

THE TOP FIVE NATIONAL PARKS OF SOUTH AMERICA



In the minds of most tourists, the image of the national park can be quite stereotypical; North Americans will undoubtedly think of their own, vast green spaces and the natural wonders left to them by past generations, such as Yellowstone, while others will automatically think of the great wildernesses and safari parks of deep Africa. What about South America? This wild continent, famous for the Amazon rainforest of course, also has some incredible and diverse parks to enjoy and here are five of the best.

1- Iguazu Falls

The first park to consider, as the name suggests, has a beautiful waterfall as its focal point - one that produces incredible walls of water at 70 metres high - but there is more to the park than that because it is also a desirable location for nature lovers because of its diverse ecosystem and its position on the border of Brazil and Argentina. This shared access means there are two fantastic destinations that are recommended as viewing points: Puerto Iguazu in Argentina and Foz do Iguazu in Brazil.

2- Torres Del Paine

This is a park that is less of a natural wilderness and more of a place for exploration by adventurous tourists, although the carefully placed paths and Refugios do add to the user-friendly nature. Given reserve status by UNESCO in 1978, this 2,400km square park in Patagonian Chile is just as popular with hikers that want to walk the snowy White Mountains as it is with photographers and kayakers wanting to explore Gray Lake.

3- Canaima National Park

If North America has the tourist trap that is Niagara Falls and Africa can boast about the splendour of Victoria Falls, it is only fair that South America celebrates Angel Falls in the same way. This majestic waterfall - the highest, uninterrupted waterfall in the world - can be enjoyed at this World Heritage Site in Guiana Shield and, arguably the best place to marvel at the grand height has to be Pico da Neblina, Brazil, on the Venezuela border, where you can get a birds-eye view alongside some of the 1680 native bird species.

4- Archipelago Los Roques

For something entirely different, visitors looking to explore the wild paradises of this continent can also head to this tropical island paradise in the sea off of Venezuela. There are only 1,500 human residents on this unspoilt region but there are 70,000 annual visitors that flock to the islands on day trips from other destinations such as Caracas in order to enjoy the marine treasures, mainly because Archipelago Los Roques is often viewed as the ideal place for diving among colourful shoals and shoals of exotic fish on the continent.

5- Los Glaciares National Park

The last national park on this list highlights the extremes in South American parks by moving away from tropical paradises and focusing on glacial wonders. Los Glaciares is in unusual natural landmark in Patagonian Argentina that contains 47 large glaciers that are fed by an ice cap in Andes. There are many tours available and key stopping points include El Calfate on the shore of Lake Argentino and the foot of Mount Fitz Roy.

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