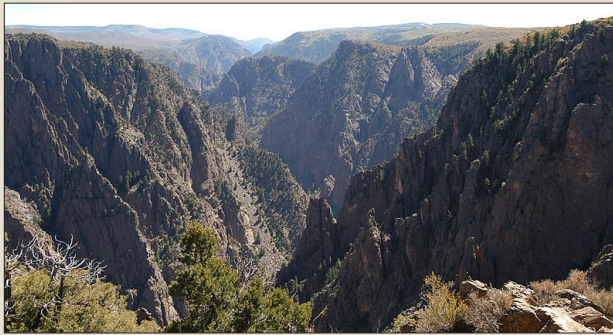


Photo by Lorax of Black canyon gunnison Colorado

**Location:** Colorado  
**Date Established as park:** October 21, 1999  
**Area:** 30,779.83 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 432,818

**Description:**

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park is an American national park located in western Colorado. There are two primary entrances to the park: the south rim entrance, located 15 miles east of Montrose, and the north rim entrance, which is located 11 miles south of Crawford and is closed in the winter.

The park contains 12 miles of the 48-mile-long Black Canyon of the Gunnison River. The Gunnison River drops an average of 34 feet per mile through the entire canyon, making it the 5th steepest mountain descent in North America. The greatest descent of the Gunnison River occurs within the park at Chasm View dropping 240 feet per mile. The Black Canyon is so named because its steepness makes it difficult for sunlight to penetrate into its depths. As a result, the canyon is often shrouded in shadow, causing the rocky walls to appear black.

Precambrian gneiss and schist that make up the majority of the steep walls of the Black Canyon formed 1.7 billion years ago during a metamorphic period brought on by the collision of ancient volcanic island arcs with the southern end of what is present-day Wyoming. The modern Gunnison River set its course 15 million years ago as the run-off from the nearby La Sal and West Elk Mountains and the Sawatch Range began carving through the relatively soft volcanic deposits.

The Ute Indians referred to the river as “much rocks, big water,” and are known to have avoided the canyon out of superstition.

The first official account of the Black Canyon was provided by Captain John Williams Gunnison in 1853, who was leading an expedition to survey a route from Saint Louis and San Francisco.

Following his death at the hands of Ute Indians later that year, the river that Captain Gunnison had called the Grand was renamed in his honor.

## Canyonlands



The Needles area of Canyonlands National Park.

**Location:** Utah  
**Date Established as park:** September 12, 1964  
**Area:** 337,597.83 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 733,996  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Canyonlands National Park is an American national park located in southeastern Utah near the town of Moab. The park preserves a colorful landscape eroded into numerous canyons, mesas, and buttes by the Colorado River, the Green River, and their respective tributaries. Legislation creating the park was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson.

The park is divided into four districts: the Island in the Sky, the Needles, the Maze, and the combined rivers—the Green and Colorado—which carved two large canyons into the Colorado Plateau. While these areas share a primitive desert atmosphere, each retains its own character. Author Edward Abbey, a frequent visitor, described the Canyonlands as “the most weird, wonderful, magical place on earth—there is nothing else like it anywhere.”

Canyonlands is a popular recreational destination. Since 2007, more than 400,000 people have visited the park each year with a record of 776,218 visitors in 2016, representing a 22 percent increase from the prior year.

The geography of the park is well suited to a number of different recreational uses. Hikers, mountain bikers, backpackers, and four-wheelers all enjoy traveling the rugged, remote trails within the Park. The White Rim Road traverses the White Rim Sandstone level of the park between the rivers and the Island in the Sky.

As of 2016, the Island in the Sky district, with its proximity to the Moab, Utah area, attracts 76.7 percent of total park visitors. The Needles district is the second most visited, drawing 20.7 percent of visitors. The remote Maze district accounts for only about 1.5 percent of visitors, while river rafters and other river users account for the remaining 1.1 percent of total park visitation.

## Carlsbad Caverns



Photo by Eric Guinther of Carlsbad Caverns interior formations.

**Location:** New Mexico  
**Date Established as park:** May 14, 1930  
**Area:** 46,766.45 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 440,691  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Carlsbad Caverns National Park is an American national park in the Guadalupe Mountains of southeastern New Mexico. The primary attraction of the park is the show cave, Carlsbad Cavern. Visitors to the cave can hike in on their own via the natural entrance or take an elevator from the visitor center.

The park entrance is located on US Highway 62/180, approximately 18 miles southwest of Carlsbad, New Mexico. Carlsbad Caverns National Park participates in the Junior Ranger Program. The park has two entries on the National Register of Historic Places: The Caverns Historic District and the Rattlesnake Springs Historic District. Approximately two-thirds of the park has been set aside as a wilderness area, helping to ensure no future changes will be made to the habitat.

Carlsbad Cavern includes a large limestone chamber, named simply the Big Room, which is almost 4,000 feet long, 625 feet wide, and 255 feet high at its highest point. The Big Room is the largest chamber in North America and the 31st largest in the world.

In 1898, a teenager named Jim White explored the cavern with a homemade wire ladder. He named many of the rooms, including the Big Room, New Mexico Room, Kings Palace, Queens Chamber, Papoose Room, and Green Lake Room. He also named many of the cave’s more prominent formations, such as the Totem Pole, Witch’s Finger, Giant Dome, Bottomless Pit, Fairyland, Iceberg Rock, Temple of the Sun, and Rock of Ages.

The town of Carlsbad, which lends its name to the cavern and national park, is in turn named after the Czech town formerly known by the German name Karlsbad (English spelling Carlsbad) and now known by the Czech name Karlovy Vary, both of which mean “Charles’ Bath[s].”

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## Crater Lake



**Photo by Zainubrazvi** Crater Lake is a caldera lake in the state of Oregon, famous for its deep blue color and water clarity.

**Location:** Oregon  
**Date Established as park:** May 22, 1902  
**Area:** 183,224.05 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 704,512

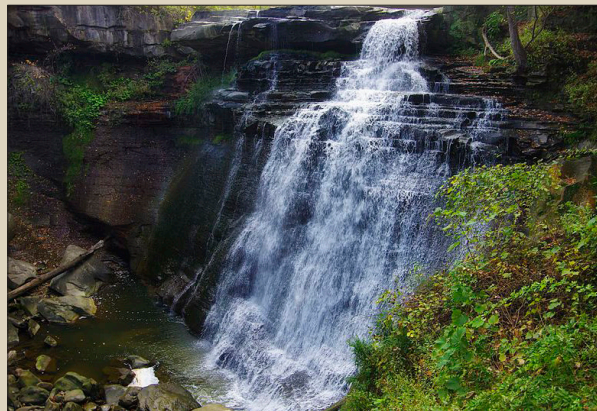
**Description:**

Crater Lake National Park is an American national park located in southern Oregon. Established in 1902, Crater Lake is the fifth-oldest national park in the U.S. and the only national park in Oregon. The park encompasses the caldera of Crater Lake, a remnant of Mount Mazama, a destroyed volcano, and the surrounding hills and forests.

The lake is 1,949 feet deep at its deepest point, which makes it the deepest lake in the U.S., the second-deepest in North America and the ninth-deepest in the world. Crater Lake is often referred to as the seventh-deepest lake in the world, but this former listing excludes the approximately 3,000-foot depth of subglacial Lake Vostok in Antarctica, which resides under nearly 13,000 feet of ice, and the recent report of a 2,740-foot maximum depth for Lake O'Higgins/San Martin, located on the border of Chile and Argentina. However, when comparing its average depth of 1,148 feet to the average depth of other deep lakes, Crater Lake becomes the deepest in the Western Hemisphere and the third-deepest in the world. The impressive average depth of this volcanic lake is due to the nearly symmetrical 4,000-foot-deep caldera formed 7,700 years ago during the violent climactic eruptions and subsequent collapse of Mount Mazama and the relatively moist climate that is typical of the crest of the Cascade Range.

The caldera rim ranges in elevation from 7,000 to 8,000 feet. The U.S. Geological Survey benchmarked elevation of the lake surface is 6,178 feet. The national park encompasses 183,224 acres. Crater Lake has no streams flowing into or out of it. All water that enters the lake is eventually lost from evaporation or subsurface seepage. The lake's water commonly has a striking blue hue, and the lake is refilled entirely from direct precipitation in the form of snow and rain.

