

# TOP 10 NATIONAL PARKS IN EUROPE



Glaciers and volcanic lands, forests of ancient trees and mountains chiseled by the wind, peaks of perpetual snow and incredible waterfalls. Europe has hundreds of natural parks that, in spring, become excellent allies to escape routine and enjoy nature. The top 10 of this list, analyzed more than 400 national parks in Europe to determine, based on the number of reviews on Google, which one is the most popular in Europe (data collected in February 2022). Brought to you by Tourism Review.

## 10/ New Forest National Park, United Kingdom

With more than 21,000 travelers' reviews, New Forest is at the bottom of the Top 10 favorite national parks in Europe.

Located in the county of Hampshire in southern England, the site is famous for its ancient ancestral forests, heathland and 40 km of coastline lined with cycling and hiking trails.

One of its classic depictions is that of the wild ponies in the meadows, as well as the deer and wild boars in the wild.

It is also possible to find charming locations within the park such as the village of Lyndhurst, with its half-timbered buildings and thatched cottages. This is also the starting point for one of the most popular walks in the area, the Lyndhurst Parish Walk, a 13.5 km circular walk.

## 9/ Peneda-Gerês National Park, Portugal

Although Portugal has many protected natural areas, the country's only national park is Peneda-Gerês, which ranks ninth with 21,167 traveler reviews.

Located in the northwest of the country, between the Alto Minho and Trás-os-Montes, the park extends in a horseshoe shape over a total of 703 square kilometers, and is home to villages such as the picturesque Pitões das Júnias o Tourém, where ancestral traditions are still alive.

Of course, it has dazzling scenarios, including thousands of species of vegetation covering the mountain range, a holly forest and endemic species such as the Gerês lily, which tints the fields with its blue-violet tones.

## 8/ Snowdonia National Park, UK

At 2,130 km<sup>2</sup> and located in the highlands of Great Britain in northwest Wales, Snowdonia is known for its spectacular scenery that includes rugged mountains (including the region's highest, Snowdon Mountain), lakes, and hidden valleys and still-operating steam trains.

Its charms also include places like Harlech Castle, legends like that of the giant Rhitta Gawr and charming villages like Portmeirion.

## **7/ Timanfaya National Park, Spain**

Another Spanish park in the top 10 national parks in Europe. Timanfaya National Park, in Lanzarote, Canary Islands is the second most popular in Spain and the seventh in the overall European ranking, thanks to more than 25,000 reviews.

Volcanoes and virgin lava fields extend along its 5,000 hectares on the western coast of the island. This park is one of the most beautiful visual spectacles in the country. Neither the vegetation, nor the climate, nor the hand of man has been able to disrupt the beauty of this red, almost Martian, land included in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

A good way to discover its charm is to follow the Ruta de Los Volcanes (Route of the Volcanoes) in the area of the Montañas del Fuego (Fire Mountains).

## **6/ Vesuvius National Park, Italy**

The Vesuvius National Park in Naples is sixth on the list with 26,288 ratings.

It was created in 1995 around Mount Vesuvius, a volcano 1,281 meters high and with a breathtaking view of the Bay of Naples and the Amalfi Coast. This park is famous for its violent volcanic activity, with eruptions such as the one on 24 August 79 AD that buried the towns of Pompeii and part of Herculaneum. Since then, the volcano has erupted on numerous occasions and is still active.

To discover the park's biodiversity and history, a good alternative is to walk along one of the park's 11 hiking trails, especially the trail N°5, known as 'Il Gran Cono', which goes up to the volcano's crater through almost lunar landscapes.

## **5/ Peak District National Park, United Kingdom**

Less than an hour from the cities of Manchester and Leeds, in central England, the Peak District is the oldest national park in the United Kingdom, a true paradise famous for its extensive limestone valleys, caves and hills, which inspired Jane Austen to include several of its locations in her bestseller *Pride and Prejudice*.

In fact, many places in the area have served as filming locations for different films such as Chatsworth House, where Pemberley Manor was recreated in the movie *Pride and Prejudice*, Haddon Hall, a backdrop of *Jane Eyre*, *Moll Flanders*, or North Lees Hall, which appeared in *Jane Eyre* and *The Boleyn Sisters*.

Visiting the Monsal Trail is a must, a beautiful trail that goes through striking viaducts. Having an afternoon tea in the town of Bakewell (with cake) and *Voices from the Peak*, a collection of artistic soundscapes created to celebrate its 70th anniversary, is also a mandatory experience as well.

## **4/ Teide National Park, Spain**

Teide National Park (with 31,433 reviews) is the most visited park in Spain and Europe (and one of the most visited ones in the world).

On the island of Tenerife, its volcano, the third-largest in the world from its base, has a total of 3,718 meters above sea level, but it is not its only attraction. Hundreds of cones, lava flows and caves make up one of the most fascinating volcanic landscapes in the world with its rock formations of whimsical shapes such as Roque Cinchado.

Nearby there is the visitor center of Cañada Blanca and the Parador de Turismo del Teide. From its access, known as La Ruleta, there are steps chiseled in the rock that leads to a path that allows you to see firsthand the constructive force of volcanoes.

## **3/ Cinque Terre National Park, Italy**

Many travelers have seen the beautiful and colorful towns of Cinque Terre that seem to float over the sea: Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Riomaggiore and Manarola.

They're not as popular as the national park in which they are located (reviewed by 40,232 users on Google) which has protected natural and marine areas, as well as a network of trails that connect these localities and allow you to visit them on foot.

## **2/ Krka National Park, Croatia**

Croatia has the second park on the list, with 44,623 reviews. Krka, an area that extends around the river of the same name and hosts numerous cultural and historical monuments.

This is the case of the Franciscan monastery on the islet of Visovac, which emerges as a jewel in the middle of the water (you can visit an art gallery and the church, dating from the 14th century), the old wheat mills, now small ethnographic museums, or the Orthodox Krka monastery, in the upper part of the river course.

Less but equally important there are its seven waterfalls, the real goal of travelers, such as the impressive Roski slap, the widest, or Skradinski buk, perhaps the best-known waterfall of them all.

## **1/ Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia**

With a total of 78,002 reviews, the Plitvice Lakes Park, also in Croatia, tops the ranking of the best national parks in Europe, and for a good reason. This park is unique in the world (and protected as a Unesco World Heritage Site), its main attraction is its 16 emerald green lakes connected to each other by waterfalls formed from the erosion of tuff deposits, a type of limestone.

The source of the Korana River and the thick forests of beech and fir trees are also among its must-

sees, as well as some of the caves, springs, meadows and animals of protected species, including the bear.

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