

The Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania

Leonard Harrison and Colton Point state parks are on opposite sides of Pine Creek Gorge, also called the “Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania.” Many scenic vistas offer spectacular views into the 800-foot-deep, glacial flood-water-carved canyon. The scenery at these parks is superb in every season of the year and is especially stunning in late September through mid-October. The large abundance of



Colton Point

Leonard Harrison State Park

On the east rim of the canyon, the 585-acre Leonard Harrison State Park has modern facilities, a visitor center, and the most famous scenic views of the gorge. GPS DD: Lat. 41.698 Long. -77.45156

Directions

To reach Leonard Harrison State Park on the eastern rim of the canyon, take PA 660 west from Wellsboro for ten miles.

Recreational Opportunities

CAMPING: flush toilets and hot showers

The campground is open from the second Friday in April until the third Sunday in October. Rustic toilets, tables, fire rings, and a sanitary dump station are provided. Some sites have electricity.

PICNICKING: Picnic tables (seven of which are covered), charcoal grills, restrooms, drinking water, and trash bins are available. Schloder Pavilion can be reserved for a fee. If unreserved, the pavilion is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

HIKING: See reverse side.

Visitor Center and Gift Shop

🦿 The gift shop is open from late mid-April to late October as visitor center staffing allows. Call the park office for hours and seasonal changes. A video and educational displays interpret the area and its wildlife. Water, soda, and juice vending machines are available from late April to late October. All proceeds benefit Pennsylvania State Parks.

History

Leonard Harrison State Park honors Leonard Harrison (1850-1929) of Wellsboro. Mr. Harrison was a civic-minded businessman and banker who contributed his time, energy, and finances to the betterment of his home community. Leonard Harrison State Park originally consisted of 121 acres and was called “The Lookout.” Mr. Harrison owned and developed the area as a public picnic ground. He gave the area to the commonwealth in 1922. The park was further developed by the boys of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-155-PA Darling Run during the mid-1930s. A bronze monument to the CCC’s achievements is on the overlook. Additional lands were added to the park in the late 1940s.



deciduous hardwood trees display beautiful autumn shades of yellow, orange, red, and purple. Pockets of evergreen trees provide a dash of green year round.

Pine Creek Gorge begins just south of Ansonia, along US 6 and continues south for about 47 miles. At its deepest point, the gorge is 1,450 feet deep and nearly one mile wide. At Leonard Harrison and Colton Point state parks, the depth of the gorge is about 800 feet and these parks have the most spectacular scenic overlooks.

Many recreational opportunities are available in the gorge. Some of these activities are regulated by the Bureau of State Parks or by the Bureau of Forestry, which have slightly different rules and regulations. Visitors can hike, mountain bike, ride horses, fish, birdwatch, hunt, camp, and seasonally whitewater boat.

FORMATION OF THE GORGE

Until about 20,000 years ago, Pine Creek flowed northeasterly. Then the Laurentide Continental Glacier, which covered most of northern North America, moved into the

area, pushing rocks, soil, and other debris, which dammed Pine Creek, forming a lake near Ansonia.

The abundant glacial meltwater eventually overflowed the debris dam, reversing the flow of Pine Creek to its current southerly flow. The meltwater swiftly carved a deep channel. Thousands of years of erosion by Pine Creek has continued to carve the spectacular Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania.

HUMAN INFLUENCE ON THE GORGE

American Indians used the Pine Creek Gorge as a major travel route. Pine Creek Trail follows the same general route as the original path. Just north of the park, near Ansonia, was a seasonal hunting camp called “Big Meadow.”

The lumbering of the native white pine and later, the hemlock and assorted hardwoods, led to the settlement of the area. Each spring, logs were floated in huge rafts to mills in Williamsport. Lumber from this area helped to make Williamsport the lumber capital of the world in the 1880s. Hemlock bark was peeled and hauled to several local tanneries to turn hides into leather. By the 1900s, only a few small areas of native forest were untouched in all of Pennsylvania.

Due to the mass deforestation, massive forest fires, and unregulated hunting and trapping, the wildlife populations declined greatly in the commonwealth. White-tailed deer, beaver, and elk were reintroduced to the state in the early 1900s. More recent additions to the canyon include the reintroduction of river otters in 1983 and fishers in the mid-1990s. Bald eagles, once an endangered species, began nesting in the gorge in the late 1980s.

Prior to being a world-class multi-use trail, Pine Creek Trail was an active railroad. The Jersey Shore, Pine Creek and Buffalo Railway Company began in 1883 by carrying timber to the sawmills in Tiadaghton, Cammal, and Slate Run. The railroad also transported coal north to New York State and vast amounts of hemlock bark to several local tanneries for use in the leather industry. By 1896, the railroad



Colton Point

Environmental Education and Interpretation

A seasonal environmental educator presents natural and cultural programs on wildlife, seasonal changes, glaciation, and other topics to visitors, organized groups, and school groups. Contact the park to schedule a group program.

At Leonard Harrison State Park, the ADA accessible visitor center opens in mid-April and closes in mid-October. A short video highlights the formation, the impact of logging, and the restoration of the canyon. Wayside exhibits detail cultural and natural history topics. Along the overlook are wayside exhibits on natural history and the Civilian Conservation Corps.



Mt. laurel

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from:

Visit Potter Tioga, 888-TIOGA-28.
http://visitpottertioga.com

Wellsboro Area Chamber of Commerce, 570-724-1926.
www.wellsboropa.com

Horseback trail rides, covered wagon rides, mountain biking, road bicycling, seasonal whitewater rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and airplane rides are available from private sources in the area.

