

THE BUCKET LIST

America's Most Visited National Parks

America's 58 national parks feature some of the country's most amazing views, natural formations and wildlife. These include Yellowstone's world-famous geysers, Olympic's rain forests in Washington and Arches' sweeping rock formations in Utah. Each year, millions travel to these parks. As the National Park Service prepares to celebrate its centennial next year, it's time to take a look at the 20 more visited parks.

20. Sequoia National Park, California – Established in 1890, Sequoia is the nation's second-oldest national park after Yellowstone. The 406,425-acre park is home to some of the world's largest trees, including the famous Gen. Sherman tree.
19. Arches National Park, Utah – The park features more than 2,000 sandstone arches carved by millions of years of erosion. Prominent formations in the park include Delicate Arch, Balanced Rock and Landscape Arch.
18. Haleakala National Park, Hawaii – On the east end of Maui, is for nature lovers and stargazers. The park is home to more endangered species than any other national park in the United States.
17. Badlands National Park, South Dakota – Hundreds of thousands of years of erosion carved Badlands National Park's extraterrestrial-like landscape of multicolored canyons, buttes and spires. Beyond its amazing views, the park contains rich fossil deposits.
16. Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas – Hot Springs is not what the uninitiated visitor may expect. You can take baths here, but not quite in a natural hot spring. Instead, the park collects hot water from its springs and distributes it to bathhouses open to the public.
15. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii – The state's only World Heritage site contains some of the world's most active volcanoes, including Kilauea, which has been erupting since 1983. The park was established as a national park in 1916.
14. Mt. Rainier National Park, Washington – Established in 1899, Rainier is the country's fifth-oldest national park. In the summer, wildflowers abound. In spring, waterfalls reach their powerful zenith, and in the fall, changing leaves put on a show. At a towering 14,410 feet, Mt. Rainier is the tallest peak in the lower 48.
13. Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah – Known for its unusual geology, Bryce Canyon's jagged landscape is formed from millions of years of erosion. Alternating periods of frost and thaw carved an impressive collection of hoodoos and spire-shaped formations into the park.
12. Joshua Tree National Park, California – Joshua Tree is home to an impressive collection of wildflowers, world-class rock-climbing and amazing rock formations. On the park's nearly 800,000 acres are 501 archaeological sites, a dozen self-guided nature hikes are available to visitors.
11. Acadia National Park, Maine – Awed by its beauty and diversity, early 20th-century visionaries donated the land that became Acadia National Park. The park is home to many plants and animals, and the tallest mountain on the U.S. Atlantic coast.
10. Glacier National Park, Montana – Glacier National Park is named after the glaciers that carved its landscape millions of years ago. Native Americans know it as the "Backbone of the World." The park has 13 campgrounds and more than 700 miles of hiking trails.
9. Cuyahoga National Park, Ohio – With its hiking and horse trails, bike paths, waterways and railways, Cuyahoga National Park offers myriad ways to get around. Sightseers can hop on and off the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, which operates year round.
8. Zion Canyon National Park, Utah – Zion's many multicolored canyons, mesas and towers frame its first-rate scenery. The park's most popular formation is Zion Canyon. Besides camping sites, Zion Lodge offers rooms, cabins, suites and a restaurant.



7. Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming – Grand Teton straddles 485 square miles of mountains, rivers and wilderness in northwest Wyoming south of Yellowstone. The park is famous for its wildlife. Visitors can see bald eagles, otters, elk, and beavers in Oxbow Bend.
6. Rocky Mountains National Park, Colorado – Rocky Mountain, 415 square miles encompass and protect spectacular mountain environments. Enjoy Trail Ridge Road, which crests over 12,000 feet including many overlooks, to experience the subalpine and alpine worlds along with over 300 miles of hiking trails, wildflowers, wildlife, starry nights, and fun times.
5. Olympic National Park, Washington – Olympic is 95% wilderness, making it an ideal spot for nature lovers. The park offers beaches, rain forests, glaciers and miles of hiking trails. Several lodges, resorts and campgrounds cater to overnight visitors.
4. Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho – Established in 1872, Yellowstone is the nation's oldest national park. It's known for its geysers and hot springs. Indeed, Yellowstone contains 60% of the world's geysers, including Old Faithful, its most famous. A mountain wildland, home to grizzly bears, wolves, and herds of bison and elk, the park is the core of one of the last, nearly intact, natural ecosystems in the Earth's temperate zone.
3. Yosemite National Park, California – First protected in 1864, Yosemite National Park lies east of San Francisco in the Sierra Nevada and offers visitors a varied landscape of deep valleys, vast meadows and groves of giant sequoia trees. Ninety-five percent of the park is designated as wilderness.
2. Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona – Established in 1919, the Grand Canyon is perhaps the most famous of America's national parks. It is an enormous stretch of canyon: 277 miles long (measured by the length of the river at its bottom), 6,000 vertical feet at its deepest point and almost 18 miles wide at its widest.
1. Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina – Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which sits between North Carolina and Tennessee, is a wonderland of waterfalls, wildflowers and wildlife. It offers visitors 800 miles of maintained trails. World renowned for its diversity of plant and animal life, the beauty of its ancient mountains, and the quality of its remnants of Southern Appalachian mountain culture, this is America's most visited national park.



Beautiful sunrises are frequently seen in America's most visited national park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It includes more than 800 miles of hiking trails, roaring streams and creeks, and the chance to see historic settlers' cabins, schoolhouses, churches, grist mills and more. GSMNP hosts 9 million visitors annually – almost three times the number Yellowstone gets!