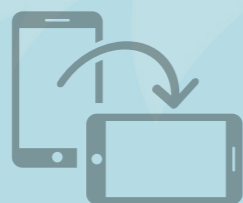


travel^{up}
presents

The American

Parks Guide





If viewed on a phone/tablet, please rotate your device
This guide is best viewed in landscape mode

Welcome

Welcome to our National Parks Guide! In this guide you'll find everything you could possibly want to know about some of the best National Parks in the USA as well as maps to give you an idea where the landmarks are and more. Where shall we begin?

Click on a park badge to jump to that page.

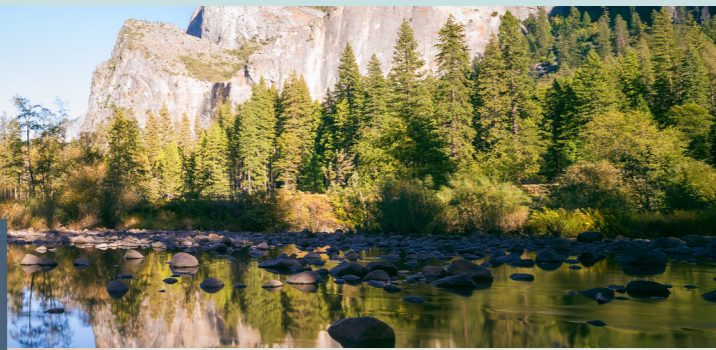


Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park sits in the heart of the Californian countryside. It's famous for its huge, ancient sequoia trees, the iconic Bridalveil Fall and the cliffs of El Capitan and Half Dome. This park is a hiker's paradise, there's just so much to explore, so planning out your route and what you want to discover in advance is recommended so you can tick absolutely everything off your bucket list.

When to visit Yosemite National Park is open 365 days a year and there are no requirements to pre-book your visit, but if you're planning on staying in one of the campsites, we'd recommend booking your place in advance.

To witness the waterfalls, we'd suggest visiting in spring. Summer is a great time to make the most of the beautiful weather whereas in the winter, although the park looks stunning, some of the roads are closed which can make it quite difficult to gain access to some of the park's iconic vistas. The trees look incredible in autumn and it's a great time to visit if you're not a fan of the soaring summer heat.



Wildlife Yosemite is not short of exciting wildlife and you may even spot some yourself on your adventure! Look out for the park's famous black bear; its name is perhaps a little misleading as the black bears that call Yosemite their home have blond, brown or black fur. A little harder to spot is the elusive mountain lion, who tend to slink through the forest unseen. If you cross paths with one of these felines then do not try to run. Instead, stand up tall and try scaring it away.

Activities The activities in Yosemite are endless, whether you want to explore the park on foot, by bike or even from the air, there's something for everyone!

We would recommend exploring the Mariposa Grove, it is the largest of the park's three groves and is home to around 500 magnificent giant sequoias. Consider doing the hike mist trail, which climbs 1,000 feet to reach the top of Vernal Fall! If you continue on this trail for almost another 1,000 feet then you'll reach the top of the 594-foot Nevada Fall – it's well worth the trek.

How to get there



The nearest commercial airport to Yosemite National Park is San Francisco International; United Airlines provide two direct flights a day to San Francisco from London Heathrow and you'll be able to relax in comfort while you embark on your adventure!

Flights from: £315^{rtn}

Once you've arrived, consider a short break to check out San Francisco where you'll discover the Golden Gate Bridge, great entertainment and the city's famous cable cars.

We would recommend that you hire a car to reach the park as it is around four hours' drive away. It's worth taking some time to appreciate the stunning Californian countryside and even stopping off at some of Yosemite's gateway towns such as Mariposa, Angels Camp and Oakdale. Not only will these towns give you a taste of authentic Californian culture, but locals will also be able to give you invaluable information and tips – they make for fantastic places to stay if camping isn't quite for you.

If you're thinking about heading on a road trip after you've finished up at the park, head up to Sonora and other towns in Tuolumne County where you can visit more state parks.

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What to see!



