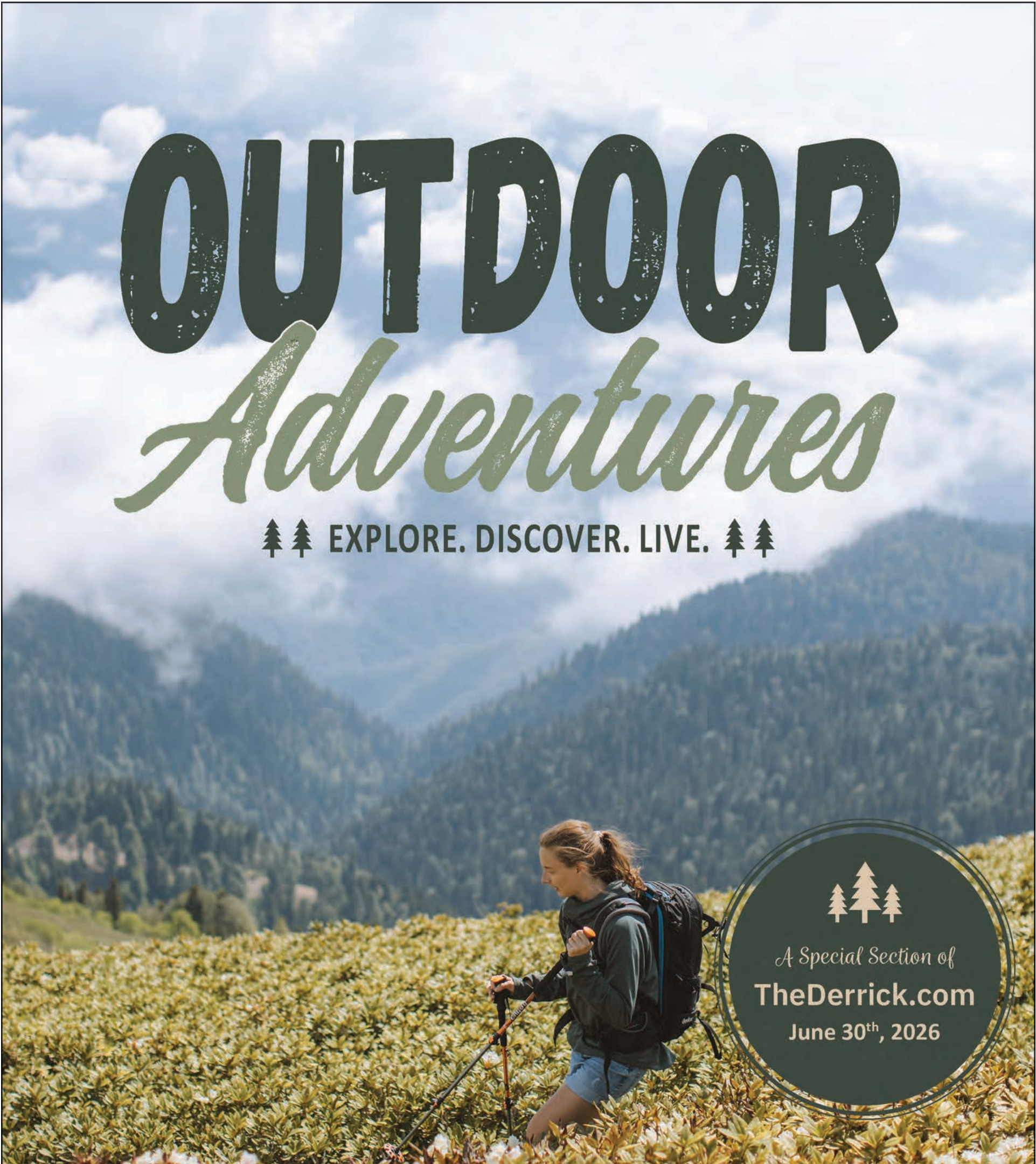


# OUTDOOR *Adventures*

🌲🌲 EXPLORE. DISCOVER. LIVE. 🌲🌲



A Special Section of  
**TheDerrick.com**  
June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026





## Outdoor recreation helps define life in the Oil Region

From winding forest trails to scenic waterways, the region's natural resources continue to draw visitors while enriching the lives of local residents.

