

Doggin' Delaware

***The 40 Best Places To
Hike With Your Dog
In The First State***

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Cruden Bay Books



There is always a new trail to look forward to...

**DOGGIN' DELAWARE: THE 40 BEST PLACES TO HIKE
WITH YOUR DOG IN DELAWARE**

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*“Dogs are our link to paradise...to sit with a dog on a hillside
on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden,
where doing nothing was not boring - it was peace.”
- Milan Kundera*

Ahead On The Trail

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Introduction

Delaware can be a great place to hike with your dog. Inside the First State you can hike on sand trails, climb hills that leave you and your dog panting, walk on some of the most historic grounds in America, explore the estates of the some of the country's wealthiest families or circle lakes for 7 miles and never lose sight of the water.

I have selected what I consider to be the 40 best places to take your dog for an outing and ranked them according to subjective criteria including the variety of hikes available, opportunities for canine swimming and pleasure of the walks. The rankings include a mix of parks that feature long walks and parks that contain short walks. Did I miss your favorite? Let us know at www.hikewithyourdog.com.

Living in Delaware you may not realize what a lucky dog you are. There is not a single public park in the state where your dog is not welcome. You may never have seen a NO DOGS ALLOWED sign. But consider our neighbors in Maryland where dogs aren't even allowed out of the car in some state parks or Pennsylvania where dogs are banned from most state campgrounds and almost every nature center and don't even think about trying to get your dog on many New Jersey beaches. Not so in Delaware. Camp with your dog here, study plants and trees with your dog at the Delaware Nature Society centers and watch your dog enjoy a sandy beach 12 months a year.

So when visiting a park always keep your dog under control and clean up any messes and we can all expect our great parks to remain open to our dogs. And maybe some others will see the light as well. *Remember, every time you go out with your dog you are an ambassador for all dog owners.*

Grab that leash and hit the trail!

DBG

Hiking With Your Dog

So you want to start hiking with your dog. Hiking with your dog can be a fascinating way to explore the Delaware's natural areas from a canine perspective. Some things to consider:

Dog's Health

Hiking can be a wonderful preventative for any number of physical and behavioral disorders. One in every three dogs is overweight and running up trails and leaping through streams is great exercise to help keep pounds off. Hiking can also relieve boredom in a dog's routine and calm dogs prone to destructive habits. And hiking with your dog strengthens the overall owner/dog bond.

Breed of Dog

All dogs enjoy the new scents and sights of a trail. But some dogs are better suited to hiking than others. If you don't as yet have a hiking companion, select a breed that matches your interests. Do you look forward to an entire afternoon's hiking? You'll need a dog bred to keep up with such a pace, such as a retriever or a spaniel. Is a half-hour enough walking for you? It may not be for an energetic dog like a border collie. If you already have a hiking friend, tailor your plans to his abilities.

Conditioning

Just like humans, dogs need to be acclimated to the task at hand. An inactive dog cannot be expected to bounce from the easy chair in the den to complete a 3-hour hike. You must also be physically able to restrain your dog if confronted with distractions on the trail (like a scampering squirrel or a pack of joggers). Have your dog checked by a veterinarian before significantly increasing his activity level.

Weather

Hot humid summers do not do dogs any favors. With no sweat glands and only panting available to disperse body heat, dogs are much more susceptible to heat stroke than we are. Unusually rapid panting and/or a bright red tongue are signs of heat exhaustion in your pet. Always carry enough water for your hike. Even days that don't seem too warm can cause discomfort in dark-coated dogs if the sun is shining brightly. In cold weather, short-coated breeds may require additional attention.

Ticks

You won't be able to spend much time on the trail without encountering ticks. All are nasty but the deer tick - no bigger than a pin head - carries with it the spectre of Lyme disease. Lyme disease attacks a dog's joints and makes walking painful. The tick needs to be embedded in the skin to transmit Lyme disease. It takes 4-6 hours for a tick to become embedded and another 24-48 hours to transmit Lyme disease bacteria.

When hiking, walk in the middle of trails away from tall grass and bushes. And when the summer sun fades away don't stop thinking about ticks - they remain active any time the temperature is above 30 degrees. By checking your dog - and yourself - thoroughly after each walk you can help avoid Lyme disease. Ticks tend to congregate on your dog's ears, between the toes and around the neck and head.

Water

Surface water, including fast-flowing streams, is likely to be infested with a microscopic protozoa called *Giardia*, waiting to wreak havoc on a dog's intestinal system. The most common symptom is crippling diarrhea. Algae, pollutants and contaminants can all be in streams, ponds and puddles. If possible, carry fresh water for your dog on the trail - your dog can even learn to drink happily from a squirt bottle.

Trail Hazards

Dogs won't get poison ivy but they can transfer it to you. Stinging nettle is a nuisance plant that lurks on the side of many trails and the slightest brush will deliver troublesome needles into a dog's coat. Some trails are littered with small pieces of broken glass that can slice a dog's paws. Nasty thorns can also blanket trails that we in shoes may never notice.

And Delaware does have copperhead snakes, the only poisonous snake in the state. Once widespread, copperheads are now found mainly in rocky areas north of Wilmington, including Alapocas Woods Natural Area, and in southwest Sussex County, including Trap Pond State Park. Reclusive by nature, the chance that you or your dog will see a copperhead (recognized by an hourglass pattern of scales, a triangular copper-colored head and range from three to four feet in length), let alone be bitten by one, is extremely rare.


If you or your dog is bitten, do not panic but get to a hospital or veterinarian with as little physical movement as possible. Wrap between the bite and the heart. Rattlesnakes might give "dry bites" where no poison is injected, but you should always check with a doctor after a bite even if you feel fine.



Outfitting Your Dog For A Hike

These are the basics for taking your dog on a hike:

- ▶ Collar.
It should not be so loose as to come off but you should be able to slide your flat hand under the collar.
- ▶ Identification Tags.
Get one with your veterinarian's phone number as well.
- ▶ Bandanna.
Can help distinguish him from game in hunting season.
- ▶ Leash.
Leather lasts forever but if there's water in your dog's future, consider quick-drying nylon.
- ▶ Water.
Carry 8 ounces for every hour of hiking.

 *I want my dog to help carry water, snacks and other supplies on the trail. Where do I start?*

To select an appropriate dog pack measure your dog's girth around the rib cage. A dog pack should fit securely without hindering the dog's ability to walk normally.

 *Will my dog wear a pack?*

Wearing a dog pack is no more obtrusive than wearing a collar, although some dogs will take to a pack easier than others. Introduce the pack by draping a towel over your dog's back in the house and then having your dog wear an empty pack on short walks. Progressively add some crumpled newspaper and then bits of clothing. Fill the pack with treats and reward your dog from the stash. Soon your dog will associate the dog pack with an outdoor adventure and will eagerly look forward to wearing it.

🐾 *How much weight can I put into a dog pack?*

Many dog packs are sold by weight recommendations. A healthy, well-conditioned dog can comfortably carry 25% to 33% of its body weight. Breeds prone to back problems or hip dysplasia should not wear dog packs. Consult your veterinarian before stuffing the pouches with gear.

🐾 *How does a dog wear a pack?*

The pack, typically with cargo pouches on either side, should ride as close to the shoulders as possible without limiting movement. The straps that hold the dog pack in place should be situated where they will not cause chafing.

🐾 *What are good things to put in a dog pack?*

Low density items such as food and poop bags are good choices. Ice cold bottles of water can cool your dog down on hot days. Don't put anything in a dog pack that can break. Dogs will bang the pack on rocks and trees as they wiggle through tight spots in the trail. Dogs also like to lie down in creeks and other wet spots so seal items in plastic bags. A good use for dog packs when on day hikes around Delaware is trail maintenance - your dog can pack out trash left by inconsiderate visitors before you.