Merced River



El Capitan



Hetch Hetchy



Mountain Lion
Puma concolor



Black Bear
Ursus americanus



Bighorn Sheep
Ovis canadensis sierrae



Campsites



Hike Trails



Grand Canyon National Park

The Grand Canyon is Arizona's goliath. With its layered bands of red rock and vast landscapes, this huge and unique park should be at the top of your bucket list! Whether you want to learn about its ancient history or witness dramatic sunrises from one of its many viewpoints, there's so much to discover here. The Grand Canyon really does have to be seen to be believed.

Activities You won't be short of things to do in the Grand Canyon, whether you want to explore the park at your own pace, take a walking tour or visit the Skywalk, there's something for everyone.

The Skywalk is located on the West Rim of the Grand Canyon; it's a u-shaped glass cantilever bridge that extends 70-feet out from the rim at Eagle Point. You'll have the chance to peer down 4,000 feet to the bottom of the canyon floor while standing on the sturdy glass.

If visiting the South Rim, take part in their free ranger programs where you will learn more about Grand Canyon's nature, science, history and culture with a park ranger as your guide. The best thing to get up to in the Grand Canyon is walking or hiking, where you'll witness the dramatic landscapes and discover beautiful views. Head to Lipan Point where you will have the chance to witness stunning views of the Colorado River; this is especially popular at sunrise and sunset.

When to visit Grand Canyon's South Rim is open 24-hours a day, 365 days a year; this includes Grand Canyon Village and Desert View. If you're visiting in the spring, summer or autumn and planning to stay within the park, it's highly recommended

to book everything you can in advance. The North Rim is closed during the winter months. The ideal time to visit the park is between March and May where the temperatures are on the rise and the park tends to be a little quieter before the summer rush. It's worth keeping in mind that the North Rim may still be closed during this time due to long lasting snow.

Wildlife Despite the Grand Canyon's vast, dry landscape, there is an abundance of wildlife that calls the park its home. Watch out for the California condor, it's the largest bird in the US with a wingspan of 9.5 feet! Its white spots under its wings and bald head are the two main identifiers for this bird.

On the ground, look out for the Rocky Mountain elk, there are only around 100 there but they aren't hard to miss as males can weigh up to 700 pounds! Rarely spotted but ever present in the park are mountain lions, they tend to spend most of their time on the cliffs.

How to get there

Grand Canyon is huge, there are all different parts to explore and where you enter the park will depend on where you fly to with United Airlines.

Flights from: £745_{rtn}

If you fly into Las Vegas, you'll likely want to visit Grand Canyon West, which is owned and operated by the Hualapai Tribe, rather than the National Park Service. The park is located just 2.5 hours from Las Vegas and is around 122 miles away. For visitors arriving from Pheonix, the closest entrance is the South Rim - it's the most popular entrance to the park with over five million people visiting every year - it is around 240 miles and 4 hours of driving from Phoenix.



If you want to try make your way around the whole park, it's worth noting that it takes around five hours to drive the 215 miles between the park's South Rim Village and the North Rim Village.



What to see!





Arches National Park

Arches National Park is Utah's huge sandstone park that boasts over 2,000 natural arches. Be sure to check out Delicate Arch in the east while discovering exotic wildlife. The park comes to life at night as the galaxy illuminates the sky, it's one of the best places in the world for stargazing – you never know what you might spot up there!



When to visit

Spring and autumn aren't just the most popular times to visit Arches National Park, they also tend to be the times that the weather is most likely to be cooperative and temperatures don't fluctuate too much. It'll still be warm enough to wander around in a t-shirt during the day, but you may want to pack a jacket for the evenings as they can be very cold.

If you decide to visit the park when it's a little less crowded in the summer or winter, be prepared for extreme weather and temperatures, as well as the occasional flash flood in summer and heavy snowfall in winter.

Activities

Arches National Park's vast landscape is waiting to be explored and what better way to witness this beautiful place than to hike it! Don't miss Delicate Arch while you're there, it's one of the park's most popular arches, sitting at 65-feet high. You can either hike the 3-mile round trip from Wolfe Ranch to see it up-close or park at the Delicate Arch Viewpoint and take the short trail to a long-distance viewpoint. If you want to challenge yourself, head on the fiery furnace trail, to explore you'll have to pick up a permit from the park's visitor centre or join a ranger-led tour – this is the best option for those who are beginners or have little experience.

