

Yellowstone National Park

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Yellowstone National Park is a national park of the United States located in the northwest corner of the state of Wyoming, with small portions extending into Montana and Idaho. It was established by the 42nd U.S. Congress through the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act and signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872. Yellowstone was the first national park in the US, and is also widely understood to be the first national park in the world. The park is known for its wildlife and its many geothermal features, especially the Old Faithful geyser, one of its most popular. While it represents many types of biomes, the subalpine forest is the most abundant. It is part of the South Central Rockies forests ecoregion. While 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. Management and control of the park originally fell under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the first secretary of the interior to supervise the park being Columbus Delano. However, the U.S. Army was eventually commissioned to oversee the management of Yellowstone for 30 years between 1886 and 1916. In 1917, the administration of the park was transferred to the National Park Service, which had been created the previous year. Hundreds of structures have been built and are protected for their architectural and historical significance, and researchers have examined more than one thousand indigenous archaeological sites. Yellowstone National Park spans an area of 3,468.4 sq mi (8,983 km²), with lakes, canyons, rivers, and mountain ranges. Yellowstone Lake is one of the largest high-elevation lakes in North America and covers part of the Yellowstone Caldera, the largest super volcano on the continent. The caldera is considered a dormant volcano. It has erupted with tremendous force twice in the last two million years. Well over 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. In 1978, Yellowstone was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Hundreds of species of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians have been documented, including several that are either endangered or threatened. The vast forests and grasslands also include unique species of plants. Yellowstone Park is the largest and most famous megafauna location in the contiguous United States. The park is inhabited by grizzly bears, cougars, wolves, and free-ranging herds of bison and elk. The Yellowstone Park bison herd is the oldest and largest public bison herd in the United States. Forest fires occur in the park each year; in the large forest fires of 1988, over one-third of the park was burnt. 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.