

Getting Started

What to bring:

Come as you are! It is recommended that you wear comfortable clothes, sturdy shoes, and dress for the weather (a raincoat is always a good idea). Keep the following in a pack or bag when you visit:



A filled water bottle
Insect repellent
Sunscreen
Sunglasses
A snack (like trail mix or an energy bar)
Optional: camera, binoculars, a first-aid kit, and a GPS unit or compass.
Note: Be aware that cell phones often do not work in wooded areas.

Leave firewood at home:

When camping or picnicking at any Minnesota state park, state forest, or other state land, use only firewood purchased at the park or from an approved vendor. Firewood restrictions prohibit bringing firewood from home (except unpainted and unstained dimensional lumber, such as two-by-four scraps), because it might contain pests like the Emerald Ash Borer, which can destroy trees and devastate forests. For a list of approved vendors and more details, visit mndnr.gov/firewood.



Join the Hiking Club:

Explore designated hiking trails and collect patches and other rewards! To participate, pick up a Hiking Club kit (\$14.95) next time you're at a Minnesota state park, then follow the trails marked with "Hiking Club" signs. When you find the password posted on each trail, enter it in your book, and watch your miles add up toward the prize levels.

Visit 71 Minnesota state parks and recreation areas:

As a Passport Club member, your goal is to visit 71 Minnesota's magnificent state parks and recreation areas, from Afton to Zippel Bay. You'll be rewarded for your travels with patches, free nights of camping, and—when you've visited them all—a customized plaque with your name on it. The Passport Club kit (\$14.95) can be purchased at most state parks.



Weather-related cancellations:

Naturalists are a hardy bunch who endure all kinds of weather, but the safety and comfort of our visitors comes first. Occasionally, due to flooding, extreme heat and severe weather in general, a program may be canceled or changed. When in doubt, call the park or check for updates online at mndnr.gov/parksandtrails.



Rent canoes, kayaks, and other equipment:

Many Minnesota state parks have rental equipment available, including canoes, kayaks, motorboats, and personal flotation devices. For more information on what's available and where, visit mndnr.gov/parksandtrails or call the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 (Twin Cities) or 1-800-657-3929 (toll free).



Inspire a young naturalist:

Pick up free Junior Park Naturalist activity booklets—three in all—at any Minnesota state park office and start exploring! When kids complete a booklet, they earn a patch and a certificate to recognize them as a Junior Park Naturalist. After completing all three they become official "nature experts" with a patch to prove it.



Schedule programs for school and youth groups:

Many state parks offer tours and educational programs for students, scouts, and other groups. Call a Minnesota state park to inquire about special group presentations. The following parks have naturalists available:

- Forestville/Mystery Cave
- Fort Snelling
- Gooseberry Falls
- Grand Portage
- Hill Annex Mine
- Interstate
- Itasca
- Jay Cooke
- Lake Bemidji
- Lake Carlos
- Mille Lacs Kathio
- St. Croix
- Sibley
- Soudan Underground Mine
- Tettegouche
- Whitewater
- Wild River
- William O'Brien

MinnAqua Programs:

MinnAqua is a statewide education program designed to teach angling recreation and stewardship as well as the ecology and conservation of aquatic habitats. MinnAqua Education Specialists and interns partner with schools, youth groups, and community organizations to hold fishing and aquatic education programs throughout the state. Visit mndnr.gov/minnaqua for more information about programs.

