

**Pennsylvania State Parks Mission**

The primary purpose of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic and historical values of parks should be given first consideration. Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Printed on recycled paper 2010



**FRENCH CREEK STATE PARK**

Once an industrial complex for the fledgling United State of America, today French Creek State Park is an oasis for people and wildlife. Straddling the Schuylkill Highlands, the 7,730-acre park is the largest block of contiguous forest between Washington D.C. and New York City. The forests, lakes, wetlands and fields are a destination for the people of southeast Pennsylvania to hike, fish, camp and bike. Those same habitats are homes to many

animals and plants that are rare in this corner of the commonwealth. French Creek State Park is an Important Bird Area and Important Mammal Area as designated by the National Audubon Society and also has Pine Swamp, a State Park Natural Area.

**Directions**

Entrances are located on PA 345; south of Birdsboro and north of PA 23.

**Reservations**

Make online reservations at: [www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com) or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday, for state park information and reservations.

**WILDLIFE WATCHING**



The heavily forested, scenic hills of French Creek State Park provide habitat for plants and animals in the ever-expanding urban environment of southeastern Pennsylvania. Large oak, poplar, hickory, maple and beech trees cover much of the park, with a sparse understory of mountain laurel, rhododendron and other brushy plants. Wetlands and pristine streams flowing through rich, damp creek valleys offer additional habitats for plants and animals.

This large, diverse environment supports many animals that take advantage of the

high quality of the resources found at French Creek. Observant visitors might see deer, squirrels, raccoons, songbirds and numerous other small animals and birds. The park sustains good populations of resident birds and animals, but also serves as an important stop for migratory species using the woodlands, streams, lakes, and wetlands for food and cover. The park is an Important Bird Area and an Important Mammal Area as designated by the National Audubon Society.

**RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

**Spend the Day**



**Fishing:**

**Scotts Run Lake:** This 22-acre cold-water lake offers excellent trout and other cold-water species fishing. Hatchery-raised trout are stocked pre-season, during the season and in the winter.

**Hopewell Lake:** 68 acres of prime water presents a challenge for anglers. A wide variety of Pennsylvania warm-water species are found at Hopewell Lake, including northern pike, chain pickerel, bass, walleye, muskellunge and many species of panfish. This lake is designated as a big bass lake and specific regulations apply.

**Special Note:** All Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission rules and regulations apply to all boating and fishing on state park waters. A fishing license is required for people age 16 and over.

**Boating: electric motors only**

Boat launching is provided at the 68-acre Hopewell Lake and the 22-acre Scotts Run Lake. Seasonal boat mooring spaces are available from April 1 to November 1 at each lake. Contact the park office for mooring information.

Boat rentals are available daily at the Hopewell Lake pool complex from Memorial Day to Labor Day and on weekends during May and September.

Non-powered boats must display one of the following: boat registration from any state; launching permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks that are available at most state park offices; launch use permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Inflatable watercraft devices used on Pennsylvania State Park waters must meet the following requirements: the craft must be made of a tough material, have more than one buoyancy chamber, and be a minimum of seven feet long.

Air propeller driven boats, sea planes, air mattresses and surf boards are prohibited.



**Picnicking:** Tables are located throughout the park with a picnic area by each lake. Picnicking near Hopewell Lake offers easy access to a peaceful place for a family picnic.

**Stay the Night**

**Camping: hot showers and flush toilets** Camping is available year-round at 200 wooded, modern sites that are within easy access to shower and flush toilet facilities. Over 60 sites have electric hookups and more may be added in the future. Pets are permitted on designated campsites.



**Camping Cottages:** Three cottages sleep five people in single bunks and double/single bunks, and have wooden floors, windows, electric heat, porch, picnic table, fire ring and electric lights and outlets.

**Disc Golf:** The course winds through the woods by Hopewell Lake. This activity attracts visitors of all ages, year-round. Sometimes referred to as Frisbee golf, disc golf is a favorite sport for individuals and families. The challenge of tossing a flying disc through the woods is unmatched by any other sport. Friendly, local enthusiasts are always willing to give advice to first-time golfers. Score cards and maps are available at the course.



**Swimming:** Swimming is offered at the swimming pool by Hopewell Lake from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day, unless otherwise posted. At fee is charged. The pool is near the shore of the lake and provides a beautiful setting for swimmers and sunbathers. Certified lifeguards are on duty when the pool is open. During the swimming season, a food concession is open at the pool complex. Firewood, charcoal, and other picnic supplies are also sold. A picnic pavilion inside the pool complex is available for rent. Reservations must be made at the pool entrance.

All children nine years of age or less must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible person. One such person shall supervise no more than five children. Swimming is prohibited in either lake.



