

Kinzua Bridge State Park

Located in McKean County, 339-acre Kinzua (kin-zoo) Bridge State Park is home to the 225-foot-high skywalk. The iron viaduct, once the longest and tallest railroad structure at 2,053 feet long and 301 feet high, was replaced by the steel viaduct, which was partially destroyed by a tornado on July 21, 2003.

Reinvented as a pedestrian walkway in 2011, visitors can walk out 600 feet on the remaining support towers, gaze into the Kinzua Creek Valley, and look down through the partial glass platform at the end of the skywalk.

The visitor center and park office features great views, self-guided exhibits, and information on the surrounding area.



Directions

GPS DD: Lat: 41.75953 Long. -78.58702

Kinzua Bridge State Park is four miles north of US Route 6 at Mount Jewett on SR 3011.

Use the following address for GPS devices:  
296 Viaduct Road, Mount Jewett 16740

Visitor Center and Park Office

The Kinzua Bridge State Park Visitor Center and Park Office opened on July 1, 2016. It provides a location for visitors to interact with park staff, explore the history of the viaduct, and learn more about the natural landscape and wildlife. The 11,000-square-foot visitor center features a reception area, spectacular view of the skywalk, and two levels of self-guided and interactive exhibits that focus on engineering, environment, nature, energy, and history as they relate to the viaduct and local area. Many of the exhibits are hands-on for the enjoyment of all ages, while some include videos and original artifacts. The PA Wilds Artisan Gift Shop connects visitors with products proudly made in the PA Wilds. www.PAWilds.com



Learn, Experience, Connect

Kinzua Bridge State Park offers year-round environmental education, recreational, and historical programs, including hands-on activities, guided walks, impromptus, and evening programs.

**TEACHER TRAINING:** A variety of natural history and curricula workshops are available to teachers. These workshops are designed to provide information and ideas that can easily be integrated in the classroom.

**SCHOOL GROUPS AND ORGANIZED GROUPS:** Programs focus on engineering, environment, nature, energy, and history. They correlate to Pennsylvania Academic Standards, vary in length, and most are

STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) related. Some programs begin in the school classroom followed by a field learning experience at the park. Contact the park for program information, to request a specific topic, or to inquire about availability. All programs must be arranged in advance and may be scheduled by calling the park office.

**TOUR GROUPS:** The park is motor coach, bus, and RV friendly. Buses may drive directly to the entrance of the visitor center and park office to drop off and pick up groups. Participants may explore the exhibits on both levels, join staff for a guided walk on the skywalk, and visit the gift shop. All guided activities must be scheduled in advance using the form on the park website.

Natural History



Porcupine

Extensive logging from 1890 to 1930 led to the Allegheny hardwood forest that now covers most of the region. The forest in and around the park consists mainly of black cherries, sugar maples, white ashes, American beeches, and other trees and shrubs. These northern hardwoods attract thousands of visitors every fall to the skywalk to view the changing of the leaves. Conifers are also scattered throughout, making spots of green year round. In addition to white pines, eastern hemlock, Pennsylvania's state tree, can be found in moist locations.

Areas where swaths of mature trees were blown down during the tornado now contain small trees, shrubs, and

wildflowers, providing for a greater diversity of wildlife habitat.

Adding to the park's beauty, wildflowers can be found throughout the seasons. Look for painted trilliums, spring beauties, and trout lilies in the spring, and jack-in-the-pulpits, Indian pipes, and asters during the summer.

Local wildlife species include black bear, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, coyote, cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, porcupine, bobcat, raccoon, saw-whet and barred owls, and numerous songbirds.

From the skywalk and other park overlooks, red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures are often seen circling on the summer air currents. Occasionally, a bald eagle is observed flying over the valley.

WILDLIFE VIEWING ETIQUETTE:

1. Keep pets on a leash.
2. Stay on trails.
3. Observe from a distance.
4. Film and photograph wildlife responsibly and from a safe distance.
5. If an animal shows stress, move away.
6. Treat other visitors courteously.
7. Report inappropriate behavior to the authorities.