The 159,466-acre **Tioga State Forest** provides timber products, wildlife habitat, and recreation. 570-724-2868



Leonard Harrison

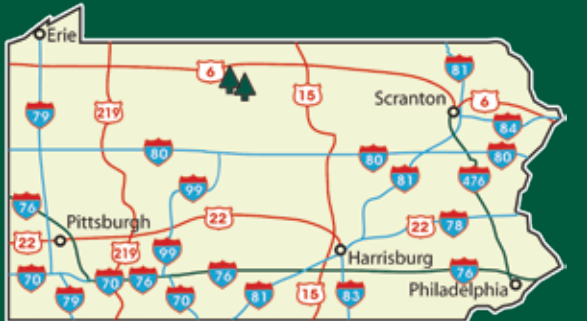
was carrying seven million tons of freight and three passenger trains on daily runs between Wellsboro Junction and Williamsport.

The railroad changed hands several times and was eventually taken over by Conrail. The last train passed through the canyon on October 7, 1988. Today, the rail line has taken on a new life as a part of the state’s extensive network of rail trails.

In 1968, 12 miles of the canyon were designated a National Natural Landmark by the U. S. Department of the Interior. In 1993, the gorge became a State Park Natural Area, which will protect it in a natural state for future generations. In 1992, Pine Creek was designated a Pennsylvania Scenic River.

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

Leonard Harrison and Colton Point State Parks



For More Information Contact:

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Information and Reservations

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.

www.visitPAparks.com



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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.

- Please camp only in designated areas and try to minimize your impact on the campsite.

- Firewood Advisory: Firewood may contain non-native insects and plant diseases. Bringing firewood into the park from other areas may accidentally spread pest insects and diseases that threaten park resources and the health of our forests. Use local firewood. Do not take wood home and do not leave firewood. Burn It!

- Prevent forest fires by having a fire in proper facilities and properly disposing of hot coals. Do not leave a fire unattended.

- 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.

Hiking

The trails lead to many beautiful vistas and waterfalls, but traverse rugged terrain, pass close to many steep cliffs, and may have slippery surfaces. Trails are subject to seasonal closure due to snow and ice, usually from December through April. Closures are posted on the park website.

The following guidelines will help ensure a safe and enjoyable hiking experience.

- Always wear sturdy boots. Wearing sneakers, sandals, water shoes, and “street shoes” can lead to serious accidents.
- Be prepared. Have proper clothing and equipment (compass, map, matches, water, food, flashlight, etc.) available in case of an emergency. This is especially important when traveling remote trails or when hiking during non-summer seasons.
- Give yourself plenty of time for your hike. The weather changes quickly in the park. 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. Stay behind the railings and fences. Avoid the temptation to get on rock overhangs for a better view.
- Don’t take shortcuts from one trail section to another. Taking shortcuts down switchbacks is dangerous and causes trail damage.

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

CAUTION: Hikers on Turkey Path should be in good physical condition, wear sturdy boots, and use caution due to slippery/wet conditions and steep trail sections.

Trails at Leonard Harrison

Turkey Path Trail: (Leonard Harrison side) 2 miles round trip, most difficult hiking

This difficult trail descends one mile to the bottom of Pine Creek Gorge. It is a down and back trail. There is no bridge across Pine Creek at the bottom. The top half of the trail descends through a series of switchbacks to a view of Little Four-Mile Run at 0.5 miles, then on a short distance to the first waterfall. The trail continues downward along narrow switchbacks and wooden decking, bridges, and steps. The lowest parts of the trail are along a series of waterfalls. The trail ends at the Pine Creek Trail.

Overlook Trail: 0.6 mile, more difficult hiking
This loop passes Otter View, a vista looking south. While short, sections are still very steep. The suggested direction of travel is clockwise.

Trails at Colton Point

Rim Trail: 1 mile, easiest hiking
Not to be confused with the West Rim Trail, Rim Trail follows the perimeter of the ‘point’ and links the many park overlooks together into a rewarding hike that also includes a section of old growth timber.

Turkey Path: (Colton Point side) 3 miles round trip, most difficult hiking

This narrow trail descends along steep hillsides 1.5 miles to the floor of the Canyon and is best-suited for experienced hikers. The highlight is a 70-foot cascading waterfall less than 0.5 mile down. It is a down and back trail. There is no bridge across Pine Creek at the bottom.

Pine Creek Trail

The 62-mile Pine Creek Trail is a multi-use trail for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Located at the bottom of the Pine Creek Gorge, one mile of this trail is in Leonard Harrison State Park.

While hikers may access this trail via the Turkey Path from Leonard Harrison, cyclists and other users must use one of many other accesses, the closest being Darling Run, nine miles north of the park.

Trail users can view dramatic rock outcrops, waterfalls, and wildlife like eagle, osprey, coyote, deer, wild turkey, heron, river otter, black bear, and many others. Diverse plant life, scattered old-growth timber, historic pine and spruce plantations, and several foundations from the Civilian Conservation Corps era can be found along the trail.



Leonard Harrison and Colton Point state parks offer outstanding opportunities for fall leaf viewing. Shortening daylight, cool nights and warm days, wind, and adequate moisture through the preceding seasons factor in the brilliance of the fall foliage. These factors also determine when the leaves will change in the gorge. Droughts, wind, and cold temperatures can cause leaves to drop early in the fall. The timing of the fall foliage varies from year to year. However, the first three weeks in October provide a spectrum of fall foliage.

The overlooks at Leonard Harrison offer the best view of the entire gorge. The drive up Colton Road to Colton Point State Park and the four overlooks offer spectacular fall foliage viewing opportunities.

- General Fall Foliage Colors of Trees**
Red: red maple, red oak, black cherry, sumac, sassafras
Yellow/Orange: sugar maple, hickories, sycamore, basswood, aspen, tulip poplar, birches, chestnut oak, serviceberry, black walnut
Brown: white oak, black oak, beech

