

# Everglade National PARK

## History of Everglades National Park

Everglades National Park, located in southern Florida, is a natural treasure that preserves the largest tropical wilderness in the United States. Designated a national park in 1947, it was established to protect the unique ecosystem of the Everglades, which is home to a diverse range of wildlife and plant species. Unlike many national parks established for their dramatic landscapes, Everglades was the first created for its ecological significance.

The park's history is intertwined with conservation efforts, as this area faced threats from urban development and drainage projects in the early 20th century. Activists like Marjory Stoneman Douglas, whose book *The Everglades: River of Grass* brought attention to the region, played a vital role in advocating for its preservation. Today, the park is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a Wetland of International Importance, and an International Biosphere Reserve.

## Detailed Facilities for Tourists

Everglades National Park offers a variety of facilities and activities designed to provide an unforgettable experience for visitors while educating them about its unique ecosystem.

## *Visitor Centers*

### 1. **Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center (Main Entrance):**

- Provides detailed maps, park information, and exhibits about the park's history and wildlife.
- Features a gift shop and interactive displays.

### 2. **Shark Valley Visitor Center:**

- Offers bike rentals and tram tours for an up-close view of the park's wildlife and landscapes.
- Includes an observation tower for panoramic views of the Everglades.

### 3. **Gulf Coast Visitor Center:**

- Gateway for exploring the Ten Thousand Islands region via kayak or boat tours.
- Information on mangrove ecosystems and marine life.

### 4. **Flamingo Visitor Center:**

- Perfect for bird watchers and water enthusiasts.
- Provides access to boat rentals, marina facilities, and backcountry camping permits.

## *Trails and Boardwalks*

- **Anhinga Trail:** A short, accessible trail known for its abundant wildlife, including alligators, herons, and turtles.
- **Gumbo Limbo Trail:** A shaded walk through a tropical hardwood hammock.
- **Shark Valley Loop:** A 15-mile loop that can be biked or explored via a tram ride, offering stunning views of the Everglades' vast expanse.

## *Boating and Kayaking*

- Canoe and kayak rentals are available to explore the intricate waterways, mangroves, and seagrass estuaries.
- Guided boat tours are offered for a deeper understanding of the ecosystem and its inhabitants.

### *Wildlife Viewing*

The Everglades is home to over 360 bird species, the elusive Florida panther, manatees, and American crocodiles. Observation platforms and guided tours increase chances of spotting these rare creatures.

### *Camping Facilities*

- **Frontcountry Camping:** Two main campgrounds, Long Pine Key and Flamingo, offer spaces for tents and RVs.
- **Backcountry Camping:** For adventurous visitors, the park has several wilderness campsites accessible by canoe, kayak, or hiking.

### *Ranger Programs and Guided Tours*

- Educational ranger-led programs, including walks, talks, and canoe trips, provide insight into the park's flora, fauna, and history.
- Nighttime programs for stargazing and learning about nocturnal wildlife.

### *Unique Experiences*

- **Airboat Rides (Outside the Park Boundaries):** While airboats are not permitted inside the park, nearby operators offer thrilling rides to experience the Everglades' outer regions.
- **Fishing:** Permitted in certain areas, with opportunities to catch bass, snapper, and other species.

### *Why Visit Everglades National Park?*

Everglades National Park is not only a haven for nature lovers but also a place to learn about the delicate balance of ecosystems and the importance of conservation. Its wide range of facilities ensures a comfortable visit for families, adventurers, and eco-tourists alike. Whether you're kayaking through mangroves, hiking scenic trails, or observing wildlife in their natural habitat, the Everglades promises a once-in-a-lifetime experience that will leave you in awe of its natural beauty.