## Cuyagoga Valley



**Brandywine Falls** in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio.

**Location:** Ohio  
**Date Established as park:** October 11, 2000  
**Area:** 32,571.88 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 2,237,997

**Description:**

Cuyahoga Valley National Park is an American national park that preserves and reclaims the rural landscape along the Cuyahoga River between Akron and Cleveland in Northeast Ohio.

Within its boundaries of the 32,572-acre park are areas independently managed as county parks or as public or private businesses. Cuyahoga Valley was originally designated as a National Recreation Area in 1974, then redesignated as a national park 26 years later in 2000, and remains the only national park that originated as a national recreation area.

Cuyahoga Valley is the only national park in the state of Ohio and one of three in the Great Lakes Basin, with Isle Royale National Park in Lake Superior and Indiana Dunes National Park bordering Lake Michigan. Cuyahoga Valley also differs from the other national parks in America in that it is adjacent to two large urban areas and it includes a dense road network, small towns, four reservations of the Cleveland Metroparks, eleven parks of the Summit Metro Parks, and public and private attractions.

No Native American tribes currently have federal recognition in Ohio; however, the former inhabitants of the Cuyahoga Valley were Native Americans. The Wyandot, Iroquois, Ottawa, Objibwe, Munsee, Potawatomi, Miami, Catawba, and Shawnee all lived in or traversed this area, but the Lenapé Nation, also known as the Lenape'wàk or Delaware Nation, are considered "the Grandfathers" of many Native Nations of the upper Ohio River Valley. They had a democratic and egalitarian sociopolitical structure where leaders (sachem) consulted elders who advocated for the expectations of the people before decisions were made. The Lenapé were actively involved in long-distance trade networks and were highly skilled at creating goods and art such as pottery, stone weaponry, clothing, and baskets.

## Denali



**Denali National Park and Preserve.**

**Location:** Alaska  
**Date Established as park:** February 26, 1917  
**Area:** 4,740,911.16 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 601,152  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Denali National Park and Preserve, formerly known as Mount McKinley National Park, is an American national park and preserve located in Interior Alaska, centered on Denali, the highest mountain in North America. The park and contiguous preserve encompass 6,045,153 acres which is larger than the state of New Hampshire. On December 2, 1980, 2,146,580-acre Denali Wilderness was established within the park. Denali's landscape is a mix of forest at the lowest elevations, including deciduous taiga, with tundra at middle elevations, and glaciers, snow, and bare rock at the highest elevations. The longest glacier is the Kahiltna Glacier. Wintertime activities include dog sledding, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. The park received 594,660 recreational visitors in 2018.

Human habitation in the Denali Region extends to more than 11,000 years before the present, with documented sites just outside park boundaries dated to more than 8,000 years before present.

The oldest site within park boundaries is the Teklanika River site, dated to about 7130 BC. More than 84 archaeological sites have been documented within the park. The sites are typically characterized as hunting camps rather than settlements, and provide little cultural context.

The presence of Athabaskan peoples in the region is dated to 1,500 - 1,000 years before present on linguistic and archaeological evidence, while researchers have proposed that Athabaskans may have inhabited the area for thousands of years before then. The word Denali means "the high one" in the native Athabaskan language and refers to the mountain itself.

The principal groups in the park area in the last 500 years include the Koyukon, Tanana and Dena'ina people.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Everglades



A great egret in a cypress grove at Everglades National Park.

**Location:** Florida

**Date Established as park:** May 30, 1934

**Area:** 1,508,938.57 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,118,300

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

### Description:

Everglades National Park is an American national park that protects the southern twenty percent of the original Everglades in Florida. The park is the largest tropical wilderness in the U.S., and the largest wilderness of any kind east of the Mississippi River.

Everglades is the third-largest national park in the contiguous U.S. after Death Valley and Yellowstone. An average of one million people visit the park each year.

UNESCO declared the Everglades & Dry Tortugas Biosphere Reserve in 1976, and listed the park as a World Heritage Site in 1979, while the Ramsar Convention included the park on its list of Wetlands of International Importance in 1987. Everglades is one of only three locations in the world to appear on all three lists.

Most national parks preserve unique geographic features; Everglades National Park was the first created to protect a fragile ecosystem.

The Everglades are a network of wetlands and forests fed by a river flowing 0.25 miles per day out of Lake Okeechobee, southwest into Florida Bay. The park contains the largest mangrove ecosystem in the Western Hemisphere.

Thirty-six threatened or protected species inhabit the park, including the Florida panther, the American crocodile, and the West Indian manatee, along with 350 species of birds, 300 species of fresh and saltwater fish, 40 species of mammals, and 50 species of reptiles.

The majority of South Florida's fresh water, which is stored in the Biscayne Aquifer, is recharged in the park.

Humans have lived for thousands of years in or around the Everglades.

## Gateway Arch



Photo by Daniel Schwen: St. Louis on the Mississippi river by night

**Location:** Missouri

**Date Established as park:** February 22, 2018

**Area:** 192.83 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 2,055,309

### Description:

Gateway Arch National Park is an American national park located in St. Louis, Missouri, near the starting point of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The memorial was established to commemorate:

- the Louisiana Purchase, and the subsequent westward movement of American explorers and pioneers;
- the first civil government west of the Mississippi River; and
- the debate over slavery raised by the Dred Scott case.

The national park consists of the Gateway Arch, a steel catenary arch that has become the definitive icon of St. Louis; a 91-acre park along the Mississippi River on the site of the earliest buildings of the city; the Old Courthouse, a former state and federal courthouse where the Dred Scott case originated; and the 140,000 sq. ft. museum at the Gateway Arch.

The Gateway Arch and its immediate surroundings were initially designated as a national memorial, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, by executive order on December 21, 1935, and redesignated as a national park in 2018.

The Gateway Arch, known as the "Gateway to the West", is the tallest structure in Missouri. It was designed by Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen and structural engineer Hannskarl Bandel in 1947 and built between 1963 and October 1965. It stands 630 feet tall and 630 feet wide at its base. The legs are 54 feet wide at the base, narrowing to 17 feet at the arch.

There is a unique tram system to carry passengers to the observation room at the top of the arch.

The original platted area of St. Louis was the site of the Battle of St. Louis, the only battle west of the Mississippi River in the American Revolutionary War, the first capital for Upper Louisiana for the U.S., and the Three Flags Day ceremony in 1804.

## Glacier



Photo by Dennis Warden of St. Mary Lake on the Sun Point Trail in Glacier National Park

**Location:** Montana

**Date Established as park:** May 11, 1910

**Area:** 1,013,125.99 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 3,049,839

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

### Description:

Glacier National Park is located in northwestern Montana, on the Canada–United States border. The park includes parts of two mountain ranges (sub-ranges of the Rocky Mountains), over 130 named lakes, more than 1,000 different species of plants, and hundreds of species of animals. This vast pristine ecosystem is the centerpiece of what has been referred to as the "Crown of the Continent Ecosystem," a region of protected land encompassing 16,000 square miles (41,000 km<sup>2</sup>).[4]

Soon after the establishment of the park, a number of hotels and chalets were constructed by the Great Northern Railway. These historic hotels and chalets are listed as National Historic Landmarks. By 1932 work was completed on the Going-to-the-Sun Road, later designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

Of the estimated 150 glaciers which existed in the park in the mid-19th century during the late Little Ice Age, only 25 active glaciers remained by 2010. Scientists studying the glaciers in the park have estimated that all the active glaciers may disappear by 2030 if current climate patterns persist.

Glacier National Park borders Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada—the two parks are known as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and were designated as the world's first International Peace Park in 1932.

The park is also home to Triple Divide Peak, which forms the boundary between the watersheds of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Glacier Bay



Photo by Brian W. Schaller of Johns Hopkins Glacier

**Location:** Alaska

**Date Established as park:** December 2, 1980

**Area:** 3,223,383.43 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 672,087

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve is an American national park located in Southeast Alaska west of Juneau.

The national preserve encompasses 58,406 acres of public land to the immediate northwest of the park, protecting a portion of the Alsek River with its fish and wildlife habitats, while allowing sport hunting.

The west side of the bay consists of a 26,000 feet thick sequence of Paleozoic sedimentary rocks, mainly massive limestones and argillite. The oldest rocks in this sequence are the Late Silurian Willoughby limestone and the youngest being the Middle Devonian Black Cap limestone.

Glacial advances occurred 7,000, 5,000 and 500 years ago, with the last extending to the entrance of the bay, where it left a huge semicircular terminal moraine. The consequent surface glacial deposits include gravels as outwash and moraines. Glacial gravels extend up to 2000 feet up the mountain slopes.