🐾 *Are dog booties a good idea?*

Dog booties can be an asset, especially for the occasional canine hiker whose paw pads have not become toughened. Some trails in Delaware involve rocky terrain. In some places, there may be broken glass. Hiking boots for dogs are designed to prevent pads from cracking while trotting across rough surfaces. Used in winter, dog booties provide warmth and keep ice balls from forming between toe pads when hiking through snow.

🐾 *What should a doggie first aid kit include?*

Even when taking short hikes it is a good idea to have some basics available for emergencies:








- ▶ 4" square gauze pads
- ▶ cling type bandaging tapes
- ▶ topical wound disinfectant cream
- ▶ tweezers
- ▶ insect repellent - no reason to leave your dog unprotected against mosquitoes and blackflies
- ▶ veterinarian's phone number

"I can't think of anything that brings me closer to tears than when my old dog - completely exhausted after a hard day in the field - limps away from her nice spot in front of the fire and comes over to where I'm sitting and puts her head in my lap, a paw over my knee, and closes her eyes, and goes back to sleep. I don't know what I've done to deserve that kind of friend."

-Gene Hill

Low Impact Hiking With Your Dog

Every time you hike with your dog on the trail you are an ambassador for all dog owners. Some people you meet won't believe in your right to take a dog on the trail. Be friendly to all and make the best impression you can by practicing low impact hiking with your dog:

-  Pack out everything you pack in.
-  Do not leave dog scat on the trail; if you haven't brought plastic bags for poop removal bury it away from the trail and topical water sources.
-  Hike only where dogs are allowed.
-  Stay on the trail.
-  Do not allow your dog to chase wildlife.
-  Step off the trail and wait with your dog while horses and other hikers pass.
-  Do not allow your dog to bark - people are enjoying the trail for serenity.
-  *Have as much fun on your hike as your dog does.*

The Other End Of The Leash

Leash laws are like speed limits - everyone seems to have a private interpretation of their validity. Some dog owners never go outside with an unleashed dog; others treat the laws as suggestions or disregard them completely. It is not the purpose of this book to tell dog owners where to go to evade the leash laws or reveal the parks where rangers will look the other way at an unleashed dog. Nor is it the business of this book to preach vigilant adherence to the leash laws. Nothing written in a book is going to change people's behavior with regard to leash laws. So this will be the last time leash laws are mentioned, save occasionally when we point out the parks where dogs are welcomed off leash.

How To Pet A Dog

Tickling tummies slowly and gently works wonders.

Never use a rubbing motion; this makes dogs bad-tempered.

A gentle tickle with the tips of the fingers is all that is necessary to induce calm in a dog. I hate strangers who go up to dogs with their hands held to the dog's nose, usually palm towards themselves.

How does the dog know that the hand doesn't hold something horrid?

The palm should always be shown to the dog and go straight down to between the dog's front legs and tickle gently with a soothing voice to accompany the action.

Very often the dog raises its back leg in a scratching movement, it gets so much pleasure from this.

-Barbara Woodhouse

*The 40 Best Places
To Hike With Your Dog
In Delaware...*

I

Cape Henlopen State Park

The Park

Cape Henlopen has the distinction of being one of the first parks in America: in 1682 William Penn decreed that Cape Henlopen would be for “the usage of the citizens of Lewes and Sussex County.” The area had been Delaware’s first permanent settlement 50 years earlier by ill-fated Dutch colonists who were massacred by local Indians. Cape Henlopen’s strategic location at the mouth of the Delaware Bay led the United States Army to establish Fort Miles among the dunes in 1941.

In 1964, the Department of Defense declared 543 acres on the cape as surplus property and the State of Delaware established Cape Henlopen State Park. Today the park boasts more than 5,000 acres, including four miles of pristine beaches where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. It is Delaware’s largest state park.

The Walks

The primary destination for dog owners at Cape Henlopen is the 3.1-mile *Dune Overlook Trail*, located south of the camp-ground. The loop is part natural surface, part paved road through pitch-pine corridors and past old fortifications. Do not skip the two short spur trails! One leads into the spartina marshes typical of the Delaware Bay estuary and the other is a journey onto the 80-foot Great Dune, the highest sand pile on the Atlantic shore between Cape Cod and Cape Hatteras.

A good way to explore the beach areas at Cape Henlopen is on the 1.8-mile *Beach Loop Trail* that begins opposite the parking lot in the southernmost section of the park and leads to overlooks of Gordon’s Pond Wildlife Area, a unique salt-water impoundment. The soft sand can make for heavy going

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 645-8983

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May to October

Directions
- Cape Henlopen is one mile east of Lewes at the end of Route 9, off of Route 1.

Bonus

Remnants of Cape Henlopen's military past remain nestled among the massive sand dunes.

Bunkers and gun emplacements were camouflaged deep in the sand and concrete observation towers were built along the shoreline to bolster America's coastal defenses during World War II. Lookouts scanned the

Atlantic Ocean for German U-boats during World War II and although the fort's huge guns were never fired in battle, a German submarine did surrender here after the war. These silent sentinels remain scattered along Delaware's beaches and one has been restored to provide visitors with a panoramic view of the park and the ocean.

so don't hesitate to plop down on a dune for a rest if your dog seems fatigued. When your shoes fill with sand you can retreat to the flat, paved park roads from the Fort Miles days.

Trail Sense: There are trail markers, maps and signs.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are not permitted around the Seaside Nature Center or on the *Pinelands Nature Trail*. Dogs are prohibited from all swimming and sunbathing beaches from May 1 to September 30. Dogs are allowed in the campground.

Traffic

The park is Delaware's second-leading tourist attraction.

Canine Swimming

The Atlantic Ocean is as good as it gets.

Trail Time

A few hours to a full day.



The Great Dune is a giant sandbox for dogs. A World War II observation tower is in the background.

2

Woodlawn Trustees Property

The Park

From 1850 until 1910, feldspar, used in porcelain dishes and false teeth, was mined here in the Woodlawn Quarry. You can still see the remains of these spar pits, with their scatterings of mica and other minerals. In 1910, as his campaign to preserve the Brandywine Valley intensified, William Poole Bancroft bought hundreds of pristine acres in the lush floodplain and rolling woodlands where the Brandywine Creek makes three wide, gentle turns. Bancroft formed the Woodlawn Company to manage these lands, harboring some of the oldest trees in Delaware. Today, more than 2,000 acres are open to the public for recreational use - one of the greatest private gifts to canine hikers to be found anywhere.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- There are no highway signs to direct you here and the parking lots are not marked. The main parking lot is opposite Peters Rock along the Brandywine on Creek Road. Other gravel lots can be found on Ramsey Road, Beaver Valley Road and opposite Woodlawn Road on Thompson's Bridge Road (Route 92). There is also parking in the hotel complex on Route 202.



Part of the trail system on the Woodlawn Trustees Property leads past actively farmed fields.

Bonus

Breaking out of the woods at several points on the hill-tops you are greeted with splendid views of Granogue, one of the American castles dotting the Brandywine Valley's chateau lands.



The Walks

These informal dirt trails through a mix of open fields and mature forests can be combined to create any kind of day out with your dog. Athletic dogs will enjoy bounding along the grassy hillsides above the Brandywine. Walking back and forth on the *Fire Trail* along the water provides an easy 45-minute walk.

The trails can be jumping off points for hikes of several hours duration. Following the white blazes of the Wilmington Trail Club along the creek you can reach Chadds Ford. You can ford Beaver Valley Road into Pennsylvania and loop around the fast-flowing Beaver Run. The route is hilly and requires some careful creek crossings but is very scenic. Finally you can cross Thompson's Bridge Road and walk into Brandywine Creek State Park.

Trail Sense: The trails are unmarked and no map is available but orienting yourself to the rivers and roads should prevent any confusion.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are permitted throughout the refuge.

Traffic

Seldom crowded but watch for horses and mountain bikers.

Canine Swimming

The shallow Brandywine Creek deepens enough in several places to form excellent swimming holes for dogs.

