



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## New York Parks Offer Summer Time Fun

JAMES L. SEWARD July 8, 2010

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As families and individuals look for ways to enjoy the wonderful summer weather, people need to look no further than our local state parks. July is Park and Recreation Month across the nation and here in New York we have many great reasons to celebrate.

Our public parks and state lands are among our greatest resources, particularly in upstate, and they fulfill a number of roles. They are a strong source of tourist dollars, drawing people

from other parts of New York, neighboring states, and across the nation. Along with generating money for the state, our parks also help support many other businesses, from small grocery stores, to souvenir shops selling locally produced keepsakes, to farm stands offering homegrown fruits and vegetables.

In this time of “staycations” our parks are also one of the remaining affordable getaways for many New Yorkers. Most New York State parks charge a per vehicle fee of between \$6 and \$8 for day use. While there may be some additional charges for certain amenities, the price of admission is very reasonable. Even better, users can purchase an Empire Passport which provides unlimited day access to most state parks and recreation facilities for just \$65 a year. That’s less than a one night stay at most hotels. There are also special reduced rate programs available for individuals with permanent disabilities, senior citizens, and members of the New York State Militia or any branch of the New York State National Guard or military reserves who has a period of active duty in support of the war on terrorism since September 11, 2001.

Just like our state’s melting pot population, our parks and state lands are extremely diverse. Outdoor recreational pursuits like hiking, swimming, fishing, and camping abound at the vast majority of our 178 state parks. Tennis, disc golf, biking, horseback riding and hunting are other endeavors enjoyed by many park and state land users. Challenging golf courses can also be found at nearly twenty of our parks. In fact, Bethpage State Park on Long Island has hosted the U.S. Open twice in the last decade. Weekend duffers can tee it up at this world class facility where the greats of golf have played.

Along with experiencing nature in all of its splendor, a great number of special events are scheduled at our state parks. Park goers can join expert artists as they create sand sculptures out of four tons of sand, witness horse and carriage driving competitions, even learn the art of fish filleting from a seasoned fisherman.

New York's past is also on display at state historic sites that dot the landscape. Here in the 51st senate district sightseers can find:

- Herkimer Home in Little Falls - the estate that once belonged to the courageous Revolutionary War hero, General Nicholas Herkimer;
- Hyde Hall in Cooperstown - one of the largest domestic structures built in the U.S. between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars;
- John Burroughs Memorial in North Blenheim - the last resting place of this famous literary naturalist which offers magnificent views of the Catskill Mountains.

While we are immersed in the summer months, it is also important to note that most of our state parks offer a number of wonderful wintertime opportunities as well. Once the snow flies and the temperature drops ice skating, ice fishing, sledding, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and snowshoeing are among the popular activities that can be pursued within the confines of the New York State park system.

Information on all of our state's wonderful parks can be found on-line through the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation website at [nysparks.state.ny.us](http://nysparks.state.ny.us). The website includes directions to all of the state's parks along with hours of operation, events calendars, even downloadable trail maps. The website can also be used to purchase an Empire Passport and reserve a campsite for an overnight adventure.

I hope everyone has the opportunity this summer to experience New York's natural beauty by visiting one of our state parks.

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