Whether it's an early morning walk through a quiet forest, an afternoon paddle along the Allegheny River or a weekend spent exploring miles of hiking trails, outdoor recreation has become an important part of life throughout the Oil Region and surrounding communities.

For generations, residents of Venango and Clarion counties have enjoyed the area's abundant natural resources. Today, those same landscapes are attracting a growing number of visitors looking to experience northwestern Pennsylvania's forests, rivers, rail trails and state parks.

The region offers an impressive variety of outdoor experiences within a

relatively short drive. Oil Creek State Park provides miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails that wind through woodlands rich with both natural beauty and the history of Pennsylvania's first oil boom. The Allegheny River and Oil Creek offer opportunities for kayaking, canoeing and fishing, while the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail continues to connect communities through a network of scenic rail trails popular with cyclists and walkers.

Just to the east, Cook Forest State Park remains one of Pennsylvania's most recognizable outdoor destinations. Known for its towering old-growth forest, the Clarion River and miles of hiking trails, the park welcomes visitors throughout the year for camping, wildlife viewing, photography and outdoor

education. Combined with nearby attractions throughout Clarion County, the area offers countless opportunities for families and outdoor enthusiasts to explore close to home.

Outdoor recreation also contributes to the local economy. Visitors who come to hike, bike, paddle or camp often spend time shopping in downtown business districts, dining at local restaurants and staying in nearby lodging. Seasonal events, organized trail rides, paddling excursions and community festivals further encourage travelers to discover the region while supporting local businesses.

The benefits extend well beyond tourism. Public parks, trails and waterways provide residents with convenient places to exercise, relax and connect with nature. Families gather for picnics, anglers cast a line from public river access points and hikers of all experience levels find trails suited to their abilities. Throughout the year, these public spaces serve as gathering places where neighbors can enjoy the outdoors together.

Local organizations, volunteers and state agencies continue to play an important role in maintaining and improving these outdoor destinations. Trail maintenance projects, habitat restoration efforts and conservation initiatives help preserve the forests, rivers and wildlife that make the region unique while ensuring future generations can enjoy them as well.

As interest in outdoor recreation continues to grow, the Oil Region remains well positioned as a destination where history and nature exist side by side. From peaceful river valleys and shaded hiking trails to scenic overlooks and vibrant downtown communities, the region offers experiences that encourage both residents and visitors to slow down, explore and appreciate the natural beauty found in their own backyard.

Whether the goal is an afternoon hike, a family camping trip or simply discovering a new scenic overlook, adventure often begins much closer to home than many people realize.

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# Following the trails: Paths to adventure across

From quiet woodland walks to challenging backcountry hikes, the region's trail system offers something for every outdoor enthusiast.

One of the greatest advantages of living in northwestern Pennsylvania is that outdoor adventure is never far away. Within minutes, residents and visitors can find themselves walking beneath towering hardwoods, crossing historic railroad bridges or following scenic streams through some of the region's most beautiful landscapes.

Trails throughout Venango and Clarion counties vary widely in both length and difficulty, making it easy for beginners, families and experienced hikers alike to find an outing that matches their interests.

Among the area's best-known destinations is Oil Creek State Park, where more than 50 miles of trails wind through forests, hillsides and historic oil country. The park's extensive trail network offers everything from short nature walks to the 36-mile Gerard Hiking Trail, a loop that attracts backpackers seeking a multi-day adventure. Along the way, hikers pass waterfalls, scenic overlooks, quiet streams and reminders of Pennsylvania's early oil industry.

Cyclists and walkers continue to enjoy the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, a developing trail system connecting communities across western Pennsylvania. Several completed sections throughout the region provide smooth, relatively flat routes ideal for families, recreational cyclists and runners. Built largely along former railroad corridors, the trail offers unique views of rivers, forests and small-town communities.



