



A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for Kings Gap Environmental Education Center

Kings Gap
Environmental
Education
Center



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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.

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2021



KINGS GAP ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER



Kings Gap Environmental Education Center's unique attractions are its mountainous terrain, extensive forests, and panoramic views, which may be experienced while driving the winding road to the mansion area or while hiking the trails. The sweeping view of the Cumberland Valley from the Cameron-Masland Mansion is impressive at any time of the year.

Kings Gap Environmental Education Center is one of several state parks

specifically dedicated to providing environmental education and public programs. A variety of programs are available for children, teachers, and the general public that increase knowledge and awareness of the values and functions of our natural resources. Whether enjoying Kings Gap through recreational activities, educational programs, or its scenic beauty, visitors can be inspired

to become stewards of Pennsylvania's outstanding natural resources.

Kings Gap consists of 2,601 acres of forest on South Mountain with more than 25 miles of hiking trails, a permanent orienteering course, picnicking, hunting, and other recreational and educational opportunities. The mansion provides facilities for overnight lodging with meals and may be reserved for meetings, weddings, receptions, and similar functions.

Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 40.09321 Long. -77.2683

From Interstate 81, take Exit 37. Travel south on PA 233 for 2.3 miles. Turn left onto Pine Road and continue 2.2 miles. Turn right onto Kings Gap Road.

The Cameron-Masland Mansion is 3.5 miles from the center's entrance. Follow the winding, paved road to the top of the mountain. In the Mansion Area, follow the one-way directional signs. Parking is available in several lots adjacent to the education building and mansion.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Spend the Day

HUNTING AND FIREARMS: About 2,406 acres are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during established seasons. An additional 138 acres, which includes the Pine Plantation and the Forest Pools areas, are open to archery deer hunting only in the appropriate season. Common game species are deer, turkeys, and squirrels.

The mansion and education building are included in a 56-acre posted no hunting area. Hunters should be aware of "Safety Zones" both posted and not posted. Contact the center office for additional information on the hunting areas.

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 center 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

Stay the Night



Orienteering

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.

PICNICKING: Picnic tables are located throughout the center. Drinking water is only available in the Mansion Area. Restrooms are available at the education building, Pine Plantation, and Kings Gap Hollow areas.

ORIENTEERING: A permanent orienteering course is located at Kings Gap. Orienteering is a sport that involves using a map and compass to navigate a designated course. Additional information on orienteering and copies of course maps are available in the education building foyer. Programs are offered in fall and spring.

HIKING: see reverse side.

LEARN, EXPERIENCE, CONNECT



Formal Education Programs

PRE-K TO GRADE 2: These programs combine sensory awareness, discovery learning, and storytelling to help students learn and experience their environment.

GRADES 3-5: Children are actively involved in exploring the environment around them. Emphasis is placed on observation, inferencing, and application.

GRADES 6-8: Programs are centered on exploring the environment using a scientific approach. Students are responsible for collecting and analyzing data.

GRADES 9-12: Programs emphasize critical thinking and problem solving skills while

Public Programs

Kings Gap is committed to providing a diverse array of environmental education and recreational programs. Programming is offered year round to schools, civic groups, and the community. Educational programs are standards-based, grade-specific, and generate learning through discovery and a hands-on approach. Kings Gap also strives to teach outdoor skills that promote healthy, lifelong, outdoor enjoyment.

A schedule of community programs is available online and at the center. School programs can be arranged by calling the center at 717-486-3799. Contact the center office or explore the online calendar of events, <https://events.dcnr.pa.gov>, for more information on programs and other learning experiences.



These workshops are designed to provide information and ideas that can easily be integrated into the classroom.

fostering an appreciation for the environment. Kings Gap offers Watershed Education, and programs on topics like problem solving and biodiversity.

COLLEGE: Programs are provided upon request. Internship opportunities are available for students seeking degrees in environmental education, resource management, biology, and other related fields.

EDUCATOR TRAINING: A variety of natural history and curricula workshops are available to teachers through both credit and non-credit workshops as well as in-service and pre-service teacher workshops.



