

Resource Guide: National Parks



Cloud formation over Skiddaw and Bassenthwaite Lake. Credit: Michael Turner

NATIONAL PARKS and the John Muir Award

Our National Parks are full of opportunities to experience wild places, with big landscapes and a fantastic diversity of nature to explore in many different ways. They are beautiful and inspirational places to walk, cycle, swim, or simply to sit and enjoy nature, and to do your John Muir Award. This guide will help you find out more about National Parks and where to go for more information about them.

What are National Parks?

Sometimes known as Britain's 'breathing spaces', National Parks are areas of protected countryside that everyone can visit, and where people live, work and shape the landscape. Each has a particular character - some have spectacular mountains or coast, others have many lakes and rivers or beautiful moors and woodlands - but all are areas with natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

National Parks were set up for both people and nature. They provide places for recreation and wellbeing, as well as protection for wildlife and nature. Each has a National Park Authority to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage - as well as to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special qualities. National Park Authorities also promote sustainable use of natural resources, and sustainable economic and social development for the people who live in National Parks.

Where are they?

With 15 National Parks in England, Wales and Scotland there will be one not too distant from you (there is a campaign for National Parks in Northern Ireland). Why not plan a visit, alone or with a group or family? If you are visiting a National Park consider what *you* think is special about the place and its landscape. You can then compare your thoughts to those identified by the National Park Authority on their website.

Find a National Park near you at www.nationalparks.gov.uk



Not ours – but ours to look after. Who looks after the National Parks?

Each National Park Authority looks after the landscape and wildlife, but it cannot do this alone. They work with a wide range of people and organisations such as conservation bodies, farmers, local communities and businesses. Through your John Muir Award activity you can also help look after National Parks as part of your own Conserve Challenge.

Find out more at www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/wholooksafternationalparks

If you're passionate about National Parks and think there should be more, then you might want to support the Campaign for National Parks (see link below).

What have National Parks got to do with John Muir?

Through his campaigning John Muir was inspirational in the foundation of National Parks in America. Muir used his ideas of conservation and ecology to influence the then President Theodore Roosevelt. Since National Park's were established (the first at Yellowstone in 1872), a global family of 6,555 protected National Park areas covering 12% of the Earth's surface has been created. Visiting a National Park and completing your own John Muir Award is a great way to celebrate Muir's legacy and follow in his footsteps.

In England and Wales the majority of National Parks were established in the 1950s, with the Peak District, the Lake District, Snowdonia/ *Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri* and Dartmoor being the first in 1951. National Parks came to **Scotland** in 2002 with the designation of the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park followed in 2003 by the Cairngorms National Park.

All these National Parks can include large towns and be close to some major cities. People are important to how National Park's in Britain work.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

This is by no means an exhaustive list – just a starting point. [Links to all 15 UK National Park websites can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk](#) and have not been listed separately here. Entries with a clipboard logo are pupil friendly or have useful resources for schools. Many activities you can do in National Parks are just the same as those you might do in other places so please look at the other Resource Guides too. There is also a section on National Parks in the John Muir Award Information Handbook.

You can follow what's going on in National Parks through Facebook, Twitter or YouTube and you'll find a list of their pages on the ANPA website at <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/aboutus/ourwebsites.htm>

Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) www.nationalparks.gov.uk/index

Links to all 15 UK National Park websites as well as links to 'Learning about', 'Visiting' and 'Looking after' the National Parks. Also links to the challenges facing National Parks – Tourism and Climate Change www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/ourchallenges

There is also an **ANPA Teachers Area** www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/teachersarea

Campaign for National Parks www.cnp.org.uk

The national charity dedicated to campaigning to protect and promote all of the National Parks of England and Wales. Also links to briefing papers on many aspects of National Parks – Recreation, Inclusion, Transport, Climate change, etc. www.cnp.org.uk/content/briefing-papers-1

Scottish Campaign for National Parks <http://www.scnp.org.uk/index.htm>

Supporting Scotland's existing National Parks - Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms, but also actively involved in A Strategy for National Parks (terrestrial and marine) for Scotland.

National Parks Week www.nationalparks.gov.uk/visiting/nationalparksweek

National Parks Week is a celebration of the beautiful winning landscapes which have inspired mountaineers, sailors, cyclists, runners, poets, photographers and artists. Annual activities and events are for all ages and abilities - you never know, a hobby could turn into a passion.

Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect_the_environment/natural_environment/national_parks.htm

Information on progress towards the establishment of National Parks in Northern Ireland.

Guides on: John Muir, Campaigning, Biodiversity, Wildlife Gardening, Surveys, Outdoor Access See www.johnmuiraward.org 2012