

National natural parks and Forests

France's National Natural Parks have national and international recognition as outstanding areas. There are ten national parks in France.

The National Natural Parks are listed areas that boast outstanding natural (forests, ponds, woods, grasslands and/or mountains), cultural and landscape features.

They count a total 8.5 million visitors a year and cover 60,728 km², divided into ten parks.

A NATIONAL NATURAL PARK IS A PROTECTED AREA

The parks are subject to specific regulations set out in **Articles L331 and R331 of the Environment Code**, designed to protect the natural and cultural heritage recognized as outstanding.

Created with the law of July 1960 (amended by the law of April 14, 2006), the National Parks now face some new challenges for the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development. The notion of environment is intrinsically linked to the definition of a National Park.

The outstanding nature of the national parks has been forged by a unique combination of geology, biodiversity, landscapes and human activities. The originality of a national park lies not only in the high value of its specific natural heritage but also in the presence of human activities that have been able to serve the local population while respecting the natural environment.

The government assesses and initiates the procedure to create a new National Natural Park, which is then finalized by a decree from the Prime Minister, which sets out the restrictions and regulations concerning activities within the park.

The park is governed by a charter, which is both an administrative and regulatory instrument (it sets out the measures that are mandatory under the Environment Code).



A PARK’S TERRITORY IS SPLIT INTO TWO PROTECTION ZONES

The heart of the park

To protect the special character of the park, this territory is subject to specific regulations that provide a strict framework for certain activities to ensure they remain compatible with environmental protection requirements. Within this space, “wilderness areas” may be designated for scientific reasons (e.g. forests or wetlands).

The charter area

This is the area surround the heart of the park and encompasses the municipalities that voluntarily sign up to the national park charter (if they lie within the optimum perimeter defined in the park’s founding decree).

THE NATIONAL PARK CHARTER

The charter is established after the consultation process and aims to:

- Ensure ecological continuity and the existence of a living space between the heart of the park and its charter area
- Federate commitment from each signatory municipality to a sustainable development project.

Whenever buying or selling a forest within a National Natural Park, it is worth consulting the relevant charter. It should be noted that industrial, mining and advertising activities are forbidden in the parks.

Agricultural, pastoral and forestry activities are authorized but subject to regulations. In addition, power lines must be buried.

The French environmental services have a preemptive right. It is thus important that you are aware of the situation before proceeding to buy a forest that lies within a National Natural Park. Our people here at Forêt Investissement are on-hand to answer any questions you may have about this.

The ten French National Parks are:

- Le Parc National des Cévennes
- Le Parc National des Écrins
- Le Parc National du Mercantour
- Le Parc National des Pyrénées Occidentales
- Le Parc National de la Vanoise
- Le Parc National de Port-Cros
- Le Parc National de la Guadeloupe
- Le Parc National de Guyane
- Le Parc National de la Réunion
- Le Parc National des Calanques

The National Parks website