Cherry Springs State Park

Cherry Springs State Park is nearly as remote and wild today as it was two centuries ago. Its dark skies make it a haven for astronomers. Named for the large stands of black cherry trees in the park, the 82-acre state park is surrounded by the 262,000-acre Susquehannock State Forest.

Directions

Cherry Springs State Park is on PA 44 in Potter County. Use the following address for GPS devices: 4639 Cherry Springs Road, Coudersport, PA 16901

Make online reservations at: www.visitPAparks.com or call toll-free 1-888-PA-PARKS (1-888-727-7275), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday, for state park information and reservations.

Recreational Opportunities

CAMPING: rustic sites

There are 30 campsites and a sanitary dump station. All sites include a picnic table, lantern hanger, and fire ring. The campground opens the second Friday in April and closes in November.

The campground often fills up during peak viewing nights, like dark of the moon and meteor showers. The closest campground is in Patterson State Park, which has ten rustic, first-come, first-served sites. Patterson is 5 miles north on PA 44. Modern camping is available at Lyman Run (9 miles) and Otte Bull (15 miles), and Submitted (20 miles) state parks.

Make online reservations at www.visitPAparks.com or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday, for state park information and reservations.

PICNICKING: Picnic tables and charcoal grills are available near the Night Sky Public Viewing Area.

HIKING: Walk the 1 mile, self-guiding Cherry Springs Working Forest Interpretive Trail to learn how the forest is an essential part of our lives.

Tell us about your hike at: www.exploretrails.com

PUBLIC STARGAZING PROGRAMS: Weather permitting, a park educator or guest speaker presents public stargazing programs on the north side of the park at the Night Sky Public Viewing Area.

These programs are available throughout the summer. Some programs require registration. Program schedules are published in the local paper and on the Cherry Springs State Park website.

Cherry Springs can be cold and damp, even in the summer. Wear proper footwear and dress warmly. Lawn chairs, a blanket, binoculars, or a telescope may enhance your experience. All flashlights should have a red filter. Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the program begins, or before dark. An alternate program might be presented if it is overcast. Pets, telescopes, and crowds do not mix. Please leave your pet at home.

WOODSMEN'S SHOW: Since 1952, the annual Woodsmen's Show attracts thousands of spectators for the early August event. The show features lumberjack contests in tree-felling, log rolling, spring board chopping, standing block chop, and chainsaw events.

Stargazing

There are two distinct opportunities for stargazing at Cherry Springs. Visitors planning to observe for a few hours should use the Night Sky Public Viewing Area. Visitors planning to observe through the entire night should use the Overnight Astronomy Observation Field.

First-time visitors should go to the public parking lot on the northeast side of PA 44 and read the information provided.

Night Sky Public Viewing Area

On the northeast side of PA 44, the Night Sky Public Viewing Area is for more casual stargazers. After parking in the Visitor Parking lot, follow the path to the field. Please be courteous to other stargazers.

Overnight Astronomy Observation Field

On the southwest side of PA 44 is the famous Cherry Springs State Park Overnight Astronomy Observation Field. This area is only for viewing and/or photography for the full night. Visitors planning to observe for a few hours then depart should use the park northeast of PA 44.

A nightly fee permit is required to set up on the Overnight Astronomy Observation Field. A Galaxy Pass allows entrance year round. Fee envelopes are at the Registration Kiosk, which is near the entrance to the field. Please follow written instructions, posted fee schedule, and list your location on the field so that you can be located in an emergency. Deposit the registration and fee in the fee tube.

Electricity is available on the Overnight Astronomy Observation Field from 120-volt ground fault protected power outlets in RV style pedestals (six per pedestal). When the field is in heavy use, outlets must be shared. Please be courteous to your fellow stargazers. Electrical pedastals are for the charging of telephones and small appliance or laptop use. Camper hook-up is prohibited.

Concrete telescope pads, ranging in size from 4’ to 6’, are located randomly across the field. Some astronomers prefer the pads while others like to set up directly on the grass.

Overnight Astronomy Observation Field Rules

• All non-red lighting is prohibited after sunset, including interior lighting, exterior lighting, flashlights, and computers and devices. Excess red lighting is prohibited.

History

Early Settlement

In 1818, Jonathan Edgcomb constructed a log house along the Jersey Shore Pike in Potter County. It came to be known as the Cherry Springs Hotel.

Over the years, the pine and hemlock in the Cherry Springs area was felled off and in their place grew hardwood trees like sugar maple and the park’s namesake, black cherry.

Civilian Conservation Corps Era

The Cherry Springs Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp, S-316 PA (1933-37), was one of ten CCC camps constructed in the Susquehannock Forest District. The men of the camp cleaned underbrush, opened trails, and constructed buildings and roads.

Additionally, Camp Elliott (named for District Forester Harry Elliott) was set up at Cherry Springs. This camp was not connected with the CCC camps, but was under the supervision of the former Department of Forests and Waters. Unemployed college boys stayed at this camp, and one of their accomplishments was the construction of the 40-acre airfield at Cherry Springs (under the former State Bureau of Aeronautics) during the summer of 1935. It is now the Night Sky Public Viewing Area.

Dark Skies

Amateur astronomers realized Cherry Springs State Park had one of the darkest skis in the northeast and began stargazing in the park. Recognizing this unique resource needed to be managed and protected, in 2000, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources declared Cherry Springs State Park the first Dark Sky Park.

Due to these facts and other efforts, Cherry Springs became the second International Dark Sky Park in the world by attaining a Gold Level International Dark Sky Park certification from the International Dark Sky Association in 2008.

Nearby Attraction

Pennsylvania Wilds is two million acres of public lands for hiking, biking, fishing, boating, hunting, and exploration in northcentral Pennsylvania. www.pawilds.com

Access for People with Disabilities

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are accessible to 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.

NEAREST HOSPITAL

Charles Cole Memorial Hospital
1001 East Second Street
Coudersport, PA 16917-9756
814-274-9300