History

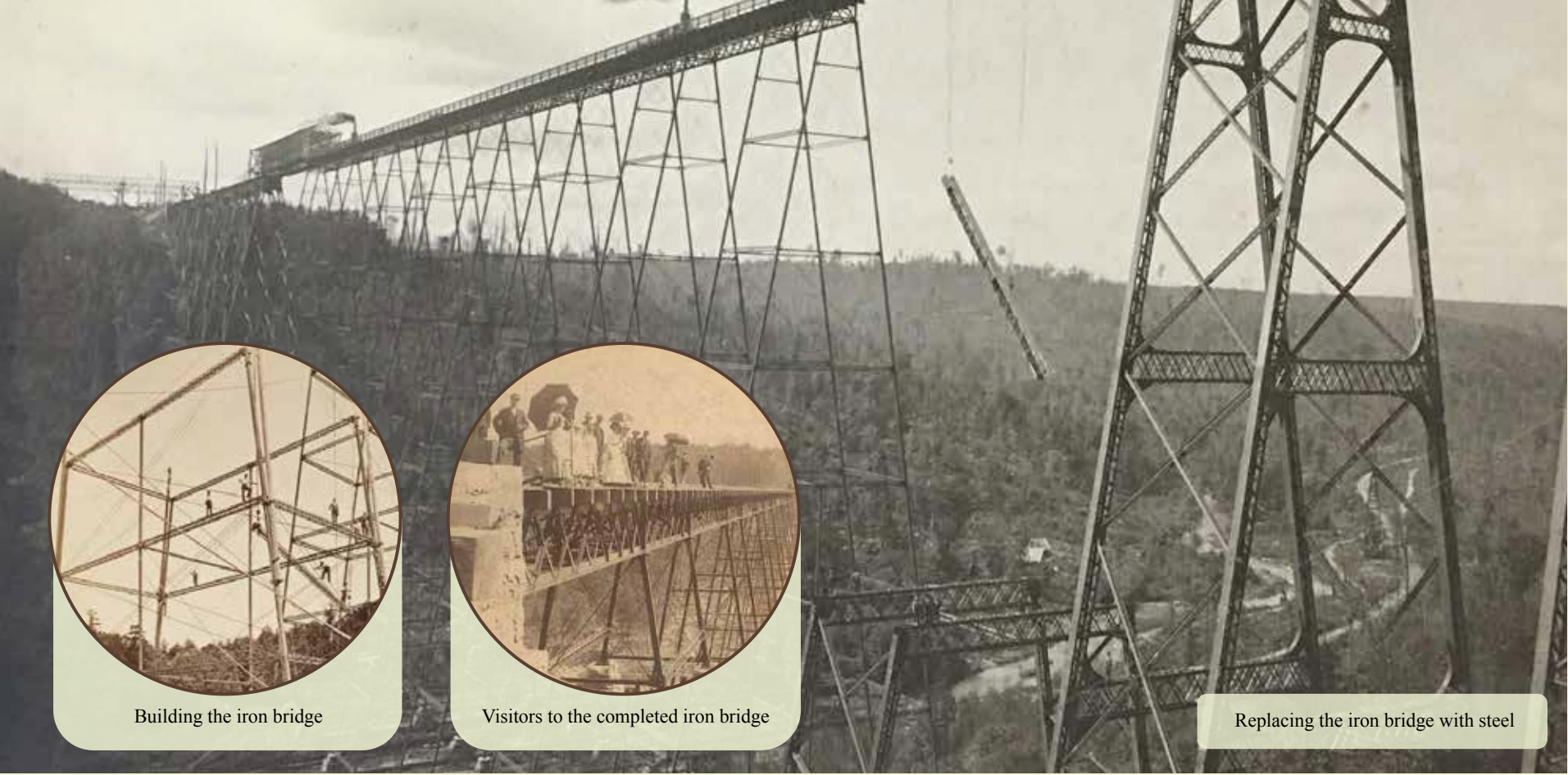
Construction of the iron viaduct began in 1881, starting with the placement of the stone piers. When completed in 1882, the Kinzua Bridge Viaduct was the longest and tallest railroad viaduct in the world. It was constructed as an alternative to laying an additional eight miles of track over rough terrain along the line leading to McKean County's coal, timber, and oil lands.