Trail Time

Whatever your dog desires - short, spirited hikes or long, long romps.

3

White Clay Creek State Park

The Park

William Penn bought most of this land in 1683 from Lenni Lenape Chief Kekelappen, who was believed to have lived here in Opasiskunk, the most important of the region's "Indian Towns." In 1968 White Clay Creek began life as a state park with 24 state-purchased acres of land. In 1984 the DuPont Company donated the land that would be the foundation for today's park of 3,384 acres with another 1,253 ad-joining acres across the state line in Pennsylvania.

The Walks

White Clay serves up the widest menu of canine hiking choices of any park in the First State - almost 40 miles of trails on a dozen marked trails. The top choices in the Walter S. Carpenter, Jr. Recreation Area are the hardy 5-mile *Twin Valley Trail* and the sporty 2-mile *Millstone Trail* with its scenic rock outcroppings and two never-finished millstones. A half-mile *Logger's Trail* illuminates the history of lumbering in the area.

The only trail that actually visits the White Clay Creek is the *Penndel Trail*, over three miles in length, connecting the park and the preserve. It is a superb linear trail for hiking with your dog - flat for its entire length and uniformly wide. Nearby, at the park office on Thompson Station Road, is a trailhead for a rugged hill climb on the homesite of David English, a lease holder of the Wil-

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 368-6900

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May-October

Directions
- The main parking lot is in the Walter Carpenter, Jr. Recreation Area on New London Road (Route 896), three miles northwest of Newark. Parking is also available on Hopkins Road at the Chambers House Nature Center, on Chamber Rock Road and the end of Thompson Station Road at the Park Office. Possum Hill is located off Paper Mill Road (Route 72) between Polly Drummond Road and Possum Park Road. The Judge Morris Estate is on Polly Drummond Road.

Bonus

To visit White Clay Creek is to indulge in a lesson of American surveying history. The *Twin Valley Trail* swings past the Arc Corner Monument marking one end of the 12-mile arc that forms the Pennsylvania-Delaware state line, unique in American political boundary making.

The circular divide dates to William Penn's directive of August 28, 1701. A half-mile to the west there is a monument marking the tri-state junction of Delaware, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Over at Possum Hill, tucked back in the woods, is a small cement pillar. This post was set up - facing west - in Alexander Bryan's field on June 12, 1764 by English mathematicians Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon. This base point, 15 miles south of the southernmost point of the city of Philadelphia, began the survey for the Mason-Dixon Line that would forever separate North from South.

liam Penn family.

While you are warming up for hill climbs, visit Possum Hill, where two stacked loop trails fall 150 feet among thick stands of mature beech and oaks that thrive in the moist valleys. The scenery on the 2-mile *Long Loop* is more arresting so save the inner loop for a second go-round.

The fourth - and newest - section of White Clay Creek was acquired in 1998 at the Judge Morris Estate. Along with an elegant 1790s mansion the park annexed one of the finest loop trails in the state. The 3-mile ramble is wooded throughout and dips and rolls across tumbling terrain. The path is narrow, however, and a favorite of mountain bikers.

Trail Sense: The paths are blazed, the paths are named and there is an excellent color map available. But some stretches share two or three trails so pay attention.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to share the trails in all sections of the park.

Traffic

For a canine hike less traveled, try Possum Hill or the Judge Morris Estate.

Canine Swimming

The swift and shallow White Clay Creek is the purest around for drinking. Occasional pools host some dog paddling and there are farm ponds in the park.

Trail Time

A half-day and more is possible.

4

Brandywine Creek State Park

The Park

Once a du Pont family dairy farm, this spectacular swath of land became a State Park in 1965. Delaware's first two nature preserves are located here: Tulip Tree Woods, behind the park office, and Freshwater Marsh, at the edge of Brandywine Creek. The stone walls that criss-cross the 850-acre park are the legacy of skilled Italian masons who crafted the barriers from locally quarried Brandywine granite - the original "Wilmington Blue Rocks."

The Walks

There are eight blazed trails totalling 14 miles on both sides of the Brandywine Creek. All are short, all are woodsy and if you can't reach out and touch the water you are moving up or down a hill. The *Hidden Pond Trail* and the *Indian Springs Trail* each travel along the water, immerse you in the steep valley terrain and traverse the Tulip Tree Woods, where majestic tulip poplar have grown for nearly two centuries.

The star walk at Thompson's Bridge is the rugged, 1.9-mile *Rocky Run Trail*, winding around the closest thing to a mountain stream in Delaware. On this trail you'll discover fragrant stands of hemlock nestled among hardwood neighbors in a mature forest with long views. Nearby, the *Multi-Use Trail* tags Brandywine Creek for the better part of two miles.

Check with the park office about programs that welcome well-behaved dogs. Your dog can experience such events as a Civil War re-enactment or star-gazing from the open fields.

Trail Sense: All the paths are blazed and there is a map available. There are some unblazed trails in the Thompson's Bridge area but you can figure out where you are headed.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 577-3534

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May-October

Directions
- The main entrance is on Adams Dam Road, between Thompson's Bridge Road (Route 92) and Rockland Road. Other parking areas are at Thompson's Bridge and off Rockland Road, opposite Rockland Mills.

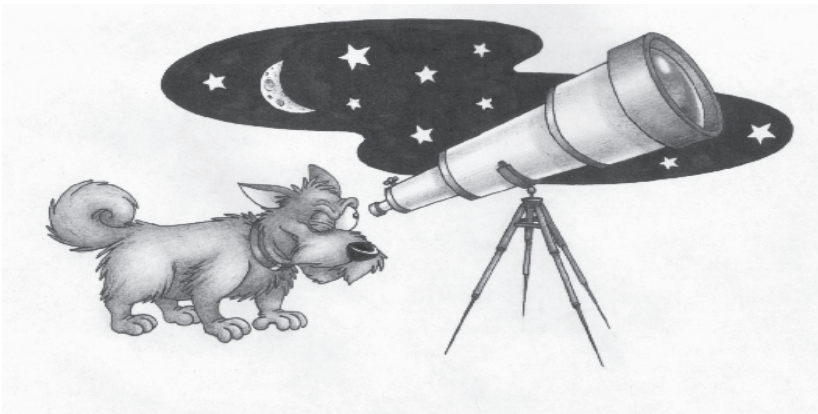
Bonus

In the winter of 1802 a rudderless French immigrant living in New Jersey named Eleuthere Irenee du Pont was invited to the Brandywine Valley to hunt game. It was not a successful trip.

The damp weather fouled his gunpowder so that his musket continually misfired. It was so bad du Pont decided to re-enter the industry he had turned his back on in France as a youth: black powder.

When it came time to launch his new business he remembered what you see today at Brandywine Creek State Park - the hardwood forests that would burn to charcoal, one of the ingredients he would need for powder; the abundant granite in the hills to build his mills; and the swift-flowing river to power the mills.

And so he returned to Delaware to found a dynasty. Incidentally, the favorite breed of dog for the du Pont family when they lived here: the greyhound.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to share the trails in all sections of the park.

Traffic

Brandywine Creek State Park is a heavily-used park; bikes are restricted to the *Multi-Use Trail*.

Canine Swimming

The Brandywine Creek is one of the best places in Delaware to take your dog for a swim. There is plenty of access to the water from the low banks in the main park.

Trail Time

More than one hour.

5

Trap Pond State Park

The Park

Trap Pond is a small portion of the Great Cypress Swamp and features one of the northernmost natural stands of baldcypress trees in North America. In the late 1700s a millpond was constructed to power a sawmill to harvest the valuable lumber. During the Depression in the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps of the federal government put men to work building diverse recreation facilities. In 1951, 14 years after the Delaware legislature authorized the development of the state park system, Trap Pond became the first state park to welcome visitors.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 875-5153

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May-October

Directions
- Trap Pond is 5 miles east of Laurel, off Route 24 between Route 13 and Route 113. The park is one mile south on Trap Pond Road (Road 449).