Those looking for shorter hikes often visit Samuel Justus Recreational Trail near Franklin. The paved trail follows the Allegheny River and offers a peaceful setting for walking, jogging and bicycling while providing easy access for visitors of all ages.

Just beyond Venango County, Cook Forest State Park offers another exceptional hiking experience. The park's famous Forest Cathedral Trail leads

visitors through one of the last remaining stands of old-growth eastern white pine and hemlock in the northeastern United States. Nearby overlooks provide sweeping views of the Clarion River Valley, especially during autumn when the surrounding hillsides are filled with vibrant color.

No matter which trail hikers choose, preparation remains an important part of every outing. Checking weather conditions, carrying adequate water, wearing appropriate footwear and remaining on marked trails help ensure a safe and enjoyable experience. Many trailheads also provide maps, difficulty ratings and information about local wildlife, allowing

visitors to plan according to their experience level.

Perhaps the greatest reward of exploring the region's trail system is the opportunity to slow down. Whether it's spotting a great blue heron along a quiet stream, hearing spring peepers after sunset or simply enjoying the shade of a mature forest, each trail offers its own unique perspective on the natural beauty that has long defined the Oil Region.

With hundreds of miles of trails stretching across public lands, state parks and local communities, there has never been a better time to lace up a pair of hiking boots and discover a new favorite path.

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## Five places every visitor should see in Cook Forest

While Cook Forest State Park is known for its towering old-growth trees and scenic hiking trails, the park is also home to a variety of destinations that showcase its natural beauty and rich outdoor heritage. Whether it's your first visit or your fiftieth, these locations offer memorable experiences for visitors of all ages.

### Forest Cathedral

Take an easy walk beneath centuries-old eastern white pines and hemlocks in one of Pennsylvania's last remaining old-growth forests.

### Seneca Point Overlook

One of the park's most photographed locations, offering expansive views of the Clarion River Valley—especially spectacular during autumn.

### Clarion River

Ideal for canoeing, kayaking, tubing and fishing, the river provides a relaxing way to experience the park from the water.

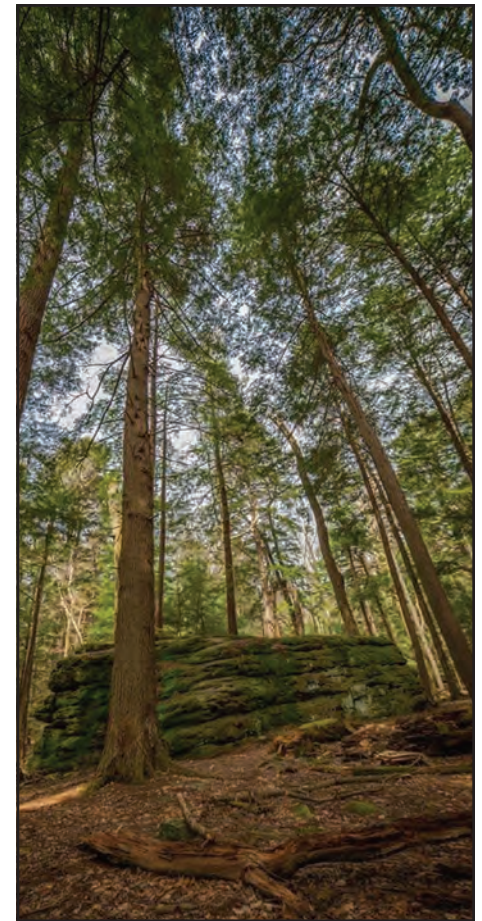
### Fire Tower Road

A favorite destination for scenic views and photography, with elevated overlooks showcasing the surrounding forest.

### Log Cabin Environmental Learning Center

Learn about the park's ecology, wildlife and conservation efforts through exhibits and seasonal educational programs.

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# Paddle the Allegheny with AVC!

Join us for the 2026 Allegheny River Sojourn.  
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Enjoy scenic views, spot wildlife, learn about conservation and connect with fellow paddlers. After the float, relax and enjoy lunch and great conversation!

