

## Why Visit Wild River State Park

Wild River State Park offers a great variety of natural habitats in a peaceful, serene setting. Visitors have an opportunity to experience the flavor of northern Minnesota's conifer forests, southern Minnesota's hardwood forests, and western Minnesota's tallgrass prairie. Encounters with wildlife and wildflowers common to all of these habitats make the park a place worth returning to over and over. Sixteen miles of shoreline on the St. Croix River provide sightseeing, fishing, and canoeing on a river recognized as the cleanest of its size in the eastern United States.

Wild River offers visitors more solitude than many state parks. Thirty-five miles of trail allow visitors to spread out. Sometimes you feel as if you have the whole park to yourself. Campsites are spacious and screened from neighboring campers. Walk-in and canoe camping sites in more remote parts of the park provide an even greater sense of seclusion.

There are plenty of activities for all ages and abilities. Besides a wide range of do-it-yourself recreation and nature observation, visitors can attend naturalist programs and hikes, get involved in seasonal events such as the annual candlelight ski and hike night in winter or maple-syruping in early spring, explore history through indoor and outdoor exhibits, or participate in a volunteer-based effort to restore native prairie and oak savanna.

Because the park is located away from major highways, it attracts visitors who are looking for a quiet, nature-oriented experience. New visitors may find that other visitors who have experienced the park before are great sources of knowledge and experience. Visitors and staff alike have their own personal favorite places and activities in the park. Sharing these favorites with others can be an enjoyable part of your experience at Wild River.

If you want to know more, here are some highlights:

### History exploration:

Walk into the past on parts of an 1852 road which carried stagecoaches from the Twin Cities to Lake Superior.

Marvel at the 40 foot high remnant of a railroad which was never completed – an embankment which dead-ends in the middle of the forest along the Sunrise Loop.

Imagine the park landscape as seen by pioneer farmers – an untouched wilderness teeming with wildlife.

Stand on the end of the dike which anchored a famous logging-era dam – Nevers Dam, said to have been the largest wooden pile dam ever built.

Compare your height and the sizes of familiar objects in today's world with the dimensions of the huge white pine trees which lured loggers to the St. Croix Valley in the 1800s.

Get a glimpse into how archaeologists explore human use of Minnesota's landscape before the beginning of written history.

### Nature exploration:

Experience northern Minnesota wildlife within an hour's drive from the Twin Cities. Besides deer, bear, beaver, coyote, and fox, you may see signs of bobcat, porcupine, fisher, river otter, perhaps even a visiting wolf.

Feel like you're in two places at once: Gaze across Dry Creek at old-growth white pine with the feel of a northern Minnesota forest, while standing in an oak savanna typical of southeastern Minnesota.

Enjoy restored prairies changing through the seasons, from spring green to summer wildflowers progressing from bud to bloom to seed at different rates so the prairie never looks the same as it did the last time you visited, to the russet and golden colors of native grasses in the fall.

Experience two distinct fall color peaks: first the brilliant hues of the maples, followed by the more subdued beauty of the oaks.

Have a hands-on experience with nature. Make your own maple syrup in early spring naturalist-led workshops, or help restore prairie and savanna landscapes by collecting or sowing native plant seed, or sign up to adopt a prairie species and observe it through its periods of blooming and seed production and collect the seed to help restore the species to more places in the park.

Explore the St. Croix River, a highway for waterfowl migration in spring and fall and a winter refuge for Trumpeter Swans. Songbird migration also takes advantage of the forested river valley. Waves of warblers, sparrows, and finches move through every spring and fall. Watch for the first arrivals of colorful Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, Eastern Bluebirds, and Scarlet Tanagers each spring. Follow the seasonal changes of American Goldfinches, from their brilliant yellow summer plumage to the subtle camouflage colors of winter and back to yellow again in spring. Bird diversity is high due to the wide variety of habitat and the river corridor connecting the north woods with southern Minnesota. Over 200 species have been observed, and over 130 species are known to nest here.

Other activities:

Wild River State Park has silent sports for everyone. Explore forest and prairie landscapes on a universally accessible paved trail, natural-surfaced hiking and horseback trails, easy walks on level terrain, and challenging hill trails. The park has thirty-five miles of trail through natural landscapes. Winter trails provide for hiking, snowshoeing, and traditional or skate skiing. Snowshoe and ski rental are available at the park.

Enjoy scenic vistas of the St Croix Valley from the fully accessible decks at the visitor center or picnic shelter, or get close-up looks from several river-edge trails or the overlook at the site of Nevers Dam.

Canoe a peaceful 10 mile stretch of the near-pristine St. Croix River between the park's Sunrise River Access and the main boat landing. You're almost guaranteed to see Bald Eagles and other wildlife. Anglers will find that the St. Croix provides chances to catch nearly every species of game fish found in Minnesota.

Want to explore the park, but not ready to try camping? Reserve one of the six winterized camper cabins or the park's guest house. Campers can choose from modern vehicle camping in summer or rustic camping in winter plus horse trailer camping May through October, a group camp, backpack sites, and canoe campsites.

Join naturalist-led hikes and talks or explore the exhibits and activities at the visitor center most weekends throughout the year. Schools, churches, and other groups can request naturalist programs on weekdays or weekends on a wide variety of topics.

Try and solve the toughest puzzle geocache in the state park system, Wild River State Park History Cache I. We claim it's harder to find than the St. Paul Winter Carnival Medallion. If you succeed, add your name to the few who have found the cache and claim your unique PathTag award. For those who want something less difficult but still challenging, choose from several virtual or traditional geocaches.

Experienced and friendly staff at Wild River State Park can help you choose activities and destinations. We hope you will visit soon!