Built of iron in only 94 days, the original viaduct was approximately 301 feet high, 2,053 feet long, and weighed 3,105,000 pounds. The towers were a patented design called Phoenix Columns, which were lighter in weight and had greater strength than cast iron columns of similar shape and size.

By 1900, it became necessary to rebuild the entire structure with steel to accommodate heavier trains. It took 100 to 150 men, working ten-hour shifts, to complete the job in 105 days. The new steel viaduct had the same measurements but now weighed around 6,706,000 pounds.

Freight traffic discontinued in 1959. In 1963, Governor William Scranton signed a law that created Kinzua Bridge State Park. The park officially opened in 1970. The Kinzua Viaduct received national recognition when it was placed on the National Register of Historic Civil Engineering Landmarks in 1977.

Beginning in 1987, excursion trains traveled from Marienville, Pennsylvania, through Allegheny National Forest and stopped on Kinzua Viaduct before returning to their point of origin.



Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from:  
Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau. 800-473-9370. www.VistANF.com  
PA Route 6 Alliance. 814-435-7706. www.PaRoute6.com  
Potter/Tioga Visitors Bureau. 570-724-0635. www.VisitPotterTioga.com  
Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau. 814-849-5197. www.visitpago.com

Located in the rugged mountains of northern Pennsylvania, the 3,192-acre **Elk State Park** surrounds the 1,106-acre East Branch Lake formed by the East Branch Dam. Recreational opportunities include unlimited horsepower motor boating, waterskiing, hiking, fishing, and hunting.

Situated in a small valley surrounded by picturesque hills, the 100-acre **Bendigo State Park** is located along the East Branch of the Clarion River. Recreational opportunities include a free swimming pool, picnicking, fishing, playground, and playing fields.

**Kinzua Dam**, one of the largest dams in the United States east of the Mississippi River, is in Warren County within the Allegheny National Forest. In addition to providing flood



Aerial view of Kinzua Bridge State Park

During a February 2002 inspection, Department of Conservation and Natural Resource (DCNR) engineers determined that the bridge needed a full-scale inspection. By June, excursion trains were barred from the bridge. In August, the bridge was closed to all traffic, including pedestrians. Engineers feared that high winds could create lateral pressure on the bridge, causing a collapse.

Because of the inspection, a national leader in railroad bridge construction and repair, W.M. Brode Company of Newcomerstown, Ohio, began working to restore the Kinzua Viaduct in February of 2003. On Monday, July 21, 2003, at approximately 3:15 PM, an F1 tornado (winds speeds of 73-112 miles per hour) struck the side of the Kinzua Viaduct. Eleven towers from the center of the bridge were torn from their concrete bases and thrown to the valley floor.

A post collapse inspection revealed that the 1882 wrought iron bridge had been replaced with steel, except for the anchor bolts, which had been re-enforced with collar-couplings. The investigation determined that

hidden fractures had developed in these collar-coupling assemblies and anchor bolts, making them too weak to withstand the winds of the tornado.

Today, park visitors can once again walk a portion of the Kinzua Viaduct. Built on six restored original towers including new anchor bolts, a pedestrian walkway (skywalk) leads to a 225-foot-high observation deck that gives a towering view of the Kinzua Creek Valley. A partial glass floor in the deck reveals a breathtaking glimpse into the steel structure of the bridge. The eleven twisted and scattered towers blown over by the tornado remain at the bottom of the valley. Several benches line the paved walkway to the skywalk.

