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Accessible Fun at Massachusetts State Parks

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State parks in Massachusetts are open to people of all abilities year-round, but the opportunities for outdoor activities really multiply as the weather gets warmer. You may already be aware of the many [accessible trails](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-hiking-trails.html), but did you know there are also accessible ways to fish, kayak, or be the pit master of an accessible grill? All of these activities and more can be found at parks throughout the Commonwealth through the [Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/)’s [Universal Access Program](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/).

You can get an overview of things to do with the [universal access brochure](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/universal-access/accessbroch.pdf), check for upcoming [accessible events](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-events.html), or keep reading for just a small sample of the ways you can have fun outdoors.

## Trails and Paths

[Accessible trails](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-hiking-trails.html) are located at parks across Massachusetts and fall into two categories:

* Accessible trails are paved or stonedust trails designed for universal accessibility. Highlights include the [Ashuwillticook Rail Trail](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/ashuwillticook-rail-trail.html), which runs from Adams to Lanesborough, [Harold Parker State Forest](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-north/harold-parker-state-forest.html), which runs through Andover, North Andover, North Reading, and Middleton, and [Scusset Beach State Reservation](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-south/scusset-beach-state-reservation.html) in Sandwich.
* Assessed trails are dirt hiking trails for those who are up for a more strenuous outing. [Borderland State Park](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-south/borderland-state-park.html) south of Boston features a relatively flat three-mile carriage road around the pond at the center of the park, while [Daughters of the Revolution (DAR) State Forest](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/dar-state-forest-generic.html) in Goshen offers a one-mile loop through the woods and the park’s campground.

The Universal Access Office also provides ways for people who are blind to enjoy DCR parks, including recorded brochures and audio tours, as well as a Berkshire hike guidebook for use by sighted guides. For more information, call 413-545-5353 (voice) or 413-577-2200 (TTY).

## Water Activities

Whether you want to get in the water, be on the water, or just drop a line, DCR offers many ways to enjoy both fresh and salt water.

* [Accessible beaches](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-beaches.html) offer specially designed wheelchairs built for rolling across the sand. You can find them across the Commonwealth, from [Houghton’s Pond](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-south/houghtons-pond-recreation-area.html) in the Blue Hills to [Erving State Forest](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-central/erving-state-forest.html)’s Laurel Lake. Several parks also have ramps leading right to the water, including [Lake Wyola State Park](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-central/lake-wyola-state-park.html) in Shutesbury and [Dunn State Park](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-central/dunn-state-park.html) in Gardner.
* [Accessible fishing](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-fishing.html) can be found at several DCR parks with accessible fishing piers, including [Scusset Beach State Reservation](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-south/scusset-beach-state-reservation.html), [Mount Tom State Reservation](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/mount-tom-state-reservation.html) in Holyoke, and [Hopkinton State Park](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-north/hopkinton-state-park.html).
* [Accessible boating](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-boating.html) of the non-motorized kind can be found at a variety of parks: Take part in a kayak program at [Walden Pond State Reservation](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-north/walden-pond-state-reservation.html) in Lincoln and Concord, canoe at [Connecticut River Greenway State Park](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/connecticut-river-greenway-state-park.html) in Northampton, or sail the Charles River through [Community Boating’s Universal Access Program](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.community-boating.org/programs/universal-access-program/).

## Stay for the Day or Overnight

Want to refuel or catch a glimpse of the starry night sky? DCR parks offer a number of ways to extend your stay while enjoying the outdoors.

* [Accessible picnicking](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-picnicking.html) sites have pedestal grills and wheelchair-accessible tables. Pit bosses can grill up in [Pittsfield State Forest](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/pittsfield-state-forest-generic.html) in the Berkshires or [Horseneck Beach State Reservation](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-south/horseneck-beach-state-reservation.html) in Westport.
* [Accessible camping](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-camping-generic.html) makes it more than just a day trip. Try the yurts at [Nickerson State Park](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-south/nickerson-state-park.html) on the Cape, stay in a cabin at [Mohawk Trail State Forest](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/mohawk-trail-state-forest.html), or head to [DAR State Forest](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-west/dar-state-forest-generic.html), which features wheelchair-accessible tent sites.

In addition, [accessible restrooms](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/accessible-restroom.html) are available at many DCR parks. Park maps also show the location of restrooms, parking, and other facilities.

## Plan Ahead

While many of the accessible options at state parks are free and don’t require advance notice, some involve fees and can fill up at peak times. If your activity of choice involves DCR equipment or camping, it’s best to call ahead and make reservations. It’s also a good idea to call if bad weather is in the forecast — some programs may be cancelled if conditions are poor.

Many programs also require participants or parents/legal guardians to sign the [DCR Participant Registration & Release](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/universal-access/waiver-dcr.pdf) form, and everyone should take a moment to read the [Essential Eligibility Criteria for Program Participants](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/essential-eligibility-criteria-for-program-participants.html), which covers everything you need to know to have a fun and safe experience at DCR state parks.

Get your summer started now! Whether you’re looking for nearby fun or you want to take a road trip, you won’t run out of [accessible things to do](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/) in the great state of Massachusetts.

**What is your favorite accessible activity? What’s your favorite DCR park? Tell us by commenting or tweeting**[**@MassGov**](https://web.archive.org/web/20220325045443/https:/twitter.com/massgov)**.**

 Written By:

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