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## Know before you go

- Wear sturdy hiking shoes.
- Carry water and snacks.
- Cell service may be limited in some areas.
- Stay on marked trails.
- Check weather conditions before heading out.
- Respect wildlife and practice Leave No Trace principles.




## Allegheny River Music & Arts Festival

**September 11, 12 & 13**

Scan the QR Code or go to [www.oilcitymainstreet.org](http://www.oilcitymainstreet.org) go to events and see the full line up of events • Register for Pathways 1/2 Marathon • Register for the Freidhaber's Family Friendly Bicycle Poker Run • Register to be an arts/craft/food/beverage vendor

Check Main Street facebook page for weekly updates.






# Scenic stops worth adding to your next adventure

Rivers, forests and small-town charm continue to make Clarion County a favorite destination for outdoor recreation throughout every season.

Bordered by the Allegheny National Forest to the north and home to portions of Cook Forest State Park, Clarion County offers a wide variety of outdoor experiences within a relatively small area. Whether visitors prefer hiking, biking, paddling, fishing or simply enjoying a peaceful afternoon surrounded by nature, opportunities can be found in nearly every corner of the county.

While Clarion County is known for its forests and waterways, several scenic locations offer memorable stops that can easily be incorporated into a day trip or weekend getaway.

**Brady's Bend Overlook** provides panoramic views of the Allegheny River as it winds through one of Pennsylvania's most dramatic river bends. The overlook is especially popular during autumn when the surrounding hillsides are covered in vibrant fall color, but the sweeping vista is impressive year-round.

**The Clarion River** itself is a destination for more than paddlers. Numerous access points allow visitors to fish, picnic or simply relax along the water while enjoying the peaceful surroundings. Wildlife such as great blue herons,

belted kingfishers and white-tailed deer are commonly seen throughout the river corridor.

For those interested in history as well as nature, the county's covered bridges, historic downtown districts and nearby state parks provide opportunities to combine outdoor recreation with local heritage. Communities like Clarion, New Bethlehem and Rimersburg offer locally owned restaurants, specialty shops and seasonal events that encourage visitors to linger after spending time outdoors.

Photographers will find no shortage of subjects, from mist rising off the Clarion River on cool mornings to colorful wildflowers in spring and spectacular foliage each fall. Even a short drive through the county often reveals scenic farmland, forested ridges and quiet country roads that capture the beauty of rural Pennsylvania.

Whether planning a weekend adventure or simply looking for a scenic afternoon drive, Clarion County offers countless opportunities to experience the outdoors while discovering the communities that make the region unique.

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## Areas to explore in Clarion Co.

**Cook Forest State Park** – Ancient old-growth forest and hiking trails.

**Clarion River** – Kayaking, canoeing, fishing and tubing.

**Brady's Bend Overlook** – Panoramic views of the Allegheny River.

**Clarion County Parks** – Picnic areas, walking trails and family recreation.

**Scenic Country Roads** – Ideal for leisurely drives, especially during fall foliage season.

# 13 things to do before hitting the trails

While the weather is warm and the outdoors pleasant, hiking is an enjoyable way to exercise and embrace the beauty of nature in Pennsylvania. Doing your research and planning is crucial for a successful hiking experience and avoiding the risks. Here are 13 hiking tips that everyone should know.

**1. Know your abilities.** The National Park Service says it is important to choose the appropriate hike for your body and your physical limitations. “If you have asthma, diabetes, a heart condition, knee or back problems, or any other health or medical issue, limit both your exertion and your exposure to the heat. The altitude, strenuous climbing, dehydration, and intense inner canyon heat will combine to make any medical problem worse.”

**2. Know your trail.** Research and study the map of the trail you plan on hiking before you start. That way, you will be familiar with what you are getting into.

**3. Know what to pack.** Depending on the location and duration of the hike, pack everything you might need while keeping your bag light. Check out the American Hiking Society’s printer-friendly guide to packing for more information!



**4. Check the weather.** Before going on your hike it’s important to know if a storm is likely. Take supplies for any

type of weather you might encounter.

