

US NATIONAL PARKS

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The U.S. national parks were originally intended to protect very specific things: the geysers of Yellowstone, the sequoias of Yosemite. As time went on, however, we realized that everything is interconnected and that to preserve one aspect of an ecosystem, we must preserve it all. The goal of the parks system shifted to from preserving specific pieces of our natural world to preserving the entire ecology around it. Each park divided into geographic section – represents an ecosystem or a cultural heritage that is unique to America.

National Parks – A Brief History

One of the first people generally credited with conceptualizing a "national park" was George Catlin (1796-1872), a self-taught artist who traveled extensively among the native peoples of North America, while sketching and painting portraits, landscapes, and scenes from daily Indian life. On a trip to the Dakotas in 1832, he worried about the impact of America's westward expansion on Indian civilization, wildlife, and wilderness. They might be preserved, he wrote, "by some great protecting policy of government . . . in a magnificent park A nation's park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!"

The idea had gained some acceptance years later, when in 1864 Congress donated Yosemite Valley to California for preservation as a state park. The establishment of Yellowstone National Park by act of Congress on March 1, 1872, for the first time signified that public lands were to be set aside and administered by the federal government "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." In 1891, President Harrison established Yellowstone Timberland Reserve as the nation's first forest reserve, and in 1903 President Roosevelt established Pelican Island in Florida as the first national wildlife refuge. There was still no real system of national parks in the United States until August 25, 1916, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Organic Act creating the National Park Service (NPS). Established under the umbrella of the Department of the Interior, the NPS was responsible for protecting the 40 national parks and monuments then in existence. In the years that followed, additional national parks and monuments (mostly in the western states) were administered by the NPS, while other monuments and natural and historical areas were administered as separate units by the War Department and the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture. No single agency provided unified management of the varied federal parklands. An Executive Order in 1933 transferred 63 national monuments and military sites from the Forest Service and the War Department to the National Park Service. This action was a major step in the development of today's truly national system of parks-a system that includes areas of historical, cultural, scientific, and scenic importance.

In 1970, Congress declared in the General Authorities Act that all units of the system have equal legal standing in a national system. Areas of the National Park System, the act states,

"though distinct in character, are united through their inter-related purposes and resources into one national park system as cumulative expressions of a single national heritage; that, individually and collectively, these areas derive increased national dignity and

recognition of their superb environmental quality through their inclusion jointly with each other in one national park system preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all people of the United States..."

Additions to the National Park System are now generally made through acts of Congress, and national parks can be created only through such acts. But the President has authority, under the Antiquities Act of 1906, to proclaim national monuments on lands already under federal jurisdiction. The Secretary of the Interior is usually asked by Congress for recommendations on proposed additions to the System. The Secretary is counseled by the National Park System Advisory Board, composed of private citizens, which advises on possible additions to the System and policies for its management.

Yellowstone National Park: One of the most visited natural attractions in the United States is the Yellowstone National Park. Founded way back in 1872, Yellowstone is the oldest national park in the world and covers territory in three US states, namely Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. The park is not only famous for its geysers and other volcanic attractions but also for its richness of wildlife including bears and herds of buffalos.



Glacier Bay National Park: Located in the state of Alaska, the Park is famous for its 16 flowing glaciers. A UNESCO world heritage site, the park and the adjacent Bay are also home to marine wildlife like whales, walruses and seals.

Denali National Park: Located in Alaska, the Denali National Park includes North America's highest peak, Mount McKinley and is famous for its bears, wolves and herds of Moose and Caribous.

Canyonlands National Park: Located in Utah at the juncture of the Colorado and Green rivers, the Canyonlands National Park offers some of the most breathtaking views of the outlying canyons and gorges.



Arches National Park: is known for its' remarkable natural red sandstone arches. With over 2,000 catalogued arches that range in size from a three-foot opening, to Landscape Arch which measures 306 feet from base to base, Arches National Park offers the largest concentration of natural arches in the world. Towering spires, fins and balanced rocks complement the arches, creating a remarkable assortment of

landforms in a relatively small area.



Grand Canyon National Park: Containing the Grand Canyon, which is one of the most visited natural attractions in the world, the Grand Canyon National

Park is located in Arizona and offers some spectacular views of the Canyon and the Colorado River flowing through it.

Everglades National Park: Located in the state of Florida, the Everglades National Park consists of a unique tropical ecosystem of a vast marshland full of saw grass and cypress trees. The national park is also home to alligators, panthers and over 300 species of birds.

US National Parks are spectacular treasures that should be explored by everyone. Visitors every year end their adventures with their own respect and appreciation for the awesome beauty that each and every park has to offer. With hundreds of destinations across the country, you can find plenty of National Parks and Monuments, Seashores, Historic Parks, BLM's and more. Everyone has an opportunity to travel to and explore one of these beautiful parks. From Acadia, Everglades, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Rocky Mountain and Zion **National Parks** to White Sands National Monument, it's time to get out and enjoy the beautiful and scenic outdoors!