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Enjoy the Outdoors at DCR Parks in Massachusetts

July 21, 2015

Chances are you’re already close to one of the more than [150 state parks](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/places-to-go/) in Massachusetts. This summer, get outdoors and host a picnic with friends, hike on a trail, or spend the day bird watching.

Learn where the Commonwealth’s many parks and recreation sites are located, how much the entrance fees cost, and how to make the most of your park visit, as well as how you can get involved in preserving our natural treasures.

**Locations and Fees**

Start planning your outdoor adventure by finding [places to go](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/places-to-go/massachusetts-state-parks-alpha.html) near you or browsing the [Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR)](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/) list of [parks, grouped by region](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/places-to-go/).

Keep in mind that most DCR facilities charge [day use parking fees](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/passes-and-fees/parking-fees.html). However, daily parking fees are waived for [Annual MassParks Pass](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/passes-and-fees/buy-parks-pass-dcr-generic.html) and [Senior MassParks Pass](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/passes-and-fees/senior-massparks-pass.html) holders, or for vehicles bearing a handicapped or disabled veteran license plate from any state.

Massachusetts residents can purchase a pass for $60 at any DCR park or beach that charges daily parking fees by bringing proof of residency, such as a driver’s license. The fee for nonresidents is $85 per calendar year, and the fee for a lifetime senior membership is $10. If you’re not ready to buy one, you can [borrow a MassParks Pass](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/passes-and-fees/borrow-a-parkspass.html) from a participating library or recreation department.

Some DCR parks and recreation areas allow dogs. When [bringing dogs into DCR state parks](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/dogs-in-massparks.html), make sure to follow the rules of each facility and be respectful of other visitors.

**Activities and Attractions**

Massachusetts parks have activities for visitors of all ages, abilities, and interests to try this summer.

* **Walking, Hiking, and Biking**— Break a sweat this summer by [biking](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/biking-paths-and-trails.html) or [hiking](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/hiking.html) on a [park trail](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/places-to-go/trail-maps-generic.html). If you prefer a casual stroll to take in nature at your own pace, [walking trails](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/walking-trails.html) are also available.
* **Camping and Picnicking**— Spend the day [picnicking](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/picnicking.html) at no cost or the night [camping](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/blog.mass.gov/blog/living-in-massachusetts/celebrate-great-outdoors-month-camp-in-massachusetts/) at designated [campsites for a fee](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/massparks-campground-fees-generic.html). Be sure to make a [camping reservation](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/massparks-camping-info-generic.html) and follow all [DCR camping regulations](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/recreate/campinfo/regs-camping-2014.pdf).
* **Kayaking, Canoeing, and Fishing** — If you prefer water activities, check out the [canoeing and kayaking](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/canoeing-and-kayaking.html) options at state parks. Some DCR parks offer rentals, or you can bring your own. [Recreational fishing](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/blog.mass.gov/blog/living-in-massachusetts/recreational-fishing-in-massachusetts/) is also available, but make sure you have a [fishing license](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/licensing/who-needs-a-license.html) or permit if required before heading out to the water.
* **Scenic Viewing**— From the mountains in the Berkshires to the beaches of Cape Cod, enjoy breathtaking scenery at designated [scenic viewing areas](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/scenic-viewing-areas.html) all over the Commonwealth.

Everyone can have [fun at Massachusetts state parks](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/blog.mass.gov/blog/living-in-massachusetts/accessible-fun-at-massachusetts-state-parks/) through [DCR’s Universal Access Program](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/accessibility/). Make sure your plans go off without a hitch by calling ahead, since some accessible activities may involve fees and can fill up fast.

**How Else to Get Involved**

DCR provides various opportunities for residents to get involved and to help shape Massachusetts parks and recreation areas. You can start by:

* **Volunteering** — There are many opportunities to [volunteer in parks](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/get-involved/volunteer-ops/). Make sure to review the [program guide](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/get-involved/volunteer-ops/dcr-volunteer-in-parks-program-guide.html) and sign a [release form](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/volunteer/volunteer-release-form1.pdf) before starting.
* **Educating** — Share your enthusiasm with your family and friends and engage them in a conversation about DCR parks and recreational areas. If you have young children, sign them up for [educational trips](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/programs-and-events/educational-field-trip-opportunities.html) where they can learn hands-on about nature and wildlife at no cost, or get a [DCR Park Passport](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/park-passport/) and explore on your own.
* **Donating** — Donate to [DCR’s trust fund](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/get-involved/donate-trust-funds/) to help maintain state parks, forests, and recreational areas. The contributions are tax-deductible and can be allocated to your favorite park. To donate, [fill out a donation form](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/stewardship/trust/contribution-form.doc) and mail it to DCR.

**What are your favorite outdoor activities? Share below or tweet us**[**@MassGov**](https://web.archive.org/web/20150810092027/https:/twitter.com/MassGov)**.**

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