The Walks

The 5-mile long *Boundary Trail* completely circles both the 90-acre millpond and the baldcypress swamp. There is a mixture of natural and paved surfaces and the flat trail is very easy to walk. If you are not totally fixated on the stunning views of the baldcypress swamp take heed of the stands of stately loblolly pines that dominate the forest and the gently flowing streams that feed the pond. Note that to complete the loop requires a short walk on Little Hill Road.

For canine hikers not interested in a complete circumnavigation of Trap Pond there are short one-mile trails on opposite shores. The *Island Trail* on the western shore visits the shoreline and actually onto one of the namesake islands in the pond before leading back into the forest. On the opposite shore the *Cypress Point Trail* meanders along the edge of the swamp with up-close revelations of its namesake cypress trees.

Trail Sense: A map is available and take it along - it is more reliable than markings on the trails.

Bonus

Hiking through Trap Pond State Park is an experience like no other in Delaware - your walk in the atmospheric swamp could easily be in the Louisiana bayou. Marvel in the quiet beauty of the baldcypress - one of the few trees capable of living in the water. Each tree sends out small stumps known as "knees" in every direction to help keep from drowning. The boardwalks on the *Cypress Point Trail* enable you and your dog to get close up views.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed on the trails and in the campground.

Traffic

There is typically more activity on the water than on the trails - and this is an ideal place to take your dog for a canoe ride.

Canine Swimming

The shoreline of the swamp is ill-defined but there are a few chances to slip into the pond without disturbing the canoeists and fishermen. Raccoon Pond off the *Boundary Trail* is another chance for a doggie dip.

Trail Time

More than an hour to fully explore the swamp.

6 Middle Run Valley Natural Area

The Park

The White Clay Creek drains some 70,000 acres and 100 square miles in Pennsylvania and Delaware. In Delaware, where Middle Run is one of its three main tributaries, it seems that much of that watershed is choked by suburban sprawl. Beginning in 1975, local civic and environmental groups began piece-meal acquisition of pristine woodlands that has resulted in an 850-acre oasis in the center of housing subdivisions, shopping centers and busy roadways.

The Walks

Middle Run features splendid canine hiking on five well-maintained loop trails that cover 14 miles and an additional five short spurs that lead to surrounding communities. All offer interesting - and sometimes challenging - switches in terrain. There is almost 200 feet of elevation change at Middle Run.

The purple-blazed *Lenape Trail* visits most of the property in its run of almost 7 miles, one of the longest loop trails in Delaware. The best choice for dog walkers only wanting to sample Middle Run's sylvan charms is the pedestrian-only 2.15-mile *Possum Hollow Trail*. Another good ramble is the *Earth Day Trail* that drops out of the parking lot into a steep valley around Muddy Run.

All the natural dirt and grass trails bound up and down hills but the *Snow Geese Trail*, marked in orange on the east side of the park, is an especially steep, heart-pumping loop for canine and human.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Middle Run is northeast of Newark. From Kirkwood Highway (Route 2) follow Possum Park Road 1.7 miles to Possum Hollow Road on the right. Take a left at the entrance to the park after about 1/2 mile.

Bonus

The patches of long-abandoned farmland are good places to spot hawks. Hawks can appear at Middle Run at any time of the year but in fall and spring the skies overflow with migrating hawks making long-distance trips between their breeding grounds and winter residences. Fall migration usually begins in mid-August and continues through late November. Spring migration takes place between March and May.



Trail Sense: The trails are not continually blazed but markers direct the way at trail junctions. New Castle County publishes a superb trail map and brochure but it is available only in county offices, not at the park. The map board at the Possum Hollow Road parking lot is the best in the state to help guide you.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome on all trails.

Traffic

Even though the parking lot has room for only 24 cars, it seems frivolously large most of the time. No one stumbles upon Middle Run. There are no directional signs announcing its existence from any of the major roads enclosing this natural area. Expect little company on these trails although there is an active community of mountain bikers that ride here.

Canine Swimming

There are no ponds on the property and the Middle Run and its branches are too shallow for swimming. There is enough water, however, for splashing on a hot day.

Trail Time

There are many hours of canine hiking here.

7

Nanticoke Wildlife Area

The Park

The Nanticoke River springs to life in southern Delaware and flows southwest to the Chesapeake Bay. It is considered one of the Chesapeake's healthiest rivers. Scientists believe the area's unique habitat stems from 10,000 years ago when the land was more exposed and prevailing winds deposited large amounts of sand across the flat terrain. Most of the roads cut through the 3,177-acre wilderness were constructed during the Roosevelt Administration by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The Walks

Of the managed wildlife areas by the State of Delaware where you get out and explore on old fire roads, Nanticoke is the best to hike with your dog. The packed sand roads are flat, easy to walk and easy on the paw. There are more than 12 miles of these well-maintained access roads; some are closed to all vehicles and others receive sporadic traffic. Keep your eyes peeled for small side trails that can lead to secluded ponds in the forests of black oaks and Virginia pine.

The Nanticoke Wildlife Area is divided into a North Area and South Area, severed by Broad Creek. There are more natural surface trails in the North Area and access to the Nanticoke River. Your dog's day here won't be complete without a stop at the boat ramp at the end of Phillips Landing Road. Here you'll find cool grass under tall pines that make a perfect launching pad for dives into the water at this wide turn in Broad Creek.

Trail Sense: Aerial tract maps are available to give you a rough idea of where you are. On the trail the numbered deer stands are the only thing to give you a clue you are in the right spot.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 875-9997

Website
- dnrec.state.de.us

Admission Fee
- No

Directions
- The Nanticoke Wildlife Area stretches west of Bethel almost to the Maryland border. From Route 13, take Route 24 west to Airport Road (Road 494) and turn right. As you reach the wildlife area an office and mapboards will appear on the right.

Bonus

The chance to see bald eagles - the Nanticoke watershed sports the highest concentration of bald eagles in the northeastern United States. The great birds favor massive nests in the treetops on the edges of the water.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the Wildlife Area. Hiking is recommended only from February to September, however - outside of hunting season.

Traffic

There will be an occasional vehicle passing as you travel the fire roads.

Canine Swimming

Broad Creek and the Nanticoke River are slow-moving and ideal for water-loving dogs.

Trail Time

Many hours.



The corridors of sand through the Nanticoke Wildlife Area are lightly traveled and a great spot for a quiet canine hike.

8 Killens Pond State Park

The Park

Native tribes traditionally gathered for centuries in this area around the waterway that would come to be called “Murderkill” after a Dutch trading party was slaughtered at the mouth of the river by local tribes in 1648. In the late 1700s the river was dammed and the 66-acre millpond created. In 1965, Killens Pond became Kent County’s only state park.

The Walks

The first thing your dog will notice while trotting on the trails at Killens Pond is that it is unusually hilly for central Delaware. Just enough to give the 2.75-mile *Pondside Trail* a nice, sporty feel. Your dog will also approve of the wide, roomy paths and the packed sand and pine straw under paw. The trail circles the entire pond, keeping sight of the water most of the way.

Chances are you will just be getting warmed up with this pleasing ramble and luckily Killens Pond serves up a few more choices. The *Ice Storm Trail* is a loop that shows the forest regenerating from a 1994 storm that left trees snapping and buckling under the weight of a cocoon of ice.

Kent

Phone Number
- (302) 284-4526

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May-October

Directions
- Killens Pond is southeast of Felton. Take Killens Pond Road east of Route 13 to the park entrance past Lake Forest High School.



A graceful footbridge matches the terrain at Killens Pond.

Bonus

Killens Pond offers the opportunity to hike through a uniquely diverse forest area as southern species mingle at the northern edge of their range with northern species reaching their southern boundary. Seven separate species of oak trees share the sandy soil with majestic loblolly pines; American holly jostles with Virginia pine and so on.