**Orienteering:** The art of map and compass reading has made French Creek State Park a favorite stop for novices and experts. Considered by some as the "Orienteering Capital of North America," French Creek has developed a permanent self-guiding course for use by visitors of all ages.

The objective is to locate markers in the park with the aid of a map, and if you like, a compass. Traveling in groups or alone, running or walking, orienteering is a healthy, fun way to exercise both mind and body. Maps are available at the park office.

**Yurts:** Two round Mongolian-style tents are on a wooden deck and sleep four people in two bunk beds. Yurts have a cooking stove, refrigerator, countertop, table, chairs, electric heat and outlets, fire ring and picnic table.

**Cabins:** Ten furnished, modern cabins, nestled among the hardwoods, offer a pleasant alternative to state park camping. Each cabin features sleeping for six, electric heat, kitchen, private bath with shower, and wall-to-wall carpeting. Bring your own dishes, cookware and bedding. Cabins can be reserved year-round.

**Organized Group Tenting:** Qualified organized groups can camp in the primitive group tenting area. One site holds 60 people and 16 other sites each hold 30 people. A portion of this area is open year-round. Reservations are required.

**Hunting and Firearms:** The combination of habitats at French Creek offers a variety of hunting opportunities. Over 6,000 acres of the park are open to hunting, trapping and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are deer, turkey, rabbit, pheasant and squirrel.

Hunting woodchucks, also known as groundhogs, is prohibited. Dog training is only permitted from the day following Labor Day to March 31 in designated hunting areas. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations apply. Contact the park office for ADA accessible hunting information.

**Use extreme caution** with firearms at all times. Other visitors use the park during hunting seasons. Firearms and archery equipment used for hunting may be uncased and ready for use only in authorized hunting areas during hunting seasons. In areas not open to hunting or during non-hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment shall be kept in the owner's car, trailer or leased campsite. The only exception is that law enforcement officers and individuals with a valid *Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms* may carry said firearm concealed on their person while they are within the park.

Approximately three miles southeast of the park is State Game Land 43, administered by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. These game lands consist of more than 1,800 acres of land and add considerably to the public land available to the hunters of the area. A public firing range is located at the end of Laurel Road. Hunting is prohibited in Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site.

**Mountain Biking:** Mountain bike riders enjoy the over 20 miles of trails that climb hills, cross streams and pass through forests. The trails explore most parts of the park and are rated difficult riding. Mountain bikes are prohibited south of Park Road and in Hopewell Furnace NHS.



**Horseback Riding:** Horse-shoe Trail winds through the park and into adjacent lands. Horses are not permitted on other park trails.

**Hiking:** see reverse side

**Organized Group Camps:** Group camps are open to organized youth and adult groups from mid-April to mid-October. These facilities include dining halls, central washhouses, camper cabins and staff quarters. Camp One holds 135 people. Camp Two holds 68 people. Applications are accepted after January and reservations awarded after March 1.



**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION**

The park naturalist leads walks and hikes and gives evening talks and demonstrations, during the spring, summer and fall seasons. Check the park activity schedule, bulletin boards, or at the park office for program times and locations. Organized groups such as scouts and schools may schedule activities by calling the park office.



**HISTORY**

The forest covering the park has changed since Hopewell Furnace began operation, producing iron for a young America from 1771 to 1883. It required tremendous amounts of charcoal to fuel the large blast furnace. Woodcutters chopped wood from the forest and colliers burned it in "hearths" throughout the wooded hills surrounding the furnace to produce charcoal. To sustain the furnace operations, the entire area now contained in French Creek State Park was timbered repeatedly to make charcoal. The original forest of predominately American chestnut was cleared and eventually mixed

oak forests developed after the furnace closed in 1883. It is hard to imagine that the thickly wooded hillsides enjoyed by today's visitors were once barren and treeless. The forest of French Creek State Park played a vital role in America's industrial infancy.

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, the Federal government purchased much of the land used for charcoal production as part of a national project to reclaim marginal lands. This project provided jobs and improved local economies by developing recreation sites called recreation demonstration areas.



**NEARBY SITE OF INTEREST**

**Hopewell Furnace NHS**

Located adjacent to the park, the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site features a cold-blast furnace restored to its 1830s appearance. Hopewell Furnace serves as an example of an early American iron-making community. Ore for the furnace was obtained from the local area. The iron produced was used to make many items including arms used by American patriots during the Revolutionary War period. The air needed to keep the furnace burning was provided by bellows powered by a huge water wheel that gathered its strength from the waters of French Creek.

