

Doggin' Delaware -

**The 40 Best
Places To Hike
With Your Dog
In The First State**

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Cruden Bay Books



There's always a new trail to look forward to...

DOGGIN' DELAWARE: THE 40 BEST PLACES TO HIKE WITH YOUR DOG IN DELAWARE

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*“Dogs are our link to paradise...to sit with a dog on a hillside
on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing nothing
was not boring - it was peace.”*

- Milan Kundera

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Introduction

Delaware can be a great place to hike with your dog. Inside the First State you can hike on sand trails, climb hills that leave you and your dog panting, walk on some of the most historic grounds in America, explore the estates of America's wealthiest families or circle lakes for 7 miles and never lose sight of the water.

I have selected what I consider to be the 40 best places to take your dog and ranked them according to subjective criteria including the variety of hikes available, opportunities for canine swimming and pleasure of the walks. The rankings include a mix of parks that feature long walks and parks that contain short walks.

Living in Delaware you may not realize what a lucky dog you are. There is not a single public park in the state where your dog is not welcome. You may never have seen a NO DOGS ALLOWED sign. But consider our neighbors in Maryland where dogs aren't even allowed out of the car in some state parks or Pennsylvania where dogs are banned from most state campgrounds and almost every nature center and don't even think about trying to get your dog on many New Jersey beaches. Not so in Delaware. Camp with your dog here, study plants and trees with your dog at the Delaware Nature Society centers and watch your dog enjoy a sandy beach 12 months a year.

So when visiting a park always keep your dog under control and clean up any messes and we can all expect our great parks to remain open to our dogs. So grab that leash and hit the trail!

DBG

Hiking With Your Dog

So you want to start hiking with your dog. Hiking with your dog can be a fascinating way to explore Delaware's natural areas. Some things to consider:

Dog's Health

Hiking can be a wonderful preventative for any number of physical and behavioral disorders. One in every three dogs is overweight and running up trails and leaping through streams is great exercise to help keep pounds off. Hiking can also relieve boredom in a dog's routine and calm dogs prone to destructive habits. And hiking with your dog strengthens the overall owner/dog bond.

Breed of Dog

All dogs enjoy the new scents and sights of a trail. But some dogs are better suited to hiking than others. If you don't as yet have a hiking companion, select a breed that matches your interests. Do you look forward to an entire afternoon's hiking? You'll need a dog bred to keep up with such a pace, such as a retriever or a spaniel. Is a half-hour enough walking for you? It may not be for an energetic dog like a border collie. If you already have a hiking friend, tailor your plans to his abilities.

Conditioning

Just like humans, dogs need to be acclimated to the task at hand. An inactive dog cannot be expected to bounce from the easy chair in the den to complete a 3-hour hike. You must also be physically able to restrain your dog if confronted with distractions on the trail (like a scampering squirrel or a pack of joggers). Have your dog checked by a veterinarian before significantly increasing your dog's activity level.

Weather

Hot humid Delaware summers do not do dogs any favors. With no sweat glands and only panting available to disperse body heat, dogs are much more susceptible to heat stroke than we are. Unusually rapid panting and/or a bright red tongue are signs of heat exhaustion in your pet. Always carry enough water for your hike. Even days that don't seem too warm can cause discomfort in dark-coated dogs if the sun is shining brightly. In cold weather, short-coated breeds may require additional attention.

Water

Surface water, including fast-flowing streams, is likely to be infested with a microscopic protozoa called *Giardia*, waiting to wreak havoc on your dog's intestinal system. The most common symptom is potentially crippling diarrhea. Algae, pollutants and contaminants can all be in streams, ponds and puddles. If possible, carry fresh water for your dog on the trail - your dog can even learn to drink happily from a squirt bottle.

Ticks

You won't be able to visit any of Delaware's parks without encountering ticks. All are nasty but the deer tick - no bigger than a pin head - carries with it the spectre of lyme disease. Lyme disease attacks a dog's joints and makes walking painful. The tick needs to be embedded in the skin to transmit lyme disease. It takes 4-6 hours for a tick to become embedded and another 24-48 hours to transmit lyme disease bacteria.

When hiking, walk in the middle of trails away from tall grass and bushes. If your walk includes fields, consider long sleeves and long pants tucked into high socks. Wear a hat - ticks like hair. By checking your dog - and yourself - thoroughly after each walk you can help avoid lyme disease. Ticks tend to congregate on your dog's ears, between the toes and around the neck and head.

 **Trail Hazards**

Dogs won't get poison ivy but they can transfer it to you. Stinging nettle is a nuisance plant that lurks on the side of many trails and the slightest brush will deliver troublesome needles into a dog's coat. Some trails are littered with small pieces of broken glass that can slice a dog's paws. Nasty thorns can also blanket trails that we in shoes may never notice.


And Delaware does have copperhead snakes, the only poisonous snake in the state. Once widespread, copperheads are now found mainly in rocky areas north of Wilmington, including Alapocas Woods Natural Area, and in southwest Sussex County, including Trap Pond State Park. Reclusive by nature, the chance that you or your dog will see a copperhead (recognized by an hourglass pattern of scales, a triangular copper-colored head and range from three to four feet in length), let alone be bitten by one, is extremely rare.




