



## Pennsylvania State Parks Mission

The primary purpose of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of parks should be given first consideration. Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.



2022

## OIL CREEK STATE PARK

Oil Creek Valley is the site of the world's first commercial oil well. Oil Creek State Park tells the story of the early petroleum industry by interpreting oil boomtowns, oil wells, and early transportation. Scenic Oil Creek carves a valley of deep hollows, steep hillsides, and wetlands.

### Reservations

Make online reservations at [www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks](http://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.

### Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 41.51544 Long. -79.68097

Between Drake Well Museum and Titusville to the north, and Oil City four miles to the south, the main entrance to the park is off PA 8, one mile north of the Borough of Rouseville.

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



Photograph by Charlene Reinhart

**BICYCLING:** A 9.7-mile paved, multi-use trail through scenic Oil Creek Valley is a major park attraction. Trailheads are at Petroleum Centre in the south and near Jersey Bridge in the north. A few bicycles are available for rent at the park office.

Picnic tables, benches, rain shelters, and restrooms are available at key points along the trail. Historical markers detail special events of the 1860s oil boom era.

The trail is open to two-way bicycle traffic. Stay to the right while riding. When passing another cyclist, first ensure that there are no oncoming riders, then call out to the cyclist that you are passing. Bicycles should be parked off of the trail to avoid obstructing traffic. Bicycles are only permitted on paved trails and roadways. Bicycles are prohibited on hiking trails.

**Caution:** Park maintenance and emergency vehicles may be on the trail.

### HUNTING AND FIREARMS:

About 6,800 acres are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are rabbit, deer, squirrel, turkey, black bear, and ruffed grouse.

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.

**FISHING:** Oil Creek is known for its bass and trout. Boughton Run, Toy Run, and Jones Run provide brook trout fishing. Two delayed harvest, artificial lures only areas cover 2.5 miles of Oil Creek. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

**CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING:** A cross-country ski trail complex located between Petroleum Centre and Plumer can be accessed on SR 1004. A network of 11.5 miles of groomed trails offers variety of skiing experiences for beginner and intermediate skiers. The area includes a large parking area, warming hut, and restrooms. Track is set on all trails in the complex. A fee is charged for a ski pass, which is required in the complex. Mountain bikes are prohibited on ski trails.

The 9.7-mile paved, multi-use trail is open to skiers without a pass. Check at the park office for trail conditions.

**PICNICKING:** Blood Farm Day Use Area and Egbert Farm Day Use Area are on the southern side of the park and are ideal settings for an enjoyable picnic. Each day use area has a playground, pavilion, picnic tables, charcoal grills, and restrooms.

Picnic pavilions may be reserved up to 11 months in advance for a fee. Unreserved picnic pavilions are free on a first-come, first-served basis.

**CANOEING AND KAYAKING:** Oil Creek offers a scenic float and is classed as a beginner's creek under normal conditions. Water levels can change rapidly, and boaters should call the park office for current water conditions. Generally, the boating season is from March to early June.

Non-powered boats launched in the park must display one of the following: boat registration; 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.



Photograph by Kim Harris

### ORGANIZED GROUP TENTING:

Organized groups can rent a rustic camping area in Wildcat Hollow or McCrea Farm. Each area has nearby parking, picnic tables, fire circle, non-flush toilets, and potable water (seasonally) but no showers. Each camp can accommodate up to 25 people. Call the park office for accommodations for larger groups. Advance reservations are required.

**WATERFALLS:** Oil Creek is home to four beautiful waterfalls. The best time to view the falls is early to late spring. For safety reasons, visitors are encouraged to stay on the trails while viewing the falls. Additional information can be obtained at the park office.

### WILDCAT HOLLOW TRAILS:

Explore a network of short hiking trails named after "wildcat" wells, oil wells drilled in areas not known to contain oil. These exploratory wells had about a 10 percent chance of being successful.