During summer months, costumed historical interpreters demonstrate, describe and tell the story of Hopewell's iron-making years (1771-1883). Hopewell Furnace is open to the public daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. throughout the year, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. There is an admission fee. For more information contact: Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, 2 Mark Bird Lane, Elverson, PA 19520, 610-582-8773



Two Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps were built at French Creek and operated until the early 1940s. The camps built two dams, two group camps, several tent camping areas, beaches, roads, picnic areas, and started the restoration process for the historic core of Hopewell Furnace. In 1946, most of the property and recreation facilities were transferred to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, creating French Creek State Park. The historic core of the furnace operations and some of the surrounding fields and woodlands were retained and are administered by the National Park Service as Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

**Access for People with Disabilities**

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are accessible. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

**In an Emergency**

Contact a park employee or dial 911. For directions to the nearest hospital, look on bulletin boards or at the park office.  
**Nearest Hospital**  
The Reading Hospital and Medical Center  
6th Avenue and Spruce Street  
West Reading, PA 19611  
610-988-8000



**Information and Reservations**

**For More Information Contact**  
French Creek State Park  
843 Park Road  
Elverson, PA 19520-9523  
Telephone 610-582-9680  
e-mail: [frenchcreeksp@state.pa.us](mailto:frenchcreeksp@state.pa.us)  
An Equal Opportunity Employer  
[www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com)

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**Protect and Preserve our Parks**

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family are your responsibility.

- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be controlled and attended at all times and on a leash, caged or crated. Pets are prohibited in swimming areas.

- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.

**Nearby Attractions**

For information on nearby attractions, contact: Greater Reading Convention and Visitors Bureau, 800-443-6610. [www.readingberkspa.com](http://www.readingberkspa.com)



## HIKING

More than 35 miles of well-marked trails cover a large portion of the park's 7,730 acres.

Hikers at French Creek have a wide variety of opportunities for quiet reflection, nature study and physical challenge. Trailhead parking is located in many convenient areas.

**PLEASE STAY ON THE BLAZED TRAILS.**

- Double blazes indicate a change of direction in the trail.
- Camping is only permitted at French Creek's established campgrounds.

• Horses are permitted on the Horse-shoe Trail, and on the right berm of public roads (except in overnight areas).

- Motorized vehicles are prohibited on any park trails.

- Mountain bikes are permitted on roads and approved trails only. All trails south of Park Road are closed to mountain bikes.

**Boone Trail:** ***6 miles, blue blaze, more difficult hiking***

This loop trail connects all major attractions of French Creek, making it an excellent route to see the park. **Start your trip at Hopewell Lake**

Boat Launch parking lot, Group Tenting Areas

13-18, campground contact station, or Hopewell Furnace Visitor Center (using connector trails).

Several portions are steep and rocky, so wear sturdy shoes. It is closed to mountain bikes around Hopewell Lake.

**Buzzards Trail:** ***3 miles, yellow blaze with red stripe, more difficult hiking***

Branching off of Raccoon and Mill Creek trails,

this trail passes through the Baptism Creek drainage area in the eastern portion of the park.

**Horse-shoe Trail:** ***8 miles, yellow blaze, more difficult hiking***

For hikers and horseback riders, this trail touches highlights of the park including Hopewell Lake and Scotts Run Lake. Horse-

shoe Trail runs 130 miles from Valley Forge to the Appalachian Trail near Harrisburg. This is

the only equestrian trail in the park.

**Kalmia Trail:** ***1 mile, purple blaze, more difficult hiking***

This mountainside trail provides a pleasant experience through mature forests with scattered mountain laurel. Kalmia is the Latin word for laurel. Mountain biking is prohibited.

**Lenape Trail:** ***5.5 miles, green blaze, more difficult hiking***

Begin this hike from the campground contact station, Scotts Run Lake, Hopewell Furnace

Visitor Center, or PA 345/Shed Road. Follow the

solid green blazes to stay on the Lenape Trail or venture off onto one of the many blazed trails that intersect this enjoyable trail.

**Mill Creek Trail:** ***6 miles, white blaze with a red stripe, most difficult hiking***

Once leaving the trailhead at Shed Road and PA 345, you will not cross another road on this

backcountry-type loop trail. Be sure to carry water and wear proper clothing and footwear.

Consider using the Raccoon and Lenape trails to add some variety for your return trip.

**Raccoon Trail:** ***1.7 miles, red blaze, more difficult hiking***

This trail serves as the most direct route into

and out of the eastern portion of French Creek State Park. It starts 0.25 mile east of Hopewell

Furnace's main gate and ends at Mill Creek.

**Six Penny Trail:** ***3 miles, orange blaze, more difficult hiking***

Use the connector trail (orange blazes with a green stripe) from the campground contact

station to get to this loop trail. Most of this trail is closed to mountain bikes.

**Turtle Trail:** ***3.6 miles, white blaze, more difficult hiking***

Circleing through the western portion of French Creek, this trail offers a variety of easy hiking

mixed with several challenging sections. Park at the lot along Firetower Road and follow the

white blazes in either direction.