

Why are American national parks filled with plastic?

Level: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. What can we reuse or recycle? What do we usually throw away?

plastic drinking straws

plastic knives and forks

glass bottles

plastic cups

wooden drink stirrers

plastic bags

takeaway food containers

paper bags

plastic flowerpots

We can recycle ...

We can reuse ...

We usually throw away ... after we use them.

2 Key words

a. Write the correct word(s) from the wordpools next to the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

mine

packaging

single-use

utensils

wildlife

1. dig a large hole or tunnel in the ground to get coal, gold, iron, copper, etc.

2. animals, birds, and plants that live in natural conditions _____

3. items, usually made of plastic, that people use once and then throw away.

4. things that are used for cooking or eating with _____

5. boxes, bottles, plastic, etc. that wrap or protect items so that people can sell them

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profits

poll

eyesore

convenience

container

6. something people use for storing or holding things, for example a box, bottle, or bowl

7. something that makes it easier to do something _____
8. money that you make by selling something or from your business _____
9. an occasion when someone asks a lot of people what they feel about something

10. something that is ugly or unpleasant to look at _____

b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. The department store sells many different cooking _____.
2. The new multi-storey car park is ugly: it's an _____.
3. There are beautiful beaches and forests and there is a lot of unusual _____ on the island.
4. Many people like the _____ of living in a city centre.
5. All the unnecessary _____ creates plastic pollution.

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- 1 Americans can experience wild nature in US national parks like the Grand Canyon in Arizona, Yellowstone, and Acadia. In these places, there are things we cannot do. We cannot cut down the forest, mine for minerals or hunt wildlife.
- 2 We know, too, that we should not provide single-use plastics in our national parks.
- 3 Plastic rubbish does not belong in these special places. But companies sell single-use plastic products there.
- 4 We started to use plastic in everyday products in the 1940s. Before then, we lived without plastic bags, utensils, water bottles and sauce packets. Now companies use plastic to create and package nearly everything.
- 5 Think of all the plastic you touch in a day: your toothpaste tube, shampoo bottle, the packaging on your fruit and vegetables, maybe a takeaway coffee cup or food container. We live in a throwaway culture in which convenience, and plastic producers' profits, are more important than anything else.
- 6 Plastic is everywhere – not just in your neighbourhood's streets or along coastlines but also in unexpected places: in Arctic sea ice, in the deepest part of the ocean, in the air of remote mountains and in the rain falling on our national parks. It's even in most of your food, from fruits and vegetables to seafood, meat, honey, beer, salt and more.
- 7 Plastic is made to last forever, but much of it is used for only a moment and then we throw it away. Plastic pollution is one of the planet's top environmental problems.
- 8 According to a recent Oceana poll, 82% of Americans would like the National Park Service to stop selling and giving out single-use plastic at national parks.
- 9 Plastic pollution is an eyesore for visitors but it's also a danger to the wildlife in the parks. Everything from birds and bears to sea turtles and manatees can swallow single-use plastic or it can trap them. Over time, plastic breaks up into smaller pieces that goes into the air we breathe and the water we drink.
- 10 It is time to look again at plastic water bottles and more. Parks should not sell food that needs plastic packaging or utensils, or give visitors disposable plastic bags when they buy something.
- 11 Hundreds of millions of people visit America's 423 national parks every year. Imagine how many plastic bags, bottles, cups, plates, bowls and utensils they use.

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3 Understanding the article

a. Match the sentence halves to summarize the article.

1. There are 423 national ...
 2. National parks are special places where people may not ...
 3. The authors want the National Park Service to stop ...
 4. Plastic waste is an eyesore for ...
 5. 82% of American voters want US national ...
 6. Single-use plastics are ...
 7. Hundreds of millions of people visit America's national ...
- a. everywhere, not only in US national parks.
 - b. selling food that has plastic packaging or utensils.
 - c. parks every year.
 - d. parks to stop selling single-use plastic.
 - e. parks in the US.
 - f. hunt wildlife, cut down forests, or dig big holes in the ground.
 - g. visitors and a danger for wildlife.

4 Key language

a. Put a tick next to the correct statements.

1. Start every new sentence with a capital letter.
2. Days, months, and holidays should start with a capital letter.
3. Write cities, countries, nationalities, and languages with a capital letter.
4. All nouns must start with a capital letter.
5. People's names and company names start with a capital letter.

b. Find and highlight all the words in the article that start with capital letters. What types of words are they?

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Why are American national parks filled with plastic?
- Who should do something to stop the single-use plastic problem in US national parks: shops and cafés, visitors, the park management, or the US government?
- What single-use plastic have you seen in cafés, hotels, planes, and/or supermarkets?

6 In your own words

a. Complete the sentences.

For me, the most surprising fact in the article is ...

I was not surprised that ...

I was sad to read that ...

The most positive thing in the article is ...

b. Read your sentences to the rest of the group.