### Geology Trail: 1 mile, red blazes, more difficult hiking

This loop trail climbs the hillside to a rock outcropping and shelter utilized by Indigenous people in the late woodland period and oil workers in the 1860s.

### Forestry Trail: 0.25 mile, green blazes, easiest hiking

Heavily forested, this trail spurs from the Wetland Trail near the Wolfe Rig. It rejoins the Wetland Trail at its terminus.

### Oil History Trail: 0.25 mile, white blazes, easiest hiking

The remnants of a central power house and many oil well sites can be seen from the trail. The trail spurs from the Wetland Trail and later rejoins it near the Wolfe Rig.

### Wetland Trail: 1 mile, blue blazes, easiest hiking

The loop trail circles a wetland fed by Wildcat Run. Along this trail, an example of a Wolfe Rig, a light weight, portable drilling machine used by oil workers, can be seen.



Photo by Casey Layman

## HIKING: 61 miles

Hiking is permitted on all trails in the park including the multi-use trail. Trails in the Cross-country Ski Area are available for hiking spring through fall.

### Blood Farm Interpretive Trail: 0.5 mile, no blazes, easiest hiking

Spend 30 minutes walking the 440-acre Blood Farm oil lease. This farm produced more oil than all other farms in the oil region in 1861 and 1862. Learn about 15 years of frantic drilling, gushing oil, and devastating fires. Educational signs guide the tour.

### Gerard Hiking Trail: 36 miles, yellow blazes, more difficult hiking

Popular with backpackers, this trail encompasses the entire park. The main trail is marked with yellow blazes. For shorter day hikes, use the connector trails and roads across the creek to create five shorter loops. Parking areas are available at several access points. Scenic vistas, waterfalls, and historic sites are prevalent along the trail. Leashed pets are permitted on the trail and at the shelter areas.

Two overnight hike-in shelter areas (Cow Run and Wolfkiel Run) are along the trail. Each area contains tent sites, six Adirondack-style shelters with fireplaces, non-flush restrooms, and potable water (seasonally). Reservations are mandatory

for these areas and require a fee. Overnight stays are limited to one night per shelter site. Follow Leave No Trace principles when hiking and camping. Fires are only permitted in camp stoves, fireplaces, or park provided fire rings and must be extinguished when unattended. Camping is permitted in shelter areas only. Contact the park office for further information.

### Petroleum Centre Walking Tour: 0.5 mile, no blazes, easiest hiking

Petroleum Centre flourished from 1863 to 1870 on its twin livelihoods of oil and entertainment. This company town had no government, law enforcement, sanitation, or public works. It was reputed as the "wickedest town east of the Mississippi!" Start at the park office for a 45-minute, self-guided tour.

## LEARN, EXPERIENCE, CONNECT



Photo by Casey Layman

Oil Creek State Park offers a wide variety of programs from April through October. Gain a better understanding of the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources through guided outdoor recreation, hands-on activities, walks, special events, and other programs.

Curriculum-based environmental education programs are available to schools and organized

groups. Call the park office to schedule a group program. A variety of professional development workshops are offered for teachers.

Contact the park office or explore the online calendar of events, <https://events.dcnr.pa.gov>, for more information on programs and other learning experiences.

## HISTORY



Along Oil Creek, just south of Titusville, Colonel Edwin Drake struck oil at a depth of 69.5 feet in August 1859. Three words—"They've struck oil!" thundered triumphantly throughout the valley. This statement changed the world forever and marks the birth of the world's oil industry. The New York Tribune stated, "The excitement attendant on the discovery of this vast source of oil was fully equal to what I saw in California when a large lump of gold was accidentally turned out. When California 49ers came into the valley they claimed conditions here were crazier than any they'd ever seen."

Drake's discovery attracted thousands of people to pour into the valley in search of liquid gold. Boomtowns sprang up instantly as derricks replaced trees and the valley filled with people. "The boomtowns spring up as of from the touch of a magician's wand, are swept away by fire, or disappear only to reappear miles in advance of their last location."

