



Chopawamsic Backcountry Campground



Campers enjoy the quiet, uncrowded nature of the Chopawamsic Backcountry Area.
Photograph courtesy: National Park Service.

Overview

Prince William Forest Park, a unit of the National Park System, is a 15,000+ acre piedmont forest preserving a variety of natural and cultural resources 32 miles south of Washington, D.C. The park offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including 37 miles of hiking trails, over 21 miles of bicycle accessible roads and trails and numerous campgrounds. The park's cultural resources are varied and include historic cabin camps built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s and used by the Office of Strategic Services (predecessor to the CIA) during the Second World War.

Chopawamsic

Looking for some peace and quiet? Want to get back to nature, listen to the sounds of the nocturnal world, or simplify your life? Then come experience primitive camping at Prince William Forest Park.

Chopawamsic (chop-ah-wahm-zik), which means "Isolated Lodge" in Algonquian, consists of approximately 400 acres of backcountry area with a wilderness-like feel. Within this tract of land, there are eight designated campsites available. Campsites are accessible from the two-mile loop trail.

Chopawamsic is open to the public year-round. A permit is required to gain admittance and can be obtained by completing a permit application at the visitor center between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily except Christmas Day, New Year's Day and Thanksgiving Day.

This permit must be returned to the visitor center after leaving the backcountry area. The backcountry permit is free of charge, however an entrance fee of \$5.00 is required to gain admittance into the park. The \$5.00 entrance pass is valid for 7 consecutive days. Entrance fees help fund park projects and upkeep of park resources.

Regulations

Chopawamsic Backcountry has eight designated tent camp sites which are identified by a post marker and are accessible from the circuit trail. Please indicate which tent site you wish to use on the permit application.

Tents must be located within twenty feet of the post marker.

Maximum stay is seven consecutive days or 14 days in one calendar year.

Trenching, leveling or digging is not permitted in any campsite. Bringing straw, hay, pine boughs or any vegetative materials to any campsite is prohibited.

Open fires are strictly prohibited. All cooking must be done on camp stoves.

Ropes, clotheslines, tent lines, hammocks and nails are not to be attached to trees or other vegetation.

Swimming and hunting are prohibited.

The following are prohibited in the backcountry: firearms, bow and arrows, weapons of any kind, fireworks and pets.

Camping is limited to four people or one family unit per site in the Chopawamsic Backcountry area. Chopawamsic is not designed for groups. Group camping is available at Turkey Run Ridge Group Campground.

Note: This is only a guide and is not all inclusive. Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations is applicable to the park. For further information, please contact the park's visitor center at 703-221-7181.

Fishing

Fishing is permitted from the National Park Service side of the Breckenridge Reservoir with a valid Virginia state fishing license.

The use of live bait for fishing is prohibited.

To fish from a non-motorized boat or from Quantico Marine Corps Base side of the reservoir, a Marine Corps base permit is required. Call the base at **703-784-5270** Wednesday through Sunday for information on obtaining a base permit.

Sanitation

When disposing of human waste, there are several options available to you.

-Use the "Port-O-Potty" located at the parking lot at the entrance to the backcountry.

-Dig a "Cat Hole". The dimensions should be six to eight inches deep and four inches wide. Choose a site at least 200 feet from all water sources and well outside the twenty foot post perimeter. After depositing waste, replace the soil, leaves and other debris to completely cover the waste. The bacteria in the soil and leaves as well as the microorganisms and macroorganisms assist in breaking down the waste.

Your third option is to pack your waste out with you when you leave. This method is the least damaging to the environment.

Stream and lake water may be unsafe for human consumption. Drinking and cooking water must be carried in or water must be treated by a water filter, by boiling or through the use of iodine tablets.

Please leave your campsite cleaner than how you found it (pack it in, pack it out). All trash, refuse and unused food items must be packed out.

Deposit waste water on the ground away from streams and vegetation.

Do not bathe in the streams or any other body of water in the backcountry area. Doing so is very damaging to the aquatic plants and animals as well as contributing to lowered water quality.

Emergencies & Wildlife

Help the National Park Service manage the area for everyone's use. Protect the natural environment by respecting wildlife.

For your health and safety, do not try to approach or feed the wildlife. Observe it from a distance and store food in animal-proof containers.

Chopawamsic is closed during the Marine Corps hunting season. Although hunting is not allowed in the park, the land outside the park is used for this purpose.

Lock your vehicle and keep valuables out of sight. Display your backcountry permit clearly on the dashboard of your vehicle.

Report all emergencies to a park ranger. The park visitor center is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with exception to Christmas day, Thanksgiving and New Year's day. The visitor center phone number is 703-221-7181.

For a law enforcement concern, please contact a park ranger or call Park Dispatch at [866-677-6677](tel:866-677-6677), or call 9-1-1 for emergencies.