There's much to learn in Arches, head to the Lower Courthouse parking area where you'll find the huge Courthouse Wash art panel that was painted by Native Americans; it's 19 feet high, 52 feet long and has so much art to appreciate.



How to get there



Salt Lake City is the nearest international airport to Arches National Park. You can fly there with United Airlines from London airports.

Flights from: £779_{rtn}

From here, the park is around 230 miles away. The best way to get there from the airport is to hire a car and turn your journey into an exciting road trip! Be sure to stop off at the town of Moab, which is located just five miles away from the entrance to the park and the friendly locals will be able to provide you with any information about the park as well as answering any questions.

Wildlife

Don't let the natural quietness of Arches National Park fool you into thinking there's no animals here, the wildlife in this dry landscape thrives. A lot of the animals here have adapted to be nocturnal, meaning if you're hiking during the day, you're less likely to spot them but keep an eye out for bobcats, foxes and even mountain lions just in case! During the day, you may find rock squirrels, antelope squirrels, chipmunks, lizards, snakes, hawks and even eagles. During the winter, the snakes and lizards go into an inactive torpor and their activity depends on the season and weather.

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What to see!



Balanced Rock



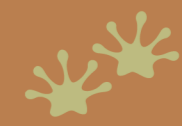
Delicate Arch



Devils Garden



Mule Deer
Odocoileus hemionus



Desert Spiny Lizard
Sceloporus magister



Turkey Vulture
Cathartes aura



Campsites



Hike Trails



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Rocky Mountain National Park

Take the Rocky Mountain pledge and discover a park that is beautiful beyond belief all year round. Impeccable vistas, interesting wildlife and incredible hiking routes are waiting for you, when will you begin your adventure?



When to visit The park is open all day, every single day of the year so deciding when best to go can be difficult. It's worth keeping in mind that summer and autumn are the most popular seasons to visit the park and it's recommended to arrive early in order to avoid queuing in the car parks and missing out on your day.

If seeing the park covered in snow is on your bucket list, head to Rocky Mountain in the winter – between December and March. It's worth noting though that sudden blizzards, high winds and deep snow are all common so be extra vigilant if you're planning on visiting during these months. During the summer, be sure to pack your waterproofs as afternoon thunderstorms are also common.

Wildlife There's so much wildlife to be discovered in Rocky Mountain, try and spot a moose milling around at Lily Lake or keep your eyes peeled on the water for a brilliant beaver! Black bears also call this park its home, but remember if you are lucky enough to spot one, keep your distance and admire from afar. You'll also have the opportunity to try and discover one of the promiscuous mountain lions, who typically spend their time exploring the park on their own or with their cubs. Challenge yourself to try and find one of the park's adorable Pikas, they are related to the rabbit family but look more like a hamster.

Activities What you can get up to in Rocky Mountain National Park depends on the time of year you decide to visit. If you visit in the winter, get your skis on and go cross-country skiing; it's a fantastic way to see the park while it's covered in a delicate blanket of snow. Horseback riding is a great way to cover more of the park while you're there. It's worth booking rides in advance as although there are many stables outside the park that are permitted to bring riders into Rocky, places fill up fast! If you are looking to learn about the park, its wildlife and history then visit during the summer where there are a number of ranger-led programs for you to take part in.



How to get there



The nearest international airport to Rocky Mountain National Park is Denver International Airport and you can fly there direct from London with United Airlines during the summer months.

Flights from: £319^{rtn}

From the airport, the best way to the park is by hiring a car and driving, it'll take around two hours to get to the park from Denver. Keep in mind that Trail Ridge road is closed from around mid-October until late-May and GPS apps and units don't always give accurate directions inside the park. It's recommended that you pick up a free park map when you enter or stop by any visitor centre to ask for directions.





Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone National Park is the world's first national park. It is nearly 3,500-sq miles and boasts dramatic canyons, alpine rivers, stunning forests, exciting hot springs and geysers. Make sure you pay a trip to the most popular geyser, Old Faithful. There's plenty of wildlife to be discovered here and the park provides some of the most spectacular backdrops for relaxing hikes.



