

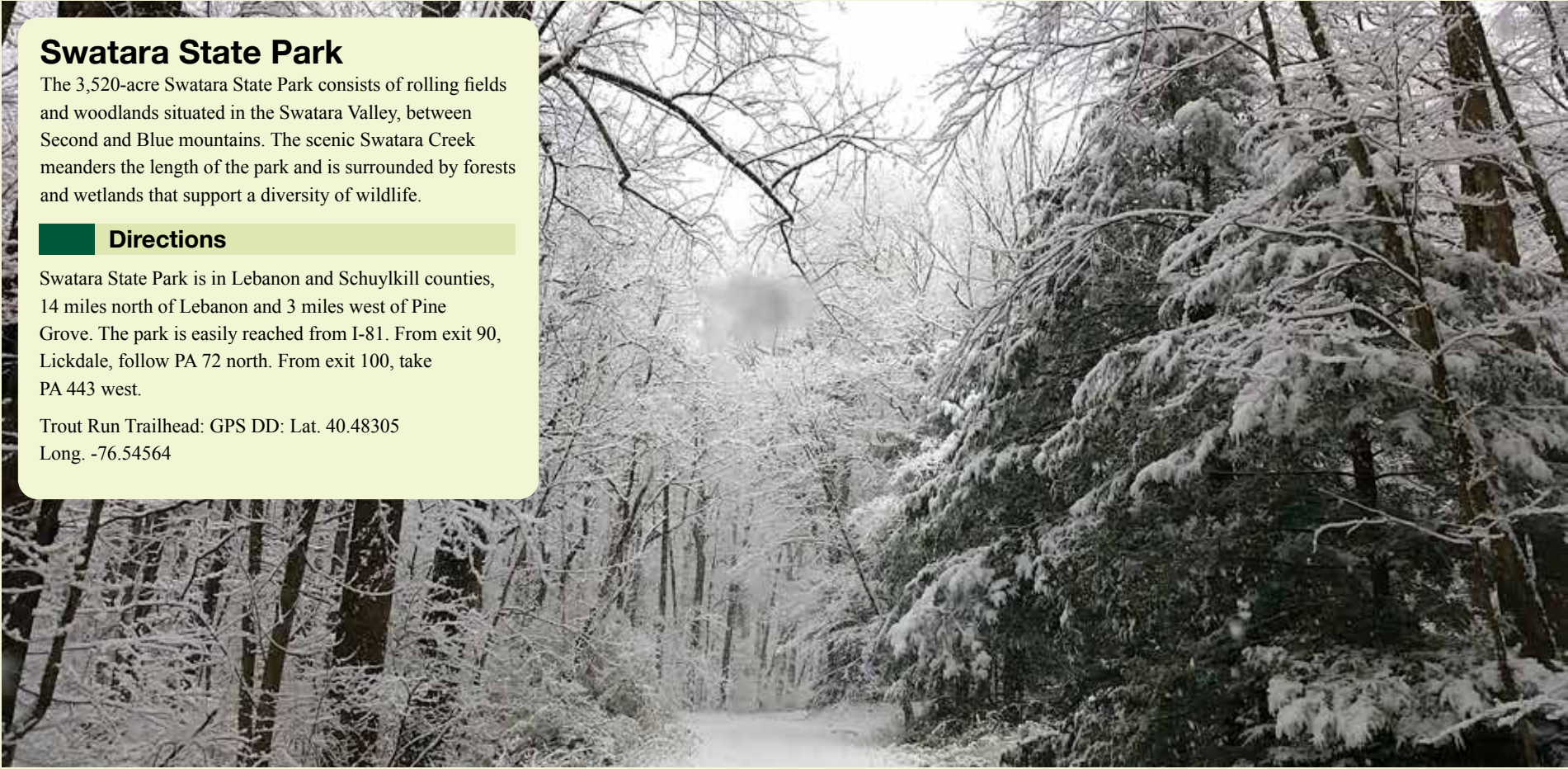
Swatara State Park

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. From exit 90, Lickdale, follow PA 72 north. From exit 100, take PA 443 west.

Trout Run Trailhead: GPS DD: Lat. 40.48305
Long. -76.54564



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. The Swatara Creek with its tributaries, hosts many fish species including brown trout, smallmouth bass, rock bass, dace, sculpins, chubs, suckers, darters, sunfish, and shiners. Wagners Pond and Irving Pond provide opportunities to catch largemouth basses and panfishes.