Outfitting Your Dog For A Hike

These are the basics for taking your dog on a hike:

- ▶ **Collar.** It should not be so loose as to come off but you should be able to slide your flat hand under the collar.
- ▶ **Identification Tags.** Get one with your veterinarian's phone number as well.
- ▶ **Bandanna.** Can help distinguish him from game in hunting season.
- ▶ **Leash.** Leather lasts forever but if there's water in your future, consider quick-drying nylon.
- ▶ **Water.** Carry 8 ounces for every hour of hiking.

 *I want my dog to help carry water, snacks and other supplies on the trail. Where do I start?*

To select an appropriate dog pack. Measure your dog's girth around the rib cage to determine the best pack size. A dog pack should fit securely without hindering the dog's ability to walk normally.

 *Will my dog wear a pack?*

Wearing a dog pack is no more obtrusive than wearing a collar, although some dogs will take to a pack easier than others. Introduce the pack by draping a towel over your dog's back in the house and then having your dog wear an empty pack on short walks. Progressively add some crumpled newspaper and then bits of clothing. Fill the pack with treats and reward your dog from the stash. Soon your dog will associate the dog pack with an outdoor adventure and will eagerly look forward to wearing it.

🐾 *How much weight can I put into a dog pack?*

Many dog packs are sold by weight recommendations. A healthy, well-conditioned dog can comfortably carry 25% to 33% of its body weight. Breeds prone to back problems or hip dysplasia should not wear dog packs. Consult your veterinarian before stuffing the pouches with gear.

🐾 *How does a dog wear a pack?*

The pack, typically with cargo pouches on either side, should ride as close to the shoulders as possible without limiting movement. The straps that hold the dog pack in place should be situated where they will not cause chafing.

🐾 *What are good things to put in a dog pack?*

Low density items such as food and waste bags are good choices. Ice cold bottles of water can cool your dog down on hot days. Don't put anything in a dog pack that can break. Dogs will bang the pack on rocks and trees as they wiggle through tight spots in the trail. Dogs also like to lie down in creeks and other wet spots so seal items in plastic bags. A good use for dog packs when on day hikes around Delaware is trail maintenance - your dog can pack out trash left by inconsiderate visitors before you.



🐾 *Are dog booties a good idea?*

Dog booties can be an asset, especially for the occasional canine hiker whose paw pads have not become toughened. Many of the trails near northern Delaware involve rocky terrain. In some places, broken glass abounds. Hiking boots for dogs are designed to prevent pads from cracking while trotting across rough surfaces. Used in winter, dog booties provide warmth and keep ice balls from forming between toe pads when hiking through snow.

🐾 *What should a doggie first aid kit include?*

Even when taking short hikes it is a good idea to have some basics available for emergencies:

- ▶ 4" square gauze pads
- ▶ cling type bandaging tapes
- ▶ topical wound disinfectant cream
- ▶ tweezers
- ▶ petroleum jelly (to cover ticks)
- ▶ veterinarian's phone number

I can't think of anything that brings me closer to tears than when my old dog - completely exhausted after a hard day in the field - limps away from her nice spot in front of the fire and comes over to where I'm sitting and puts her head in my lap, a paw over my knee, and closes her eyes, and goes back to sleep. I don't know what I've done to deserve that kind of friend."

-Gene Hill

Low Impact Hiking With Your Dog

Every time you hike with your dog on the trail you are an ambassador for all dog owners. Some people you meet won't believe in your right to take a dog on the trail. Be friendly to all and make the best impression you can by practicing low impact hiking with your dog:

- 🐾 Pack out everything you pack in.
- 🐾 Do not leave dog scat on the trail; if you haven't brought plastic bags for waste removal bury it away from the trail and topical water sources.
- 🐾 Hike only where dogs are allowed.
- 🐾 Stay on the trail.
- 🐾 Do not allow your dog to chase wildlife.
- 🐾 Step off the trail and wait with your dog while horses and other hikers pass.
- 🐾 Do not allow your dog to bark - people are enjoying the trail for serenity.
- 🐾 Have as much fun on your hike as your dog does.

The Other End Of The Leash

Leash laws are like speed limits - everyone seems to have a private interpretation of their validity. Some dog owners never go outside with an unleashed dog; others treat the laws as suggestions or disregard them completely. It is not the purpose of this book to tell dog owners where to go to evade the leash laws or reveal the parks where rangers will look the other way at an unleashed dog. Nor is it the business of this book to preach vigilant adherence to the leash laws. Nothing written in a book is going to change people's behavior with regard to leash laws. So this will be the last time leash laws are mentioned, save occasionally when we point out the parks where dogs are welcomed off leash.

"No one appreciates the very special genius of your conversation as a dog does."

-Christopher Morley

*The 40 Best Places
To Hike With
Your Dog In
Delaware...*

1

Cape Henlopen State Park

The Park

Cape Henlopen has the distinction of being one of the first parks in America: in 1682 William Penn decreed that Cape Henlopen would be for "the usage of the citizens of Lewes and Sussex County." The area had been Delaware's first permanent settlement 50 years earlier by ill-fated Dutch colonists who were massacred

by local Indians. Cape Henlopen's strategic location at the mouth of the Delaware Bay led the United States Army to establish Fort Miles among the dunes in 1941. In 1964, the Department of Defense declared 543 acres on the cape as surplus property and the State of Delaware established Cape Henlopen State Park. Today the park boasts more than 5,000 acres, including four miles of pristine beaches where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. It is Delaware's largest state park.

The Walks

The primary destination for dog owners at Cape Henlopen is the 3.1-mile *Dune Overlook Trail*, located south of the campground. The loop is part natural surface, part paved road through pitch-pine corridors and past old fortifications. Do not skip the two short spur trails! One leads into the spartina marshes typical of the Delaware Bay estuary and the other is a journey onto the 80-foot Great Dune, the highest sand pile on the Atlantic shore between Cape Cod and Cape Hatteras.

A good way to explore the beach areas at Cape Henlopen is on the 1.8-mile *Beach Loop Trail* that begins opposite the parking

Sussex

Phone Number

- (302) 645-8983

Website

- destateparks.com

Admission Fee

- Yes, May to October

Directions

- Cape Henlopen is one mile east of Lewes at the end of Route 9, off of Route 1.

Bonus

Remnants of Cape Henlopen's military past remain nestled among the massive sand dunes. Bunkers and gun emplacements were camouflaged deep in the sand and concrete observation towers were built along the shoreline to bolster America's coastal defenses during World War II. Lookouts scanned the Atlantic Ocean for German U-boats during World War II and although the fort's huge guns were never fired in battle, a German submarine did surrender here after the war. These silent sentinels remain scattered along Delaware's beaches and one has been restored to provide visitors with a panoramic view of the park and the ocean.

lot in the southernmost section of the park and leads to overlooks of Gordon's Pond Wildlife Area, a unique salt-water impoundment. The soft sand can make for heavy going so don't hesitate to plop down on a dune for a rest if your dog seems fatigued. When your shoes fill with sand you can retreat to the flat, paved park roads from the Fort Miles days.

Trail Sense: There are trail markers, maps and signs.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are not permitted around the Seaside Nature Center or on the Pinelands Nature Trail. Dogs are prohibited from all swimming and sunbathing beaches from May 1 to September 30. Dogs are allowed in the campground.

Traffic

The park is Delaware's second-leading tourist attraction.

Canine Swimming

The Atlantic Ocean is as good as it gets.

Trail Time

A few hours to a full day.



The Great Dune is a giant sandbox for dogs. A World War II observation tower is in the background.

2

Woodlawn Trustees Property

The Park

From 1850 until 1910, feldspar, used in porcelain dishes and false teeth, was mined here in the Woodlawn Quarry. You can still see the remains of these spar pits, with their scatterings of mica and other minerals. In 1910, as his campaign to preserve the Brandywine Valley intensified, William Poole Bancroft bought hundreds of pristine acres in the lush floodplain and rolling woodlands where the Brandywine Creek makes three wide, gentle turns. Bancroft formed the Woodlawn Company to manage these lands, harboring some of the oldest trees in Delaware. Today, more than 2,000 acres are open to the public for recreational use - one of the greatest private gifts to canine hikers to be found anywhere.

New Castle

Phone Number

- None

Website

- None

Admission Fee

- None

Directions

- There are no highway signs to direct you here and the parking lots are not marked. The main parking lot is opposite Peters Rock along the Brandywine on Creek Road. Other gravel lots can be found on Ramsey Road, Beaver Valley Road and opposite Woodlawn Road on Thompson's Bridge Road (Route 92). There is also parking in the hotel complex on Route 202.



Part of the trail system on the Woodlawn Trustees Property leads past actively farmed fields.

Bonus

Breaking out of the woods at several points on the hilltops you are greeted with splendid views of Granogue, one of the American castles dotting the Brandywine Valley's chateau lands.



The Walks

These informal dirt trails through a mix of open fields and mature forests can be combined to create any kind of day out with your dog. Athletic dogs will enjoy bounding along the grassy hillsides above the Brandywine. Walking back and forth on the *Fire Trail* along the water provides an easy 45-minute walk.

The trails can be jumping off points for hikes of several hours duration. Following the white blazes of the Wilmington Trail Club along the creek you can reach Chadds Ford. You can ford Beaver Valley Road into Pennsylvania and loop around the fast-flowing Beaver Run. The route is hilly and requires some careful creek crossings but is very scenic. Finally you can cross Thompson's Bridge Road and walk into Brandywine Creek State Park.

Trail Sense: The trails are unmarked and no map is available but orienting yourself to the rivers and roads should prevent any confusion.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are permitted throughout the refuge.

Traffic

Seldom crowded but watch for horses and mountain bikers.

Canine Swimming

The shallow Brandywine Creek deepens enough in several places to form excellent swimming holes for dogs.

Trail Time

Several hours.

3

White Clay Creek State Park

The Park

William Penn bought most of this land in 1683 from Lenni Lenape Chief Kekelappen, who was believed to have lived here in Opasiskunk, the most important of the region's "Indian Towns." In 1968 White Clay Creek began life as a state park with 24 state-purchased acres of land. In 1984 the DuPont Company donated the land that would be the foundation for today's park of 3,384 acres with another 1,253 adjoining acres across the state line in Pennsylvania.

The Walks

White Clay serves up the widest menu of canine hiking choices of any park in the First State - almost 40 miles of trails on a dozen marked trails. The top choices in the Walter S. Carpenter, Jr. Recreation Area are the hardy 5-mile *Twin Valley Trail* and the sporty 2-mile *Millstone Trail* with its scenic rock outcroppings and two never-finished millstones. A half-mile *Logger's Trail* illuminates the history of lumbering in the area.

The only trail that actually visits the White Clay Creek is the *Pennidel Trail*, over three miles in length, connecting the park and the preserve. It is a superb linear trail for hiking with your dog - flat for its entire length and uniformly wide. Nearby, at the park

New Castle

Phone Number

- (302) 368-6900

Website

- destateparks.com

Admission Fee

- Yes, May-October

Directions

- The main parking lot is in the Walter Carpenter, Jr. Recreation Area on New London Road (Route 896), three miles northwest of Newark. Parking is also available on Hopkins Road at the Chambers House Nature Center, on Chamber Rock Road and the end of Thompson Station Road at the Park Office. Possum Hill is located off Paper Mill Road (Route 72) between Polly Drummond Road and Possum Park Road. The Judge Morris Estate is on Polly Drummond Road.

Bonus

To visit White Clay Creek is to indulge in a lesson of American surveying history. The Twin Valley Trail swings past the Arc Corner Monument marking one end of the 12-mile arc that forms the Pennsylvania-Delaware state line, unique in American political boundary making. The circular divide dates to William Penn's directive of August 28, 1701.

A half-mile to the west there is a monument marking the tri-state junction of Delaware, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Over at Possum Hill, tucked back in the woods, is a small cement pillar. This post was set up - facing west - in Alexander Bryan's field on June 12, 1764 by English mathematicians Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon.

This base point, 15 miles south of the southernmost point of the city of Philadelphia, began the survey for the Mason-Dixon Line that would forever separate North from South.

office on Thompson Station Road, is a trailhead for a rugged hill climb on the homesite of David English, a lease holder of the William Penn family.

While you are warming up for hill climbs, visit Possum Hill, where two stacked loop trails fall 150 feet among thick stands of mature beech and oaks that thrive in the moist valleys. The scenery on the 2-mile *Long Loop* is more arresting so save the inner loop for a second go-round.

The fourth - and newest - section of White Clay Creek was acquired in 1998 at the Judge Morris Estate. Along with an elegant 1790s mansion the park annexed one of the finest loop trails in the state. The 3-mile ramble is wooded throughout and dips and rolls across tumbling terrain. The path is narrow, however, and a favorite of mountain bikers.

Trail Sense: The paths are blazed, the paths are named and there is an excellent color map available. But some stretches share two or three trails so pay attention.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to share the trails in all sections of the park.

Traffic

For a less-traveled canine hike, try Possum Hill or the Judge Morris Estate.

Canine Swimming

The swift and shallow White Clay Creek is the purest around for drinking.

Occasional pools host some dog paddling and there are farm ponds in the park.

Trail Time

A full day if desired.

4

Brandywine Creek State Park

The Park

Once a du Pont family dairy farm, this spectacular swath of land became a State Park in 1965. Delaware's first two nature preserves are located here: Tulip Tree Woods, behind the park office, and Freshwater Marsh, at the edge of Brandywine Creek. The stone walls that criss-cross the 850-acre park are the legacy of skilled Italian masons who crafted the barriers from locally quarried Brandywine granite - the original "Wilmington Blue Rocks."

New Castle

Phone Number

- (302) 577-3534

Website

- destateparks.com

Admission Fee

- Yes, May-October

Directions

- The main entrance is on Adams Dam Road, between Thompson's Bridge Road (Route 92) and Rockland Road. Other parking areas are at Thompson's Bridge and off Rockland Road, opposite Rockland Mills.

The Walks

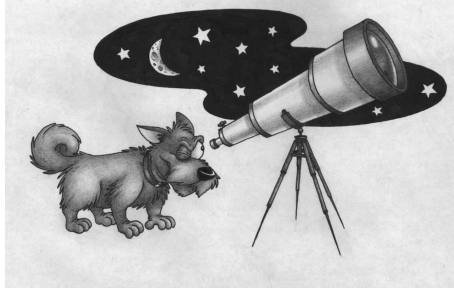
There are eight blazed trails totalling 14 miles on both sides of the Brandywine Creek. All are short, all are woodsy and if you can't reach out and touch the water you are moving up or down a hill. The *Hidden Pond Trail* and the *Indian Springs Trail* each travel along the water, immerse you in the steep valley terrain and traverse the Tulip Tree Woods, where majestic tulip poplar have grown for nearly two centuries.

The star walk at Thompson's Bridge is the rugged, 1.9-mile *Rocky Run Trail*, winding around the closest thing to a mountain stream in Delaware. On this trail you'll discover fragrant stands of hemlock nestled among hardwood neighbors in a mature forest with long views. Nearby, the *Multi-Use Trail* tags Brandywine Creek for the better part of two miles.

Bonus

In the winter of 1802 a rudderless French immigrant living in New Jersey named Eleuthere Irenee du Pont was invited to the Brandywine Valley to hunt game. It was not a successful trip. The damp weather fouled his gunpowder so that his musket continually misfired. It was so bad du Pont decided to re-enter the industry he had turned his back on in France as a youth: black powder. When it came time to launch his new business he remembered what you see today at Brandywine Creek State Park: the hardwood forests that would burn to charcoal, one of the ingredients he would need for powder; the abundant granite in the hills to build his mills; and the swift-flowing river to power the mills. And so he returned to Delaware to found a dynasty. Incidentally, the favorite breed of dog for the du Pont family when they lived here: the greyhound.

Check with the park office about programs that welcome well-behaved dogs. Your dog can experience such events as a Civil War re-enactment or star-gazing from the open fields.



Trail Sense: All the paths are blazed and there is a map available. There are some unblazed trails in the Thompson's Bridge area but you can figure out where you are headed.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to share the trails in all sections of the park.

Traffic

Brandywine Creek State Park is a heavily-used park. Bikes are restricted to the Multi-Use Trail.

Canine Swimming

The Brandywine Creek is one of the best places in Delaware to take your dog for a swim. There is plenty of access to the water from the low banks in the main park.

Trail Time

More than one hour.

5

Trap Pond State Park

The Park

Trap Pond is a small portion of the Great Cypress Swamp and features one of the northernmost natural stands of baldcypress trees in North America. In the late 1700s a millpond was constructed to power a sawmill to harvest the valuable lumber. During the Depression in the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps of the federal government put men to work building diverse recreation facilities. In 1951, 14 years after the Delaware legislature authorized the development of the state park system, Trap Pond became the first state park to welcome visitors.

Sussex

Phone Number

- (302) 875-5153

Website

- destateparks.com

Admission Fee

- Yes, May-October

Directions

- Trap Pond is 5 miles east of Laurel, off Route 24 between Route 13 and Route 113. The park is one mile south on Trap Pond Road (Road 449).

The Walks

The 5-mile long *Boundary Trail* completely circles both the 90-acre millpond and the baldcypress swamp. There is a mixture of natural and paved surfaces and the flat trail is very easy to walk. If you are not totally fixated on the stunning views of the baldcypress swamp take heed of the stands of stately loblolly pines that dominate the forest and the gently flowing streams that feed the pond. Note that to complete the loop requires a short walk on Little Hill Road.

For canine hikers not interested in a complete circumnavigation of Trap Pond there are short one-mile trails on opposite shores. The *Island Trail* on the western shore visits the shoreline and actually onto one of the namesake islands in the pond before

Bonus

Hiking through Trap Pond State Park is an experience like no other in Delaware - your walk in the atmospheric swamp could easily be in the Louisiana bayou. Marvel in the quiet beauty of the baldcypress - one of the few trees capable of living in the water. Each tree sends out small stumps known as "knees" in every direction to help keep from drowning. The boardwalks on the Cypress Point Trail enable you and your dog to get close up views.



leading back into the forest. On the opposite shore the *Cypress Point Trail* meanders along the edge of the swamp.

Trail Sense: A map is available and take it along - it is more reliable than markings on the trails.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed on the trails and in the campground.

Traffic

There is typically more activity on the water than on the trails.

Canine Swimming

The shoreline of the swamp is ill-defined but there are a few chances to slip into the pond without disturbing the canoeists and fishermen. Raccoon Pond off the Boundary Trail is another chance for a doggie dip.

Trail Time

More than an hour to fully explore the swamp.

6

Middle Run Valley Natural Area

The Park

The White Clay Creek drains some 70,000 acres and 100 square miles in Pennsylvania and Delaware. In Delaware, where Middle Run is one of its three main tributaries, it seems that much of that watershed is choked by suburban sprawl. Beginning in 1975, local civic and environmental groups began piecemeal acquisition of pristine woodlands that has resulted in an 850-acre oasis in the center of housing subdivisions, shopping centers and busy roadways.

New Castle

Phone Number

- None

Website

- None

Admission Fee

- None

Directions

- Middle Run is northeast of Newark. From Kirkwood Highway (Route 2) follow Possum Park Road 1.7 miles to Possum Hollow Road on the right. Take a left at the entrance to the park after about 1/2 mile.

The Walks

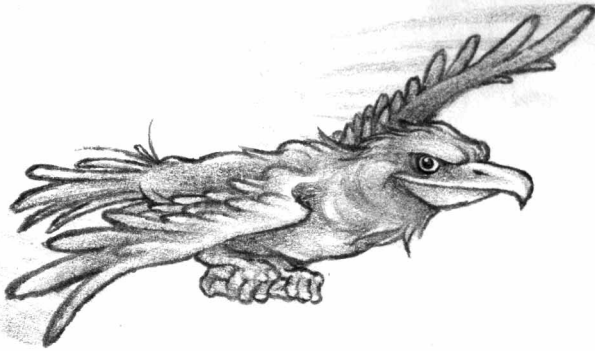
Middle Run features splendid canine hiking on five well-maintained loop trails that cover 14 miles and an additional five short spurs that lead to surrounding communities. All offer interesting - and sometimes challenging - switches in terrain. There is almost 200 feet of elevation change at Middle Run.

The purple-blazed *Lenape Trail* visits most of the property in its run of almost 7 miles, one of the longest loop trails in Delaware. The best choice for dog walkers only wanting to sample Middle Run's sylvan charms is the pedestrian-only 2.15-mile *Possum Hollow Trail*. Another good ramble is the *Earth Day Trail* that drops out of the parking lot into a steep valley around Muddy Run.

Bonus

The patches of long-abandoned farmland are good places to spot hawks. Hawks can appear at Middle Run at any time of the year but in fall and spring the skies overflow with migrating hawks making long-distance trips between their breeding grounds and winter residences.

Fall migration usually begins in mid-August and continues through late November. Spring migration takes place between March and May.



All the natural dirt and grass trails bound up and down hills but the *Snow Geese Trail*, marked in orange on the east side of the park, is an especially steep, heart-pumping loop for canine and human.

Trail Sense: The trails are not continually blazed but markers direct the way at trail junctions. New Castle County publishes a superb trail map and brochure but it is available only in county offices, not at the park. The map board at the Possum Hollow Road parking lot is the best in the state to help guide you.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome on all trails.

Traffic

Even though the parking lot has room for only 24 cars, it seems frivolously large most of the time. No one stumbles upon Middle Run. There are no directional signs announcing its existence from any of the major roads enclosing this natural area. Expect little company on these trails although there is an active community of mountain bikers that ride here.

Canine Swimming

There are no ponds on the property and the Middle Run and its branches are too shallow for swimming. There is enough water, however, for splashing on a hot day.

Trail Time

There are many hours of canine hiking here.

7

Nanticoke Wildlife Area

The Park

The Nanticoke River springs to life in southern Delaware and flows southwest to the Chesapeake Bay. It is considered one of the Chesapeake's healthiest rivers. Scientists believe the area's unique habitat stems from 10,000 years ago when the land was more exposed and prevailing winds deposited large amounts of sand across the flat terrain. Most of the roads cut through the 3,177-acre wilderness were constructed during the Roosevelt Administration by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 875-9997
Website
- dnrec.state.de.us
Admission Fee
- No
Directions
- The Nanticoke Wildlife Area stretches west of Bethel almost to the Maryland border. From Route 13, take Route 24 west to Airport Road (Road 494) and turn right. As you reach the wildlife area an office and mapboards will appear on the right.

The Walks

Of the managed wildlife areas by the State of Delaware where you get out and explore on old fire roads, Nanticoke is the best to hike with your dog. The packed sand roads are flat, easy to walk and easy on the paw. There are more than 12 miles of these well-maintained access roads; some are closed to all vehicles and others receive sporadic traffic. Keep your eyes peeled for small side trails that can lead to secluded ponds in the forests of black oaks and Virginia pine.

The Nanticoke Wildlife Area is divided into a North Area and South Area, severed by Broad Creek. There are more natural surface trails in the North Area and access to the Nanticoke River. Your dog's day here won't be complete without a stop at the boat

Bonus

The chance to see bald eagles - the Nanticoke watershed sports the highest concentration of bald eagles in the northeastern United States. The great birds favor massive nests in the treetops on the edges of the water.

ramp at the end of Phillips Landing Road. Here you'll find cool grass under tall pines that make a perfect launching pad for dives into the water at this wide turn in Broad Creek.

Trail Sense: Aerial tract maps are available to give you a rough idea of where you are. On the trail the numbered deer stands are the only thing to give you a clue you are in the right spot.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the Wildlife Area. Hiking is recommended only from February to September, however - outside of hunting season.

Traffic

There will be an occasional vehicle passing as you travel the fire roads.

Canine Swimming

Broad Creek and the Nanticoke River are slow-moving and ideal for water-loving dogs.

Trail Time

Many hours.



The corridors of sand through the Nanticoke Wildlife Area are lightly traveled and a great spot for a quiet canine hike.

8

Killens Pond State Park

The Park

Native tribes traditionally gathered for centuries in this area around the waterway that would come to be called “Murderkill” after a Dutch trading party was slaughtered at the mouth of the river by local tribes in 1648. In the late 1700s the river was dammed and the 66-acre millpond created. In 1965, Killens Pond became Kent County’s only state park.

The Walks

The first thing your dog will notice while trotting on the trails at Killens Pond is that it is unusually hilly for central Delaware. Just enough to give the 2.75-mile *Pondside Trail* a nice, sporty feel. Your dog will also approve of the wide, roomy paths and the packed sand and pine straw under paw. The trail circles the entire pond, keeping sight of the water most of the way.

Kent

Phone Number

- (302) 284-4526

Website

- destateparks.com

Admission Fee

- Yes, May-October

Directions

- Killens Pond is southeast of Felton. Take Killens Pond Road east of Route 13 to the park entrance past Lake Forest High School.



A graceful footbridge matches the terrain at Killens Pond.

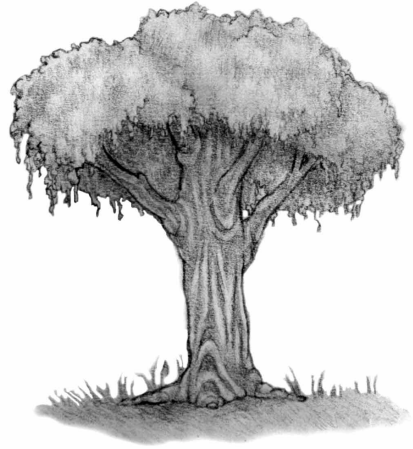
Bonus

Killens Pond offers the opportunity to hike through a uniquely diverse forest area as southern species mingle at the northern edge of their range with northern species reaching their southern boundary. Seven separate species of oak trees share the sandy soil with majestic loblolly pines; American holly jostles with Virginia pine and so on.

Chances are you will just be getting warmed up with this pleasing ramble and luckily Killens Pond serves up a few more choices. The *Ice Storm Trail* is a loop that shows the forest regenerating from a 1994 storm that left trees snapping and buckling under the weight of a cocoon of ice.

If it is not in use you and your dog can sample the best cross-country course in down-state Delaware on the western edge of the pond.

Trail Sense: A color map is available and comes in handy. Trail markers are wanting in a few spots and Killens Pond has its share of unmarked trails peppered in among the main routes.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to share the trails in all sections of the park and there is a dog training area on Paradise Alley Road. Dogs are also allowed in the campground except in cabins.

Traffic

Bikes are shuffled off to their own path; canine hikers will likely encounter other dogs and joggers at almost any time in the park.

Canine Swimming

The trail drops down to the waterside every few hundred yards for your dog to get into open water.

Trail Time

More than an hour.

"The best thing about a man is his dog."

-French Proverb

9

Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

The Park

When Dutch settlers first pushed onto these shores nearly 400 years ago they discovered an abundance of purple beach plums and named that area *Priume Hoek*, meaning "Plum Point." In 1963, the United States Fish & Wildlife Service created the refuge to protect more than 10,000 acres of fresh and saltwater wetlands from Slaughter Beach to the Broadkill River.

Sussex

Phone Number

- (302) 684-8419

Website

- primehook.fws.gov

Admission Fee

- None

Directions

- The refuge is located 12 miles southeast of Milford and 10 miles northwest of Lewes. Take Route 16 off Delaware 1 for one mile. Turn left into the refuge on Turtle Pond Road.

The Walks

Prime Hook features four walking trails that visit fields, forest and marshlands. All four, located off the main road, can be completed comfortably in an afternoon's visit.

The *Pine Grove Trail* follows a serpentine path between Turtle and Fleetwood ponds. The soft pine straw-and-leaf surface beneath mature loblolly pines is extremely easy on the paw. The trail is just under one mile long.

Up the road is the *Black Farm Trail* that skirts wooded uplands and marshes as it travels around former farm fields. A trail extension leads to a photography blind. This is flat, easy canine hiking.



The Pine Grove Trail leads to an observation deck at Turtle Pond.

Bonus

The mixed pine-hardwood forest at the edges of the Prime Hook marshes is ideal habitat for the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel, an endangered species of mammal since 1967.

The largest of the 10 varieties of local tree squirrels, the reclusive creature is hard to spot even though it grows to over two feet long. Look for a flash of white belly and large bushy tail with black edge stripes in tree cavities or scampering along the ground of the open forest - unlike its more agile cousins it doesn't jump from tree to tree.

At the park office are two adjoining walks that explore a freshwater marsh. The *Dike Trail* travels atop the spoil from the digging of the Headquarters Ditch straight out for a half-mile and the *Boardwalk Trail* slips across the water after passing by the Morris family cemetery, where eight family members are buried.

Trail Sense: A trail map is available at the park office.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome on all four refuge walking trails.

Traffic

These trails are lightly used and well worth a sidetrip on an excursion to the beach. The trails are for foot traffic only.

Canine Swimming

Save for a few spots, Prime Hook does not extend to the Delaware Bay but the bay beaches just a few hundred yards from the refuge's boundaries are a water-loving dog's delight.

Trail Time

More than an hour.



It is easy to mistake the Delaware Bay waves at Broadkill Beach at Prime Hook for the ocean.

10

James Farm Ecological Preserve

The Park

James Farm was created as an ecological preserve through a gift of 150 acres to Sussex County in 1992 from Mary Lighthipe in memory of her son Harold. Beginning in 1998, the Center for the Inland Bays has managed the property for the benefit of the public.

The Walks

A patchwork of color-coded trails explores this thumb of land that pokes into the Indian River Bay. Your canine hike begins in an old horse pasture that has been reforested with a planting of 4000 young trees, with another 4000 planned. As the hardwood forest grows it supports an increasing population of migratory songbirds and other animals.

The trails then push into a maritime forest on the way to a small sandy beach on Pasture Point Cove. Dogs will love the silky soft sands and gentle waters of the bay. In fact, your dog will appreciate the wide, paw-friendly trails and the shade provided by mature oaks and hickories. For an open field trot, don't forget the *Purple Trail* across Cedar Neck Road. There is no better place to take your dog for a walk at the beach than James Farm.

Trail Sense: A color mapboard is located at the parking lot.

Sussex

Phone Number

- (302) 645-7325

Website

- inlandbays.org/education.html

Admission Fee

- None

Directions

- The nature preserve is in Ocean View. Traveling south on Delaware 1, make your first right after crossing Indian River Inlet onto Road 360. Continue to the end and make a right on Cedar Neck Road. The parking lot is on the left, just past the tennis club. Approaching on Route 26, make a left on Cedar Neck.

Bonus

Beginning in 2003, James Farm has been one of 14 locations in Delaware's inland bays used for oyster gardening. More than one million oysters have been deployed to build reefs that will stabilize the bay floor and filter the waters for a more energized aquatic environment.

It is estimated that a single oyster can filter 50 gallons of water and more than 100,000 oysters were introduced to the reef at Pasture Point Cove.

The oysters attach themselves to a solid substrate - often another oyster - and begin building a reef habitat. Natural oysters have been gone from Delaware's inland bays for over 30 years but someday the efforts of this oyster gardening may yield harvests once again.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome on all preserve trails. Look for a loving memorial to Wilma Rudolph Tucker, "a damn good dog," near the sandy beach.