**5. Always hike with a buddy.** And let someone else know where and when you are going.

**6. Plan your hike so that you will not be in the dark.** Starting early can prevent you from ending up in the woods at night.

**7. Make sure every hiker has a map and a compass.** (And knows how to use them, the National Park Service says.)

**8. Be aware of dangerous plants.** Know what not to touch!

**9. It’s OK to take breaks.** Half of the hiking experience is enjoying the nature

surrounding you. If you are feeling short of breath or tired, take a break.

**10. If you can talk while you are walking,** you are hiking at a good pace.

**11. Eat often on longer hikes,** and don’t force fluids. The National Park Service says you should eat a healthy breakfast and take snacks and water to fuel your body and keep it cool if you are hiking all day.

**12. Don’t forget a first-aid kit!**

**13. Dress properly.** The American Hiking Society has recommendations for types of clothing to wear on your hike.

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# Following the leave no trace guidelines

By taking the time to practice the following responsible outdoor ethics we can ensure that Pennsylvania state parks and forests remain premier outdoor recreation destinations for generations to come.

## Plan ahead and prepare

Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.

Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.

Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.

Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.

Repackage food to minimize waste.

Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

## Travel and camp on durable surfaces

Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.

Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.

Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

### In popular areas:

Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.

Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.

Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

### In pristine areas:

Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.

**The 7 Principles of Leave No Trace**

- Plan Ahead**
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces**
- Dispose of Waste Properly**
- Leave What You Find**
- Minimize Campfire Impacts**
- Respect Wildlife**
- Be Considerate Of Other Visitors**

Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

## Dispose of waste properly

Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.

Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug six to eight inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.

Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.

To wash yourself or your dishes, carry

water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

## Leave what you find

**Preserve the past:** examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.

Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.

Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.

Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

## Minimize campfire impacts

Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.

Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.

Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.

Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

## Respect wildlife

Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.

Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.

Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.

Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.

Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

## Be considerate of other visitors

Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.

Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.

Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.

Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.

Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

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# Life on the water: Rivers that shaped a region

For generations, the rivers of northwestern Pennsylvania have shaped the communities that grew along their banks. Once used to transport timber, oil and other natural resources, today's waterways have taken on a new role as destinations for recreation, relaxation and outdoor adventure.

Whether paddling the Allegheny River, floating down the Clarion River or casting a fishing line into Oil Creek, residents and visitors alike have countless opportunities to experience the region from a different perspective.

The Allegheny River remains one of the area's signature outdoor attractions. Flowing through Venango County, the river offers miles of scenic paddling suitable for beginners and experienced kayakers alike. Quiet stretches allow paddlers to observe wildlife, while gentle currents provide an enjoyable experience for families looking to spend a summer afternoon on the water.

Oil Creek, known worldwide for its connection to the birth of the petroleum industry, also offers opportunities for canoeing and kayaking during appropriate water conditions. Towering trees, steep hillsides and historic sites line portions of the creek, creating a peaceful setting that blends natural beauty with Pennsylvania history.

Just east of the Oil Region, the Clarion River winds through Cook Forest State Park and surrounding communities. Designated as part of Pennsylvania's Scenic Rivers System, the Clarion has become a favorite destination for canoeing, kayaking and tubing. During the summer months, outfitters help visitors plan river trips ranging from a few hours to full-day adventures.

Fishing remains another popular way to enjoy the region's waterways. Anglers pursue smallmouth bass, trout, walleye, muskellunge and panfish throughout the Allegheny River, Clarion River and numerous streams and lakes. Early mornings often reward fishermen with calm water, active fish and spectacular sunrises reflected across the river's surface.



Waterways also provide excellent opportunities for wildlife observation. Great blue herons stalk the shoreline, bald eagles soar overhead, painted turtles bask on fallen logs and river otters occasionally make appearances along quieter stretches of water. For photographers and birdwatchers, rivers often provide some of the region's best opportunities to observe wildlife in its natural habitat.

As outdoor recreation continues to grow, local communities have expanded public river access through

boat launches, fishing areas and riverside parks. These improvements make it easier than ever for families to spend time outdoors while supporting local outfitters, restaurants and businesses.