If it is not in use you and your dog can sample the best cross-country course in downstate Delaware on the western edge of the pond.

Trail Sense: A color map is available and comes in handy. Trail markers are wanting in a few spots and Killens Pond has its share of unmarked trails peppered in among the main routes.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to share the trails in all sections of the park and there is a dog training area on Paradise Alley Road. Dogs are also allowed in the campground except in cabins.

Traffic

Bikes are shuffled off to their own path; canine hikers will likely encounter other dogs and joggers at almost any time in the park.

Canine Swimming

The trail drops down to the waterside every few hundred yards for your dog to get into open water.

Trail Time

More than one hour.



9

Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

The Park

When Dutch settlers first pushed onto these shores nearly 400 years ago they discovered an abundance of purple beach plums and named that area Priume Hoek, meaning “Plum Point.” In 1963, the United States Fish & Wildlife Service created the refuge to protect more than 10,000 acres of fresh and saltwater wetlands from Slaughter Beach to the Broadkill River.

The Walks

Prime Hook features four walking trails that visit fields, forest and marshlands. All four, located off the main road, can be completed comfortably in an afternoon’s visit.

The *Pine Grove Trail* follows a serpentine path between Turtle and Fleetwood ponds. The soft pine straw-and-leaf surface beneath mature loblolly pines is extremely easy on the paw. The trail is just under one mile long.

Up the road is the *Black Farm Trail* that skirts wooded uplands and marshes as it travels around former farm fields. A trail extension leads to a photography blind. This is flat, easy canine hiking.

At the park office are two adjoining walks that explore a freshwater marsh. The *Dike Trail* travels atop the spoil from the digging of the Headquarters Ditch straight out for a half-mile

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 684-8419

Website
- primehook.fws.gov

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The refuge is located 12 miles southeast of Milford and 10 miles northwest of Lewes. Take Route 16 off Delaware 1 for one mile. Turn left into the refuge on Turtle Pond Road.



The Pine Grove Trail leads to an observation deck at Turtle Pond.

Bonus

The mixed pine-hardwood forest at the edges of the Prime Hook marshes is ideal habitat for the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel, an endangered species of mammal since 1967. The largest of the 10 varieties of local tree squirrels, the reclusive creature is hard to spot even though it grows to over two feet long. Look for a flash of white belly and large bushy tail with black edge stripes in tree cavities or scampering along the ground of the open forest - unlike its more agile cousins it doesn't jump from tree to tree.



It is easy to mistake the Delaware Bay waves at Broadkill Beach at Prime Hook for the ocean.

and the *Boardwalk Trail* slips across the water after passing by the Morris family cemetery, where eight family members are buried.

Trail Sense: A trail map is available at the park office.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome on all four refuge walking trails.

Traffic

These trails are lightly used and well worth a sidetrip on an excursion to the beach. The trails are for foot traffic only.

Canine Swimming

Save for a few spots, Prime Hook does not extend to the Delaware Bay but the bay beaches just a few hundred yards from the refuge's boundaries are a water-loving dog's delight.

Trail Time

More than one hour.

James Farm Ecological Preserve

The Park

James Farm was created as an ecological preserve through a gift of 150 acres to Sussex County in 1992 from Mary Lighthipe in memory of her son Harold. Beginning in 1998, the Center for the Inland Bays has managed the property for the benefit of the public.

The Walks

A patchwork of color-coded trails explores this thumb of land that pokes into the Indian River Bay. Your canine hike begins in an old horse pasture that has been reforested with a planting of 4000 young trees, with another 4000 planned. As the hardwood forest grows it supports an increasing population of migratory songbirds and other animals.

The trails then push into a maritime forest on the way to a small sandy beach on Pasture Point Cove. Dogs will love the silky soft sands and gentle waters of the bay. In fact, your dog will appreciate the wide, paw-friendly trails and the shade provided by mature oaks and hickories. For an open field trot, don't forget the *Purple Trail* across Cedar Neck Road. There is no better place to take your dog for a walk at the beach than James Farm.

Trail Sense: A color mapboard is located at the parking lot.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome on all preserve trails. Look for a loving memorial to Wilma Rudolph Tucker, "a damn good dog," near the sandy beach.

Traffic

Foot traffic only - and much of it is accompanied by a four-legged friend.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 645-7325

Website
- inlandbays.org/education.html

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The nature preserve is in Ocean View. Traveling south on Delaware 1, make your first right after crossing Indian River Inlet onto Road 360. Continue to the end and make a right on Cedar Neck Road. The parking lot is on the left, just past the tennis club. Approaching on Route 26, make a left on Cedar Neck.

Bonus

Beginning in 2003, James Farm has been one of 14 locations in Delaware's inland bays used for oyster gardening. More than one million oysters have been deployed to build reefs that will stabilize the bay floor and filter the waters for a more energized aquatic environment. It is estimated that a single oyster can filter 50 gallons of water and more than 100,000 oysters were introduced to the reef at Pasture Point Cove. The oysters attach themselves to a solid substrate - often another oyster - and begin building a reef habitat. Natural oysters have been gone from Delaware's inland bays for over 30 years but someday the efforts of this oyster gardening may yield harvests once again.

Canine Swimming

Dogs can frolic in the Indian River Bay but only the smallest will enjoy a swim - 300 feet out into the bay the water depth is still about knee-deep.

Trail Time

More than one hour.



The trails at James Farm lead to three observation decks overlooking salt marshes and Indian River Bay.

II

Ashland Nature Center

The Park

A mill operated here as early as 1715. Since 1964, when the Delaware Nature Society was founded, 130 acres at Ashland Nature Center have been preserved for the conservation and study of natural resources.

The Walks

There are four self-guiding nature trails here, each a loop between .8 and 1.3 miles. *Sugarbush* and *Treetop* trails explore the wooded hillside beyond the Ashland Covered Bridge, built in the days before the Civil War; the adjoining *Succession* and *Flood Plain* trails visit meadow, marsh, pond and forest. There is a good deal of hillwalking at Ashland, save for the benign *Flood Plain Trail*. The trails are natural - dirt covered in the woods; grass in the meadows.

Trail Sense: The trails and interpretive stops, over 30 on some trails, are well-marked. Detailed brochures are available in the kiosk at the parking lot.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome at the Ashland Nature Center.

Traffic

No bikes or horses compete on the trails; expect group nature tours, though.

Canine Swimming

Birch Run and the Red Clay Creek flow through the property. Neither is deep enough to dog paddle in.

Trail Time

More than one hour.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 239-2334

Website
- delawarenaturesociety.org/ashland.htm

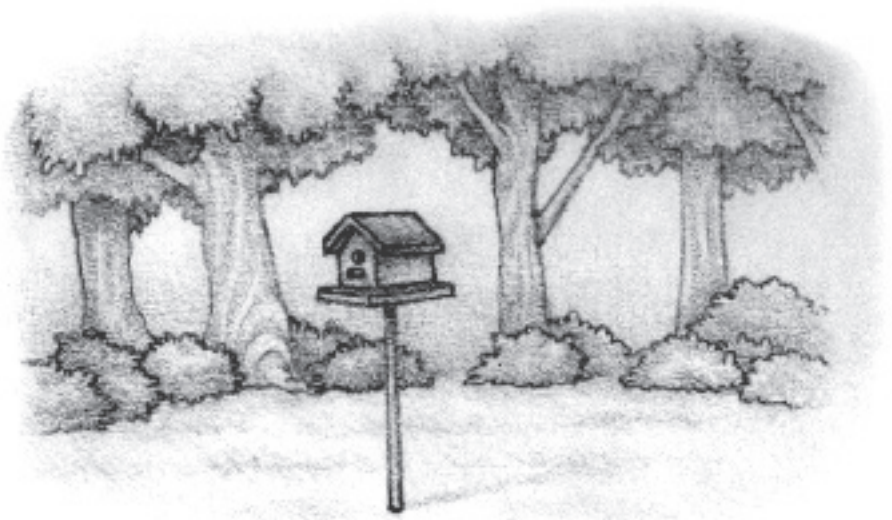
Admission Fee
- Yes, to use the trails

Directions
- Ashland Nature Center is in Hockessin, on Barley Mill Road, between Creek Road (Route 82) and Brackenville Road.

