



Park Etiquette and Safety Tips



In Brief

Prince William Forest Park, a unit of the National Park Service, 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 bicycling 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 1930's.

Safety Statistics

Of the Approximately 227,000 people who visited Prince William Forest Park in 2003, there were a total of twelve reported incidents.

Bicycling

Visitors had trouble braking properly on loose gravel. Please pay close attention to your surroundings, and watch your speed.

Visitors became dehydrated after bicycling. Make sure you carry plenty of water... and stay within your limits.

Slips/Falls

Two of the incidents were slips related to icy conditions during the winter season. One head injury was reported by a visitor while recreating on rocks in Quantico Creek.

We hope these incidents emphasize the importance of making safety your personal goal. The following hints could help keep your visit to the park safe and enjoyable.

Hiking Safety

Hiking is done at the visitor's own risk. Please observe these tips for a fun and safe hike.

- Take five minutes to stretch your muscles before and after your hike. Warm up by starting slowly, then pick up the pace.
- Plan your trip before you go and let someone know your route.
- Bring a small first aid kit, always wear

sunscreen, take several rests, and carry a map and compass.

- Drink plenty of water.
- Always keep dogs on a leash.
- Follow tick prevention tips noted below.
- Note that rocks in park streams can be extremely slippery. Please stay on marked trails and observe park rules

Bicycling Safety

Bicycling is done at the visitor's own risk. Please observe these tips for a fun and safe ride.

- Always wear a helmet.
- Gloves are recommended.
- Maintain your bicycle, look it over before each ride.
- Be aware of your surroundings, including debris on the road or trail.

- Ride at a safe speed and observe all traffic rules.
- Be aware of changing weather.
- Carry plenty of drinking water.
- Take along a park map.
- Avoid horseplay.

Backcountry Camping Safety

Camping in the Chopawamsic Backcountry area can be very rewarding and peaceful. Please read the bulletin specific to the Chopawamsic Backcountry for full details on rules and regulations. You must have a permit to camp in a primitive site.

There are precautions that should be taken when camping in the backcountry. Campers should be prepared for changing weather conditions. It is always a good idea to let someone know where you are going and how long you will be gone. Many supplies are recommended for primitive camping,

including a flashlight with extra batteries, pocket knife, first aid kit, nylon cord, waterproof matches, topographic map and compass, and plenty of food.

Always carry a supply of drinking water or have a method for purifying such as a filter, iodine tablets, or boiling. Untreated water can harbor a microscopic organism called Giardia that can cause diarrhea, cramps, bloating, and weight loss.

Ticks, Mosquitoes, and Bees

Ticks are most active when the temperature is above 35 degrees. They can generally be found from April - October. Especially high risk times are June and July.

Tips To Avoid Being Bitten

Don't walk bearlegged in the woods, brush, or tall grass. Wear light colored clothing that covers as much skin as possible including long sleeved shirts, long pants, and high socks. Wear closed toe shoes or hiking boots with pants tucked into the socks.

Commercial tick or insect repellent, containing DEET, can be sprayed onto clothing, shoes, and socks. Please read label for precautions and instructions.

Check your head and body carefully during and after your day on the trails. If you are bitten you should remove the tick as soon as possible. This can be achieved by grasping the tick with tweezers as close to your skin as possible and pulling steadily and firmly. Wash the bite with soap and water and apply an antiseptic or antibiotic ointment.

Mosquitoes and West Nile virus

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus. The virus can cause encephalitis or meningitis, however

this occurs in very few cases. Only about 1 in 200 people become seriously ill. The virus is spread when an infected bird is bitten by a mosquito, which in turn bites humans or animals. West Nile virus is not spread from person to person.

Mild symptoms are flu like and sometimes include a skin rash. Severe symptoms include high fever, intense headache, stiff neck, and confusion.

You can help prevent West Nile virus from spreading by eliminating breeding grounds around your home. These areas include anywhere that rainwater collects.

Protect yourself from mosquito bites by wearing insect repellent. The recommended level of DEET for adults is 35% and 10% for children. Adults should apply repellent for children. Only apply to exposed skin and clothes, not under clothing. Wear long, loose, and light colored clothing to deter mosquitos.

Bees

Bees and other stinging insects often nest in or near park buildings and waysides. Please be aware of their presence and avoid disturbing or provoking them. If stung, brush away the stinger and administer ice or a local anesthetic such as Bactine. Visitors allergic to bee stings may wish to contact 911 if necessary.

Park Etiquette

Many people experience the beauty of Prince William Forest Park on a daily basis. To make everyone's visit more enjoyable, several courtesies should be followed.

- Never litter, carry in what you need and be prepared to carry trash out as well.
- Always keep your dog on a leash.
- Allow faster hikers/bikers to pass on the left.
- Announce that you intend to pass someone on their left.

- Respect others and avoid shouting.
- Respect property owners along the park's boundaries.
- Do not disturb the wildlife.
- When stopped, move to the side of the trail leaving room for others to pass.

Make your visit to the park a wonderful one, and allow others to enjoy the serenity that Prince William Forest Park has to offer.

In the event of an emergency, call Park Dispatch at 866-677-6677.