

# National Monuments

## What are they?



### 1. What is a National Monument?

National Monuments are designated federal landmarks that have a historic, natural, scientific, archaeological or cultural value. A monument can be a historic home (John Muir's Home), a statue (like the Statue of Liberty) a giant land area (the Grand Canyon) or a geological feature (Devil's Postpile National Monument near Mammoth).

### 2. What is the Antiquities Act of 1906?

[Monuments](#) came to be, as a federal designation, because of the Antiquities Act of 1906, which was signed by Republican President Theodore Roosevelt. The text of the bill [is here](#). It's short and worth a quick read.

It gave congress or the president the ability to designate national landmarks. President Roosevelt immediately began making designations, which were sizable, and setting the precedent for future presidents to make significant contributions to America's protected areas and landmarks. The first monument designated was Devil's Tower in Wyoming. The third monument is the Grand Canyon in Arizona at 800,000 acres.

### 3. Is there controversy?

Yes. Some think the President should not have so much power. So, efforts to unwind the act have been around for a long while. In addition, the question remains – can a newly elected President unwind prior presidential designations? This matter is currently unsettled. That said, a president cannot unwind a monument designated by Congress, via the bill making process. The purpose of the original act was to ensure that when congress failed to act, (usually because of the conflicting special interests and self-interested stakeholders), the president could establish protected places for the best benefit of the American people.

### 4. What's the political process for establishing a monument today?

Technically, a president can designate a monument at any time, but in reality that's rarely how it works. Presidents generally require a lengthy campaign, which includes local, state and national support from citizens, stakeholders, and large non-profit organizations. In addition for the past 60 (or so) years, there must be a bill introduced in congress. The president also requires the submission of an "object and support book," which is the legal and scientific basis for a national monument's creation. Finally, there is usually a public meeting, which is led by a federal legislator or member of the Department of Interior. These aren't legal requirements, but monument campaigns that meet these precedents are more likely to garner attention and to be established.