

Planning Your National Parks Trip

Although there are so many ways to enjoy a National Park, preparing is key to making the most of your visit. Before you go, research fees, passes, or permits you'll need. Make a reservation for a tour, campground, cabin, or on-site lodging. Most importantly of all, research the weather conditions. Even if you choose to go in less-than-perfect conditions, Park Rangers may shut down areas of a National Park due to dangers caused by inclement weather.



We'd Love to Hear from You!

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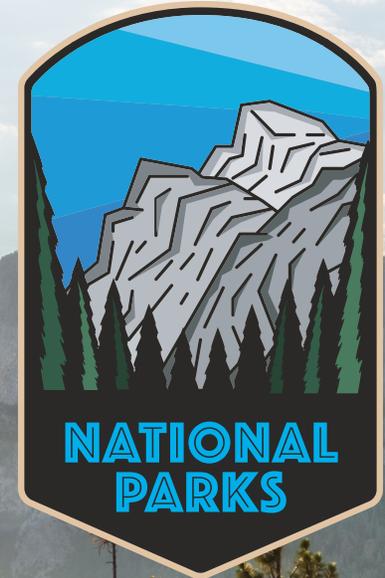
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Lease NEWS & VIEWS



GET OUTDOORS THIS SUMMER BY VISITING OUR NATIONAL PARKS



You want to get away from it all this summer. You want something out of the ordinary — to relax and recharge on a one-of-a-kind getaway. One of the best ways to do this is by taking a trip to one or more of our country's National Parks. These natural wonders of the United States are packed full of beautiful sites and sounds, opportunities for fun, and ways to kick back and relax. And there's probably one or more within driving distance of where you live.

The National Park Service manages 423 individual parks across all 50 states as a part of the National Park System, including National Battlefields, National Seashores, and National Forests. However, Congress has specially designated 63 of these areas as National Parks.

These environments are normally characterized by being large, open, and varied in landscape. Many times they're also home to historical monuments or events. The only rule: Don't hunt, mine, or consume the surroundings while you're there. And leave things better than you found them.

Ways to Explore

There are many ways to enjoy the National Parks. Each site has special features, but there are several activities you'll be able to do no matter where you find yourself. Of course, planning ahead is advised. Research the park or parks you'll be visiting for operating hours, available activities, and any other important information specific to that National Park.



Hiking is one of the most popular ways to enjoy a National Park. Before you head out, check with the park for different trail or walking opportunities and level of fitness recommendations. If you're not up to hiking or walking, find out if the park has any driving or guided tours. For the best experience, wear proper footwear and bring plenty of water. Layering on clothing is also a good idea for hiking. The elevations and temperatures can change drastically, and you want to be prepared no matter what the climate.

Getting out on the water is another way to enjoy the National Parks. Water sports like kayaking, fishing, and swimming are available at many of the sites. If you go to a park that houses a larger body of water, boating is also a leisure activity you can enjoy. When you're done with your activities, you can camp out under the stars — tents, campers, yurts, cabins, and on-site inns are options at many of the National Parks.

One of the best parts about the National Parks is their historical importance. Native Americans once roamed and inhabited many of the lands now designated as these sites. Their stories and ways of life are often memorialized and sometimes reenacted at National Park sites. These and other events are important parts of American history. If you visit a National Park, be sure you take advantage of this unique opportunity.

Leave No Trace

There's a reason the National Parks have survived and thrived for as long as they have. It's the same reason they'll be here long into the future. Each person who enters a National Park has a responsibility to preserve it through the way they treat the surroundings. To help visitors decrease their impact on the park as they enjoy it, the National Park Service has established the **Leave No Trace Seven Principles**.

1. Plan ahead and prepare.
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
3. Dispose of waste properly.
4. Leave what you find.
5. Minimize campfire impacts.
6. Respect wildlife.
7. Be considerate of other visitors.

Following the Leave No Trace rules helps preserve natural features and ecosystems within the National Parks, like the mangroves in Everglades National Park, Florida or the dunes in Great Sand Dunes National Park, Colorado. A fascinating part of the National Parks is the plants and wildlife that inhabit their ecosystems. Following the Leave No Trace guidelines means protection for these species.



QLT Spotlight

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