Oil and mud soon mixed throughout the valley. Roads were impassable. When J.H.A. Bone got off the train at Petroleum Centre he wrote: "...pull up your legs when they disappear from sight, remembering that if you descend deep enough, you may strike oil." Others wrote: "The creek was covered with oil, the air was full of oil...we could see, hear, smell, nothing but oil." "Mud divided our attention with oil, wagons, men and animals were submerged in mud."

By 1871, production in most boomtowns was dwindling. Drillers, speculators, and others moved on in their endless search for oil as "black as a stack of ebony cats," and the valley slowly recovered to the state it is today. Scattered ruins dot the landscape of Oil Creek

Valley. Remnants of old refineries can still be seen, old wells abound, and crumbling stone walls that once protected wells still stick up in the middle of Oil Creek.

The wooded hills of Oil Creek Valley look almost as they did before the boom. A few wells are still active in the park, pulling the last bits of oil and natural gas from the earth which nature laid down millions of years ago.

"The oil rush changed the pace of the world, and greased the wheels of the machine age. It lit up the future, fueled wars, speeded peace and is still flowing strong."

**Reference:** Unless stated otherwise, the above quotes are from Paul Gidden's book, "Early Days of Oil."



## HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITIES

The primary purpose of Oil Creek State Park is to tell the story of the changing landscape. The early petroleum industry's oil boom towns and oil well sites are in contrast with clean trout streams and forested hillsides seen today throughout the park. The events of the 1860s, the time of the original oil boom, receive special emphasis.

### Historical Tableaus



These full-scale, three-dimensional landscapes contain buildings, machinery, equipment, and materials that replicate the historic landscape. Similar to a movie set, the buildings are empty and the machinery is non-operational, but the tableaus give an idea of historic periods at Oil Creek.

**HUNT FARM TABLEAU:** This site has an engine house, various pumping jacks, and stock tanks. From the 1940s to the 1960s, small-scale oil operations drilled and pumped oil using a gas engine to pump several wells, with the wells supplying gas to run the

engine. The long rod lines carried the power from the central engine to the distant wells.

**BENNINGHOFF FARM TABLEAU:** This site has six 35-foot-tall oil derricks, an oil barge, and an engine house. The first oil operators thought that oil could only be drilled on flat, level terrain. In the autumn of 1865, the famous Ocean Well was sunk on the steep hillside. When the well began producing 300 barrels of oil a day, oil opportunists flocked to lease part of the farm and soon Mr. Benninghoff earned about \$6,000 a day.



Photo by Casey Layman

## INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

### Oil Creek State Park

305 State Park Road  
Oil City, PA 16301-9733  
814-676-5915  
[OilCreekSP@pa.gov](mailto:OilCreekSP@pa.gov)

An Equal Opportunity Employer  
[www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks)

**Make online reservations at**  
[www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks](http://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.



### 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.



### 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.

### Electric Vehicle Charging Station

A 2-plug, electric vehicle charging station is available for public use in the Egbert Day Use Area parking lot. Please move to another parking space once your vehicle has been charged.



### NEAREST HOSPITALS

UPMC Northwest	Titusville Area Hospital
100 Fairfield Drive	406 West Oak Street
Seneca, PA 16346	Titusville, PA 16354
814-676-7600	814-827-1851