When to visit

There are reasons to visit all year round, each season brings something new to the park that will guarantee a unique experience every time you visit. Summer is the most popular season as the park welcomes in over 2 million tourists. Spring is known as 'mud season' as this is the time when all the snow melts away, making paths, grounds and campsites a little harder to navigate. To make the most of the park while missing the crowds, head to Yellowstone in autumn when the trees are turning beautiful orange and yellow colours and the weather only has a slight chill. For those who love a thrill, visit the park in the winter where the snow makes the perfect playground for winter sports.

Wildlife

The park is filled with spectacular wildlife and you may be lucky enough to see it for yourself! Perhaps the most magnificent animal to call Yellowstone their home is the grizzly bear. About 700 of them live in the park and can be identified by the hump between their shoulders and blond-tipped hair; head to Lamar, Hayden or Pelican valleys and Yellowstone and Heart lakes for your chance to spot one. An animal you're more likely to see is the common elk, where in summer their population can reach up to 20,000! America's wild bison also call this park their home and can be spotted in the valleys.

Activities

Yellowstone National Park is filled with fun activities to keep you busy during your stay. Whether you want to wake up with the wolves or see huge hot springs, this park has something for everyone. If you're planning on trying to spot one of the mysterious wolves that grace Yellowstone, we'd recommend you head to Lamar Valley in the park's northeast corner before sunrise. Of course while you're exploring Yellowstone you'll no doubt put some time aside to discover the enormous hot springs and geysers. Make sure to add the Grand Prismatic Spring to your list, it's one of the world's largest and deepest hot springs sitting at 370 feet across and is deeper than a 10-storey building at 125 feet!

How to get there



The closest airport to Yellowstone National Park is Denver, which you can fly direct to from London Heathrow with United Airlines during the summer months.

Flights from: £319^{rtn}

From here, it's about an eight hour drive, depending on which entrance of the park you decide to drive to, so stopping off at charming towns along the way is a great idea to turn this adventure into a road trip adventure! Stop at the beautiful Cooke City and Silvergate if you are entering the park from the northeast gateway, head to Cody to experience a unique Wild West themed town and if you're planning on heading to Grand Teton after your Yellowstone visit, head to Jackson Hole, an old West town with a touch of fun!



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What to see!



Old Faithful



Grand Canyon of Yellowstone



Grand Prismatic Spring



Wolf
Canis lupus



Moose
Alces alces



Grizzly Bear
Ursus arctos Linnaeus



Bison
Bison bonasus



Campsites



Hike Trails



Elk
Cervus canadensis



Denali National Park

Denali National Park is Alaska's enormous exciting wilderness. Although a lot of the park is untouched by humans to preserve the wildlife, there's so much to see and do here. Whether you want to kayak along the Savage River or zipline your way through the park, you're guaranteed to make memories that will last a lifetime here.

When to visit Unlike some other national parks in the US, Denali National Park is open to visitors all year round so if you want to witness the park when it's covered in snow, you can wander freely! It's worth noting that a lot of the planned activities, such as kayaking and ziplining, only take place in the summer months. If you don't fancy braving the cold, you'll be glad to hear that the weather in the summer is much more pleasant and you can comfortably hike around the park without huge coats and scarves.



Activities You won't be short of things to do in Denali National Park, whether you're going to discover wildlife or be at one with nature, there's something for everyone. Try your hand at river rafting or kayaking along Savage River, or even embark on Denali's zipline adventure, whatever you choose to do is guaranteed to create lifelong memories. To experience North America's tallest mountain, head to the skies! There are daily helicopter tours around the magnificent Denali Mountain where you will climb to nearly 21,000 feet and witness the park from above, as well as the mountain summit. It's worth noting that these tours only operate in the summer months. Outside of these activities, you can also hike the park at your own pace to discover your favourite spots and witness incredible wildlife, the possibilities are endless.

Wildlife If you are visiting the park to be in with a chance of witnessing the stunning wildlife, it's worth sticking to the guided hiking paths within the park. Denali National Park strives to keep much of its park untrammelled or free from human intervention. This is to allow the natural systems to continue and allow predator-prey relationships to adapt. If you're unsure where you should and shouldn't go, speak to a park ranger and they'll happily clarify for you. There's lots of exciting wildlife to discover in this park, including the huge moose, grizzly bears, caribou and even grey wolves. It's important to make sure you don't try and approach any of these animals as the park is their home and won't want to be disturbed.