No roads lead to the park and it is most easily reached by air travel. During some summers there are ferries to the small community of Gustavus or directly to the marina at Bartlett Cove.

Despite the lack of roads, the park received an average of about 470,000 recreational visitors annually from 2007 to 2016, with 520,171 visitors in 2016. Most of the visitors arrive via cruise ships.

Other travelers come on white-water rafting trips, putting in on the Tatshenshini River at Dalton Post in the Yukon Territory and taking out at the Dry Bay Ranger Station in the Glacier Bay National Preserve.

Trips generally take six days and pass through Kluane National Park and Reserve in the Yukon and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park in British Columbia

## Grand Canyon



Photo by I, Luca Galuzzi

**Location:** Arizona

**Date Established as park:** February 26, 1919

**Area:** 1,201,647.03 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 5,974,411

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site

**Description:**

Grand Canyon National Park, located in northwestern Arizona, is the 15th site in the United States to have been named as a national park. The park's central feature is the Grand Canyon, a gorge of the Colorado River, which is often considered one of the Wonders of the World.

The park, which covers 1,217,262 acres of unincorporated area in Coconino and Mohave counties, received more than six million recreational visitors in 2017, the second highest count of all American national parks after Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The Grand Canyon became well known to Americans in the 1880s after railroads were built and pioneers developed infrastructure and early tourism.

The Grand Canyon, including its extensive system of tributary canyons, is valued for its combination of size, depth, and exposed layers of colorful rocks dating back to Precambrian times.

The canyon itself was created by the incision of the Colorado River and its tributaries after the Colorado Plateau was uplifted, causing the Colorado River system to develop along its present path.

Grand Canyon Village is the primary visitor services area in the park. It is a full-service community, including lodging, fuel, food, souvenirs, a hospital, churches, and access to trails and guided walks and talks.

Private canyon flyovers are provided by helicopters and small airplanes out of Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Grand Canyon National Park Airport. Due to a crash in the 1990s, scenic flights are no longer allowed to fly within 1,500 feet of the rim within the Grand Canyon National Park. Flights within the canyon are still available outside of park boundaries.

## Grand Teton

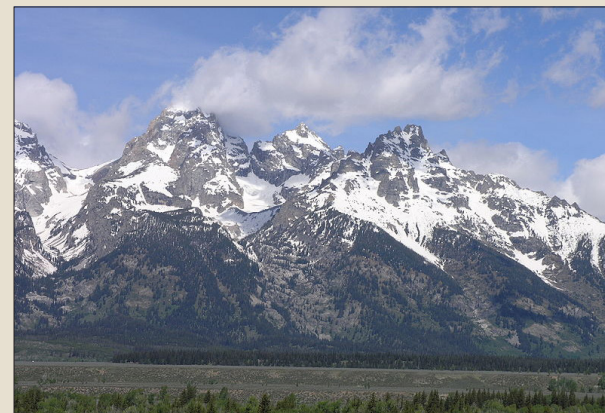


Photo by Daniel Mayer

**Location:** Wyoming

**Date Established as park:** February 26, 1919

**Area:** 310,044.36 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 3,405,614

**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Grand Teton National Park is an American national park in northwestern Wyoming. At approximately 310,000 acres, the park includes the major peaks of the 40-mile-long Teton Range as well as most of the northern sections of the valley known as Jackson Hole.

Grand Teton National Park is only 10 miles south of Yellowstone National Park, to which it is connected by the National Park Service-managed John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway.

Along with surrounding national forests, these three protected areas constitute the almost 18,000,000-acre Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the world's largest intact mid-latitude temperate ecosystems.

The human history of the Grand Teton region dates back at least 11,000 years, when the first nomadic hunter-gatherer Paleo-Indians began migrating into the region during warmer months pursuing food and supplies.

In the early 19th century, the first white explorers encountered the eastern Shoshone natives.

Between 1810 and 1840, the region attracted fur trading companies that vied for control of the lucrative beaver pelt trade.

U.S. Government expeditions to the region commenced in the mid-19th century as an offshoot of exploration in Yellowstone, with the first permanent white settlers in Jackson Hole arriving in the 1880s.

Grand Teton National Park is named for Grand Teton, the tallest mountain in the Teton Range. The naming of the mountains is attributed to early 19th-century French-speaking trappers—les trois tétons (the three teats) was later anglicized and shortened to Tetons.

Grand Teton rises to 13,775 feet.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Great Sand Dunes



Photo of the Colorado dunes

**Location:** Colorado

**Date Established as park:** September 13, 2004

**Area:** 107,341.87 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 527,546

**Description:**

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is an American national park that conserves an area of large sand dunes up to 750 feet tall on the eastern edge of the San Luis Valley, and an adjacent national preserve in the Sangre de Cristo Range, in south-central Colorado.

The park contains the tallest sand dunes in North America.

The dunes cover an area of about 30 sq. mi. and are estimated to contain over 1.2 cubic miles of sand.

Sediments from the surrounding mountains filled the valley over geologic time periods. After lakes within the valley receded, exposed sand was blown by the predominant southwest winds toward the Sangre de Cristos, eventually forming the dunefield over an estimated tens of thousands of years.

The four primary components of the Great Sand Dunes system are the mountain watershed, the dunefield, the sand sheet, and the sabkha. Ecosystems within the mountain watershed include alpine tundra, subalpine forests, montane woodlands, and riparian zones.

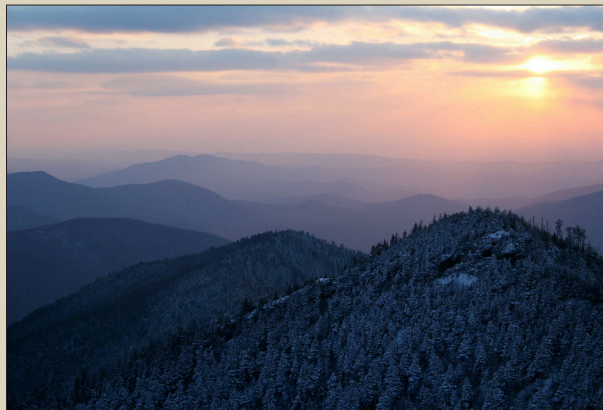
Evidence of human habitation in the San Luis Valley dates back about 11,000 years. The first historic peoples to inhabit the area were the Southern Ute Tribe; Apaches and Navajo also have cultural connections in the area.

Visitors must walk across the wide and shallow Medano Creek to reach the dunes in spring and summer. The creek typically has a peak flow from late May to early June. From July to April, it is usually no more than a few inches deep, if there is any water at all.

Hiking is permitted throughout the dunes with the warning that the sand surface temperature may reach 150 °F in summer.

Sandboarding and sandsledding are popular activities, both done on specially designed equipment that can be rented just outside the park entrance or in Alamosa.

## Great Smoky Mts.



The photo was taken at the Cliff Tops on Mount Le Conte, in the Great Smoky Mountains of Sevier County, Tennessee.

**Location:** North Carolina, Tennessee

**Date Established as park:** June 15, 1934

**Area:** 522,426.88 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 12,547,743

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Great Smoky Mountains National Park straddles the ridgeline of the Great Smoky Mountains, part of the Blue Ridge Mountains, which are a division of the larger Appalachian Mountain chain. The park contains some of the highest mountains in eastern North America, including Clingmans Dome, Mount Guyot, and Mount Le Conte. The Appalachian Trail passes through the center of the park on its route from Georgia to Maine. With 12.5 million visitors in 2019, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the most visited national park in the United States.

The park encompasses 522,419 acres, making it one of the largest protected areas in the eastern United States. The park is internationally recognized for its mountains, waterfalls, biodiversity, and spruce-fir forests. In addition, the park also preserves multiple historical structures that were part of communities occupied by early settlers of the area.

There are 850 miles (1,370 km) of trails and unpaved roads in the park for hiking, including 70 miles of the Appalachian Trail.

