

Parks and recreation

Take a walk on the wild side at some of the finest national parks across the network

Words by Delle Chan

Illustration by Nathalie Lees

AUSTRALIA

Kakadu National Park

Australia's largest national park turns 40 this year, and the federal government has promised to invest A\$200 million in it. Saltwater crocodiles and close to 13,000 other species, such as sandy wallabies, can be found within its borders that span savannah woodlands, wetlands and lowlands. It's also home to Aboriginal cave paintings and rock carvings dating back over 20,000 years – archaeological marvels recognised by Unesco. parksaustralia.gov.au

SOUTH AFRICA

Agulhas National Park

Cape Agulhas is best known as the southernmost tip of Africa, with a cairn marking the spot where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans collide. But other sights abound too, such as its candy-striped lighthouse. Inland, you'll find plains carpeted with lowland fynbos (scrubland) and wetlands with exotic wildlife such as micro frogs. The park recently unveiled the Iconic Map of Africa Monument, a 30m-wide 3D relief map of the African continent. sanparks.org/parks/agulhas

NEW ZEALAND

Kahurangi National Park

Earlier this year, this national park, which shot to fame thanks to its starring role in the *Lord of the Rings* movies, was expanded by 64,000ha – roughly half the size of Auckland. It now measures a whopping 517,335ha in total, making it the second-largest national park in New Zealand. Within its folds lie a multitude of rare creatures, from the endangered great spotted kiwi to over 20 species of carnivorous land snails. doc.govt.nz

CAMBODIA**Southern Cardamom National Park**

For a long time, this swathe of land located a few hours from Phnom Penh was under threat from illegal loggers and poachers. Fortunately, it has since come under the protection of the Cambodian government and the Wildlife Alliance. To promote sustainable tourism, glamping resort Shinta Mani Wild set up camp here late last year. The luxe resort makes a great base to explore the entirety of the park. wildlifealliance.org

UNITED STATES**Grand Canyon National Park**

Arizona's Unesco-designated national park has long been mesmerising visitors with its spectacular geological formations and shifting, shimmering hues. Challenge yourself with one of its many hiking tracks, such as the 15.3km Bright Angel Trail, which offers spectacular views of the inner canyon. The park is currently commemorating its centenary with a year-long calendar of events, including lectures on the canyon's rich history. nps.gov/grca/index.htm

UNITED KINGDOM

Yorkshire Dales National Park
Britain's 15 National Parks are celebrating their 70th anniversary this year. While most visitors flock to the better-known, postcard-perfect Lake District, the vastly underrated Yorkshire Dales in northern England – with its windswept moors and craggy outcrops – is equally worthy of mention. It's a landscape best explored on foot or by bike, thanks to an extensive network of pathways like the Swale Trail, which opened in the spring of 2018. yorkshiredales.org.uk

THRILLS AND SPILLS

These new and upcoming theme parks promise all kinds of excitement

HIGH ADRENALINE

Houston**Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Splashtown**

The water park just received a huge facelift, complete with new attractions such as the Wahoo Wave, a massive six-storey slide. wetwildsplashtown.com

Beijing**Universal Studios**

Asia's largest Universal Studios theme park is set to open its doors in 2021, with attractions revolving around Harry Potter, Transformers and more. universalbeijingresort.com

Abu Dhabi**Warner Bros World**

Explore immersive lands such as Batman's Gotham City and the Flintstones' Bedrock at this 153,000m² amusement park, which is located an hour's drive from Dubai. wbworldabudhabi.com

Seoul**Wonderbox**

Part of the Paradise City integrated resort, this new night-time indoor amusement park features carnival-style rides such as a carousel, as well as a bungee drop. p-city.com

Swiss Alps**Heidi Alperlebnis**

Modelled around the children's book *Heidi*, this park – slated to open in 2020 – will offer Alpine activities such as milking goats and building wooden stools.

LOW ADRENALINE