How to get there



To get to Denali National Park from the UK, fly to Fairbanks International Airport with United Airlines for the easiest entry into Alaska.

Flights from: £775^{rtn}

Please note, Alaska is part of the US and you will still be required to present a VISA upon entry. Once you've arrived at Fairbanks International Airport, you can use either a car, bus or train to reach the park. To reach the park by car, it's around 120 miles from Fairbanks Airport, make sure you stop off at Healy on the way; it's the nearest year-round community and is a great place to ask for advice about the park! Alternatively, try the Alaska Railroad train, which will take you straight to the park and you'll have the chance to admire stunning landscapes along the way.



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What to see!



Mt Foraker



Mt Denali



Lake Wonder



Wolf
Canis lupus



Grizzly Bear
Ursus arctos Linnaeus



Moose
Alces alces



Caribou
Rangifer tarandus



Campsites



Hike Trails



Everglades National Park

The Everglades is Florida's 1.5-million-acre mammoth wetlands, it's the largest in the US and one of the biggest in the world. It's made up of coastal mangroves, sawgrass marshes and pinewood flats and is often called a grassy, slow-moving river. The park is home to hundreds of animal species, including the Florida panther and West Indian manatee!



Activities

The most accessible way around the park is by boat. Feel the wind on your face as you skim the water and zip through twisting mangroves, it'll also give you the opportunity to spot one of the Everglades' famous alligators, or even the elusive Florida panther. It's important to note that unless you are very skilled at navigating boats, it's recommended that you book a guided tour as it's important to protect the sensitive underwater habitats and you must have the ability to "read the water" in order to avoid shallow waters and mud banks. Alternatively, you can embark on a journey through the Everglades by kayak or canoe, The Wilderness Waterway is around 99 miles long and takes approximately 7-10 days to complete – there are many well-marked shorter trails for you to explore too!

When to visit

The Everglades are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year but choosing when in the year to go depends on whether you want to experience the wet season (April - October) or the dry season (November - March). The dry season tends to bring more people to the park but with lower temperatures and dry conditions, the water levels drop, which means large numbers of animals congregate around remnant water holes.

Although temperatures in the wet season tend to be higher, the park conditions will significantly change. Water levels rise and animals disperse, making it harder to spot wildlife – keep in mind that mosquitoes and biting flies can also be profuse in some areas.



How to get there



Fly to Miami with United Airlines, then your nearest entrance is the Shark Valley entrance just 36 miles away from the airport.

Flights from: £309^{rtn}

If you're staying on the Gulf Coast, head to the Everglades City entrance, it's closest to Naples, Florida and is around 35 miles away. There are only two campsites inside the actual park itself, but there's an abundance of options of places to stay in the surrounding area and whether you'd like to camp or stay in a hotel, there's something for everyone.

Wildlife

You'll have the chance to discover all sorts of weird and wonderful wildlife in the Everglades, from exotic fish to huge alligators! Keep an eye out for the boa constrictors and Burmese pythons that call these vast wetlands its home. If you look very closely, you may even spot one of the leatherback turtles that live here. It's not just the water you need to keep your eyes peeled on either! There are over 40 species of mammal in the Everglades, including bobcats, armadillos, skunks and even pigs. Back in the water, keep an eye out for the West Indian manatee and the bottle nosed dolphin.

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What to see!



Anhinga Trail



Shark Valley



Flamingo Visitor Center



Alligator
Mississippiensis



Florida Panther
Concolor coryi



Leatherback Sea Turtle
Dermochelys coriacea



American Flamingo
Phoenicopterus ruber



Campsites



Hike Trails

Feeling Inspired?

Check out our recommended road trip, which will see you visit some of the stunning National Parks featured in this guide!

From San Francisco to Yellowstone, you'll discover some of the most beautiful destinations in the US and create memories that will last a lifetime.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 San Francisco | 10 Arches National Park |
| 2 Lake Tahoe | 11 Moab |
| 3 Reno | 12 Capitol Reef |
| 4 Elko | 13 Bryce |
| 5 Twin Falls | 14 Lake Powell |
| 6 Craters of the Moon | 15 Flagstaff |
| 7 Yellowstone | 16 Las Vegas |
| 8 Grand Teton | 17 Death Valley |
| 9 Salt Lake City | 18 Los Angeles |

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