

Official Map and Guide



Going to a campfire talk, playing on wide open fields, seeing wildflowers, birds' nests, raccoons, and camping out are just a few of the things to do in Greenbelt Park.

An Urban Oasis

Greenbelt Park is a retreat from the pressures of city life and a refuge for native plants and animals just 12 miles from downtown Washington and 23 miles from Baltimore. Its 1,100 acres of woodland contain facilities for camping, hiking, biking, picnicking, and other outdoor recreation. Greenbelt Park is an oasis of greenspace within an urban area.

Long before colonial settlers appeared here, trees and flowers covered these rolling hills and wildlife roamed the woodlands. Algonquin Indians hunted this land in competition with other, smaller tribes. A balance existed between the land and its plants, animals, and native peoples.

Then the colonists arrived. Trees fell before the broadax. Forests gave way to farmland. Wildlife retreated with the frontier. For the next 150 years people cleared the land, plowed the fields, and planted tobacco, corn, and other crops. The rich fertile soil returned high yields. But the people did not give back as much as they took from the soil. The land wore out, producing less each season, and farming ceased. The land was left bare and defenseless. Erosion caused many scars before nature could slow the process with new growth.

Since the early 1900s the land has been recovering. Today the mixed pine and deciduous forest testifies to the land's ability to recover. Unless an outside force interferes with the process, the hardwood forest will again cover this land in a few decades. The pines will have dwindled and disappeared—an important middle step toward an eastern climax forest.

The land of Greenbelt Park was acquired in 1950 by the National Park Service along with the land for the establishment of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. The parkway was created to provide an uninterrupted and scenic route for passenger vehicles between the two cities. In the 1930s this land was intended to have been a part of Greenbelt, Md., one of many "model towns" to be developed within a "belt of green" surrounding Washington, D.C. Greenbelt Park is today surrounded by development and remains a restive greenspace.

Once again raccoon, squirrel, and red fox make their home at Greenbelt Park, as do the blue jay, cardinal, and numerous other birds. In the spring displays of dogwood, laurel, and azalea please the eye, while in the fall the colors are as vivid as can be found in the region. The summer visitor need only walk a lit-

tle way on the trails before being surrounded by ground-hugging wildflowers or luxuriant ferns lining deep-cut streams. In winter a new world opens up. Crisp days and sunlight filtering through bare tree branches provide an invigorating atmosphere for observing nature at rest.

The greenspace of Greenbelt Park offers many forms of enjoyment for both the naturalist and the casual visitor, a pleas-



urable retreat from the hectic urban surroundings, and a conveniently located campground for visitors to the Nation's Capital.

For Your Enjoyment

Picnicking Three picnic areas are available: Sweetgum, Holly, and Laurel. Holly and Laurel may be reserved. Sweetgum is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Each area has restrooms, water, picnic tables, and fireplaces, in which only charcoal fires are permitted.

Camping The 174-site campground is open all year. Facilities are available for tents, recreation vehicles, and trailers up

to 30 feet long. Restrooms, picnic tables, water, and fireplaces are provided. There are no utility connections, but a disposal station is available. Camping is limited to 14 days per year. Fees are charged. Campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Accommodations, Services, and Transportation Greenbelt park is in a metropolitan area and close to motels, restaurants, grocery stores, service stations, and shopping centers. Buses found nearby and the Metrorail at Greenbelt, College Park/University of Maryland, and New Carrollton provide service to and from Washington, D.C. Schedules and fares vary with the

time of day; rush hours have more frequent service and higher fares. For current information call 202-637-7000.

Park Programs Guided walks, talks, and evening programs are offered year round. Check at the Ranger Station for schedules.

Preservation of the Park The National Park Service was established in 1916 "to conserve the scenery" in each park area

"and to provide for the enjoyment of the same." To conserve, yet allow for the use and enjoyment of a park can be difficult. You can help us with our mission.

- Natural features must be left as you find them.
- Do not deface or remove plants, flowers, or rocks.
- Do not disturb or approach the park's wildlife.

- Pets must be on a leash no longer than 6 feet, or otherwise confined.
- All vehicles, including bicycles, must stay on the paved roads. Their use on any trail or off the pavement is strictly prohibited. Parking is permitted only in designated areas.
- The park is closed at dark.



Visiting Greenbelt

Nature Trails Four marked trails introduce visitors to the park's flora, fauna, ecology, and human history. Perhaps you will see one of the park's animal residents.

- The 1.2-mile **Azalea Trail** connects the three picnic areas and passes through plant communities that grow along streams and hillsides.
- The 6-mile **Perimeter Trail**, used for horseback riding

and hiking, circles the park's western section and leads to some of the most picturesque scenery in the area. Horses are not available in the park. • The 1.4-mile **Dogwood Trail** begins at the parking area on Park Central Road. Self-guiding brochures are available that tell about the ecology, early land use, and nature's recovery found along this trail. • The 0.8-mile **Blueberry Trail** begins just beyond

the campground entrance and traverses a cross-section of abandoned farmland, mature forest, and marsh stream bottom.

Safety Please use caution and common sense so that your visit will be safe and enjoyable. Observe speed limits while traveling the park roads, and yield to hikers, joggers, and bikers.

To report any unusual activity in the park,

call a park ranger at 301-344-3944. Or, call the U.S. Park Police at 301-344-4250.

Information Greenbelt Park and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For information write: Park Manager, Greenbelt Park, 6565 Greenbelt Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770-3207; or call 301-344-3948.



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