The park was chartered by the United States Congress in 1934 and officially dedicated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940. The Great Smoky Mountains was the first national park whose land and other costs were paid for in part with federal funds; previous parks were funded wholly with state money or private funds.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park anchors a large tourism industry based in Sevier County, Tennessee adjacent to the park. Major attractions include Dollywood, the second most visited tourist attraction in Tennessee, Ober Gatlinburg, and Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies. Tourism to the park contributes an estimated \$2.5 billion annually into the local economy

## Guadalupe Mts.



Photo by Leaflet of Guadalupe Mountains at sunset, photo taken from Salt Flat

**Location:** Texas

**Date Established as park:** October 15, 1966

**Area:** 86,367.10 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 188,833

**Description:**

Guadalupe Mountains National Park is an American national park in the Guadalupe Mountains, east of El Paso, Texas. The mountain range includes Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas at 8,749 feet, and El Capitan used as a landmark by travelers on the route later followed by the Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoach line. The ruins of a stagecoach station stand near the Pine Springs visitor center. The restored Frijole Ranch contains a small museum of local history and is the trailhead for Smith Spring.

The Guadalupe Peak Trail winds through pinyon pine and Douglas-fir forests as it ascends over 3,000 feet to the summit of Guadalupe Peak, with views of El Capitan and the Chihuahuan Desert.

The Guadalupe Mountains give their name to the Guadalupian series in the Permian period.

The International Commission on Stratigraphy estimates the mountain range's age at 272–260 Mya.

The mountains have had a tumultuous history for thousands of years. Archaeological evidence shows that people have lived there lived over 10,000 years in and among the many caves and alcoves.

Three major ecosystems are contained within the park. The Chihuahuan Desert exhibits salt flats, creosote bushes, and honey mesquite on the western side of the park, with low elevations on the eastern side covered with grassland, pinyon pine, and junipers. The canyon interiors, including McKittrick, Bear, and Pine Springs Canyon, exhibit bigtooth maple, velvet ash, chinkapin oak, and other deciduous trees that are fed by springs recharged by mountain streams. Finally, alpine areas more than 7,000 ft above sea level contain forests of ponderosa pine, Arizona pine, southwestern white pine, Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir, alligator juniper, and small stands of quaking aspen.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Haleakala



Photo by Matttrain of the Haleakala Crater, Maui, Hawaii.

**Location:** Hawaii  
**Date Established as park:** July 1, 1961  
**Area:** 33,264.62 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 994,394  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Haleakalā National Park is an American national park located on the island of Maui in the state of Hawaii, named after Haleakalā. Haleakalā was originally part of Hawaii National Park along with the volcanoes of Mauna Loa and Kilauea on the island of Hawai'i, created in 1916. Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park was made into a separate national park in 1961. The name Haleakalā is Hawaiian for "house of the sun." According to a local legend, the demigod Maui imprisoned the sun here in order to lengthen the day. The Hawaiian National Park Language Correction Act of 2000 was proposed to observe the Hawaiian spelling, but it did not become law. The park features the dormant Haleakalā (East Maui) Volcano, which last erupted sometime between 1480 and 1600 AD. The park is divided into two distinct sections: the summit area and the coastal Kipahulu area. An extremely winding but well maintained road leads up the mountain. The summit area includes Haleakalā Crater, the summit of the volcano, and the area surrounding the summit. This part of the park is accessed by Hawaii State Road 378. There is a visitor center, with parking and restrooms, near the summit. At the summit itself is another parking lot and a simple observatory without facilities. The main feature of this part of the park is Haleakalā Crater which, despite its name, is geologically an erosional valley. It is 6.99 miles across, 2.0 miles wide, and 2,600 ft deep. The interior of the crater is dotted by numerous volcanic features, including large cinder cones. Visitors frequently come to the summit of the volcano to watch the sunrise and/or sunset.

## Hawaii Volcanoes



Photo by G.E. Ulrich, USGS of Pu'u 'O'o, a Volcanic cone on Kilauea, Hawaii

**Location:** Hawaii  
**Date Established as park:** August 1, 1916  
**Area:** 325,605.28 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,368,376  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park is an American national park located in the U.S. state of Hawaii on the island of Hawaii. The park encompasses two active volcanoes: Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, and Mauna Loa, the world's most massive shield volcano. The park provides scientists with insight into the development of the Hawaiian Islands and access for studies of volcanism. For visitors, the park offers dramatic volcanic landscapes, glimpses of rare flora and fauna, and a view into the traditional Hawaiian culture connected to these landscapes. On May 11, 2018, the park was closed to the public in the Kilauea volcano summit area, including the visitor center and park headquarters, due to explosions and toxic ash clouds from Halema'umaiu, as well as earthquakes and road damage. Portions of the park, including the visitor center, reopened to the public on September 22, 2018. As of 2020, most of the park is open; however, some road segments and trails as well as the Jaggar Museum of the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory remain closed to visitors. Eruptive activity, ground collapses and explosions in the park ceased in early August of 2018, and the lull in eruptive activity at Kilauea continued until an eruption on December 20, 2020, at the Halema'uma'u crater. The purpose of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is to protect, study, and provide access to Kilauea and Mauna Loa, two of the world's most active volcanoes, and perpetuate endemic Hawaiian ecosystems and the traditional Hawaiian culture connected to these landscapes.

## Hot Springs



Aerial photo of Hots Springs National Park


**Location:** Arkansas  
**Date Established as park:** March 4, 1921  
**Area:** 5,554.15 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,467,153

**Description:**

Hot Springs National Park is an American national park in central Garland County, Arkansas, adjacent to the city of Hot Springs, the county seat. Hot Springs Reservation was initially created by an act of the United States Congress on April 20, 1832 to be preserved for future recreation. Established before the concept of a national park existed, it was the first time that land had been set aside by the federal government to preserve its use as an area for recreation. The hot spring water has been popularly believed for centuries to possess medicinal properties, and was a subject of legend among several Native American tribes. Following federal protection in 1832, the city developed into a successful spa town. The hot springs flow from the western slope of Hot Springs Mountain, part of the Ouachita Mountain range. In the park, the hot springs have not been preserved in their unaltered state as natural surface phenomena. They have been managed to conserve the production of uncontaminated hot water for public use. The mountains within the park are also managed within this conservation philosophy to preserve the hydrological system that feeds the springs. Following 8,000 years of use by indigenous peoples, European Americans discovered and appropriated the springs. They have used the hot spring water in therapeutic baths for more than 200 years to treat rheumatism and other ailments. While this was a federal reservation, the area developed into a well-known resort nicknamed The American Spa; it attracted not only the wealthy but indigent health seekers from around the world. The park includes portions of downtown Hot Springs, making it one of the most accessible national parks. There are numerous hiking trails and camping areas. Bathing in spring water is available in approved facilities at extra cost.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Joshua Tree



Photo by Jarek Tuszyński of Granite rock formation and Joshua Trees near Real Hidden Valley area

**Location:** California

**Date Established as park:** October 31, 1994

**Area:** 795,155.85 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 2,988,547

**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Joshua Tree National Park is an American national park in southeastern California, east of Los Angeles and San Bernardino, near Palm Springs. It is named for the Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) native to the Mojave Desert.

Straddling San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, the park includes parts of two deserts, each an ecosystem whose characteristics are determined primarily by elevation: the higher Mojave Desert and the lower Colorado Desert. The Little San Bernardino Mountains traverse the southwest edge of the park.

Nine established campgrounds exist in the park, two of which (Black Rock Campground and Cottonwood Campground) provide water and flush toilets. A fee is charged per night for each camping spot. Reservations are accepted at Black Rock Campground, Cottonwood Campground, Indian Cove Campground, and Jumbo Rocks Campground for October through May, while the other campgrounds are first-come, first-served. Backcountry camping, for those who wish to backpack, is permitted with a few regulations.

Nature walks inside the park include: Hidden Valley, Indian Cove, Cholla Cactus Garden;

Longer trails include: Boy Scout Hiking and Equestrian Trail, Contact Mine, Fortynine Palms Oasis, Lost Horse Mine, Lost Palms Oasis, Ryan Mountain and Warren Peak.

Due to graffiti on at least 17 sites on trails, officials have closed them to the public. The closed sites include Native American sites, at the Southern California park's Rattlesnake Canyon and Barker Dam. They blame the increase in vandalism on the increased use of social media.

## Kings Canyon

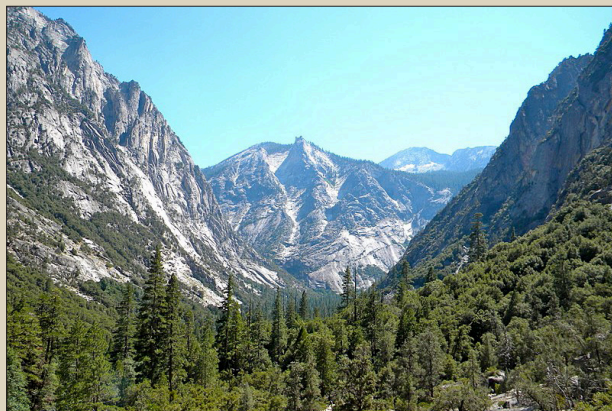


Photo by Crd637 of Kings Canyon as seen from the Mist Falls trail

**Location:** California

**Date Established as park:** March 4, 1940

**Area:** 461,901.20 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 632,110

**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Kings Canyon National Park is an American national park in the southern Sierra Nevada, in Fresno and Tulare Counties, California. Originally established in 1890 as General Grant National Park, the park was greatly expanded and renamed to Kings Canyon National Park.

