



ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



The Mission of the National Park Service

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Since 1916, the American people have entrusted the National Park Service (NPS) with the care of their national parks. With help from volunteers and partners, NPS safeguards more than 400 places and shares their stories with more than 275 million visitors every year. But their work doesn't end there.

NPS is proud that tribes, local governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individual citizens ask for help in [revitalizing their communities](#), preserving local history, celebrating local heritage, and creating close-to-home opportunities for kids and families to get outside, be active, and have fun.

Writer and historian Wallace Stegner called national parks “the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.” Taking care of the national parks and helping Americans take care of their communities is a job NPS loves. NPS needs—and welcomes—your help and support.

The History of the National Park Service

Forty-four years after the establishment of [Yellowstone](#), President [Woodrow Wilson](#) created the [National Park Service](#) on August 25, 1916. This year, NPS celebrates its Centennial anniversary.

Starting in the 1800s, the scenic natural wonders of the West, places like mineral springs in Arkansas, towering mountains and majestic trees of Yosemite, spouting geysers of Yellowstone, and the arid ruins of Casa Grande, inspired individual Americans to call for their preservation, asking their government to create something called “national parks.”

In 1916, the work of caring for these places was moved to a new agency created by Congress for that specific purpose. The National Park Service was given the responsibility to not only conserve and protect parks, but also to leave them “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

The job got bigger as the number and types of parks expanded. In the 1930s, military parks and national monuments were added. Then came national parkways and seashores followed by urban parks in the 1960s. During the next decade, the size of the National Park System nearly doubled with the addition of 47 million acres in Alaska.

Today numbering close to 410, national park units now include places that commemorate more recent – and in many cases more sobering – history. The stories of the fight for civil rights, the World War II Japanese American internment camps, and Sand Creek, the site of the tragic Indian massacre in 1864, are all told in national parks.

For more information, please visit [nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov).