

Table 12.1 Worldwide Examples of National Parks and Preserves

Location	Park or Preserve
Australia	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
China	Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve
Ecuador	Galapagos National Park
Guatemala	Laguna Del Tigre National Park
India	Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary
New Zealand	Auckland Islands National Nature Reserve
Saudi Arabia	Ar-Rub'-Al-Khali Wildlife Management Area
South Africa	Kruger National Park
Tanzania	Serengeti National Park
United States	Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Defining Carrying Capacity

Just how many visitors are too many? The answer is, It depends, and what it depends on is the carrying capacity of an area. Carrying capacity is a key concept in analysis of the potential environmental impacts of tourism. Different people mean different things when they use the term *carrying capacity*, but essentially there are four elements to the concept.

1. **Physical capacity**—the limit on the actual number of users that can be accommodated in a region. Such things as the number of roads, the size of parking lots, and the amount of water resources influence the physical carrying capacity of an area. Acadia National Park in Maine is frequently marred by bumper-to-bumper traffic during the height of tourist season.
2. **Environmental capacity**—the limit on the number of users that an area can accommodate before visitors perceive a decline in the desirability of the area. This capacity is more subjectively defined and varies depending on season, and so forth. The beaches of St. Tropez in France are uncomfortably crowded in August.
3. **Ecological capacity**—the maximum level of users that an area can accommodate before ecological damage is incurred. For example, the alpine flora of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park spanning the Canadian/U.S. border has suffered from the tens of thousands of hikers swarming the park. Ecological capacity will vary depending on the type of use made of the area. Backpackers will have less impact on a national park than campers who travel through the park on horseback or in four-wheel-drive vehicles. In addition, different types of environments are affected more or less by use. Beaches and other dunelike areas tend to be even more fragile than mountainous areas.²
4. **Social carrying capacity**—is sometimes used to label the amount of people that a society and its land area can bear without substantial damage to its culture.

FYI BRITAIN'S NATIONAL TRUST

The United Kingdom boasts of a private organization whose mission is preservation—The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural

Beauty. Started in 1895, it is the largest private landowner in Great Britain (Scotland also has a National Trust). Along with a huge portfolio of stately

homes and gardens, the Trust owns or controls 600 miles of coastline.