SUMMER CAMPS: During the summer months, youths ages 4 to 17 are invited to participate in the Bureau of State Parks' DiscoverE! day camps. This series of outdoor learning programs offers young people opportunities to explore and learn about the environment in four age specific levels.

SPECIAL EVENTS: Kings Gap provides special programming on a variety of topics, including Spring Garden Day and Native

Plant Sale, Heritage Day, Garden Harvest Day, and Holiday Open House.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS: A variety of programs for the community are offered on a regular basis. Recreational programs include guided trail hikes, orienteering, and archery; while natural history programs cover such topics as honeybees, birding, owls, and seasonal pools.

WILDLIFE WATCHING

Rising in elevation from 700 feet to 1,400 feet above sea level, Kings Gap straddles South Mountain. This dramatic elevation change gives Kings Gap two distinct forest habitats.

On the lower slopes of South Mountain is a forest habitat of white oak, red oak, and tulip trees. In the tree canopy, birds such as scarlet tanagers, Baltimore orioles, and vireos hunt for food to feed their young. Ovenbirds, eastern towhees, and wood thrushes scour the ground for insects. Sharp-shinned hawks hunt for songbirds, reptiles, and amphibians. These woods are also wet with spring seeps, small natural ponds, and vernal pools found after the spring thaw and rains. Wood frogs and spotted salamanders journey to the waters to lay their eggs. Summer brings blooms to native wildflowers like fly poison and white snakeroot.

The dry ridge tops of South Mountain are a forest habitat of chestnut oak trees, with an understory of mountain laurels, blueberries, and huckleberries. Pileated woodpeckers,

eastern wood-peewees, brown creepers, and kinglets thrive in the dry forest. The showy blooms of pink lady slippers and the tiny flowers of trailing arbutus appear briefly in the spring. White-tailed deer, turkeys, and fox squirrels feast on the acorn crop each fall. The ridge tops are excellent sites to view turkey vultures soaring on warm updrafts from the valley.



Red-breasted
nuthatch

The pine plantation at the foot of the mountain was planted in the 1950s. It is home to animals that prefer coniferous forests. The chatter of red squirrels often break the silence of the pine forest. In winter, red-breasted nuthatches scour the tree bark for food. Although impacted by invasive plants, the understory is also home to spicebush, a good food for mockingbirds, catbirds, and bluebirds.

Kings Gap is great habitat for a variety of reptiles, including box turtles, five-lined skinks, northern copperheads, and timber rattlesnakes. Snake sightings are not uncommon in the summer months. If left

alone, snakes are usually not aggressive. The timber rattlesnakes of South Mountain are an isolated population whose numbers have declined in recent years. For this reason, it is unlawful to hunt, take, catch, or kill timber rattlesnakes in the South Mountain region. For additional information on these reptiles, contact the center office.

The Irish Gap and Pinebrook access areas are gateways into an undeveloped section of the center grounds. This tract is crisscrossed with existing old trails and logging roads which are not blazed or marked. Many of the trails can be impassable due to wet conditions which support abundant moisture-loving plants like royal ferns. For the adventurous, wildlife abounds. Black bears, coyotes, and foxes are sometimes sighted in this area.



Five-lined skink



Spotted salamander



ORGANIZED GROUP TENTING: This wooded area located in the Kings Gap Hollow Area has one site with a capacity of 30 people and may be reserved mid-April through mid-November by organized adult or youth groups.

Reservations from 11 months up to two days in advance can be made online and by calling toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday. Reservations two days or less in advance can be made by contacting the center office at 717-486-5031, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday to Friday.

INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

Kings Gap Environmental Education Center

500 Kings Gap Road
Carlisle, PA 17015
717- 486-5031
KingsGapSP@pa.gov
An Equal Opportunity Employer
www.visitPAparks.com

Electric vehicle charging station

A two-plug, electric-vehicle charging station is available for public use in the Education Building parking lot. Please move to another parking space once your vehicle has been charged.

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.

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.

KingsGapEEC



Spicebush swallowtail butterfly

In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a center employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards, the education building, and the center office doors.

NEAREST HOSPITAL

UPMC Carlisle
361 Alexander Spring Road, 17015
Emergency: 717-249-1212



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.

- 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.