Whether exploring by kayak, canoe, fishing boat or simply enjoying the view from a riverside trail, the waterways of northwestern Pennsylvania remain an essential part of the region's outdoor heritage. Every bend in the river offers a reminder that some of the area's greatest adventures begin on the water.



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# Hidden gems offer new ways to explore the outdoors

Some of the best outdoor experiences aren't always the ones found on the front page of a travel guide. Across Venango, Clarion and neighboring

counties, quiet trails, scenic overlooks, waterfalls and historic landmarks reward visitors who venture a little farther from the familiar.

These destinations may not attract the same crowds as larger state parks, but they often provide memorable views, peaceful surroundings and opportunities to experience the region at a slower pace.

One of the area's most photographed natural attractions is **Freedom Falls**, tucked into the village of Freedom in Rockland Township. The waterfall cascades over layered sandstone before continuing downstream through a quiet wooded valley. A short walk from the parking area leads visitors to the falls, making it a popular stop for photographers and families looking for an easy outdoor excursion. Nearby, the remains of the historic **Rockland Furnace** serve as a reminder of the region's iron-making history and offer another point of interest for visitors exploring the area. If you don't mind the hike, keep heading downstream. Or, get back in the car and take the dirt road to the end and make the left into the trailhead just outside of the **Rockland Tunnel**.

Nearby the falls, furnace and tunnel is the **Kennerdell Overlook**, located high above the Allegheny River. The overlook offers sweeping views of the Allegheny River Valley as it winds through steep, forested hills. On clear days, visitors can take in miles of uninterrupted scenery, making it a favorite destination for photographers, sightseers and anyone looking to appreciate the region's rugged landscape. The overlook is accessible by vehicle, making it one of the easiest ways to experience one of the Oil Region's most spectacular panoramic views.

A short drive away, the **Sandy Creek Trail** provides a peaceful route through

forests, wetlands and open fields. Built along a former railroad corridor, the trail welcomes walkers, cyclists and runners while offering frequent opportunities to observe birds and other wildlife. The relatively level terrain makes it accessible for visitors of many ages and abilities.

For those willing to travel a little farther north, **Rimrock Overlook** in the Allegheny National Forest rewards visitors with sweeping views across miles of forested hills. Massive sandstone boulders frame the overlook, creating one of the region's most recognizable landscapes. The nearby hiking trails and picnic areas make it easy to spend an afternoon exploring the surrounding forest.

Scenic drives also reveal countless hidden treasures. Covered bridges, quiet country roads, rolling farmland and historic small towns offer unexpected opportunities to stop, stretch your legs and discover something new. During autumn, many of these backroads become favorite routes for leaf-peepers hoping to experience Pennsylvania's spectacular fall colors.

Part of the appeal of these hidden gems is the sense of discovery they provide. Whether it's hearing the sound of rushing water before seeing a waterfall or finding an overlook at the end of a winding road, these places remind visitors that adventure doesn't always require traveling far from home.

As interest in outdoor recreation continues to grow, many of these destinations remain peaceful alternatives to more heavily visited parks. With a little curiosity and a willingness to explore, residents and visitors alike can uncover some of northwestern Pennsylvania's most rewarding outdoor experiences.

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our area parks are a community resource everyone can enjoy. **Here a few ideas to make the most of them:**

- Pack a picnic.
- Read a book.
- Play a lawn game.
- Fly a kite.
- Make some bubbles.
- Create a scavenger hunt for the kids.
- Bring a board game or deck of cards.
- Take a sketch pad and do some drawing.
- Practice birdwatching or photography.
- Enjoy yoga or meditation.



## Protect our parks!

*Please remember to:*

- > Leash your pets.
- > Pick up your trash and pet waste.
- > Avoid approaching or feeding wildlife.
- > Be mindful of others with music and noise.
- > Stay on marked walking trails to protect vegetation.

*Thank you for doing your part to keep our local parks safe and beautiful for everyone to enjoy.*

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