



Seeing a bird's nest, playing on wide open fields, examining wildflowers, and camping are just a few of the things you can enjoy in Greenbelt Park.

ALL PHOTOS: NPS

## An Urban Oasis

Greenbelt Park is a retreat from the stress 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 contain facilities for camping, hiking, biking, picnicking, and other outdoor recreation.

Hundreds of years ago trees and flowers covered these rolling hills, and wildlife roamed the woodlands. Algonquin Indians and other tribes hunted, fished, and gathered plants throughout the area.

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 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. Farming ceased. Erosion scarred the land until finally nature slowed the process and new growth began.

The soil began to recover in the early 1900s. Today mixed pine and deciduous

forests testify to the land's ability to rebound. In a few years—unless outside forces interfere with the process—the pines will have disappeared, and hardwood forests will again cover the area.

In the 1930s Greenbelt, Md., became the first planned community in the United States built as a federal venture in housing. From the beginning it was designed as a complete city, with businesses, schools, and facilities for recreation. In 1950 the National Park Service established Greenbelt Park and acquired land for the establishment of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. The parkway, which opened in 1954, was created to provide an uninterrupted, scenic route for passenger vehicles between the two cities.

Deer, squirrels, and red foxes make their home at Greenbelt Park, as do blue jays, cardinals, and other birds. In spring displays of flowering dogwood, laurel, and azalea catch the eye. In summer visitors strolling along the park's trails are surrounded by wildflowers or ferns lining deep-cut streams. The colors of changing

leaves in autumn are as vivid as can be found anywhere in the region. In winter a new world opens up. Crisp days and sunlight filtering through bare tree branches provide an invigorating atmosphere for observing nature.

The park offers activities for the naturalist and casual visitor, and it has a conveniently located campground for visitors to the Nation's Capital. Greenbelt Park is an oasis where you can relax in an exceptional outdoor setting.



Watch for white-tailed deer throughout the park.

## Enjoying Your Visit

**Picnicking** There are three picnic areas: Sweetgum, Holly, and Laurel. Holly and Laurel may be reserved. Sweetgum is available first-come, first-served. Each area has restrooms, water, picnic tables, and grills (only charcoal fires are permitted).

**Camping** Open year-round, the 174-site campground accommodates tents, recreational vehicles, and trailers up to 36 feet long. Restrooms, showers, picnic tables, water, and grills 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 first-come, first-served. Reservations are available Memorial Day through Labor Day. For reservations call 800-365-2267, or visit <http://reservations.nps.gov>.

**Lodging, Services, and Transportation** Greenbelt Park is in a metropolitan area and close to motels,

restaurants, grocery stores, service stations, and shopping centers. Buses 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 trip planning call 202-637-7000 or visit [www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com).

**Park Programs** Guided walks, talks, and evening programs are offered seasonally. Check bulletin boards, ask at the ranger station, or visit our website for schedules.

**Accessibility** Restrooms and picnic areas are accessible for visitors with disabilities. For information about services and facilities call 301-344-3948.

**Preservation of the Park** Stewardship—saving our natural and cultural resources for future generations—is something everyone can enjoy. Please help us safeguard this park by treating it with respect.

- Do not remove, deface, or destroy any plants, animals, rocks, or natural or cultural features—all are protected by federal law.
- Do not disturb, feed, or approach park wildlife.
- Pets must be on a leash no longer than six 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 closes at dark.



# Exploring Greenbelt Park

**Nature Trails** Explore four marked trails to discover the park's plants, animals, ecology, and history:

- **Azalea Trail** (1.1 miles) connects the three picnic areas and traverses plant communities that grow along streams and on hillsides.
- **Perimeter Trail** (5.3 miles) circles the western section of the park and leads to some of this area's most beautiful scenery.
- **Dogwood Trail** (1.4 miles) starts at the parking area on Park Central Road. Self-guiding brochures tell about this area's ecology, early land use, and the recovery of nature you will witness along this trail.
- **Blueberry Trail** (1 mile) begins just beyond the campground entrance and takes you through abandoned farmland, mature forest, marsh, and bottomland along a stream.

**Safety and Regulations** • Use caution and common sense to make your visit safe and enjoyable. • Observe speed limits on park roads and yield to hikers, joggers, and bikers. • Stay on the trails; do not shortcut.

To report an unusual activity in the park, call the U.S. Park Police: 301-344-4250.

**Emergencies: call 911.**

Service animals are welcome. For firearms regulations check our website or ask a ranger.

**More Information**  
Greenbelt Park  
6565 Greenbelt Road  
Greenbelt, MD 20770-3207  
301-344-3948  
[www.nps.gov/gree](http://www.nps.gov/gree)

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A tiger swallowtail butterfly sips flower nectar.

Greenbelt Park is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs please visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