The picture taking platform under the skywalk allows visitors to photograph themselves and the remaining support towers in a 3D effect, similar to what visitors saw prior to the towers falling in 2003.

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for Kinzua Bridge State Park



**Kinzua Bridge State Park**  
296 Viaduct Road  
Kane, PA 16735  
814-778-5467  
KinzuaBridgeSP@pa.gov

**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.

[www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks](http://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 is your responsibility.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- 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.
- Please park only in designated areas and obey all traffic regulations.
- Please recycle. Place trash accumulated during your stay in proper receptacles or take it home with you.
- Soliciting and posting signs are prohibited without approval from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.



Recreational Opportunities

**RECREATION ADVISORY:** Due to unsafe conditions around the downed towers, visitors are prohibited from walking near the downed towers and debris field as indicated on the map.



**SCENIC VIEWS:** The skywalk gives close-up views of the viaduct and wide views of the Kinzua Creek Valley. The overlook is excellent for viewing both the skywalk and valley. Both locations are ideal for viewing fall foliage, which usually peaks in the first two weeks of October.

**PICNICKING:** Tables and charcoal grills are scattered in the grassy areas near the playground in full to partial shade. An ADA accessible pavilion that can accommodate up to 60 people is located across the parking lot from the visitor center and park office. The pavilion may be reserved up to 11 months in advance for a fee. The unreserved picnic pavilion is free and may be used on a first-come, first-served basis.

**DOG WALKING:** All pets must be controlled, attended at all times, and on a leash or otherwise safely restrained. Be considerate when walking your dog and carry a container to clean up after your pet.

**HUNTING AND FIREARMS:** About 275 acres of Kinzua Bridge State Park are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are bear, deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, rabbit, and squirrel.

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.

**SNOWSHOEING:** Snowshoes in a variety of sizes are available at the visitor center and park office for use within the park. If you are interested, please call the park office to reserve a pair of snowshoes. A valid Pennsylvania driver’s license is required. Snowshoes are available on a first-come, first-served basis when there is sufficient snow cover (at least 5 inches). Park staff offer visitors a brief beginner lesson and a program on the history of snowshoeing. Current winter conditions can be found at:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/WinterReport>

Hiking: 2.0 miles

**GENERAL KANE TRAIL:** 1.6 miles, blue blazes, easiest hiking  
The trail begins and ends at the overflow parking area. It wanders through hardwood forests of black cherry and maple trees, which have been ravaged and renewed by nature since the 2003 tornado.

The loop trail is named for General Thomas Leiper Kane, the visionary behind the Kinzua Viaduct. During the Civil War, Kane assembled the famed Bucktail Regiment. He also supported slave rights and the Latter-day Saints movement as it migrated westward.

**KINZUA CREEK TRAIL:** 0.4 mile (one way), yellow blazes, most difficult hiking

This steep and challenging trail should only be attempted by visitors with proper footwear and hiking experience.

The trail begins on the paved walkway to the overlook and switchbacks to the valley bottom 280 feet below, giving close-up views of the supports for the skywalk and spectacular views of the fallen towers. The trail ends at the far side of the footbridge at the creek. Entering the debris field is prohibited. Hikers must retrace their steps to the trailhead or use the service road shown on the map.

**Caution:** Hikers on the Kinzua Creek Trail should be in good physical condition, wear sturdy boots, and use caution due to steep trail conditions.

The following guidelines will help ensure a safe and enjoyable hiking experience while at the park.

- Always wear sturdy footwear.
- Give yourself plenty of time for your hike. Plan to be off the trails well before dark.
- Let someone know where you are hiking and when you should return.
- Stay on the trails. Leaving the trail causes damage to unique natural resources, promotes erosion, and can be dangerous.
- Don’t take shortcuts from one trail section to another. Taking shortcuts down switchbacks is dangerous and causes trail damage.