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 and around 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 vehicle or enclosed trailer. 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

Approximately nine miles of Swatara Creek flow through the park, creating a popular destination for canoeing, kayaking, and tubing, especially in the spring. Be aware, naturally occurring hazards may be encountered on Swatara Creek. Designated launches at the Swopes Valley Trailhead, Waterville Bridge Parking Lot, and Lickdale Trailhead provide access to the creek for put-in and take-out of boats. Boat trailer parking is only available at Swopes Valley and Lickdale trailheads.

Non-powered boats that launch in the park must display one of the following: boat registration from any state;

launch permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks, 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) and those 12 and younger must wear a PFD.

BICYCLING: 27.7 miles

Many miles of trails within the parks are open to bicycling and mountain biking. A 9.5-mile trail system, referred to as the Mountain Bike Complex, is accessible from the State Park Lane Parking Lot, and consists of six trails specifically designed for mountain bikes. These single track, natural surface trails are a maximum of 24 inches wide with log obstacles and stream crossings. They are considered most difficult by DCNR hiking trail standards, but easy by International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) standards. Each trail loop is approximately 1.5 miles in length, and twists through the woods, up and down hills.



Caution:

- The Mountain Bike Complex trails can be hazardous and slippery
- Some slopes are steep with rough surfaces
- The trail is for riders equipped for off-roading riding



Mountain Bike Complex Trail

HORSEBACK RIDING: 12.8 miles

Horseback riding is permitted on PEC Trail (3.1 miles), PEC Connector Trail (0.8 mile), Swatara Rail Trail east of the Sand Siding Bridge, and on Bear Hole Trail east of the Sand Siding Bridge. Riders may use Sand Siding Bridge to access both trails. Horse trailer parking is permitted at the equestrian parking lot along 443 and Swopes Valley Trailhead only.



THE APPALACHIAN NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL (AT):

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 designated 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. Rausch Gap Shelter is approximately 4.5 miles northwest (southbound to Georgia) along the Appalachian Trail from the AT Overnight Parking Lot. The William Penn Shelter is approximately 8.7 miles southeast (northbound to Maine) along the Appalachian Trail from the AT Overnight Parking Lot.

History

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

Between 1827 and 1830, 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. A catastrophic flood destroyed the canal in June of 1862. Due to financial difficulties and competition from the railroads, the portion of the canal running through the park 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 northeastern 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 by rail through the park.



Sand Siding Bridge

Wildlife Watching

Swatara State Park has a combination of woodlands, old fields in various stages of forest succession, and freshwater habitats. The blending of these habitats results in a remarkably wide variety of trees, wildflowers, and wildlife. The diverse ecosystems provide food and cover for species such as deer, fox, rabbit, raccoon, squirrels, mice, and a wide variety of shrews. Raptors such as red-tailed hawks can be seen soaring over the open meadows, hunting for food. In the spring, salamanders migrate to wetland habitats and wood frogs call from forest pools. Eastern ratsnakes and northern black racers sun themselves on the trails in the summer months.

Geology



Phacops rana (trilobite species) fossil

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 two to three inches thick. An Upper Mahantango Formation that contains significant marine fossil beds is exposed along Bear Hole Trail. The site provides excellent opportunities for fossil collecting, including organisms such as the state fossil *Phacops rana*, a type of trilobite.

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.

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.

BORDNER CABIN: The Bordner Cabin is a unique structure, built between 1937 and 1939 by Armar James Bordner. The easiest way to access the Bordner Cabin and Aycrigg’s Falls is to park at Sand Siding Parking Lot, continue west on Swatara Rail Trail for 0.2 miles, turn left onto Sand Siding Trail and travel 0.4 miles, turn left and go 0.9 miles on Bear Hole Trail, the cabin will be on your right.

WATERVILLE BRIDGE: This cast iron bridge was built in 1890 across the Little Pine Creek in Lycoming County. The bridge design is a lenticular truss and is one of three such bridges still found 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 Swatara Creek to allow hikers on the Appalachian Trail to cross the stream. Because of this fact, it is also frequently referred to as the “AT Bridge.”



Eastern box turtle

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from Visit Hershey & Harrisburg, 877-727-8573. www.visithersheyharrisburg.org

The 230-acre **Memorial Lake State Park** is located near the base of Blue Mountain in East Hanover Township, Lebanon County. The park is surrounded by Fort Indiantown Gap, the headquarters for the Pennsylvania Army and Air National Guard. Recreational activities include hiking, picnicking, boating, and fishing. 717-865-6470



Spring beauty

In an Emergency

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

NEAREST HOSPITALS

WellSpan Good Samaritan Hospital
252 S. 4th Street
Lebanon, PA 17042
717-270-7500

Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
500 University Drive
Hershey, PA 17033
717-531-0003

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for Swatara State Park



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



Swatara State Park
c/o Memorial Lake State Park
18 Boundary Road
Grantville, PA 17028-9682
717-865-6470
MemorialSP@pa.gov

Make online reservations at
www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks or call toll-free
888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to
5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks [visitPAparks](https://www.facebook.com/visitPAparks)

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Protect and Preserve Our Parks

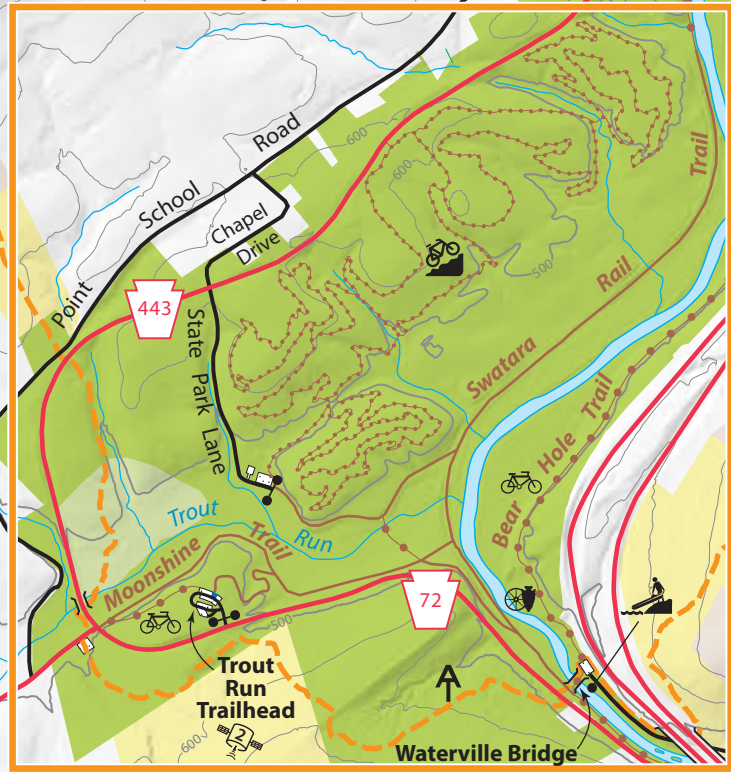
Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- 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.
- The use of drones or unmanned aerial systems (UAS) is prohibited.
- Camping and fires are prohibited.
- Park hours are sunrise to sunset.
- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be physically controlled, attended at all times, and on a leash, caged, or crated. Electronic fences and leashes are prohibited.
- 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 can be placed no more than two weeks prior and must be removed no more than two weeks after any deer season, per Pennsylvania Game Commission regulations.

Trout Run Trailhead and Mountain Bike Complex



Trout Run Trailhead and Mountain Bike Complex

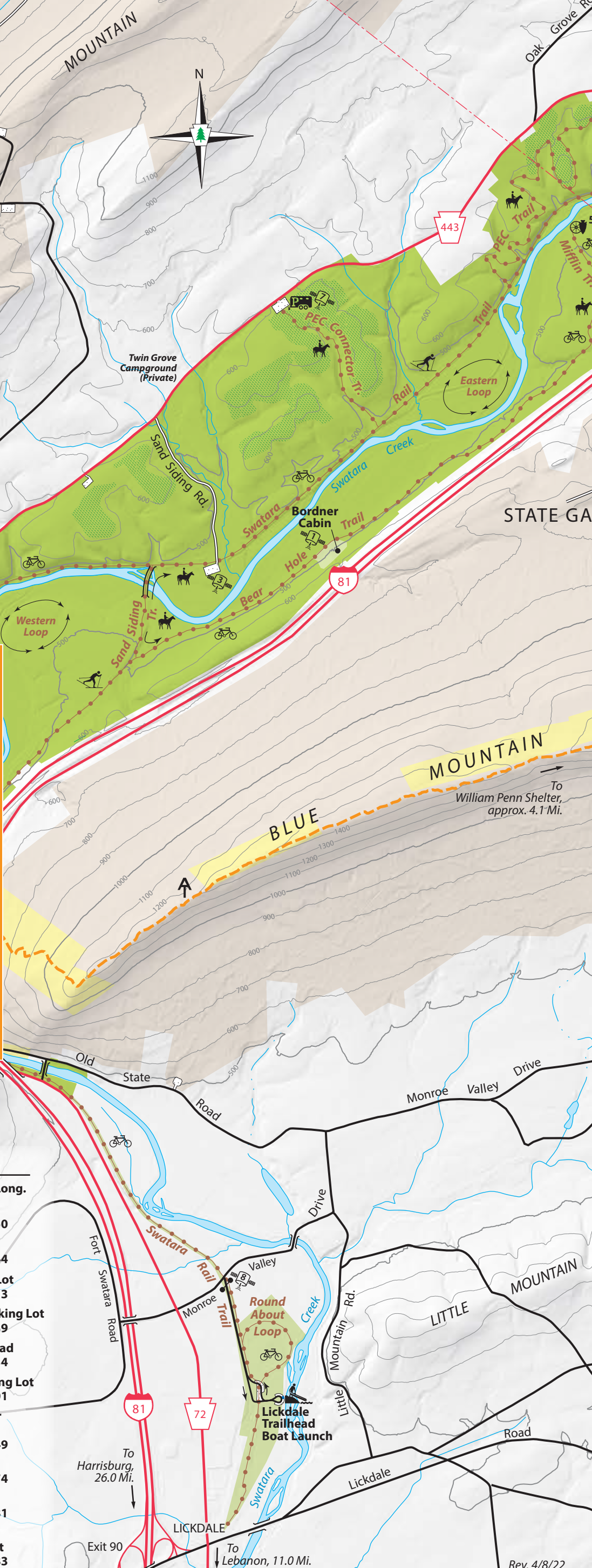


- Blue Symbols Mean ADA Accessible
- Non-flush Restrooms
- Historic Locks
- Hand-carry Boat Launch
- Paved, Multi-use Trail: Hiking, Bicycling
- Multi-use Trail: Hiking & Other Uses as Designated
- Appalachian Trail (Hiking Only)
- Bicycling
- Mountain Biking
- Cross-country Skiing Recommended
- Horseback Riding
- Unpaved Road
- One-way Road
- Gate
- Parking ADA Accessible
- Parking Paved
- Parking Unpaved
- Parking Horse Trailers
- State Park No Hunting
- State Park Hunting
- Agricultural Fields
- Appalachian Trail Corridor (National Park Service)



- GPS Coordinates**
- | | Decimal Degree Lat. Long. |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Bordner Cabin | 40.504730, -76.501950 |
| 2. Trout Run Trailhead | 40.482859, -76.545844 |
| 3. Sand Siding Parking Lot | 40.504088, -76.510513 |
| 4. Waterville Bridge Parking Lot | 40.480822, -76.531559 |
| 5. Swopes Valley Trailhead | 40.522343, -76.469334 |
| 6. State Park Lane Parking Lot | 40.486433, -76.543501 |
| 7. 443 Equestrian Trailer Parking Lot | 40.518019, -76.505749 |
| 8. Lickdale Trailhead | 40.465854, -76.510774 |
| 9. Fossil Site | 40.522041, -76.478781 |
| 10. Appalachian Trail Overnight Parking Lot | 40.481738, -76.550683 |

SWATARA STATE PARK



Trails: 34 miles

All park trails are open to hiking. Hikers at Swatara State Park have a wide variety of opportunities for quiet reflection, nature study, and physical challenge. Many trails are also open to bicycling and horseback riding – see the trail descriptions below and the map for more information.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL (AT): 2.1 miles in the park, most difficult hiking

The approximately 2,190-mile-long trail passes through the western side of the park. North from the AT Overnight Parking Lot, the trail travels approximately three quarters of a mile in the park. It crosses Moonshine Road and 443 west, continues north along Trout Run stream, intersects again with 443 west, and finally crosses over Green Point School Road, leaving the park. South from the AT Overnight Parking Lot, the trail travels approximately one and a quarter miles in park. The trail continues south, toward Blue Mountain, crossing over PA 72 and the Waterville Bridge. The Appalachian Trail is open to hiking only.

BEAR HOLE TRAIL: 4.8 miles, more difficult hiking

Running along the southern side of Swatara Creek, Bear Hole Trail is a wide, rolling trail for hiking and biking. Horses are permitted on the eastern side of Bear Hole Trail between Swopes Valley Road and Sand Siding Trail. Ideal parking locations for immediate access to the trail are Swopes Valley Trailhead and the Waterville Bridge Parking Lot.

MIFFLIN TRAIL: 0.3 mile, more difficult hiking

Located on the eastern side of the park, this hiking and bicycling only trail is accessible from Bear Hole Trail. The trail is a natural surface and leads to Lock #5 and Swatara Creek. Horses are prohibited on this trail.

MOONSHINE TRAIL: 0.8 mile, easiest hiking

An abandoned road, Moonshine Trail is a paved surface trail and is relatively flat. The hiking and bicycling trail runs south from the 443/72 intersection to the Swatara Rail Trail. Park at Trout Run Trailhead and follow Trout Run Trail to access Moonshine Trail.

MOUNTAIN BIKE COMPLEX TRAILS: 9.5 miles, most difficult hiking

These six trails are single track (average 18 inches wide), consisting of natural features (dirt trail surface trails, roots, logs, and natural stream crossings). They are accessible from the State Park Lane parking lots. Horses are prohibited on these trails.

- Trail A: 1.49 miles
- Trail A-1: 1.97 miles with maintained obstacles
- Trail A-2: 1.11 miles
- Trail B: 1.42 miles
- Trail C: 1.63 miles
- Trail D: 1.91 miles

PA EQUINE COUNCIL (PEC) TRAIL: 3.1 miles, red blazes, more difficult hiking

This natural surface trail begins and ends on the Swatara Rail Trail. It passes through forested and agricultural land. To access the PEC Trail, park at the 443 parking lot, take PEC Connector Trail to Swatara Rail Trail and go east. Biking is prohibited on this trail.

PEC CONNECTOR TRAIL: 0.8 mile, more difficult hiking

The trail has a natural surface and continues from the gravel parking lot on 443, through agricultural fields to Swatara Rail Trail. Biking is prohibited.

PORTAGE TRAIL: 0.4 mile, easiest hiking

This hiking and bicycling only trail runs south from State Park Lane to the Swatara Rail Trail, intersecting with Moonshine Trail. Between State Park Lane and Moonshine Trail, Portage Trail is multi-surface, grass and gravel. The section between Moonshine and the Swatara Rail Trail is narrow with asphalt.

ROUND ABOUT LOOP: 0.5 mile, easiest hiking

Access this trail from Lickdale Trailhead parking lot. This wide, flat, gravel hiking and bicycling trail loops around wetland habitat adjacent to the Swatara Creek and offers an excellent opportunity to listen to spring peepers.

SAND SIDING TRAIL: 0.4 mile, easiest hiking

The trail crosses over the Swatara Creek between Swatara Rail Trail and Bear Hole Trail. Sand Siding Trail, a gravel trail that includes the Sand Siding Bridge, is open to hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Mounting blocks are provided on either end of the Sand Siding Bridge; horseback riders are asked to dismount and lead their horses across the bridge. The Sand Siding Road Parking Lot is the closest parking area to the trail.

STATE PARK LANE TRAIL: 0.5 mile, more difficult hiking

This trail runs southeast from the State Park Lane parking lot to the Swatara Rail Trail. The hiking and bicycling trail is wide, paved, and steep. The trail intersects with Portage Trail and Swatara Rail Trail.

SWATARA RAIL TRAIL: 10 miles, easiest hiking

Swatara Rail Trail is ten miles in length from the 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 recommended for cross-country skiing with adequate snowfall. Ideal parking locations for immediate access to the trail are Lickdale Trailhead and Sand Siding parking lot.

TROUT RUN TRAIL: 0.5 mile, more difficult hiking

This half-mile, hiking and bicycling trail is accessible from Trout Run Trailhead and intersects with Moonshine Trail on either end. The trail is narrow and multi-surface, with gravel and asphalt.

LONGER TRAIL LOOPS:

Eastern Loop: A 7.3-mile loop can be completed by using the Swatara Rail Trail, Bear Hole Trail, Sand Siding Trail, and Swopes Valley Road. Be aware that Swopes Valley Road is a main road open to vehicular traffic. The loop runs parallel to the Swatara Creek, crossing over at Sand Siding Bridge and Swopes Valley Bridge. Swopes Valley Trailhead or Sand Siding parking lot are ideal parking locations, offering immediate loop access. The Eastern Loop is open to all user groups.

Western Loop: A 4.7-mile loop can be completed by using Swatara Rail Trail, Bear Hole Trail, Sand Siding Trail, and the Waterville Bridge. The loop runs parallel to the Swatara Creek, crossing over at Sand Siding Bridge and Waterville Bridge. For immediate trail access, use the Sand Siding or Waterville Bridge parking lots. Horses are prohibited on the Western Loop.

Full Loop: An 11-mile loop can be made by combining the Eastern and Western loops. Swopes Valley Trailhead and Sand Siding Parking Lot are ideal parking locations. Be aware that Swopes Valley Road is a main road open to vehicular traffic. Horse are prohibited on the western half of this loop.