Bonus

This is where you can find the answers to all those questions that confound you when walking in other northern Delaware parks:

1. Why is this park so hilly?
2. What are the dominant trees in these woods?
3. How did all this sand get in this creek?
4. Where did all these big rocks come from?
5. Why do these trees grow so tall, straight and branchless?



Answers to boxed questions:

1. Glacial runoff carved Delaware's valleys from a high plateau.
2. Oak and beech.
3. Eroded soil carried downstream from far-off mountains.
4. Schists of rock were folded in by intense pressure deep in the earth.
5. The trees, usually tulip poplars that compete with sycamores as the burliest in Eastern forests, are shade intolerant and are constantly striving for the sun.

Norman G. Wilder Wildlife Area

The Park

The former Petersburg Wildlife Area was re-named for Norman G. Wilder, who embarked on a 56-year conservation career after a four-year stint in the Army in the South Pacific in World War II. A graduate of the University of Connecticut, Wilder was named director of the Delaware Game and Fish Commission in 1948. Like all of the state's Wildlife Area's, Norman G. Wilder is managed for wildlife enhancement and public hunting and rambles with your dog are best avoided during the September through January hunting seasons.

The Walks

Your canine hiking adventure in Norman G. Wilder Wildlife Area will take place along some 16 miles of fire roads through dense forest and swampland. These roads range from mossy grass to gravelly dirt but all are level and exceedingly easy for your dog to trot. Although you won't notice it, there is enough

Trail Sense: There is an information board and the trail completely under the canopy of trees is blazed.

Kent

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The Norman G. Wildlife Area is southwest of Dover. Turn right off Route 13 at Canterbury onto Road 32. Go through the village of Viola and continue straight on Road 108. At a T-intersection, turn right. Parking is in designated areas along the roads, the first at a maintenance area about a half-mile on the right.

Bonus

When the leaves are off the trees you can scan the high branches of the towering oaks in the Wilder Wildlife Area for glimpses of American mistletoe. Identified nearly 2000 years ago, Anglo Saxons named the plant "mistle-tan" meaning "dung twig" after bird droppings on a branch. It was thought the plant's existence was entwined with birds but it is actually a parasitic plant that is also known as the Vampire Plant. The mistletoe sends out a root-like structure into the bark of hardwood trees and extracts all its nutrients from its host. The mistletoe's mooching won't kill the oak - if the host dies, it dies. You can recognize mistletoe by its clumps of 2-inch greenish-yellow leaves and clusters of white berries. The tradition of kissing under a sprig of mistletoe dates back hundreds of years. The proper procedure is to pick one berry off the plant for every kiss received. When the berries are gone, so are the kisses. Make sure you dispose of the berries after you're through bussing - they are toxic to dogs and people.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed in the wildlife area.

Traffic

Expect miles of solitary canine hiking here.

Canine Swimming

Occasional ditches and shallow creeks cross the area but swimming will not be the main focus of your dog's visit.

Trail Time

Several hours.



When the Cow Marsh Ditch shows up about half-way into a long canine hike it is a tail-wagging refresher for hot dogs.

13

Alapocas Woods Natural Area

The Park

The original 123 acres of the 145-acre park were deeded to Wilmington in 1910 by William Poole Bancroft, founder of the city's park system. Today, Alapocas is a part of Wilmington State Parks, although the gate on the bridge connecting the park to Rockford Park is locked more often than not.

The Walks

The main *Alapocas Woods Trail* tumbles up and down wooded hillsides for 1.8 miles. After a narrow start (a new trail segment), the path is wide, the trees are mature with little understory to block your views and the canine hiking is splendid. Most of the way, including side loops like the *Paw-Paw Trail* (that is the tree, not a dogs-only trail), the footpaths are covered in paw-friendly dirt.

If, however, you venture off the main track and hike down to the Brandywine River you will do so on a steep, rocky track that is hard on foot and paw. Your reward for this exploration is a descent into the industrial heritage of the river. As you walk along the water you will be in the shadow of the Bancroft Mills complex, once the largest cotton finishing works in the world. The path in this section of the park becomes flat and paved and you can return to the *Alapocas Woods Trail* on smooth macadam if you so choose.

Trail Sense: There is a mapboard and signposts on the trails, but not at every intersection.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 577-7020

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Alapocas Woods is behind the DuPont Experimental Station, off Route 141 on Alapocas Drive. The trailhead is in the woods at the back of the parking lot. You can also access the trails from Alapocas Drive.

Bonus

Squeezed between the Piedmont and coastal plain zones, Alapocas offers some of the most dramatic geology in Delaware. The granite cliffs here are high enough to claim the state's only natural waterfall and plentiful enough for the Brandywine Granite Company to have once quarried over 600,000 tons of Wilmington "Blue Rocks" from this site between 1883 and 1888.



Dog Friendliness

Keep your dog off the ballfields and let her romp in the woods.

Traffic

There is little competition for these trails.

Canine Swimming

There is fun to be had in the rapids between large boulders and lazy dog paddling in the slower stretches of the Brandywine.

Trail Time

You can spend about an hour on these trails and in the river.

Delaware Seashore State Park

The Park

Delaware has about two dozen miles of ocean shoreland and about half of those are part of the state park system. And about half of those are in the Delaware Seashore State Park, the First State's most popular park. Now stretching across 2,825 acres, the park was created in 1965.

The Walks

There are no formal trails through the park, just plenty of beach to hike on. Dogs are permitted on unguarded beaches throughout the year but the best time to hike is October to April when dogs are allowed on all beaches.

There is more to see at Delaware Seashore State Park than sea and sand. World War II observation towers still stand as reminders of coastal Delaware's military history. Just to the south, at low tide, stumps of a ghost forest, trees overwhelmed by tide and sand, can still be seen. And if you find your dog acting peculiar it may be the presence of the ghost of a young woman, clad in an old-fashioned bathing suit, who has been seen roaming the dunes.

When there is access, a 1.5-mile loop trail explores Burton's Island, one of the inland bay's largest islands. Much of the way the trail is sand-surfaced with a boardwalk covering the saltwater marsh.

Trail Sense: Your canine hiking day is completely up to you.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 227-2800

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May to October

Directions
- The Delaware Seashore State Park is located between the Atlantic Ocean and Rehoboth Bay on DE Route 1, south of Rehoboth Beach and north of Bethany Beach.

Bonus

About a mile north of Indian River Inlet is the Indian River Life-Saving Station, built in 1876. It was constructed about 400 feet closer to the waves but almost immediately became engulfed in a dune and was moved to its present location a year later. The station was occupied by six surfmen and a keeper from September to May to aid mariners in navigating the dangerous waters offshore. After the Coast Guard formed they took over operations that continued until the 1960s. The station, with its distinctive diamond-shaped trim, has been restored to its 1905 appearance. It is one of America's oldest life-saving stations still standing.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed year-round in the park but not on swimming beaches between May 1 and September 30.

Traffic

Off-road vehicles are allowed on some of the park beaches and you may have to share the shoreline with surf fishermen.

Canine Swimming

If your dog finds the pounding surf of the Atlantic Ocean intimidating, you can turn around and go a few hundred yards to the gentle (usually) water of the inland bays.

Trail Time

Many hours possible here.

15 Carousel Park

The Park

Carousel Park is another legacy to recreation in Delaware from the du Pont family, being a former family estate. Long the home of public riding stables, New Castle County has worked to make the park a mecca for hiking as well.