### 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.

### Nearby Attractions

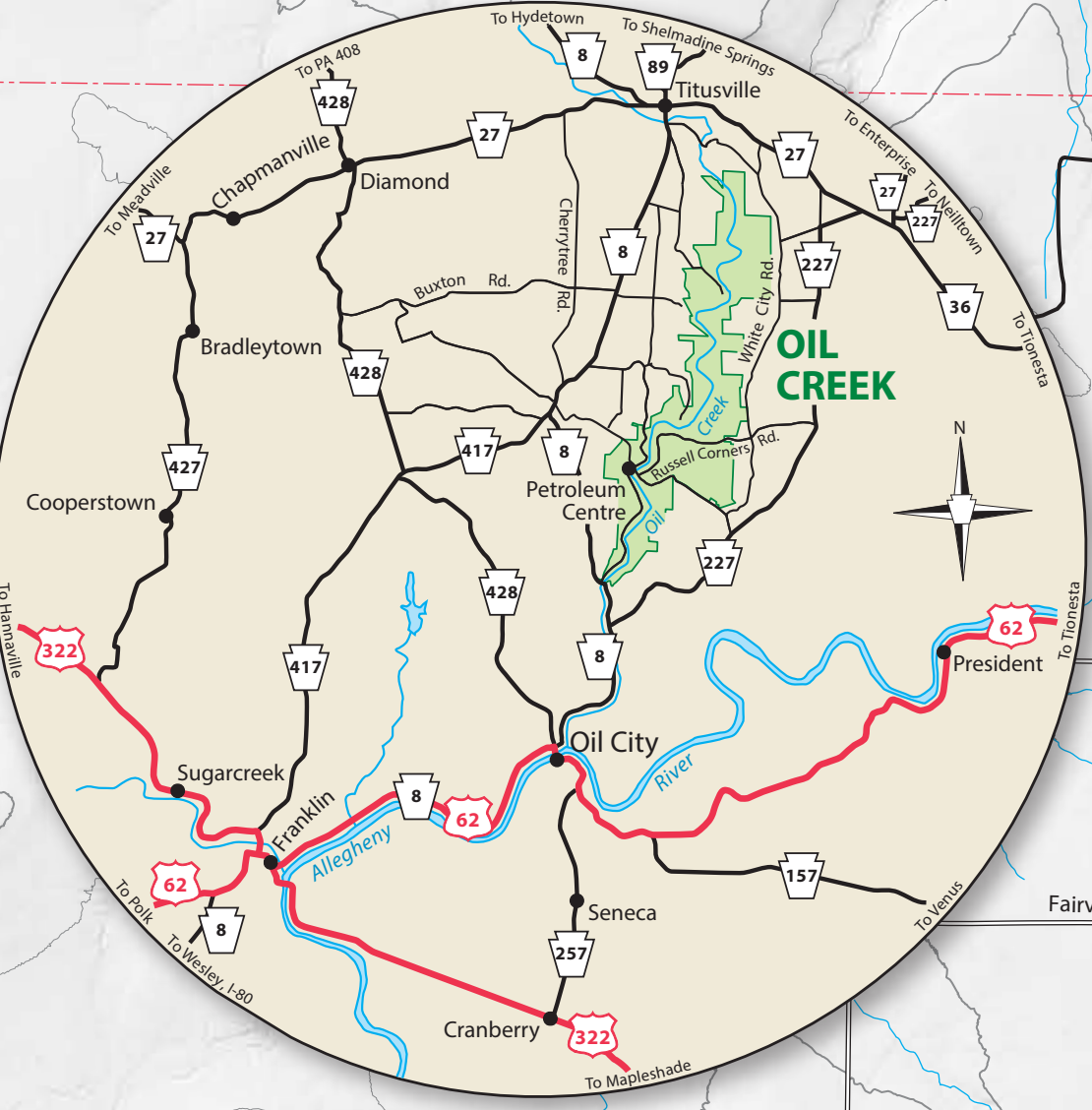
Information on nearby attractions is available from the Oil Region Alliance.  
[www.oilregion.org](http://www.oilregion.org)

At the north end of Oil Creek State Park near Titusville is the **Drake Well Museum and Park**. The museum is administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and presents a full-size replica of the engine and derrick over the early oil well, plus outstanding exhibits about Pennsylvania oil country. Within six miles of Oil Creek Valley is Pithole, America's largest oil boom town. Oil was discovered in Pithole in January 1865. By September 1865, Pithole had grown into a city of 15,000.  
[www.drakewell.org](http://www.drakewell.org)

