EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL

A series of 12 hikes (and one canoe trip) will be held on the North Country Trail as we celebrate 125 years of Minnesota State Parks and Trails and 100 years of the National Park Service. Scheduled one per month, these hikes are sponsored by both Itasca State Park and the Itasca Moraine and Laurentian Lakes Chapters of the National North Country Trail. Explore different sections on the scenic national hiking trail system as it passes through remote portions of Itasca State Park.

Trying for the 125 Miles by Bike, Boot or Boat Challenge or the National Parks Service 100 miles? These events can help you add a little distance.

JANUARY
SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 2016
11:30 A.M.-3 P.M.
“SECOND DAY” HIKE: A BACKCOUNTRY EXPLORATION ON THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL
Help keep your New Year’s resolutions going on the second day of the new year! Join us for an invigorating snowshoe hike as we explore the backcountry area around Hernando DeSoto and Morrison Lakes. This will be a strenuous 3 mile hike.

FEBRUARY
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2016
3-6 P.M.
OWL HOOTING SNOWSHOE HIKE: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AT DUSK.
Join us for a late afternoon invigorating snowshoe hike as we make a loop past Sibilant, Iron Corners and Josephine Lakes. February is the time of year that owls begin to call as they establish nesting territories. The hike will go through an ideal area to potentially see and hear barred owls. Portions of this 3 mile route will be a strenuous.

MARCH
SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2016
1-4 P.M.
SPRING EQUINOX SNOWSHOE HIKE: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AND SIBILANT LAKE
Join us for the “last” day of winter during this afternoon snowshoe hike as we explore Sibilant Lake. March, known as the crust of snow period, is a great time of year to see wildlife as they take advantage of traveling across the hardened, crusty snow. Portions of this 3 mile route will be a strenuous.

APRIL
SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2016
12:30-4 P.M.
LAURENTIAN DIVIDE VISTA HIKE: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AND THE MISSISSIPPI/RED RIVER WATERSHED
Welcome the budding of spring during this afternoon hike. This strenuous hike is well worth the effort as we hike to a spectacular overlook on the Laurentian Divide (elevation 1,730 feet). Looking north-east, you will be viewing the Mississippi watershed basin at its beginnings around Itasca State Park. To the west is the Red River (of the North) watershed. Portions of this 4 mile route will be a strenuous.

MAY
SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2016
10 A.M.-1 P.M.
SPRING WILDFLOWER HIKE: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AND ITASCA’S WESTERLY WOODS
Remember to bring your camera as we discover the array of spring wildflowers during this late morning hike. We will be looking for the first ephemeral wildflowers of the “flower-budding” season as we hike through old growth hardwood forests. Watch for large flowered bellworts, hepatica and trillium. Portions of this 4 mile route will pass numerous wetlands and lakes where we might see returning waterfowl and shorebirds, so don’t forget your binoculars.
12 MONTHS OF NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL HIKES (AND CANOEING)!

JUNE
SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 2016
12:30-4 P.M.
NATIONAL TRAILS DAY GLACIAL HILLS HIKE: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AND ITASCA STATE PARK
Join us on the longest National Scenic Trail in the second oldest State Park in the USA! This 4.5 mile hike will pass by Three Pines Pond and several other wetlands as we hike this rolling glacially formed landscape. Noted for its “knobs and kettle” topography, or rolling moraines and lakes landscape, we will enter the park at the end of the hike route.

SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2016
10:30 A.M.-NOON
LADYSLIPPERS OF ITASCA: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AND ITASCA’S ORCHIDS
Bring your camera because June is orchid month along the North Country Trail and the numerous other trails within Itasca State Park. Join us on this special 2.2 mile hike as we look for Minnesota’s state flower, the showy lady slipper and other orchids that may be blooming. A variety of other wildflowers will also be in bloom during our “strawberry moon” month.

JULY
WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2016
9 A.M.-NOON
PADDLING THE ROUTE OF SCHOOLCRAFT CANOE/KAYAK TOUR: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AND LAKE ITASCA
On this day in 1832, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and his exploration party were led by Ojibwe guide Ozawindib to Lake Itasca, the source of the Mississippi River. Now, 184 years later, join the park naturalists as we explore Lake Itasca from a canoe (or kayak) during this 6.5 mile morning paddle. The early portage routes within the Itasca basin make up some of the “first” hiking trails. Learn where Schoolcraft portaged in order to reach the source of the Mississippi River.

AUGUST
SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 2016
10:30 A.M.-7:30 P.M. (MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES)
10TH ANNUAL NORTH COUNTRY HIKING FEST: TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE!
A day packed full of family friendly and healthy activities focusing on the National North Country Trail. Are you brave enough to take on the challenge? This year we celebrate 10 years by hiking the entire length of the North Country Trail in Itasca State Park. Our 10.6 mile hiking challenge will begin at the western access point on the Anchor Matson Road and hike across the entire width of the park, where we will conclude near Highway 71.

SEPTEMBER
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2016
6:30 P.M.
ITASCA’S 9TH ANNUAL AUTUMN HARVEST FESTIVAL AND LANTERN LIT HIKE: MAKING ITASCA MEMORIES
“Making Memories” is this year’s theme for our lantern lit hike. Guides with lanterns will lead you down the kerosene lantern-lit trail as we walk through the photo album of Itasca’s past. Pictures will come to life as you meet characters that will share stories about recreating in Itasca State Park during this family-friendly 1/2 mile evening hike.

OCTOBER
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2016
12:30-3 P.M.
FALL COLORS VISTA HIKE: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL AND THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATERSHED
The forest is bursting with color as autumn peaks in the Itasca area! This hike can be challenging but is well worth the effort as we hike to a wonderful overlook at Tim-Don-Del Hill (elevation 1,750 feet). Stand amongst majestic red pine as you look across a sea of hardwoods towards the Smokey Hills seen 18 miles to the south. See the rolling glacial hills that help created the Mississippi watershed basin at its beginnings around Itasca State Park. Portions of this 2.5 mile route will be a strenuous.

NOVEMBER
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2016
1-3 P.M.
DISCOVERING THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS: EXPLORING ITASCA ALONG THE DR. ROBERTS TRAIL
Many of the hiking trails (including portions of the North Country Trail within Itasca State Park), are the result of the boys of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) of the 1930s. Learn about the boys, their work projects and even tour the Old Timer’s Cabin, one of the buildings they constructed, as we hike along the Dr. Robert’s Trail. Part of this 2 mile hike can be challenging.

DECEMBER
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2016
1-3 P.M.
WILDLIFE TRACKING HIKE: EXPLORING THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL IN EARLY WINTER
The first signs of winter are all around us. Join us for an afternoon hike as we explore the tracks of Itasca’s critters in the first dustings of snow. This 2.5 mile hike will pass through stands of birch and aspen and scattered stands of red pine. We will conclude at Iron Corner—the location where three counties—Becker, Clearwater and Hubbard—come together.