

National Parks



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. There are currently 15 National Parks across England, Wales and Scotland, each with its own 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. Find out more about National Parks, their history and who looks after them on the [National Parks website](#).

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.

John Muir is well known for his role in founding the National Parks system in America, so it is fitting that Award activity takes places across our National Parks.



What makes National Parks special?

Every National Park has special qualities – characteristics that make them the unique and beautiful environments they are. These qualities may be related to the landscapes, views, geology, geography, biodiversity, rare species, archaeology or history. It is the distinctive combination of these special qualities that have led to the designation and protection of these areas as National Parks.

Every wild place, no matter where, has its own special qualities. Why not think about what makes a wild place local to you special and how you can help to protect or enhance these qualities through your John Muir Award?

Useful websites

[National Parks UK](#) The central hub of information about the UK's National Parks, including brief introductions to each National Park, along with links to each Park's own website. Key information about visiting National Parks and educational resources can also be found. Follow National Parks UK on social media, or search using #breathingspaces to find out how people are engaging with National Parks.

You can also find country-specific information about National Parks by visiting [National Parks England](#), [Visit Wales.com](#) and [NatureScot's National Parks webpage](#). Northern Ireland is the only country in the UK which currently has no National Parks, but has large areas of countryside protected as [Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#).

[Campaign for National Parks](#) The national charity dedicated to campaigning to protect and promote National Parks in England and Wales. Find out about key policy issues and campaigns in these National Parks and the engagement initiatives which enable everyone to access National Parks. Read a [blog](#) about the John Muir Award.

[Scottish Campaign for National Parks](#) Supporting Scotland's existing National Parks and actively involved in A Strategy for National Parks (terrestrial and marine) for Scotland.

[London National Park City](#) In 2019, London became the world's first National Park City. Find out more about the movement, and how you can get involved.

[Mission:Explore National Parks](#) 49 fun challenges to help tune into everything that makes National Parks great places to explore and enjoy (£5). Why not also try [Mission:Explore John Muir](#) – freely available to download from our website or buy a copy for £3.

[Climate and nature in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park](#) This resource demonstrates how the John Muir Award helps the National Park engage people with the climate emergency and nature crisis, through encouraging environmental action.

[National Parks Week](#) National Parks Fortnight is a celebration of the beautiful landscapes which have inspired mountaineers, sailors, cyclists, runners, poets, photographers and artists. Find out about annual activities and events online.