The **Oil Creek and Titusville Railroad** operates an excursion train on weekends and other dates from June through October. The 26-mile round trip travels through Oil Creek State Park from Titusville to Rynd Farm. With advanced notice, the train will also stop at the Petroleum Centre Train Station within Oil Creek State Park. [www.octr.org](http://www.octr.org)

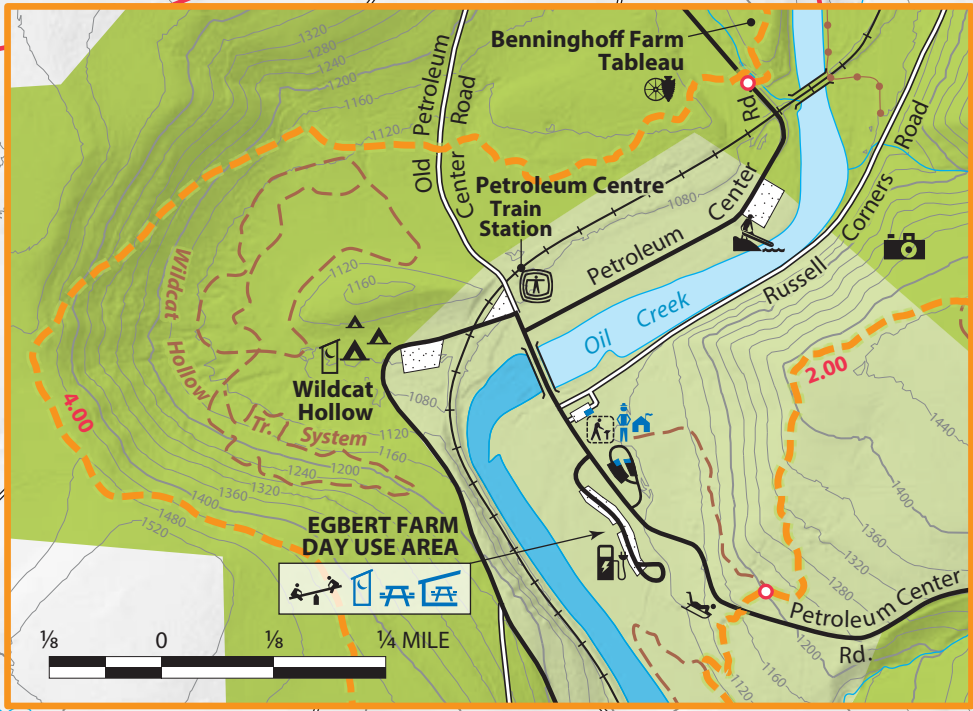


OIL CREEK STATE PARK



- Park Office
  - Blue Symbols Mean ADA Accessible
  - Petroleum Centre Train Station Visitor Center
  - Historic Site
  - Emergency Phone
  - Non-flush Restrooms
  - Picnic Area
  - Picnic Pavilion
  - Organized Group Tenting
  - Rain Shelter
  - Shelter and Non-flush Restroom
  - Warming Hut
  - Scenic View
  - Playground
  - Sledging
  - Hand-carry Boat Launch
  - Waterfall
  - Hiking Trail
  - Self-guided Trail
  - Multi-use Trail: Hiking, Bicycling, Cross-country Skiing
  - Gerard Hiking Trail  
Red Number is Distance Between Red Dots in Miles (East Side 18.40 Miles) (West Side 16.06 Miles)
  - Cross-country Skiing Recommended
  - Unpaved Road
  - Gate
  - Electric Vehicle Charging
  - Parking ADA Accessible
  - Parking Paved
  - Parking Unpaved
  - State Park No Hunting
  - State Park Hunting
  - Delayed Harvest Area
  - Artificial Lure Only
  - Drake Well Museum Property
- 1500 — 1400 —  
CONTOURS ARE ON 100 FT. INTERVALS

Petroleum Centre Area



Petroleum Centre Area

