

# The National Park System

## Caring for America's Treasures

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Our national parks tell the story of America – its wondrous places, memorable events, and unforgettable people. From the Statue of Liberty to the Grand Canyon, the National Park System includes areas of historical, scenic, and scientific importance. The National Park Service takes care of these places so future generations can enjoy them, learn from them, and be inspired by them.

On March 1, 1872, Congress established the first national park, Yellowstone National Park in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming. Forty-four years later, on August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed an act creating the National Park Service, a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior responsible for protecting the 40 national parks and monuments then in existence and those yet to be established.

Today, the National Park System of the United States is made up of nearly 400 areas covering more than 83 million acres in 49 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan, and the Virgin Islands. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

Areas within the National Park System vary in size. The largest park in the system is Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska (13.2 million acres). The smallest park in the system is Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial in Pennsylvania (.02 acres).

Additions to the National Park System are now generally made through acts of Congress, and national parks can be created only through such acts. However, the President does have the authority to proclaim national monuments on lands already owned by the federal government.



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