The park's namesake, Kings Canyon, is a rugged glacier-carved valley more than a mile deep. Other natural features include multiple 14,000-foot peaks, high mountain meadows, swift-flowing rivers, and some of the world's largest stands of giant sequoia trees. Kings Canyon is north of and contiguous with Sequoia National Park.

The majority of the park, drained by the Middle and South Forks of the Kings River and many smaller streams, is designated wilderness. Tourist facilities are concentrated in two areas: Grant Grove, home to General Grant (the second largest tree in the world, measured by trunk volume) and Cedar Grove, located in the heart of Kings Canyon. Overnight hiking is required to access most of the park's backcountry, or high country, which for much of the year is covered in deep snow. The combined Pacific Crest Trail/John Muir Trail, a backpacking route, traverses the entire length of the park from north to south.

People have inhabited what is now Kings Canyon National Park for about 6,000–7,000 years.

Grant Grove, the only vehicular entrance to the park, is 60 miles east of Fresno via Highway 180. In addition to Highway 180 from the west, Highway 198, the Generals Highway, provides access from Sequoia National Park in the south. The roads converge in Grant Grove Village, from where Highway 180 continues another 35 miles northeast to Cedar Grove.

## Mammoth Cave

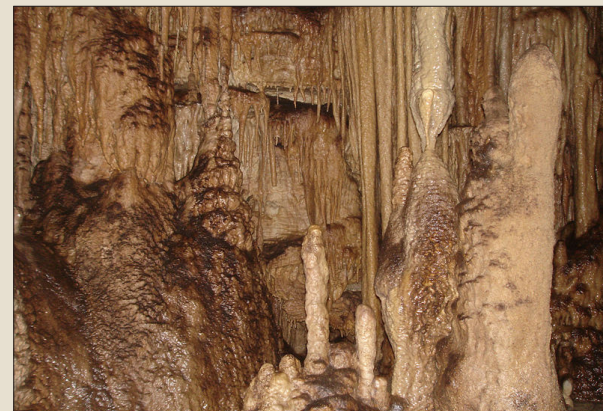


Photo by Navin75 of Mammoth Cave

**Location:** Kentucky

**Date Established as park:** July 1, 1941

**Area:** 54,011.91 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 551,590

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Mammoth Cave National Park is an American national park in west-central Kentucky, encompassing portions of Mammoth Cave, the longest cave system known in the world.

Since the 1972 unification of Mammoth Cave with the even-longer system under Flint Ridge to the north, the official name of the system has been the Mammoth–Flint Ridge Cave System.


The park is located primarily in Edmonson County, with small areas extending eastward into Hart and Barren counties.

The Green River runs through the park, with a tributary called the Nolin River feeding into the Green just inside the park. Mammoth Cave is the world's longest known cave system with more than 400 miles of surveyed passageways, which is nearly twice as long as the second-longest cave system, Mexico's Sac Actun underwater cave.

Mammoth Cave developed in thick Mississippian-aged limestone strata capped by a layer of sandstone, which has made the system remarkably stable. It is known to include more than 400 miles of passageway; new discoveries and connections add several miles to this figure each year. Mammoth Cave National Park was established to preserve the cave system.

The upper sandstone member is known as the Big Clifty Sandstone.

The National Park Service offers several cave tours to visitors. Some notable features of the cave, such as Grand Avenue, Frozen Niagara, and Fat Man's Misery, can be seen on lighted tours ranging from one to six hours in length. Two tours, lit only by visitor-carried paraffin lamps, are popular alternatives to the electric-lit routes. Several "wild" tours venture away from the developed parts of the cave into muddy crawls and dusty tunnels.

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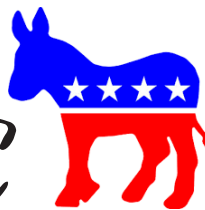
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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Mesa Verde



Photo by Andreas F. Borchert of Cliff Palace

**Location:** Colorado  
**Date Established as park:** June 29, 1906  
**Area:** 52,485.17 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 556,203  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site

**Description:**

Mesa Verde National Park is an American national park and UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Montezuma County, Colorado. The park protects some of the best-preserved Ancestral Puebloan archaeological sites in the United States.

Mesa Verde (Spanish for "green table") is best known for structures such as Cliff Palace, thought to be the largest cliff dwelling in North America.

Starting c. 7500 BC Mesa Verde was seasonally inhabited by a group of nomadic Paleo-Indians known as the Foothills Mountain Complex. The variety of projectile points found in the region indicates they were influenced by surrounding areas, including the Great Basin, the San Juan Basin, and the Rio Grande Valley. Later, Archaic people established semi-permanent rock shelters in and around the mesa. By 1000 BC, the Basketmaker culture emerged from the local Archaic population, and by 750 AD the Ancestral Puebloans had developed from the Basketmaker culture.

The Mesa Verdeans survived using a combination of hunting, gathering, and subsistence farming of crops such as corn, beans, and squash. They built the mesa's first pueblos sometime after 650, and by the end of the 12th century, they began to construct the massive cliff dwellings for which the park is best known. By 1285, following a period of social and environmental instability driven by a series of severe and prolonged droughts, they abandoned the area and moved south to locations in Arizona and New Mexico, including Rio Chama, Pajarito Plateau, and Santa Fe.

The first occupants of the Mesa Verde region, which spans from southeastern Utah to northwestern New Mexico, were nomadic Paleo-Indians who arrived in the area c. 9500 BC.

## Mount Rainier



Aerial Photo by Stan Shebs of Mount Rainier from the west

**Location:** Washington  
**Date Established as park:** March 2, 1899  
**Area:** 236,381.64 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,501,621

**Description:**

Mount Rainier National Park is an American national park located in southeast Pierce County and northeast Lewis County in Washington state. It was the fifth national park in the U.S. to be established, preserving all of Mount Rainier, a 14,411-foot stratovolcano.

The mountain rises abruptly from the surrounding land with elevations in the park ranging from 1,600 feet to over 14,000 feet. The highest point in the Cascade Range, Mount Rainier is surrounded by valleys, waterfalls, subalpine meadows, and 91,000 acres of old-growth forest. More than 25 glaciers descend the flanks of the volcano, which is often shrouded in clouds that dump enormous amounts of rain and snow.

Mount Rainier is circled by the Wonderland Trail and is covered by glaciers and snowfields totaling about 35 square miles. Carbon Glacier is the largest glacier by volume in the contiguous United States, while Emmons Glacier is the largest glacier by area. Mount Rainier is a popular peak for mountaineering with some 10,000 attempts per year with approximately 50 percent making it to the summit.

The earliest evidence of human activity in the area which is now Mount Rainier National Park, a projectile point dated to circa 4,000–5,800 BP (before present) found along Bench Lake Trail (the first section of Snow Lake Trail).

A more substantial archeological find was a rock shelter near Fryingpan Creek, east of Goat Island Mountain. Hunting artifacts were found in the shelter. The shelter would not have been used all year round. Cultural affinities suggest the site was used by Columbia Plateau Tribes from 1000 to 300 BP.

## Olympic

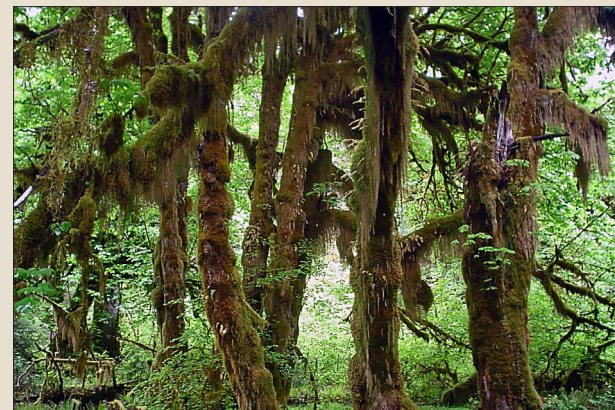


Photo of Maples in Olympic National Park's Hoh Rain Forest.

