

Prince William

FOREST PARK
VIRGINIA

Prince William Forest Park is a quiet, unhurried place for observing nature, for camping and watching deer at twilight, for picnicking, fishing and bike-riding—a place to find tumbling waters and shaded trails to remote hillsides, to strengthen little-used leg muscles, and to relax away from the city.

On the surface, this forest community of wild plants and slender Virginia pine trees shows little evidence of its recent past. But, a closer look reveals a remarkable story. It tells how the land became barren from over-use and how nature reclaimed the stripped and depleted fields abandoned by man. Take your time and discover this story of man and the land while enjoying the recreational facilities.



A beaver pond is a perfect place for a patient observer to catch glimpses of the park's year-round residents. The box turtle, a land reptile, may be seen as it feeds upon berries, insects, earthworms, and mushrooms. Don't mistake the semi-aquatic northern water snake for the poisonous water moccasin, which doesn't live this far north. With luck you'll see beavers at work creating new wildlife habitats by building dams that flood stream valleys.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

A long history of exploitation with little regard for conservation makes Prince William Forest Park especially suited for learning about the delicate balance in our natural environment. The consequences of drastic human demands upon the soil can still be seen here as a new forest takes time to mature.

The visitor who wants to piece together this story of change will find additional printed information at park headquarters and the Turkey Run Ridge Nature Center. Here park rangers maintain self-guiding nature trails and exhibits. They also conduct trips and give illustrated talks on natural history. The center is open daily during summer; weekends during winter.

An Environmental Study Area (ESA) on a long-abandoned farm site in the park is reserved for field trips by school classes and organized groups. Teaching materials adapted to the ESA can be obtained in advance by calling park headquarters.

HELP PROTECT THIS PARK AND YOURSELF

Man's present intrusion on this landscape is far less upsetting than it once was. You can help protect the park further by remembering to leave plants and animals undisturbed. You, and those who come after you, will enjoy the park more if everyone leaves camping and picnic areas the way they would like to find them. Please observe these regulations and tips for a safe, comfortable stay. Remember, safety is no accident.

Accidents must be reported as soon as possible to a park ranger or to park headquarters.

Motor vehicles should not be driven or parked on grassy areas or road shoulders. Please observe posted speed limits.

Fires are permitted only at established picnic areas and campgrounds, and then only in fireplaces provided. Extinguish fires completely before leaving, even for a temporary absence.

Hunting is prohibited. Firearms, fireworks, knives with blades more than 7.6 centimeters (3 inches) long, archery equipment, and slingshots are not allowed in the park unless adequately cased, broken down, or otherwise packed to prevent their use.

Natural features are strictly protected. The destruction, injury, defacement, removal, or disturbance of any natural feature, such as trees, wildflowers, rocks, or wildlife, is prohibited.

Pets must be kept on a leash.

Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

Lost and found items should be reported to park headquarters.

Climbing trees and park structures is considered dangerous and is not permitted.

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WE'RE JOINING THE METRIC WORLD

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.

ADMINISTRATION

Prince William Forest Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For additional information, write to Prince William Forest Park, Box 208, Triangle, VA 22172. Telephone (703) 221-7181.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, park and recreation areas, and for the wise use of all those resources. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



The delicate flowers of the azalea are among the showiest of the park's wild shrubs.



Christmas fern remains green for the holidays and throughout the winter.

A FOREST RETURNS

Beginning with the arrival of the area's first settlers in the late 17th century, forests were cut and the land was plowed. Lumber and fur, tobacco and grain—products of virgin forests and fertile soils—were carried to distant countries from the then thriving port of Dumfries at the mouth of Quantico Creek. In this era of plenty, few conservation practices were observed, and the soil soon lost its fertility. Light and erodible, it was washed away by rains and carried downstream where it silted up the Dumfries harbor. Thus, abuse of the land caused the port and the local area to decline. Most of the farming had stopped by the start of the 20th century. Soon the unproductive soil began to revert to forest, and the area comprising the park became a patchwork of abandoned farms and of woodlands in various stages of natural succession. These have since gradually given way to a beautiful forest where man comes and goes as a visitor.

The park, named for the Virginia county in which it lies, now harbors 89 known species of trees and shrubs. It includes pure stands of Virginia pine, a large variety of hardwoods, and a green understory of mountain laurel, holly, dogwood, redbud, and other shrubs and small trees. Among the resident animals are white-tailed deer, red and gray foxes, beaver, raccoon, opossum, flying squirrel, gray squirrel, skunk, and woodchuck; wild turkey, ruffed grouse, red-tailed hawk, and numerous species of songbirds; several kinds of amphibians and warm-water fish; and numerous reptiles, including the copperhead snake.

Erosion by the North and South Branches of Quantico Creek has removed the Coastal Plain sand, gravel, and clay, and exposed the ancient granite, schist, and quartzite of the Piedmont. Before 1920, pyrite, containing iron and sulfur, was mined near the confluence of the two creek branches.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Whether you plan a daytime or overnight outing, you can enjoy many activities here.

Hiking. Approximately 56 kilometers (35 miles) of trails and fire roads reach into the wilder regions of the park. Parking areas along park roads provide convenient starting points for many hikes. Each major trail is marked at intervals with a number; those numbers appear on the map. Self-guiding nature trails begin and end at each picnic area and campground. Trails are well maintained, but hikers should be alert for such obstructions as fallen limbs. Please do not hike access trails into cabin camps; admittance is by permit only.

Biking. Bicycle riding is permitted on all roads and fire roads in the park. Motorists and bicyclists have equal rights and equal responsibilities for safety. Remember, steep hills can be dangerous.

Fishing. Bass, bluegill, perch, and catfish are native here; North and South Branches of Quantico Creek are stocked yearly with trout. Virginia fishing regulations apply in the park; a State license to fish any of the park streams and lakes is required. Ask a ranger for further information.

Picnicking. Pine Grove and Telegraph Road Picnic Grounds, near the main entrance, are open all year. Each area has tables, fireplaces, trash receptacles, water, comfort stations, playfields, and a shelter for use on a first-come, first-served basis. Carter's Day Camp is for use by groups on a reservation basis.

Tent camping for family use. Oak Ridge Campground, for use on a first-come, first-served basis, has 120 family sites with a paved parking slip for each one. Also provided are water, comfort stations, tables, fireplaces, and trash receptacles.

Trailer camping. Travel Trailer Village, operated by a concessioner, has 89 sites divided into three types of service—hookups for electricity, water, and sewage; hookups for electricity and water; and hookups for electricity only. Showers and coin-operated laundry facilities are also provided.

Primitive camping. Chopawamsic is the park's first back-pack camping area. Campsites are from .8 to 2.4 kilometers (½ to 1½ miles) from the trail-head. The only facilities are pit toilets and fireplaces. The camper carries everything, including water, in and out. Please take your trash with you and dump it in containers outside the camping area. Use-permits must be obtained at park headquarters. Litter bags can be obtained there, too.

Tent camping for organized groups. Turkey Run Ridge Campground has water, comfort stations, tables, fireplaces, and trash receptacles for use by organized groups. Reservations must be made.

Cabin camps for groups. Five cabin camps are reserved for youth groups from mid-June through August. Other organized groups of 50 or more can make reservations for April to June, or September 1 through October 31. Spring reservations for all groups are due by mid-February; autumn reservations by mid-June. Each camp has cabins, a central kitchen-dining hall, a washhouse, staff quarters, a nature lodge, and an administration building. Groups must provide their own bedding and cooking utensils.

PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK

