

**Doggin'
Pittsburgh**

***The 50 Best Places
To Hike With Your Dog
In Southwest Pennsylvania***

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Cruden Bay Books



There is always a new trail to look forward to...

**DOGGIN' PITTSBURGH: THE 50 BEST PLACES TO HIKE
WITH YOUR DOG IN SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

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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

Pittsburgh can be a great place to hike with your dog. Within a short drive your canine adventurer can be climbing mountains that leave him panting, trotting through impossibly green ravines, exploring the estates of America's wealthiest families or circling lakes for miles and never lose sight of the water.

I have selected what I consider to be the 50 best places to take your dog for an outing around Pittsburgh 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. Did I miss your favorite? Let us know at www.hikewithyourdog.com.

For dog owners it is important to realize that not all parks are open to our best trail companions (see page 14 for a list of parks that do not allow dogs). It is sometimes hard to believe but not everyone loves dogs. We are, in fact, in the minority when compared with our non-dog owning neighbors.

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. And maybe some others will see the light as well. *Remember, every time you go out with your dog you are an ambassador for all dog owners.*

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 the Pittsburgh region from a canine perspective. 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 his activity level.

Weather

Hot humid 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 the prime hiking days of late fall through early spring that don't seem too warm can cause discomfort in dark-coated dogs if the sun is shining brightly. During cold snaps, short-coated breeds may require additional attention.

Trail Hazards

Dogs won't get poison ivy but they can transfer it to you. 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.

Ticks

You won't be able to spend much time in Pennsylvania woods 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. And when the summer sun fades away don't stop thinking about ticks - they remain active any time the temperature is above 30 degrees. 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.

Water

Surface water, including fast-flowing streams, is likely to be infested with a microscopic protozoa called *Giardia*, waiting to wreak havoc on a dog's intestinal system. The most common symptom is 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.

At the beach, cool sea water will be tempting for your dog but try to limit any drinking as much as possible. Again, have plenty of fresh water available for your dog to drink instead.

🐾 Rattlesnakes and Copperheads, etc.

Rattlesnakes and their close cousins, copperheads, are not particularly aggressive animals but you should treat any venomous snake with respect and keep your distance. A rattler's colors may vary but they are recognized by the namesake rattle on the tail and a diamond-shaped head. Unless cornered or teased by humans or dogs, a rattlesnake will crawl away and avoid striking. Avoid placing your hand in unexamined rocky areas and crevasses and try and keep your dog from doing so as well. Stick to the trail and out of high grass where you can't see well. If you hear a nearby rattle, stop immediately and hold your dog back. Identify where the snake is and slowly back away.

If you or your dog is bitten, do not panic but get to a hospital or veterinarian with as little physical movement as possible. Wrap between the bite and the heart. Rattlesnakes might give "dry bites" where no poison is injected, but you should always check with a doctor after a bite even if you feel fine.



🐾 Black Bears

Are you likely to see a bear while out hiking with your dog? No, it's not likely. It is, however, quite a thrill if you are fortunate enough to spot a black bear on the trail - from a distance.

Black bear attacks are incredibly rare. In the year 2000 a hiker was killed by a black bear in Great Smoky National Park and it was the first deadly bear attack in the 66-year history of America's most popular

national park. It was the first EVER in the southeastern United States. In all of North America only 43 black bear mauling deaths have ever been recorded (through 1999).

Most problems with black bears occur near a campground (like the above incident) where bears have learned to forage for unprotected food. On the trail bears will typically see you and leave the area. What should you do if you encounter a black bear? Experts agree on three important things:

- 1) *Never run. A bear will outrun you, outclimb you, outswim you. Don't look like prey.*
- 2) *Never get between a female bear and a cub who may be nearby feeding.*
- 3) *Leave a bear an escape route.*

If the bear is at least 15 feet away and notices you make sure you keep your dog close and calm. If a bear stands on its hind legs or comes closer it may just be trying to get a better view or smell to evaluate the situation. Wave your arms and make noise to scare the bear away. Most bears will quickly leave the area.

If you encounter a black bear at close range, stand upright and make yourself appear as large a foe as possible. Avoid direct eye contact and speak in a calm, assertive and assuring voice as you back up slowly and out of danger.

Porcupines

Porcupines are easy for a curious dog to catch and that makes them among the most dangerous animals you may meet because an embedded quill is not only painful but can cause infection if not properly removed.

Outfitting Your Dog For A Hike

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

▶ **Collar.**

A properly fitting collar 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 dog's 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. 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 poop 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 southwest Pennsylvania is trail maintenance - your dog can pack out trash left by inconsiderate visitors before you.



 *Are dog booties a good idea?*

Although not typically necessary, dog booties can be an asset, especially for the occasional canine hiker whose paw pads have not become toughened. Many Pittsburgh area trails are rocky and in some places there may be broken glass or roots. Hiking boots for dogs are designed to prevent pads from cracking while trotting across rough surfaces.

 *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
- ▶ insect repellent - no reason to leave your dog unprotected against mosquitoes and biting flies
- ▶ 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 poop 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.

The Best of the Best



DOG-FRIENDLIEST PARK

Townsend Park



BEST INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

Hemlock Trail - Laurel Hill State Park



BEST HIKE TO MEET OTHER DOGS

Hartwood Acres



BEST 1-HOUR WORKOUT FOR YOUR DOG

Brady's Run Park



BEST CANINE HIKE TO A WATERFALL


Hell's Hollow - McConnells Mill State Park





BEST CANINE HIKE TO A VIEW


Wolf Rocks - Laurel Summit State Park





-  **BEST HIKE TO CIRCLE A LAKE WITH YOUR DOG**
Keystone Lake State Park


-  **BEST DOGGIE SWIMMING HOLE**
Blue Hole Creek - Forbes State Forest


-  **BEST RAIL TRAIL FOR YOUR DOG**
Roaring Run Watershed


-  **BEST PLACE TO HIKE ALL DAY WITH YOUR DOG**
Quebec Run Wild Area - Forbes State Forest


-  **BEST 5-MILE HIKE WITH YOUR DOG**
Alpha Pass/Kildoo Loop - McConnells Mill State Park

-  **PRETTIEST HIKE WITH YOUR DOG**
Ferncliff Trail - Ohiopyle State Park

-  **BEST HALF-HOUR HIKE WITH YOUR DOG**
Flat Rock Trail - Linn Run State Park

-  **MOST HISTORIC HIKE FOR YOUR DOG**
Fort Necessity National Battlefield

-  **BEST HIKE THROUGH MEADOWS**
Friendship Hill National Historic Site

-  **PARK YOU WOULD MOST WANT DOGS ALLOWED WHERE THEY CURRENTLY CAN'T GO**
Bear Run Nature Reserve

No Dogs

Before we get started on the best places to take your dog, let's get out of the way some of the parks that do not allow dogs at all:

Bear Run Nature Reserve

Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

Todd Sanctuary

Gilfillan Farm



O.K. that wasn't too bad. Let's forget about these and move on to some of the great places where we CAN take our dogs on Pittsburgh area trails...

*The 50 Best Places
To Hike With Your Dog
Around Pittsburgh...*

I

Ohiopyle State Park

The Park

By the 1870s the railroads had penetrated the rugged Youghiogheny River Gorge and reached Ohiopyle, chasing the timber trade. Quickly enough the breathtaking scenery held sway and soon the Baltimore & Ohio railroad was hauling tourists as well as lumber. It cost \$1 to ride from Pittsburgh to Ohiopyle and back.

Hotels popped up along the gorge, including the four-story Ferncliff Hotel built on a 100-acre peninsula where the Youghiogheny River doubles back on itself. But roads were slower to arrive than rails and with the rise of the automobile vacationers were diverted elsewhere. Hotels fell into disrepair and were torn down.

In 1973 the Ferncliff Peninsula was declared a National Natural Landmark in recognition of its many rare and interesting plants, many being Southern species at the northern reach of their range.

The Walks

Just about anything on your dog's canine hiking wish list is on the menu in the nearly 20,000 acres of Ohiopyle State Park. Waterfalls. Swimming holes. Overlooks. Easy hikes. Vigorous workouts. The mandatory canine hike is luckily the easiest and most centrally located - the three miles of trails that sweep around and across the Ferncliff Peninsula. Hugging the water for most of its 1.7 miles, the hemlock-draped *Fernwood Trail* leads to detours through mature hardwoods and carpets of ferns and past hotel ruins.

Fayette County

Phone Number
- (724) 329-8591

Website
- www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/Parks/ohiopyle.aspx

Admission Fee
- None

Park Hours
- Sunrise to sunset

Directions
- *Ohiopyle*; from the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76), take Exit 91, Donegal. Turn left onto PA 31 east. Travel about two miles, turn right onto PA 711 and PA 381 south. Travel ten miles to Normalville, turn left onto PA 381 south for 11 miles to park.

Bonus

The famous Lower Yough begins after the Ohiopyle Falls and flows seven miles downstream to the Bruner Run Take-out. This is the busiest section of whitewater east of the Mississippi River, studded with Class III and Class IV rapids. A half-dozen alone can be viewed from the *Ferncliff Trail*.

Waterfalls can be tracked down with little purchase on *Jonathan's Run Trail*, the *Great Gorge Trail* and *Meadow Run Trails*. Along Meadow Run the water sluices through waterslides that you don't need a kayak to enjoy. Strap on your dog's climbing gear and check out valley views along the *Kentuck Trail* and atop Baughman Rock.



Cavorting in Meadow Run.

The *Youghiogheny River Trail* is a hike/bike trail so

fine that it was tabbed by *Travel & Leisure* magazine as one of the “The

World's Best Walks.” Your dog won't have to do all 27 miles through the park to agree. Ohiopyle is also the southern terminus for the 70-mile *Laurel Highlands Trail*, one of Pennsylvania's premier footpaths. That would be a highlight of most parks; here it is scarcely a footnote.

Trail Sense: A park map/brochure gives routes and topography; trails are signed and blazed.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to hike in the park but are prohibited in all overnight areas.

Traffic

Many of the trails in the eastern part of the park are multi-use but most of the highlight hikes are foot traffic only.

Canine Swimming

Your water-loving dog won't leave Ohiopyle without a swim, whether in a calm spot in the Youghiogheny or in a pool formed by one of the many runs racing down the mountains.

Trail Time

Many hours to many days.

McConnells Mill State Park

The Park

The ancient 400-foot Slippery Rock Gorge was carved by glacial melt-water that happened so quickly it left rocky outcrops, massive boulders scattered across the canyon floor and swift water that remains to today. In 1974 the 930-acre Slippery Rock Gorge was designated a National Natural Landmark.

Daniel Kennedy built the first gristmill on Slippery Rock Creek. Thomas McConnell purchased the mill in 1875 and modernized it, installing water turbines and one of the first rolling mills in the country. For a half-century the mill ground corn, oats and wheat until it ceased to be profitable. The mill survived the transfer of the property to the Commonwealth and remains at the center of the state park that opened in 1957.

The Walks

All of your dog's hiking day at McConnells Mill will be spent in the six-mile Slippery Rock Gorge. Luckily for those without a car shuttle or a hanker for retracing pawprints, there are two bridges, one open to traffic and one not, that allow a hiking loop on both sides of the turbulent waters. This 2-mile loop begins at the Old Mill and welds the *Kildoo Trail* on the east bank to the *North Country National Scenic Trail* on the west. There is plenty of rock-hopping in store for your dog - more on the east side - and, yes, they can be slippery. But with the heart-stopping scenery in the gorge you won't be in any hurry to be moving at an unsafe speed. You are seldom more than a few bounds from

Lawrence County

Phone Number
- (724) 368-8091

Website
- www.dcnr.state.pa.us/STATEPARKS/parks/mcconnellsmill.aspx

Admission Fee
- None

Park Hours
- Sunrise to sunset

Directions
- *Portersville*; from the intersection of US 19 and US 422, take 422 west and quickly make the first left onto McConnell's Mill Road into the park.

Bonus

Slippery Rock Creek is 49 miles long and filled with foot-challenging boulders but is named for just one exceptionally slick rock. Located below the Armstrong Bridge and not on any park road but accessible by road, a shelf of sandstone at an Indian trail ford was made exceptionally slick by a natural oil seep. When oil wells were dug in the 1800s the oil seep was drained and Slippery Rock is no longer covered in oil.

Slippery Rock Creek that does calm down enough in places for safe dog-paddling. This is often signalled by pockets of sandy beach.

Unless it is mid-week or a lousy weather day you probably won't score one of the four parking spots at the Old Mill so you will need to start at Alpha Pass and hike into the gorge. This dirt path between boulders winds under dark hemlocks and serves as a



The McConnells Mill Covered Bridge was built in 1874 and is a National Historic Landmark.

nice warm-up for the more rugged going downstream from McConnells Mill.

The hike to take to give your dog bragging rights with her friends is the titanic 6.2-mile, one-way *Slippery Rock Gorge Trail*. Confined to the west side of the gorge, this footpath climbs to hillside overlooks and plunges into deep ravines. The all-day hike begins - or ends - in the Upper Hell Run Valley. A parallel strolling path here leads to Hell's Hollow Falls where your dog can stand inside an old lime kiln, reminiscent of the gorge's industrial past.

Trail Sense: The park map and accurate trail markings will keep you going in the right direction but study beforehand to find the trailheads.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to hike throughout the gorge.

Traffic

Foot traffic only and little of that the further you travel from the Old Mill.

Canine Swimming

Yes, but be careful and keep your dog close to shore - you don't want to discover that your dog doesn't understand how to use the life preservers provided along the trail.

Trail Time

At least two hours.

3

Forbes State Forest – Quebec Run Wild Area

The Park

Forbes State Forest takes its name from General John Forbes, a Scotsman who led a methodical march on French-held Fort Duquesne in 1758. Forbes commanded the cutting of a wagon road out of the wilderness over the Allegheny Mountains, building a series of fortifications along the way to serve as supply depots.

Forbes' army was repulsed in its first attack on Fort Duquesne in September and he fell back to wait until spring for his next attempt. In the interim Indian support for the French fell apart and on November 25, 1758 the British were able to occupy a deserted and burned fort. Forbes immediately ordered the construction of a new fort between the rivers, which he called Fort Pitt after British Secretary of State William Pitt the Elder. Gravely ill from his campaign, Forbes left a week later, heading back to Philadelphia to die. His stay in the area was short but his legacy long-lasting. Before he left he named the settlement Pittsburgh.

The Walks

Quebec Run, covering 7,441 wooded acres, is one of 16 state forest areas designated as a "wild area" - no amenities, no developments, including access roads. The forest on the east slope of Chestnut Ridge is laced with a honeycomb of footpaths and abandoned logging roads that make possible a variety of

Fayette County

Phone Number
- (724) 238-1200

Website
- www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforests/maps/ForbesQuebecRun.pdf

Admission Fee
- None

Park Hours
- Sunrise to sunset

Directions
- *Hopwood*; east of town off US 40. At the top of the mountain turn south on Skyline Drive after the Laurel Summit Inn. Go 1.8 miles past Laurel Caverns and bear left where the road goes downhill to the right. This is unmarked and unimproved Quebec Road. Drive carefully down to the parking area on the right in 1.3 miles.

Bonus

Standing along Skyline Drive atop Chestnut Ridge is the last fire tower in the Braddock Division of the Forbes State Forest. Built in 1937, the 80-foot high tower is no longer manned but is open to the public briefly in the fall for unparalleled views of three states. The grounds also house a cabin once used by the full-time fire watcher, plus a pavilion and a topographical marker.

canine hiking loops. Budget at least two hours for any route you devise however.

The hemlock and rhododendron-shaded waters of Quebec Run that split the forest are a prime destination for most visitors. These lively waters are traced by the *Rankin Trail* that is intersected by a trio of trail to compose hiking loops.

Deeper incursions lead to Tebolt Run and Mill Run. Just off Mill Run are the ruins of an old water-powered grist mill.

Trail Sense: Trail maps are available online but not onsite. All the main trail routes are blazed in red so it is critical to pay attention to directional signposts at trail junctions.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the state forest.

Traffic

Foot traffic mostly with a few mountain bikes. Weekends - especially in late spring when the rhododendrons are in bloom - will be busy enough you might see another trail user every half hour or so.

Canine Swimming

Quebec Run and Tebolt Run are mostly for frolicking but Mill Run is deep enough to support a doggie swim.

Trail Time

A full day is possible.



There is nothing better for your dog on a hot day than the spa-like waters of Quebec Run.

4

Laurel Hill State Park

The Park

Pennsylvania's white pine and hemlock were the nation's most valuable natural resource in the mid-1800s. The timber built America and the bark tanned leather. The state's ancient forests were ravaged and laid bare.

The Laurel Hill Valley's rugged slopes staved off the onslaught until the 1880s. But the development of 70-ton Shay locomotives that could haul timber up 15-percent grades with ease ended that. It took logging companies only a few decades to clearcut the trees from the steep stream valleys here.

In the 1930s the National Park Service targeted five areas for restoration and reforestation, including Laurel Hill. The Civilian Conservation

Corps planted trees, built roads and trails and developed recreation facilities. In 1945 the federal government turned over the park centered around Laurel Hill Lake to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Walks

Laurel Hill State Park is a tails-up treat for any dog, featuring a variety of diverse trails with several highlights. You get a choice of eight, all but one between one and two miles in length.

A good appetizer is the *Pumphouse Trail* that targets Jones Mill Run Dam. Like many park trails, this one uses an old logging road grade and is roomy enough to accommodate the snowmobiles that frequent Laurel Hill in the winter. Also like most of the park trails it doesn't loop so you have a choice of park roads and trails to craft a return trip. The most intriguing is the *Tram Road Trail* that hopscotches across Jones Mill Run several times.

Somerset County

Phone Number
- (814) 445-7725

Website
- www.dcnr.state.pa.us/state-parks/parks/laurelhill.aspx

Admission Fee
- None

Park Hours
- Sunrise to sunset

Directions
- *Trent*; from the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76) take the Donegal Exit and pick up PA 31 East. Go 14 miles and follow the directional signs to the park.