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau. www.VisitCumberlandValley.com

Visitors enjoy many recreational opportunities at **Pine Grove Furnace State Park** including two mountain lakes (Laurel Lake and Fuller Lake) hiking the Appalachian Trail, biking the rail trail, camping, fishing, swimming, visiting the Appalachian Trail Museum, and imagining when the park was a charcoal-fired iron furnace community. 717-486-7174

The 85,000-acre **Michaux State Forest** offers general recreation such as hunting, fishing, and hiking. 717-352-2211

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission raises trout and other fish for release into Pennsylvania lakes and streams at the **Huntsdale State Fish Hatchery**. 717-486-3419

HIKING: 25 miles



Sturdy footwear is recommended due to the rocky footing on most trails. Trails are marked, but taking a trail map on your hike is strongly recommended. Maps are available at trailhead parking areas and the center office. Distances listed are one-way.

TRAIL DIFFICULTY RATINGS: Ratings are based on technical challenge, not physical exertion.

Easiest: Elevation gain or loss is minimal, less than 5% slope, maximum 20% up to 100 feet

More Difficult: Elevation gain or loss is moderate, 12% slope, maximum 30% up to 300 feet

Most Difficult: Elevation gain or loss is usually severe, less than 18% slope, maximum 30+% up to 500 feet

- 1. Pine Plantation Trail: 0.6 mile, orange blazes, easiest hiking**
This loop trail has educational signs to explain management techniques used to thin trees within the 42-acre coniferous plantation.
- 2. 🌿 Whispering Pines Trail: 0.3 mile, paved, easiest hiking**
This ADA accessible trail loops through the interior of the pine plantation.
- 3. Rock Scree Trail: 1.9 miles, red blazes, more difficult hiking**
This linear trail connects the Pine Plantation

- and Mansion areas by crossing over the ridge and rocky outcrop where Antietam quartzite was quarried to construct the mansion.
- 4. Ridge Overlook Trail: 0.8 mile, orange blazes, most difficult hiking**
This linear, ridge-top trail with boulder outcrops and a view of the valley below presents a more challenging hike. Rock Scree and Kings Gap Hollow trails provide access to Ridge Overlook Trail.
 - 5. Forest Heritage Trail: 1.8 miles, yellow blazes, more difficult hiking**
This loop trail passes several charcoal hearths, unused for over 100 years. Maple Hollow and Rock Scree trails provide access to Forest Heritage Trail.
 - 6. Maple Hollow Trail: 1.3 miles, orange blazes, more difficult hiking**
This loop trail traverses a hollow with rich soils, plentiful water, and resulting maple forest.
 - 7. Woodland Ecology Trail: 0.6 mile, red blazes, easiest hiking**
Educational signs help hikers identify forest plants and interpret the ecology of a chestnut oak forest on this quiet, mossy loop trail.
 - 8. Scenic Vista Trail: 2.5 miles, orange blazes, more difficult hiking**
This linear trail offers rolling terrain on the way to Scenic Vista Overlook. Benches are strategically placed for hikers to relax and enjoy the surrounding view of unbroken forest.
 - 9. 🌿 White Oaks Trail: 0.3 mile, paved, easiest hiking**
This ADA accessible loop trail has educational signs about the ecology of a deciduous white oak forest.

- 10. Watershed Trail: 1.9 miles, yellow blazes, more difficult hiking**
This loop trail encompasses the headwaters for Kings Gap Hollow Run, including a rocky portion beside the stream with many small pools and cascades.
- 11. Boundary Trail: 2.4 miles, red blazes, most difficult hiking**
This linear trail travels through an oak/pitch pine forest and blueberry/huckleberry understory.
- 12. Kings Gap Hollow Trail: 2.8 miles, orange blazes, more difficult hiking**
This linear trail winds along its namesake stream as it follows the gap through the mountain.
- 13. Locust Point Trail: 1 mile, yellow blazes, most difficult hiking**
This trail loops off of Boundary Trail and then travels to a clearing created by fallen, dead locust trees that presents a view of Kings Gap Hollow.
- 14. Buck Ridge Trail: 6 miles (1.8 miles in the park), yellow blaze, most difficult hiking**
This linear trail links Kings Gap to Pine Grove Furnace State Park through Michaux State Forest using a network of rocky footpaths and old logging roads. The trail begins at the mansion and parallels Scenic Vista Trail before heading into Michaux State Forest.
- 15. Black Gum Trail: 1 mile, red blazes, more difficult hiking**
This linear trail with an abundance of black gum (tupelo) trees follows the southwestern contour of the mountainside near the Mansion Area. Kings Gap Hollow and Forest Heritage trails provide access to Black Gum Trail.