**Location:** Washington  
**Date Established as park:** June 29, 1938  
**Area:** 922,649.41 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 3,245,806  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Olympic National Park is located in the State of Washington, on the Olympic Peninsula. The park has four regions: the Pacific coastline, alpine areas, the west-side temperate rainforest, and the forests of the drier east side. Within the park there are three distinct ecosystems, including subalpine forest and wildflower meadow, temperate forest, and the rugged Pacific coast.

President Theodore Roosevelt originally designated the park as Mount Olympus National Monument on March 2, 1909. The monument was re-designated a national park by Congress and President Franklin Roosevelt on June 29, 1938. In 1988, Congress designated 95 percent of the park as the Olympic Wilderness.

The coastal portion of the park is a rugged, sandy beach along with a strip of adjacent forest. It is 60 miles long but just a few miles wide, with native communities at the mouths of two rivers.

Within the center of Olympic National Park rise the Olympic Mountains whose sides and ridgelines are topped with massive, ancient glaciers.

The western side of the park is mantled by temperate rainforests, including the Hoh Rainforest and Quinalt Rainforest, which receive annual precipitation of about 150 inches, making this perhaps the wettest area in the continental United States.

There are several roads in the park, but none penetrate far into the interior. The park features a network of hiking trails, although the size and remoteness means that it will usually take more than a weekend to get to the high country in the interior.

Views of the Olympic National Park can be seen from the Hurricane Ridge viewpoint.

During winter, the viewpoint known as Hurricane Ridge offers numerous winter sports activities.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Redwood

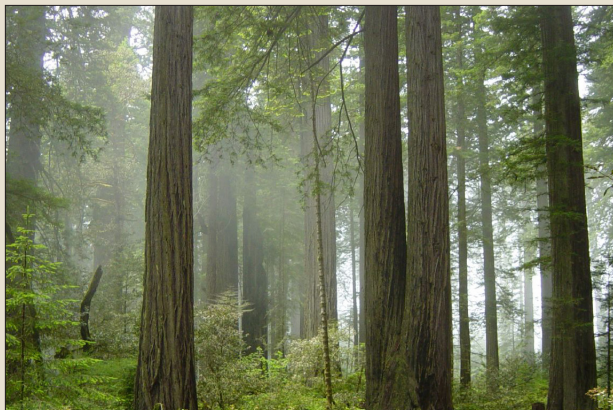


Photo by Michael Schweppe of Coast Redwood forest and understory plants

**Location:** California  
**Date Established as park:** October 2, 1968  
**Area:** 138,999.37 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 504,722  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site

**Description:**

The Redwood National and State Parks (RNSP) are a complex of several state and national parks located in the United States, along the coast of northern California. The combined RNSP feature old-growth temperate rainforests. Located within Del Norte and Humboldt Counties, the four parks, together, protect 45% of all remaining coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) old-growth forests, totaling at least 38,982 acres. These trees are the tallest, among the oldest, and one of the most massive tree species on Earth. In addition to the redwood forests, the parks preserve other indigenous flora, fauna, grassland prairie, cultural resources, portions of rivers and other streams, and 37 miles of pristine coastline.

In 1850, old-growth redwood forest covered more than 2,000,000 acres (8,100 km<sup>2</sup>) of the California coast. The northern portion of that area, originally inhabited by Native Americans, attracted many lumbermen and others turned gold miners when a minor gold rush brought them to the region. Failing in efforts to strike it rich in gold, these men turned toward harvesting the giant trees for booming development in San Francisco and other places on the West Coast.

There are no hotels or motels within the parks boundaries. However, nearby towns such as Klamath, Requa, and Orick provide small hotels and inns.

While the state parks have front country campsites that can be driven to, the federal sections of the park do not, and hiking is the only way to reach back country campsites. Almost 200 miles of hiking trails exist in the parks. Horseback riding and mountain biking are popular but are only allowed on certain trails. Kayaking is popular along the seacoast and in the various rivers and streams.

## Rocky Mountain

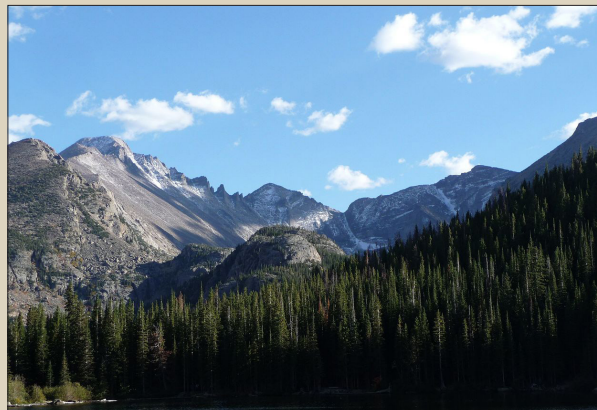


Photo by Daniel Mayer of Bear Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park

**Location:** Colorado  
**Date Established as park:** January 26, 1915  
**Area:** 265,807.25 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 4,670,053  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Rocky Mountain National Park is an American national park located approximately 76 miles northwest of Denver International Airport. The park is situated between the towns of Estes Park to the east and Grand Lake to the west. The eastern and western slopes of the Continental Divide run directly through the center of the park with the headwaters of the Colorado River located in the park's northwestern region. The main features of the park include mountains, alpine lakes and a wide variety of wildlife within various climates and environments.

The park has a total of five visitor centers and regions, with park headquarters located at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center—a National Historic Landmark designed by the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture at Taliesin West.

Region 1 is known for moose and big meadows and is located on the west, or Grand Lake, side of the Continental Divide.

Region 2 is the alpine region of the park with accessible tundra trails at high elevations—an area known for its spectacular vistas.

Region 3, known for wilderness escape, is in the northern part of the park and is accessed from the Estes Park area.

Region 4 is the heart of the park with easy road and trail access, great views, and lake hikes including the most popular trails.

Region 5, known for waterfalls and backcountry, is south of Estes Park and contains Longs Peak—the park's iconic fourteener—and the Wild Basin area.

The park contains a network of trails that range from easy, paved paths suitable for all visitors including those with disabilities, to strenuous mountain trails for experienced, conditioned hikers as well as off-trail routes for backcountry hikes. Trails lead to more than 100 designated wilderness camping sites.

## Sequoia



Photo by Dennis Warden of Abby Warden next to a Sequoia tree

**Location:** California  
**Date Established as park:** September 25, 1890  
**Area:** 404,062.63 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,246,053  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Sequoia National Park is an American national park in the southern Sierra Nevada east of Visalia, California. The park was established on September 25, 1890 to protect 404,064 acres of forested mountainous terrain. Encompassing a vertical relief of nearly 13,000 feet (4,000 m), the park contains the highest point in the contiguous United States, Mount Whitney, at 14,505 feet above sea level. The park is south of, and contiguous with, Kings Canyon National Park; both parks are administered by the National Park Service together as the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

The park is notable for its giant sequoia trees, including the General Sherman tree, the largest tree on Earth by volume. The General Sherman tree grows in the Giant Forest, which contains five of the ten largest trees in the world.

The park's giant sequoia forests are part of 202,430 acres of old-growth forests shared by Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The parks preserve a landscape that still resembles the southern Sierra Nevada before Euro-American settlement.

In addition to hiking, camping, fishing, and backpacking, the following attractions are highlights with many park visitors:

- Sherman Tree Trail
- Tunnel Log is a fallen giant sequoia tree in Sequoia National Park. The tree, which measured 275 feet tall and 21 feet in diameter, fell across a park road in 1937 due to natural causes. The following year, a crew cut an 8-foot tall, 17-foot wide tunnel through it.
- Tokopah Falls The trail to Tokopah Falls s
- Crescent Meadow is a small, sequoia-rimmed meadow in the Giant Forest region of Sequoia National Park.
- Moro Rock is a granite dome located in the center of the park, at the head of Moro Creek, between Giant Forest and Crescent Meadow.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Theodore Roosevelt



**Photo by NPS/Mark Hoffman:** Plateaus and tops of buttes provide expansive views of the buttes and river valley floor

**Location:** North Dakota  
**Date Established as park:** November 10, 1978  
**Area:** 70,446.89 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 691,658

**Description:**

Theodore Roosevelt National Park is an American national park comprising three geographically separated areas of badlands in western North Dakota. The park honors U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and is the only American national park named directly after a single person.