The Walks

Carousel is a suburban park given over to walking - no playgrounds or ballfields here. The main trail (*The Carousel Loop*) is a three-mile walk around the circumference of the park. Many short connecting trails dissect the park as well. All told there are 14 trails in the park winding through open fields, horse pastures, ponds, hardwoods (Land of the Giants) and pine trees (Sherwood Forest). Carousel Park is set in rolling hills; a healthy climb is required to reach Strawberry Field in the back of the park. The *Carousel Loop* is covered with paw-pleasing wood chips the entire way while the connecting trails are gravel roads, dirt and sometimes grass.

Trail Sense: The trails are all well-marked, color-coded and sport whimsical names. Locator map boards are also on site.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

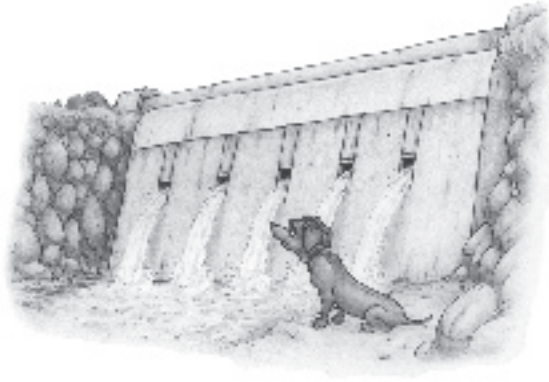
Directions
- The main parking lot for Carousel Park, halfway between Newark and Wilmington, is on Limestone Road (Route 7) between Milltown Road and New Linden Hill Road. Smaller parking lots are at the end of Old Linden Hill Road, off Limestone Road, and on Skyline Drive, off New Linden Hill Road.



Bonus

An off-leash Bark Park at Carousel Park has been established in an open field above Enchanted Lake.

For dogs who enjoy a refreshing dip, this is the place to come.



Dog Friendliness

Carousel Park is one of the most popular places to bring dogs in northern Delaware.

Traffic

There are plenty of walkers, joggers and other dogs on the trails.

Canine Swimming

A trail encircles Enchanted Lake, an ideal spot for canine aquatics with easy access to the water from the banks. Another smaller swimming hole is the less fashionable Moonlight Pond.

Trail Time

More than one hour.

16 Redden State Forest

The Park

The Redden State Forest is Delaware's largest, embracing 9,500 acres in 14 separate tracts of land across central Sussex County in the heart of the state's loblolly pine country. Redden also protects large swaths of wooded wetlands characterized by thriving stands of bottomland hardwoods, including red maple, sweetgum, and mixed oaks. State forest lands are open to hunting during the fall and winter hunting seasons so check ahead for restrictions.

The Walks

While there are 44 miles of trails - mostly unpaved access roads - in the 14 tracts of Redden State Forest, the only destination for canine hikers is the Headquarters Tract. Here you can sample the forest on an interpretive *Educational Trail*, a nature loop that kicks off opposite the park office, housed in an historic carriage house. This flat, sandy footpath can hold water after heavy rains.

Hardy canine hikers can set off on an easy-to-walk, 5-mile *Headquarters Loop Trail*, mostly on access roads.

Trail Sense: There are no trail markers or signs in the forest but you can pick up tract maps that outline the boundaries of the state forest and show some access roads.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 856-2893

Website
- state.de.us/deptagri/forestry/forest.shtml

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The Headquarters Tract of the Redden State Forest is approximately 3 miles north of Georgetown; 1/2 mile east of Route 113 on East Redden Road.

Bonus

The centerpiece of the Redden State Forest is the historic Redden Lodge, built in the early 1900s by the Pennsylvania Railroad as a hunting retreat for company executives. The graceful wood-shake building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 and was completely renovated in 1995.



Hidden ponds deep in Redden Forest can provide welcome relief for a dog on a hot day.

Dog Friendliness

There are no prohibitions against dogs in the Redden State Forest.

Traffic

Very light, foot traffic only on the *Education Trail*.

Canine Swimming

There are ditches and an occasional pond, good for cooling off but your dog can leave his swimming trunks home when coming here.

Trail Time

Several hours possible.

17

Chapel's Branch Nature Area

The Park

In the 1930s a DuPont Company research team led by Dr. Wallace Carothers developed nylon - the world's first true synthetic fiber. In 1939 the company began commercial production in Seaford, selecting the 609-acre site on the Nanticoke River for its proximity to raw material supplies and major markets. The town greeted the company with an impromptu parade. The six-story plant was soon operating 24 hours a day, producing enough yarn in its first year of operation to weave 64 million pairs of nylon stockings. The first nylon yarn produced at the Seaford plant is now on display in the Smithsonian Institution. The DuPont Company conveyed 190 acres across the street from its plant and the Seaford Golf and Country Club for the Chapel Branch Nature Area, named for a small frame church built in the 1700s.

The Walks

The primary loop in Chapel Hill is about 2.5 miles with a short cut, some spur trails and an access road for prolonged canine hiking in this delightful mixed upland forest. Sunlight

Sussex
Phone Number - None
Website - None
Admission Fee - None
Directions - Chapel Branch is located in West Seaford. From Route 20, make a left onto Sussex Avenue and continue until the end at a stop light in front of the DuPont nylon plant. Make a right on Harrington Street and look for the parking lot 1/2 mile on your right.



Bonus

On the other side of the nylon plant, in the downtown area, you can take your dog to the *Seaford River Walk* at the foot of Pine Street off High Street. The concrete path is two blocks long but there is a grass area to the right with access to the Nanticoke River.

Delaware towns have been energetic in developing walks along their rivers, all of which welcome dogwalkers. Laurel has a short walk along Broad Creek and Milton has developed a brick walkway along the Broadkill River that honors four 19th century governors from the area. One of the state's most ambitious waterfront developments is Milford's *Mispillion Riverwalk* that stretches across the entire downtown area. In Wilmington a walkway has been created along a curve in the Christina River.

filters to the ground throughout this completely shaded ramble.

The track starts out wide as it drops gently to the wetlands around Chapel Branch, providing a bit of elevation change. The path narrows in the later stages but remains comfortably roomy with a dog in tow. The trails are uniformly dog-friendly with soft dirt and pine straw under paw.

Trail Sense: You can navigate the main nature trail by following numbered posts; there are also colored blazes.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed in the nature area.

Traffic

This is a popular spot with birders, nature lovers and cross country teams but you should find a quiet hike with your dog most times.

Canine Swimming

There is minimal access to the shallow Chapel Branch as it moves slowly to its outlet in the Nanticoke River.

Trail Time

About one hour.

Abbott's Mill Nature Center

The Park

In 1795 local carpenter Nathan Willey bought the land on this site. By 1802 he had finished a large grist mill and asked authorities to build a road to it. Willey died in 1812. Over the next century the property passed through many hands, with the mill remaining viable. Ainsworth Abbott took possession of the mill in 1919 and remained here until 1962. The state of Delaware bought the property in 1963 and today is operated as the downstate center for the Delaware Nature Society.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 422-0847

Website
- delawarenaturesociety.org

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Abbott's Mill is southwest of Milford. From Route 113, take Route 36 west to Road 620 and turn right, following signs.

The Walks

There are two short hiking trails open for dogs at Abbott's Mill, both leaving and returning to the parking lot from the same trailhead. The *Tulip Woods Trail* travels for just under a mile on natural surface paths. Delaware was once under an ancient ocean and the flat, sandy trails here are a souvenir of the area's prehistoric past.

The *Millstream Trail* is a ten-minute exploration, mostly on boardwalk, beside Johnson's Branch. Both of these walking paths are completely in the forest and your dog will hike in shaded comfort on even the hottest days.

Trail Sense: Interpretive brochures are available to illuminate the natural wonders of the nature center.