- 16. Nature Trail: 0.2 mile, red blazes, easiest hiking**
This loop trail by the education building guides walkers through open forest on a safe and level circuit around the education building.
- 17. Cold Springs Trail: 0.7 miles, red blazes, easiest hiking**
While following the center’s eastern boundary, this trail provides great views of Cold Springs Hollow.
- 18. Upper Irish Gap Hollow Trail: 0.4 mile, yellow blazes, easiest hiking**
This trail leads into Irish Gap Hollow and connects with Two Hollows Trail.
- 19. Two Hollows Trail: 0.9 mile, orange blazes, more difficult hiking**
This trail connects Kings Gap and Irish Gap hollows.
- 20. Lower Irish Gap Hollow Trail: 0.6 mile, yellow blazes, more difficult hiking**
From the Pinebrook Access Area, this trail connects to Irish Gap Hollow Run near the remains of a dam used to power Keller’s Sawmill in the late 1800s.
- 21. Forest Pools Trail: 1.2 miles, yellow blazes, easiest hiking**
This trail loops through the Forest Pools Area and by six vernal pools. Educational kiosks explain the restoration methods used to restore the pools.

Tell us about your hike at:

 **ExplorePAtrails.com**
 powered by you

HISTORY

HUMAN IMPACTS ON SOUTH MOUNTAIN 1750-1900
The exact origin of the name “Kings Gap” is unknown, but may date back to early European settlers in this region. The relatively young forests of Kings Gap reflect the influence of the charcoaling industry from the 1700s through the late 1800s. Before it was economical to ship coal, wood charcoal fueled the iron furnaces located nearby. The forests of South Mountain were systematically clear-cut on a 20- to 25-year cycle to satisfy the thirst for charcoal by the nine iron furnaces in the Kings Gap area. A relatively young forest now exists as a result of these repeated cuttings.

To make the charcoal, wood was piled and burned slowly on hearths. These flat, 30- to 50-foot diameter circles where charcoal was made can still be found. Even more than 100 years later, few woody plants grow on the old hearths.

JAMES MCCORMICK CAMERON 1906-1951
Near the turn of the 20th century, James McCormick Cameron, a member of the politically prominent Cameron family from Harrisburg, purchased many parcels of land surrounding Kings Gap. Around 1908, Cameron erected a 32-room stone mansion as a summer home. The threat of fire was the most likely reason Mr. Cameron had the mansion constructed with the native Antietam quartzite quarried nearby and built the interior structure of reinforced concrete. During this period, forest fires on South Mountain were a constant threat due to poor forestry practices.

Still remaining from the Cameron mountain estate are the water tower, carriage house, generator building, stone walled mansion

garden, caretaker’s house (currently a private residence), and ice house where ice, hauled from Pine Grove Furnace each winter, kept food cool during the summer months.

C. H. MASLAND AND SONS 1951-1973
With Mr. Cameron’s passing in 1949, C. H. Masland and Son Carpet Company of Carlisle purchased the mansion and the surrounding 1,430 acres from the heirs in 1951. The remaining acreage passed into other ownership. Masland refurbished the mansion, then called the “Masland Guest House,” which was used as accommodations for potential clients and as a training site for employees and sales representatives. As conference rooms and overnight facilities became more available in the Carlisle area, it was no longer necessary for the company to operate its own guest house.

FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
The Nature Conservancy, assisted by the commonwealth, purchased the mansion and 1,430 acres of South Mountain in 1973. Kings Gap was dedicated as the third state park environmental education center in 1977.

In 2011, the Nature Conservancy, assisted by the commonwealth, purchased 1,077 acres, designated as “Irish Gap Tract,” reuniting most of the original Cameron estate.