The park covers 70,446 acres of land in three sections: the North Unit, the South Unit, and the Elkhorn Ranch Unit. The park's larger South Unit lies alongside Interstate 94 near Medora, North Dakota. The smaller North Unit is situated about 80 mi north of the South Unit, and Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch is located between the North and South units. The Little Missouri River flows through all three units of the park. The Maah Daah Hey Trail connects all three units.

Roosevelt first came to the North Dakota badlands to hunt bison in September 1883. During that first short trip, he got his bison and fell in love with the rugged lifestyle and the "perfect freedom" of the West.

Both main units of the park have scenic drives, approximately 100 miles of foot and horse trails, wildlife viewing, and opportunities for back country hiking and camping.

Both main units of the park have scenic drives, approximately 100 miles of foot and horse trails, wildlife viewing, and opportunities for back country hiking and camping. There are three developed campgrounds: Juniper Campground in the North Unit, Cottonwood Campground in the South Unit, and the Roundup Group Horse Campground in the South Unit.

One of the most popular attractions is wildlife viewing. Among the local wildlife, bison may be more dangerous and visitors are advised to view them from a distance.

Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch is a separate, remote area of the park, 35 miles north of Medora, accessible by gravel roads.

## White Sands



**Photo by davebluedevel - Flickr:** White Sands, New Mexico

**Location:** New Mexico  
**Date Established as park:** December 20, 2019  
**Area:** 146,344.31 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 608,785

**Description:**

White Sands National Park is an American national park located is completely surrounded by the White Sands Missile Range. This gypsum dunefield is the largest of its kind on Earth, with a depth of about 30 feet, dunes as tall as 60 feet, and about 4.5 billion short tons of gypsum sand.

Approximately 12,000 years ago, the land within the Tularosa Basin featured large lakes, streams, grasslands, and Ice Age mammals. As the climate warmed, rain and snowmelt dissolved gypsum from the surrounding mountains and carried it into the basin. Further warming and drying caused the lakes to evaporate and form selenite crystals. Strong winds then broke up crystals and transported them eastward.

It is the most visited NPS site in New Mexico, with about 600,000 visitors each year. The park features a drive from the visitor center to the heart of the dunes, picnic areas, backcountry campground in the dunefield, marked hiking trails, and sledding on the dunes. Ranger-guided orientation and nature walks occur at various times and months throughout the year.

White Sands, during its period as a national monument, has been used as a filming location for scenes in several films.

Many visitors arrive during the warmer months from March through August, but sledders and photographers can be seen throughout the dunes year round. March and July are the two busiest months.

The Dunes Drive leads 8 miles into the dunes from the visitor center at the park entrance. Three picnic areas are available, as well as a backcountry campground with ten sites for overnight camping in the dunefield. Five marked trails totaling 9 miles allow visitors to explore the dunes on foot. Ranger-guided orientation and nature walks occur at various times and months throughout the year.

## Wrangelle-St. Elias



**Photo by R. McGimsey, U.S. Geological Survey** of Mount Jarvis is the youngest volcano in the eastern Wrangell Volcanic Field.

**Location:** Alaska  
**Date Established as park:** December 2, 1980  
**Area:** 8,323,146.48 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 12,547,743  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site

**Description:**

Wrangell—St. Elias National Park and Preserve is an American national park and preserve managed by the National Park Service in south central Alaska. The park and preserve form the largest area managed by the National Park Service with a total of 13,175,799 acres, an expanse that could encapsulate six Yellowstone National Parks. The park includes a large portion of the Saint Elias Mountains, which include most of the highest peaks in the United States and Canada, yet are within 10 miles of tidewater, one of the highest reliefs in the world. Wrangell—St. Elias borders on Canada's Kluane National Park and Reserve to the east and approaches another American national park to the south, Glacier Bay. The chief distinction between park and preserve lands is that sport hunting is prohibited in the park and permitted in the preserve. In addition, 9,078,675 acres of the park and preserve are designated as the largest single wilderness in the United States.

The park has long, extremely cold winters and a short summer season. Plate tectonics are responsible for the uplift of the mountain ranges that cross the park. The park's extreme high point is Mount Saint Elias at 18,008 feet, the second tallest mountain in both the United States and Canada. The park's glacial features include Malaspina Glacier, the largest piedmont glacier in North America, Hubbard Glacier, the longest tidewater glacier in Alaska, and Nabesna Glacier, the world's longest valley glacier. The Bagley Icefield covers much of the park's interior, which includes 60% of the permanently ice-covered terrain in Alaska. At the center of the park, the boomtown of Kennecott exploited one of the world's richest deposits of copper from 1903 to 1938. The abandoned mine buildings and mills comprise a National Historic Landmark district.

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# National Parks of the U.S.



## Yellowstone



Photo by Brocken Inaglory of Grand Prismatic Spring and Midway Geyser Basin

**Location:** Wyoming, Montana, Idaho

**Date Established as park:** March 1, 1872

**Area:** 2,219,790.71 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 4,020,288

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

**Description:**

Yellowstone National Park is an American national park located in the western United States. It was established by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872. Yellowstone was the first national park in the U.S. and is also widely held to be the first national park in the world. The park is known for its wildlife and its many geothermal features, especially Old Faithful geyser, one of its most popular.

Although Native Americans have lived in the Yellowstone region for at least 11,000 years, aside from visits by mountain men during the early-to-mid-19th century, organized exploration did not begin until the late 1860s.

Yellowstone National Park spans an area of 3,468.4 sq mi comprising lakes, canyons, rivers, and mountain ranges. Yellowstone Lake is one of the largest high-elevation lakes in North America and is centered over the Yellowstone Caldera, the largest supervolcano on the continent. Half of the world's geysers and hydrothermal features are in Yellowstone, fueled by this ongoing volcanism. Lava flows and rocks from volcanic eruptions cover most of the land area of Yellowstone. The park is the centerpiece of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the largest remaining nearly-intact ecosystem in the Earth's northern temperate zone.

Grizzly bears, wolves, and free-ranging herds of bison and elk live in this park. The Yellowstone Park bison herd is the oldest and largest public bison herd in the United States. Yellowstone has numerous recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping, boating, fishing, and sightseeing. Paved roads provide close access to the major geothermal areas as well as some of the lakes and waterfalls. During the winter, visitors often access the park by way of guided tours that use either snow coaches or snowmobiles.

## Yosemite



Photo by Dennis Warden: View of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park

**Location:** California

**Date Established as park:** October 1, 1890

**Area:** 761,747.50 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 4,422,861

**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site

**Description:**

Yosemite National Park is in the western Sierra Nevada of Central California, bounded on the southeast by Sierra National Forest and on the northwest by Stanislaus National Forest. Yosemite is internationally recognized for its granite cliffs, waterfalls, clear streams, giant sequoia groves, lakes, mountains, meadows, glaciers, and biological diversity. Almost 95% of the park is designated wilderness.

The name Yosemite is from the Native American word "uzumate," which meant grizzly bear. The indigenous tribe that lived in the Valley were called Yosemite by caucasians and by other tribes because they were reportedly skilled at killing the bears.

The park has an elevation range from 2,127 to 13,114 feet. The geology of the Yosemite area is characterized by granitic rocks and remnants of older rock. About 10 million years ago, the Sierra Nevada was uplifted and then tilted to form its relatively gentle western slopes and the more dramatic eastern slopes. About one million years ago, snow and ice accumulated, forming glaciers at the higher alpine meadows that moved down the river valleys. Ice thickness in Yosemite Valley may have reached 4,000 feet during the early glacial episode. The downslope movement of the ice masses cut and sculpted the U-shaped valley that attracts so many visitors.

Yosemite was central to the development of the national park idea. Galen Clark and others lobbied to protect Yosemite Valley from development, ultimately leading to President Abraham Lincoln's signing the Yosemite Grant in 1864. John Muir led a successful movement to have Congress establish a larger national park by 1890, one which encompassed the valley and its surrounding mountains and forests, paving the way for the National Park System.

