



What is a National Monument?

A National Monument is a protected area that is similar to a National Park—except that a monument is more broadly managed and allows a diversity of recreational opportunities. Monuments can be less than one acre and protect a historic building like the [Statue of Liberty](#) on Ellis Island, or they can be large and dramatic like [Grand Staircase-Escalante](#) in Utah, which encompasses 1.9 million acres. Since 1906, the President and Congress have created more than 100 National Monuments. These monuments are currently managed by a multitude of federal agencies including the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

What is the difference between a National Monument and a National Park?

A National Monument (with significant acreage) has a wider range of recreational opportunities than a park. While the primary focus is often on historical preservation and ecological restoration, monument management is more open to interpretation than a park. For example, in a park, you cannot mountain bike or hunt, but in many monuments, you can still do both of those activities. Fort Ord was recently declared a National Monument, and it has an extensive mountain bike trail system.

What is the history of National Monuments?

The Antiquities Act of 1906 grants the President authority to designate National Monuments in order to protect "objects of historic or scientific interest." It's important to note that "objects of ... scientific interest" has been interpreted broadly. President Theodore Roosevelt first preserved the natural geological features of [Devils Tower](#) in Wyoming, and then, the [Petrified Forest](#).

Initially, there was an expectation that National Monuments would be small, but in 1908, President Roosevelt used the act to establish more than 800,000 acres of the [Grand Canyon](#) as a National Monument. In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson topped that number, by establishing [Katmai National Monument](#) in Alaska, which comprises more than a million acres. It was later enlarged to nearly 2.8 million acres. For a time, Katmai was the largest unit in the National Park system. Today, the largest National Park is [Wrangell-St. Elias](#) in Alaska. It has 13.2 million acres – and according to the Park Service – it's larger than Switzerland.

The largest land National Monument is Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, at 1.9 million acres, and the largest Marine National Monument is Papahānaumokuākea in the Pacific Ocean near Hawaii, which is 140,000 square miles. It was proclaimed by George W. Bush in 2006.

What are the latest National Monument designations?

Several National Monuments were designated by President Obama on March 25, 2013. They include the [Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument](#) in New Mexico, [Chimney Rock](#) in Colorado and the San Juan Islands in Washington. In 2014, Obama also designated Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks in New Mexico and the San Gabriel Mountains in California. In 2015, he made Brown's Canyon a National Monument and two other national historic landmarks.

How do designations affect the local economy?

A [Headwaters Economics Report](#) analyzed the economies surrounding 17 National Monuments larger than 10,000 acres. These monuments were all created after 1982. The analysis found that the local economies surrounding nearly all of the National Monuments grew following the designation. In addition, Headwaters Economics analyzed the income level per person. Their data showed that for the counties adjacent to National Monuments, particularly in rural areas where average earnings are often declining, the rise in the personal wealth of individuals was significant.