



#### For More Information Contact:

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[www.visitPAParks.com](http://www.visitPAParks.com)

#### Information and Reservations

Make online reservations at  
[www.visitPAParks.com](http://www.visitPAParks.com) or call toll-free  
888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.,  
Monday to Saturday, for state park information  
and reservations.

## Swatara State Park

The 3,520-acre Swatara State Park consists of rolling fields and woodlands situated in the Swatara Valley, between Second and Blue mountains. The scenic Swatara Creek meanders the length of the park and is surrounded by forests and wetlands that support a diversity of wildlife.

### Directions

Swatara State Park is in Lebanon and Schuylkill counties, 14 miles north of Lebanon and 3 miles west of Pine Grove. The park is easily reached from I-81: at Exit 90, Lickdale, follow PA 72 north; at Exit 100, take PA 443 west.

### Recreational Opportunities

**FISHING:** Spring attracts many anglers to Trout Run; the park's only trout-stocked stream. Other coldwater tributaries within the park support native populations of brook trout.

Warmwater fish like smallmouth bass, trout and panfish can be caught in Swatara Creek. Wagners Pond and Irving Pond provide opportunities to catch largemouth bass and panfish.

**HUNTING AND FIREARMS:** Most of Swatara State Park is open to hunting, trapping and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, pheasant, rabbit, squirrel and waterfowl, with populations of furbearers including muskrat, raccoon, opossum and fox. Be alert for trail users and the 150-yard safety zone surrounding each of the occupied buildings in the park.

Hunting woodchucks, also known as groundhogs, is prohibited. Dog training is only permitted from the day following Labor Day through March 31 in designated hunting areas. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations apply. Contact the park office for ADA accessible hunting information.

Use extreme caution with firearms at all times. Other visitors use the park during hunting seasons. Firearms and archery equipment used for hunting may be uncased and ready for use only in authorized hunting areas during hunting seasons. In areas not open to hunting or during non-hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment shall be kept in the owner's car, trailer or leased campsite. Exceptions include: law enforcement officers and individuals with a valid *Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms* are authorized to carry a firearm concealed on their person while they are within a state park.

**BOATING: non-powered boats only**  
Swatara Creek is a popular destination for canoeing, kayaking and tubing, especially in the spring. Designated launches at Swopes Valley Trailhead, the Waterville Bridge Parking Lot and the Lickdale Trailhead provide access to the creek for put-in and take-out of boats.

Be aware of naturally occurring hazards which may be encountered on Swatara Creek. Check real-time data at <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/rt> for Swatara Creek near Inwood, PA. Recommended gauge height is a minimum of 3.25 feet.

Non-powered boats must display one of the following:

boat registration from any state; launching permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks that are available at most state park offices; launch use permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Each boater must possess a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD). Those 12 and younger must wear PFD. Tubers 9 and younger must wear a PFD.

### HIKING AND BICYCLING: 18.2 miles of trails

Park trails are generally flat and wide.

**The Appalachian National Scenic Trail:** Stretching from Georgia to Maine, this backpacking trail traverses two miles of the southern portion of Swatara State Park. Kittatinny Ridge, also known as Blue Mountain, has been designated by Audubon Pennsylvania as the largest of the state's "Important Bird Areas." Overnight parking for through or section AT hikers is on SR 443 just west of SR 72. Hikers may leave an itinerary with the park for emergencies.

### Swatara Rail Trail: 10 miles, easiest hiking

Swatara Rail Trail is ten miles in length from Lickdale Interchange (Exit 90) of I-81 to the Pine Grove Interchange (Exit 100) of I-81. The trail grade is relatively flat, with variable surfaces (dirt, gravel and pavement) requiring wide tires. This trail is good for skiing with adequate snowfall.

### Bear Hole Trail: 4.8 miles, more difficult hiking

Running along the eastern side of Swatara State Park, Bear Hole Trail is a wide, rolling trail for hiking and biking. An 11-mile loop can be completed by using Swatara Rail Trail and Bear Hole Trail and crossing the creek at the Waterville Bridge and the Swopes Valley Road.

### MOUNTAIN BIKING: 27.7 miles of trails, most difficult hiking

Accessible from the State Park Lane trailhead, six trails are designed as mountain bike trails. These single track natural surface trails are a maximum 24 inches wide with log obstacles and stream crossings. They are considered "most difficult" by DCNR trail standards, but "easy" by International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) standards. Each trail loop is about 1.5 miles in length, totaling 9.5 miles, and twist through the woods and up and down hills.

Mountain bikes are also permitted on Swatara Rail Trail (10 miles), Bear Hole Trail (4.8 miles), Moonshine Trail (0.8 mile), Trout Run Trail (0.5 mile), State Park Lane (0.5 mile), Portage Trail (0.4 mile), Mifflin Trail (0.3 mile), Round About Loop (0.5 mile) and Sand Siding Trail (0.4 mile), adding an additional 18.2 miles.

### HORSEBACK RIDING: 12.8 miles of trails

Horseback riding is permitted on the equestrian trail west of Suedberg, Horse Trail, Swatara Rail Trail north of the Sand Siding Bridge and on the Bear Hole Trail north of the Sand Siding Bridge. Riders may use Sand Siding Bridge to access both trails.

Tell us about your hike at:



### History

The area in and around Swatara State Park has a rich history. American Indians originally used the land along the Swatara Creek as a transportation route, while early European settlers in the Pine Grove area used the creek to transport harvested timber to market in Jonestown.

In the late 1820s, the Union Canal Company constructed a branch canal to Pine Grove to provide a means of transportation for anthracite coal being mined in the Tremont area. The Branch Canal was destroyed by a horrendous flood in June of 1862. Due to financial difficulties and competition from the railroads, the canal was abandoned. Visitors can view the remains of two canal dams, seven lift locks and several miles of towpath within the park boundaries.

In 1870, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company opened a railroad spur running from Lebanon to Pine Grove. About 60 years after the advent of the railroad, a more sophisticated highway system was constructed. By 1965, the railroad in the northern section of the park had been abandoned and by the early 1980s, the line from Suedberg south to Lebanon was abandoned. Today, trucks using Interstate 81 carry most of the cargo that was once transported through the park by rail.

Although not a major source of commerce, there was also a small airport located along the rail line that accommodated aircraft as large as the DC-3 but more commonly, smaller aircraft like the Piper J-3 Cub and helicopters.

**WATERVILLE BRIDGE:** This cast iron bridge was built in 1890 to cross the Little Pine Creek in Lycoming County. The bridge design is a lenticular truss (parabolic) and is one of three such bridges still in Pennsylvania. In the 1980s, the bridge was determined to be too narrow for modern use. Instead of being demolished, the bridge was dismantled, repaired, moved and rebuilt across the Swatara Creek to allow hikers on the Appalachian Trail to cross the stream.

### Watching Wildlife

Swatara State Park has a combination of woodland and old fields in various stages of forest succession. The blending of these habitats results in a remarkably wide variety of trees, wildflowers and wildlife. Nest boxes are maintained for game and non-game species like bluebirds, hawks, wrens and ducks.

### Geology

The geology of Swatara State Park is predominately sedimentary rocks that formed in a shallow ocean during the Middle Devonian Period of the Paleozoic Era, about 375 million years ago.

These rocks indicate that this site was a shallow sunlit seafloor where mostly filter-feeding organisms thrived in the gentle currents. The skeletal remains of these organisms were concentrated by wave action into lens-shaped deposits 2 to 3 inches thick.

An Upper Mahantango Formation that contains significant marine fossil beds is exposed at a site along Bear Hole Trail. The site provides excellent opportunities for fossil collecting, including the state fossil *Phacops rana*, a type of trilobite.

### Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau, 877-727-8573. [www.hersheyharrisburg.org](http://www.hersheyharrisburg.org)

### Trash Disposal and Recycling

Swatara State Park participates in a carry-in/carryout trash disposal program for small parks. There are no trash collection or recycling facilities. Visitors are asked to limit the amount of disposable items brought to the park and to take all trash and recyclables home.

### Protect and Preserve Our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family are your responsibility.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Campfires are prohibited.
- Park hours are sunrise to sunset.
- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be controlled and attended at all times and on a leash, caged or crated.
- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.
- Motorized vehicles are prohibited off-road, on marked or unmarked trails and on utility easements.
- Equipment left unattended for 24 hours is considered abandoned property and will be removed. This excludes deer stands, which must be removed no more two weeks after any deer season per Game Commission regulations.

### Access for People with Disabilities

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

### In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a park employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the park office.

**NEAREST HOSPITAL**  
Good Samaritan Hospital  
Fourth and Walnut Streets  
Lebanon, PA 17042  
717-270-7500