Traffic

Foot traffic only - and much of it is accompanied by a four-legged friend.

Canine Swimming

Dogs can frolic in the Indian River Bay but only the smallest will enjoy a swim. 300 feet out into the bay the water depth is still about knee-deep.

Trail Time

More than an hour.



The trails at James Farm lead to three observation decks overlooking salt marshes and Indian River Bay.

11

Ashland Nature Center

The Park

A mill operated here as early as 1715. Since 1964, when the Delaware Nature Society was founded, 130 acres at Ashland Nature Center have been preserved for the conservation and study of natural resources.

The Walks

There are four self-guiding nature trails here, each a loop between .8 and 1.3 miles.

Sugarbush and *Treetop* trails

explore the wooded hillside beyond the Ashland Covered Bridge, built in the days before the Civil War; the adjoining *Succession* and *Flood Plain* trails visit meadow, marsh, pond and forest. There is a good deal of hillwalking at Ashland, save for the benign Flood Plain Trail. The trails are natural - dirt covered in the woods; grass in the meadows.

Trail Sense: The trails and interpretive stops, over 30 on some trails, are well-marked. Detailed brochures are available in the kiosk at the parking lot.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome at the Ashland Nature Center.

Traffic

No bikes or horses compete on the trails; expect group nature tours, though.

Canine Swimming

Birch Run and the Red Clay Creek flow through the property. Neither is deep enough to dog paddle in.

Trail Time

More than an hour.

New Castle

Phone Number

- (302) 239-2334

Website

- delawareaturesociety.org/ashland.htm

Admission Fee

- Yes, to use the trails

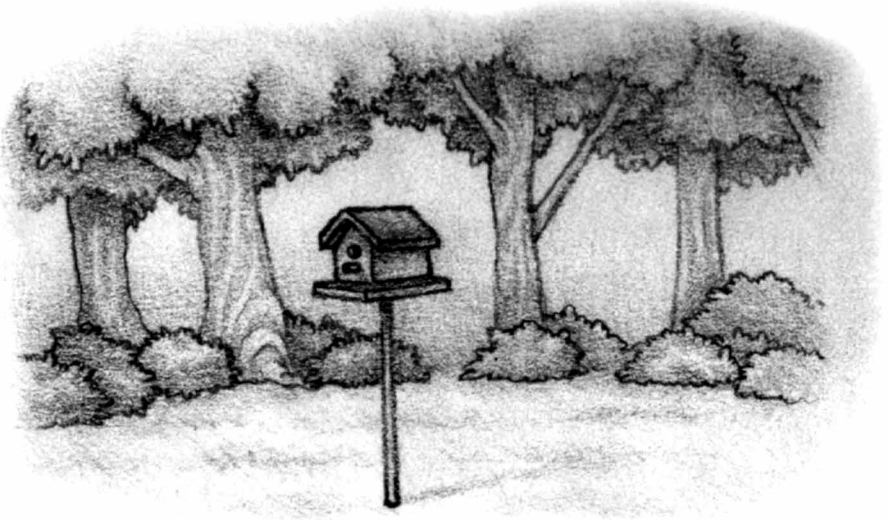
Directions

- Ashland Nature Center is in Hockessin, on Barley Mill Road, between Creek Road (Route 82) and Brackenville Road.

Bonus

This is where you can find the answers to all those questions that confound you when walking in other northern Delaware parks:

1. Why is this park so hilly?
2. What are the dominant trees in these woods?
3. How did all this sand get in this creek?
4. Where did all these big rocks come from?
5. Why do these trees grow so tall, straight and branchless?



Answers to boxed questions:

1. *Glacial runoff carved Delaware's valleys from a high plateau.*
2. *Oak and beech.*
3. *Eroded soil carried downstream from far-off mountains.*
4. *Schists of rock were folded in by intense pressure deep in the earth.*
5. *The trees, usually tulip poplars that compete with sycamores as the burliest in Eastern forests, are shade intolerant and are constantly striving for the sun.*

12

Norman G. Wilder Wildlife Area

The Park

The former Petersburg Wildlife Area was re-named for Norman G. Wilder, who embarked on a 56-year conservation career after a four-year stint in the Army in the South Pacific in World War II. A graduate of the University of Connecticut, Wilder was named director of the Delaware Game and Fish Commission in 1948. Like all of the state's Wildlife Area's, Norman G. Wilder is managed for wildlife enhancement and public hunting and rambles with your dog are best avoided during the September through January hunting seasons.

Kent

Phone Number

- None

Website

- None

Admission Fee

- None

Directions

- The Norman G. Wildlife Area is southwest of Dover. Turn right off Route 13 at Canterbury onto Road 32. Go through the village of Viola and continue straight on Road 108. At a T-intersection, turn right. Parking is in designated areas along the roads, the first at a maintenance area about a half-mile on the right.

The Walks

Your canine hiking adventure in Norman G. Wilder Wildlife Area will take place along some 16 miles of fire roads through dense forest and swampland. These roads range from mossy grass to gravelly dirt but all are level and exceedingly easy for your dog to trot. Although you won't notice it, there is enough

"Children are for people who can't have dogs."

-Anonymous