



Visitors to Congaree National Park can enjoy many recreational opportunities, including hiking, paddling, fishing, picnicking, and camping. However, the park’s wilderness character and unique environment make it necessary for you to carefully prepare for your visit. Use this guide and the map on the reverse side to plan a safe and enjoyable visit to Congaree National Park.



GET LOST IN YOUR THOUGHTS,
NOT LOST IN THE WOODS

You are responsible for your own safety. Every year park rangers and other search-and-rescue personnel respond to lost and injured visitors at Congaree National Park. Please consider the following as you prepare for your trip:

- ✓ Plan your route ahead of time.
- ✓ Get the latest conditions from park staff, the NPS App, or www.nps.gov/cong.
- ✓ Tell someone your plans and let them know your expected return time.
- ✓ Don’t rely on electronic devices for navigation and communication. Service in the park is often limited.
- ✓ Know your limits, including physical condition, skill-level, and knowledge of the park trail system.
- ✓ Bring the Ten Essentials with you (see below).

THE TEN ESSENTIALS

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A large fallen tree along Oakridge Trail.

HIKING IN THE CONGAREE WILDERNESS

Even in ideal conditions, some trails can be challenging for those unprepared for a wilderness experience. Most park trails are subject to periodic flooding and may become impassible. Storms can also bring down trees and drop debris on trails. If you encounter such conditions, consider turning around or adjusting your plans. The rating descriptions below can help you find the best trails to fit your desired experience.

TRAIL DIFFICULTY RATINGS

EASY These trails tend to be shorter and are usually simple to navigate; minor obstacles are still possible, such as tripping hazards and slick sections.

MODERATE Trails may be hard to follow in some areas; mud and standing water are possible along low-lying sections; hikers will likely encounter downed trees; emergency response can take a couple hours or more.

DIFFICULT Wayfinding skills are necessary to navigate these longer backcountry trails; major obstacles may be encountered (flooded waterways, large downed trees, etc.); hikers need to be completely self-reliant; emergency response may take many hours.

An elevated section of the Boardwalk Trail during a significant flood.

TRAIL NUMBERS AND MARKERS

Hiking trails are assigned numbers, which appear on reflective blazes attached to trees and posts. To assist with navigation, approximately every one-tenth of a mile, there will be a blaze with GPS coordinates (**right**). Be aware that storms can bring down trees and the trail markers with them. Always pay close attention to your surroundings as you navigate in the forest.

TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

The trail distances listed below are roundtrip from the Harry Hampton Visitor Center. Distances for trails marked with * are roundtrip from trailhead parking lots.

Boardwalk Trail - 2.6 Miles **EASY**
Elevated sections offer access to the forest during floods, while lower sections offer closeup views in drier times.

Bluff Trail (#1) - 1.8 Miles **EASY**
A gentle path through a young upland pine forest. Look for fox squirrels, deer, and evidence of prescribed fires.

Sims Trail (#2) - 3.2 Miles **EASY**
Follow a former hunting club road used by conservationist Harry Hampton to Cedar Creek. A short spur trail leads to Wise Lake, one of the park’s many oxbow lakes.

Weston Lake Trail (#3) - 4.5 Miles **MODERATE**
This popular trail traverses an old-growth cypress-tupelo forest along the edges of Weston Lake and Cedar Creek.

Oakridge Trail (#4) - 7.1Miles **DIFFICULT**
Passing through a rich stretch of old-growth forest, hikers pass towering oaks and cross several guts (small creeks).

River Trail (#5) - 11.1 Miles **DIFFICULT**
This remote trail leads to the Congaree River, the lifeblood of the park. A large sandbar is present at low water levels.

Kingsnake Trail (#6) - 12.0 Miles **DIFFICULT**
This trail passes through cypress-tupelo sloughs and meanders near the south bank of Cedar Creek.

Bates Ferry Trail (#7) - 2.2 Miles* **EASY**
Follows an historic colonial road and is a great option for hikers looking for a shorter hike to the Congaree River.

Longleaf Trail (#8) - 1.3 Miles **EASY**
This trail connects Longleaf Campground to the Harry Hampton Visitor Center, the Boardwalk, and other trails.

Fork Swamp Trail (#9) - 0.6 Miles* **MODERATE**
The trail runs alongside the southern channel of Bates Old River, an oxbow lake created by a hurricane in 1852.

Firefly Trail (#10) - 1.8 Miles **EASY**
Visitors are treated to a magical light show produced by synchronous fireflies along this trail in the late spring.

View of the Congaree River from Bates Ferry Trail.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

As one of America’s national parks, all of the natural and cultural resources in Congaree National Park are protected by federal laws and regulations, including:

- ✓ **Wildlife, trees, plants, flowers, insects, etc.** Do not cut down, carve, or graffiti trees, pick flowers, or approach, feed, capture or harass wildlife. See the Superintendent’s Compendium on the park’s website for specific rules and restrictions regarding fishing and gathering of nuts, berries, fruit, and mushrooms.
- ✓ **Historic and prehistoric artifacts and structures.** If you find something, take a photo, note the location, and contact park staff. Do not remove any cultural objects or artifacts.

Congaree National Park is a unit of the National Park System and part of the National Wilderness System. Visitors should remember the following when visiting:

- ✓ All visitors must follow Leave No Trace Ethics. Pack out all trash, including pet waste, and dispose of it properly.
- ✓ Pets must remain on a leash that is six-feet or less.
- ✓ Bicycles, e-bikes, and other mechanical devices are not allowed on any of the park’s trails. Wheelchairs as defined in Title V Section 507(c) of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may be used by persons with disabilities in wilderness areas.
- ✓ Please report violations or suspicious activity to park staff immediately. **IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call the Harry Hampton Visitor Center during normal operating hours (803-776-4396); visit the park’s official website (www.nps.gov/cong); download the NPS App, which is available through the App Store and Google Play.

Congaree National Park Trail Map

