

National Parks



Over the years, people have been concerned about natural areas and saving wilderness for all to enjoy. In fact, the United States has been officially setting areas aside for protection for almost 150 years. In 1872, Congress set aside 3,400 square miles in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming to create Yellowstone National Park, the first national park, for all to enjoy its unique hydrothermal wonders. Yellowstone's abundant and diverse wildlife is as famous as its geysers.



After Yellowstone was established as the first national park, other countries soon began to follow suit. Australia created the world's second national park in 1879.

Today, nearly 100 countries have national parks.

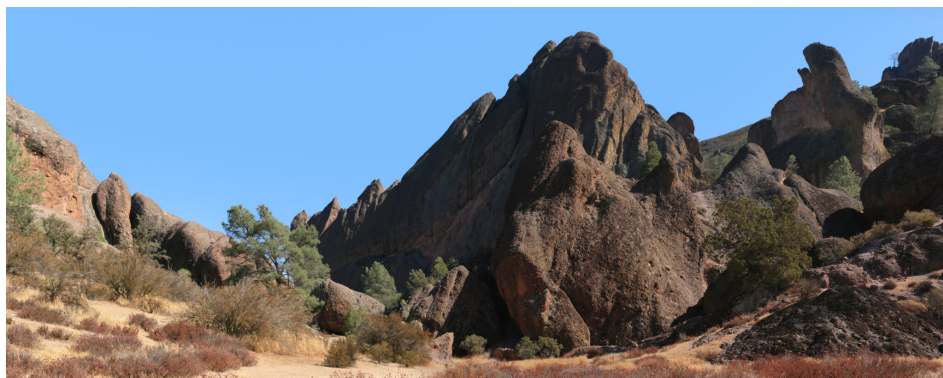
President Theodore Roosevelt was one of the parks' earliest and greatest patrons. He loved the outdoors so much that during his administration (1901-1909) five new national parks were created. He was also instrumental in creating 18 national monuments, 4 national game refuges, 51 bird sanctuaries, and over 100 million acres of national forests.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act of Congress that created the National Park Service. The National Park Service is a bureau in the Department of the Interior. The "Organic Act" that created the National Park Services states that the fundamental purpose of the National Park Service "is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the 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." The Park Service is responsible for protecting the 401 national parks, monuments, historic sites, and other units.

As of 2019, the U.S. has 61 national parks and 84 national monuments. Many of the parks offer a variety of activities and opportunities for families, from hiking, swimming, climbing, and camping, to visiting hot springs and geysers, to seeing a volcano.

Sixty percent of the parks represent America's history. These sites include battlefields, memorials, or historic homes. Some of the parks have ancient dwellings, petroglyphs, and pictographs from earlier cultures.

More than two dozen national parks were first designated national monuments. They were later upgraded to national parks by Congress. Pinnacles National Park is a recent new national park. It was declared a national monument in 1908. Over a hundred years later, in 2013, it became Pinnacles National Park.



As of 2021, there are 20 states that do not have a designated National Park. The largest national park is Wrangell Saint Elias, in Alaska, at 13.2 million acres.



Four of the five largest national parks are in Alaska. They include Denali, which also has the highest point in the U.S., Mt. Denali, at 20,237 feet. The fifth-largest park is Death Valley, in California, which has the lowest point in the U.S. in Badwater Basin, at 279 feet below sea level.

[US National Parks and State Parks Guide Online](#). Accessed June 1, 2019.

[National Park Service](#). Accessed June 1, 2019.

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