

Regional Natural Parks and Forests

In France, the Regional Natural Parks were created to protect and promote large rural spaces that are inhabited but under threat due to their isolated position and a long period of neglect of their heritage or culture.

Created in the 1960s, the Regional Natural Parks help protect a vulnerable area with a rich heritage and contribute to regional development and economic growth.

The Regional Natural Parks also reach out to the public and provide training and awareness-raising initiatives focused on the environment.

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The regional councils have the authority to create this kind of protected space. The decision to create a park is however enacted in a decree by the Prime Minister, listing the territory for a renewable 14-year period. The Regional Parks have a “syndicat mixte” (joint management association). It can be useful to refer to this association as it applies the Regional Natural Parks Charter.

A Regional Natural Park is centered on a concerted project for sustainable development and environmental protection, designed to promote the area’s natural and cultural heritage.

What kind of area can be listed as a Regional Natural Park?

Mainly rural areas with high-quality landscapes, natural environments, especially forests, and cultural heritage but where the balance remains fragile.

What actions are implemented in the Regional Natural Parks?

Initiatives are implemented in line with the five missions defined by decree:

- Protection and management of natural (forests, woods, ponds and grasslands) and cultural heritage through careful consideration for natural environments and landscapes.
- Regional development, contributing to the definition and orientation of development projects.
- Economic and social development, leading and coordinating economic and social actions to ensure quality of life in the area: regional natural parks support businesses that respect the environment and promote natural and human resources.
- Reaching out to, educating and informing the public The Regional Parks provide opportunities for contact with the natural environment and raise local inhabitants awareness of environmental issues.
- Experimentation and research: the parks contribute to research programs and are tasked with launching new procedures and methods.

What kind of land management applies to these Regional Natural Parks?

The Regional Parks stand out for their land management policies as they have adopted a clear position to protect and promote rural and forest heritage.

Land management in the Regional Natural Parks is based on three focus areas:

- Efficient land-use management. A charter applies for a renewable 12-year period
- Authority is shared between the State and the regions
- Persuasion rather than obligation

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The French environment services can exercise a preemptive right if they consider that a project put forward does not comply with the notion of sustainable development.

The DREAL (Regional Directorate for Environment, Development and Housing) is the referral department.

If you are thinking about investing in the forest, feel free to contact Forêt Investissement: we can answer any questions you have concerning a property located within a Regional Natural Park.