## Zion



Photo by Tobias Alt of view from the Angels Landing trail looking northward to the Narrows

**Location:** Utah

**Date Established as park:** November 19, 1919

**Area:** 147,242.66 acres

**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 4,488,268

**Description:**

Zion National Park is located in southwestern Utah. A prominent feature of the 229-square-mile park is Zion Canyon, which is 15 miles long and up to 2,640 ft deep. The canyon walls are reddish and tan-colored Navajo Sandstone eroded by the North Fork of the Virgin River. The lowest point in the park is 3,666 ft at Coalpits Wash and the highest peak is 8,726 ft at Horse Ranch Mountain. Located at the junction of the Colorado Plateau, Great Basin, and Mojave Desert regions, the park has a unique geography and a variety of life zones that allow for unusual plant and animal diversity. Numerous plant species as well as 289 species of birds, 75 mammals (including 19 species of bat), and 32 reptiles inhabit the park's four life zones: desert, riparian, woodland, and coniferous forest. Zion National Park includes mountains, canyons, buttes, mesas, monoliths, rivers, slot canyons, and natural arches.

In 1909, President William Howard Taft named the area Mukuntuweap National Monument in order to protect the canyon. In 1918, the acting director of the newly created National Park Service, Horace Albright, drafted a proposal to enlarge the existing monument and change the park's name to Zion National Monument, Zion being a term used by the Mormons. According to historian Hal Rothman: "The name change played to a prevalent bias of the time. Many believed that Spanish and Indian names would deter visitors who, if they could not pronounce the name of a place, might not bother to visit it."

Guided horseback riding trips, nature walks, and evening programs are available from late March to early November.

Seven trails with round-trip times of half an hour (Weeping Rock) to 4 hours (Angels Landing) are found in Zion Canyon.

Lodging in the park is available at Zion Lodge, located halfway through Zion Canyon.

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# Other National Parks of the U.S.



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## Acadia

**Location:** Maine  
**Date Established as park:** February 26, 1919  
**Area:** 49,076.63 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 3,437,286

## Arches

**Location:** Utah  
**Date Established as park:** November 12, 1971  
**Area:** 76,678.98 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,659,702

## Biscayne

**Location:** Florida  
**Date Established as park:** June 28, 1980  
**Area:** 801,163.21 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 463,832

## Bryce Canyon

**Location:** Utah  
**Date Established as park:** February 25, 1928  
**Area:** 35,835.08 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 2,594,904  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site

## Capitol Reef

**Location:** Utah  
**Date Established as park:** December 18, 1971  
**Area:** 241,904.50 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,226,519

## Channel Islands

**Location:** California  
**Date Established as park:** March 5, 1980  
**Area:** 249,561.00 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 409,630  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

## Congaree

**Location:** South Carolina  
**Date Established as park:** November 10, 2003  
**Area:** 26,476.47 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 159,445  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

## Death Valley

**Location:** California, Nevada  
**Date Established as park:** October 31, 1994  
**Area:** 3,408,406.73 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,740,945  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

## Dry Tortugas

**Location:** Florida  
**Date Established as park:** October 26, 1992  
**Area:** 64,701.22 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 79,200  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

## Gates of the Arctic

**Location:** Alaska  
**Date Established as park:** October 1, 1890  
**Area:** 7,523,897.45 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 10,518

## Grand Basin

**Location:** Nevada  
**Date Established as park:** October 27, 1986  
**Area:** 77,180.00 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 131,802

## Indiana Dunes

**Location:** Indiana  
**Date Established as park:** February 15, 2019  
**Area:** 15,349.08 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 2,134,285

## Isle Royale

**Location:** Michigan  
**Date Established as park:** April 3, 1940  
**Area:** 571,790.30 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 26,410  
**UNESCO Designation:** Biosphere Reserves

## Katmai

**Location:** Alaska  
**Date Established as park:** December 2, 1980  
**Area:** 3,674,529.33 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 84,167

## Kenai Fjords

**Location:** Alaska  
**Date Established as park:** December 2, 1980  
**Area:** 669,650.05 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 356,601

## Kobuk Valley

**Location:** Alaska  
**Date Established as park:** December 2, 1980  
**Area:** 1,750,716.16 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 15,766

## Lake Clark

**Location:** Alaska  
**Date Established as park:** December 2, 1980  
**Area:** 2,619,816.49 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 17,157

## Lassen Volcanic

**Location:** California  
**Date Established as park:** August 9, 1916  
**Area:** 106,589.02 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 517,039

## New River Gorge

**Location:** West Virginia  
**Date Established as park:** December 27, 2020  
**Area:** 7,021 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** —  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

## North Cascades

**Location:** Washington  
**Date Established as park:** October 2, 1968  
**Area:** 504,780.94 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 38,208

## Petrified Forest

**Location:** Arizona  
**Date Established as park:** December 9, 1962  
**Area:** 221,390.21 acres

## Pinnacles

**Location:** California  
**Date Established as park:** January 10, 2013  
**Area:** 26,685.73 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 177,224  
**UNESCO Designation:** World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserves

## Saguaro

**Location:** Arizona  
**Date Established as park:** October 14, 1994  
**Area:** 92,867.42 acres

## Shenandoah

**Location:** Virginia  
**Date Established as park:** December 26, 1935  
**Area:** 199,223.77 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 1,425,507

## Virgin Islands

**Location:** U.S. Virgin Islands  
**Date Established as park:** August 2, 1956  
**Area:** 15,052.53 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 133,398

## Voyageurs

**Location:** Minnesota  
**Date Established as park:** April 8, 1975  
**Area:** 218,222.35 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 232,974

## Wind Cave

**Location:** South Dakota  
**Date Established as park:** January 9, 1903  
**Area:** 33,970.84 acres  
**Recreation Visitors in 2019:** 615,350



# Before the Trip:

## Know Before You Go



*You've decided to take a trip to a national park either alone, with your family and friends, or as a group leader. Do you know what information you should research and what skills you should practice before you head out? Use these trip planning principles to help you, your family, friends, and group members prepare and "Know Before You Go".*

### Pick the Park and the Right Activity for Your Group

Pick the right activity for your group. Be sure to "Know Your Limits" and those of your group members and consider these factors:

**Time of year:** During what season will you be doing your activity?

**Setting:** Does the activity take place at the beach, on a trail, in a cave, or at a historical site?

**Duration:** Will your trip and activity last a few hours or all day?

**Difficulty level:** Will you be going a short distance at a slow pace on flat terrain or a long distance at a faster pace on difficult terrain?

**Skill level:** Do you need special skills (e.g. rock climbing) to safely enjoy the activity?

### Know Your Limits and the Limits of Your Group

**Skill:** Determine the skill level needed to safely enjoy the activity you picked. Do you and your group members have the right skill level for the activity?

**Experience:** Determine if you and your group members have any outdoor experience. Is this your or their first time? Have you done this activity before?

**Fitness Level:** Identify how physically fit you and your group members are. Are you prepared to take a short hike on a paved trail or can you go on a long hike up a mountain?

**Required Medication:** Determine if you or any group members have medical considerations.

Will you need to bring medications with you on the trip (e.g. inhalers)?

**Health Considerations\*:** Find out if you or any group members have health conditions which may limit the kind of activity you can participate in. Do you have any mental or physical disabilities that should be considered? Do you have medical conditions that could be worsened by certain activities or changes in altitude (asthma, heart condition)?

\* Consult a physician if you have any questions on fitness levels, health conditions, or medications required

### Learn About the Environment and Hazards of Your Park

Every park is unique. Environments and hazards can even vary within a park. Research your park's website or call the park to find out what risks and hazards are associated with your activity (e.g. inclement weather, wildlife, swift water, uneven steps) so you can prepare for them before you go on your adventure.

**Potential hazards include:**  
**Inclement Weather**  
**Physical Environment**  
**Poisonous Plants**  
**Wildlife Encounters**

### Plan For Your Water, Food and Equipment Needs and Do a Test Run

Testing and practicing with your equipment are important steps in planning for a safe trip. You or the group's Trip Leader should:

**Make a packing list** - research the activity you selected and make sure that you and group

members have the required gear (e.g. hiking boots, life jackets) including the 10 Essentials.

**Do a test run** - learn how to use your equipment properly. Make sure it works and that items like hiking boots, backpacks, and life jackets fit correctly.

**Decide who is going to carry the equipment.**

**Practice** - practice packing and carrying your backpack, and pitching a tent if you are planning a long trip.





### Have a 'Plan B'

Have a back-up plan in case something comes up and keeps you or your group from doing your planned activity. Consider having an alternative activity or rescheduling your trip for another date.

### Develop and Practice Your Emergency Plan

An emergency plan will help you and your group respond to a lost or injured group member. Do not count on your cell phone reception. Practice your plan before you go so everyone knows what to do.

### Your Cell Phone is.....

-  NOT a light source
-  NOT a map
-  NOT a survival kit
-  NOT always going to have reception