ABOUT THE PARK

Afton State Park was established in 1969 for visitors to experience unique natural features and enjoy outdoor recreation. Just forty minutes east of the Twin Cities, the park lies along bluffs overlooking the St. Croix River. Here you will see wildflowers and grasses in restored prairies that were once agricultural fields. Below, outcrops of limestone jut from the sides of deep, forested ravines that drop three hundred feet to the river. Make your way down to the water’s edge and watch for wildlife. The park’s diverse habitats make it a birdwatcher’s haven with over 190 species, some of which are rare.

VISITOR TIPS

• Wear good hiking shoes.
• The campground is backpack-only and is a strenuous ¾-mile hike from the parking lots.
• The swimming beach is a ½-mile walk from parking areas. No lifeguard is on duty.
• River access requires a ½-mile portage. There is no drive-in boat ramp.
• Bicyclists and horseback riders should stay on their designated trails.
• In an emergency call 911.
• Non-emergency sheriff’s number: 651-439-9381

TRAIL HIGHLIGHTS

All distances are from the park visitor center.

North River Trail
Flat • Crushed gravel
Follow the St. Croix River as you head north along a former railroad grade. Pass through floodplain forest and the lower picnic area. Go past two railroad bridges and take the trail to the top of the bluff for scenic overlooks of the river valley.

Prairie Loop
Rolling terrain • Mowed grass • Shared with horseback riders seasonally
Circle the park’s largest open area and imagine what the prairies looked like when the first European settlers arrived. Experience views of the river valley and the Afton Alps Ski Area. Set out on this trail by foot in summer or skis in winter.

Trout Brook Loop
Steep terrain • Packed dirt • Grass • Wooden bridges
Be ready for a workout as you follow Trout Brook through a secluded ravine and then head up over a bluff top. Your effort will be rewarded with solitude and scenery as you hike.

Deer Valley Loop
Steep terrain • Narrow • Packed dirt
Follow an intermittent creek as this narrow foot trail brings you up hills and down ravines. Keep an eye out for wildlife in this wooded habitat. The southernmost trail loop climbs to the top of a bluff and a wide prairie with expansive views.

South River Trail
Flat • Crushed Gravel
Encounter long, uninterrupted views of the St. Croix River and golden maple leaves in the fall. Cross country ski this trail in the winter.

MORE TO EXPLORE AT THE PARK

• Join a free naturalist program.
• Hike ravines carved by glacial meltwater.
• Find a geocache or navigate an orienteering course.
• Borrow a GPS, fishing equipment, birding kit or discovery kit.