Bonus

On your exploration of the nature center you will see the state tree of Virginia (the dogwood), the state tree of Maryland (the white oak) and the state tree of Delaware (the American holly). The colorful holly tree has been a symbol of the winter holiday season since ancient times. Found in abundance in Delaware forests, a major export industry was developed in the early 1900s. By the 1930s, Delaware was the leading producer of holly wreaths in America. So important was the tree to Delaware's economy during the Depression that the American holly was designated the state tree.



There is plenty for a dog to see at Abbott's Mill Nature Center.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed on the trails and in the nature center.

Traffic

Foot traffic, aside from educational tours, is light.

Canine Swimming

A 23-acre pond has access from a boat launch across the road from the main building.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.

19

Iron Hill Park

The Park

Welsh settlers began extracting iron from this hill, known to the Lenni Lenape Indians as Marettico - "the hill of hard stone" - as early as 1701. Ore was hauled to North East, Maryland where it was smelted. In September of 1777, the Big Three of the Continental Army - George Washington, Nathaniel Greene and the Marquis de Lafayette - surveyed the progress of the approaching British Army from this hill. The ensuing skirmish just past the base of the hill at Cooch's Bridge on September 3 was the only exchange of gunfire on Delaware soil during the American Revolution.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

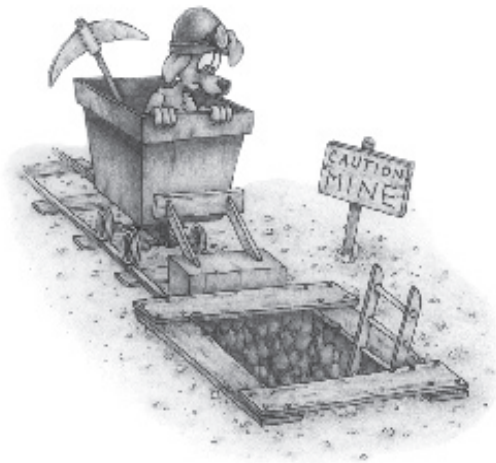
Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The entrance for Iron Hill Park is off Whitaker Road, between Old Baltimore Pike and Welsh Tract Road. Any of the four parking areas will provide access to the trails.

The Walks

A *Yellow Trail* and a *Red Trail* cover the park's 300 acres. The *Mason-Dixon Trail*, blazed in light blue, cuts through Iron Hill Park and dead-ends against I-95 before skipping across on Welsh Tract Road and continuing its journey westward.

While there are some hardy climbs on Iron Hill, the main dirt trails work around the hill rather than



Bonus

A terminus for the *Mason-Dixon Trail* is the Iron Hill Museum, a converted one-room schoolhouse that illuminates the natural and industrial history of the area.



Remnants of its mining past still dot the landscape at Iron Hill Park.

up and down the slopes.

Trail Sense: There is no map of the park available; the trails are blazed, but not always reliably so. This is a compact trail system, however, so you can't get too far off course.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed throughout the park.

Traffic

This is not an especially busy park but the trails are a favorite of mountain bikers.

Canine Swimming

There is no flowing water in the park but some of the played-out ore pits - the mines were abandoned in 1891 - are filled with water.

Trail Time

There is more than an hour of canine hiking here.

20

Blackbird State Forest

The Park

The Blackbird State Forest manages about 3,400 acres on 10 non-connecting tracts. Here you can see such New Castle County arboreal regulars as yellow poplar, white oak, maple, gum and bayberry mingling with an occasional regal loblolly pine just north of its natural range.

The Walks

An informal tangle of fire road, deer paths and primitive trails extend for over 40 miles in the forest. The best canine hiking is in the Tybout Tract where the paths are generally wide and well-trod. Most of the trails in the other tracts are rustic enough in many places to be termed “overgrown” at certain times during the year.

The dirt, grass and pine straw trails are flat everywhere so your dog should be able to take every step without a copy of this book tumbling from his head. Also at Tybout is a short, paved trail with interpretive signs.

Trail Sense: Don't venture into these woods with just your dog's nose for guidance - the trails are unmarked and do not loop. But the color topographic maps provided by the Delaware Department of Agriculture are excellent - they will take you where you want to go.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 653-6505

Website
- state.de.us/deptagri/forestry/forest.shtml

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The Blackbird State Forest office is located in the Tybout Tract, about 4 miles northwest of Smyrna. Take Route 15 South and make a left on Oliver Guessford Road. Follow to the end. Make a right on Blackbird Forest Road and the entrance to the office is 1/3 mile down on the left. From Route 13, turn left on Blackbird Forest Road (County Road 471). Continue for 1.5 miles to the office.

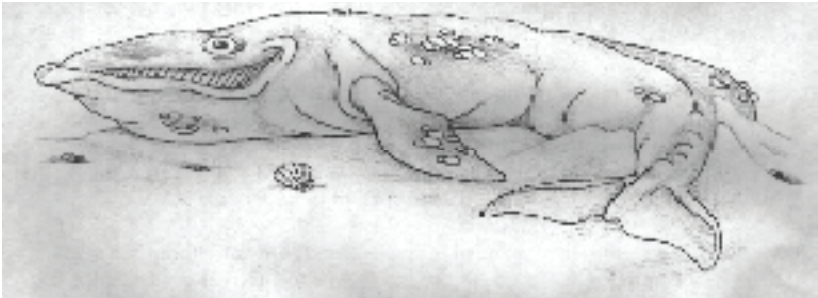
Bonus

Of immediate interest in the Blackbird Forest are the Delmarva Bays or "whale wallows." These series of shallow depressions, filled with water in rainy times, are found only in the Blackbird State Forest and the Millington Wildlife Management Area in nearby Kent County, Maryland. Their origins are a mystery - local lore maintains that they are the result of struggling whales, stranded after a biblical flood receded.

Other theories suggest glacial scraping or even meteorites. Whatever their origins, when wet, these "living museums" support rare plants and wildlife. Seven of the Delmarva Bays have been dedicated as nature preserves in the Blackbird State Forest.

A prominent "whale wallow" near the office in the Tybout Tract is opposite the southernmost picnic area.

Although there are no trails leading to this Delmarva Bay, you can claw your way through the woods to reach it.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the state forest. Hiking is recommended only from February to September, however - outside of hunting season.

Traffic

There is little chance of seeing anyone on these trails most of the time.

Canine Swimming

The Blackbird Creek is narrow, shallow and so slow-moving as to be almost stagnant. No water fun here. There are three small ponds in the Tybout Tract suitable for dog-paddling.

Trail Time

Many hours to a full day.

Brandywine Springs Park

The Park

One of the first resort hotels and spas in America was built here in 1827. The recreational heritage of the area was revived with the advent of a popular amusement park decades later featuring, among other attractions, a boardwalk and a roller coaster. The Friends of Brandywine Springs Park have erected stations housing turn-of-the-20th century photographs to help recreate its heyday as a pioneering amusement park in the United States.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The park is at the corner of Newport Gap Pike (Route 41) and Faulkland Road (Route 34). The entrance is on Faulkland.



Bonus

When the historic Wilmington & Western tourist railroad is operating (the stretch of tracks in the park has been washed away by floods twice in recent years), you may chance to see the old-fashioned train rumble across the open wooden trestle spanning Red Clay Creek.

The Walks

The historic Brandywine Springs Park is an ideal spot for a quick walk of a half-hour or so. Many people walk dogs around the picnic areas in the ball-fields in the upper section of the park. The lower, wooded section - where the amusement park was located - features wide trails that fishhook along Hyde Run and Red Clay Creek.

Both the upper and lower sections are flat walks; the connecting trails between the two areas require short hikes up and down the interceding steep grade. The gentlest of these is the trail at the Council Oak, the remains of a 330-year old tree that stands at the woods' edge opposite the park entrance.

It is said that George Washington met with his war council beneath the oak on September 8, 1777 and made the decision to fall back to the Brandywine River and defend Philadelphia against the marching British Army instead of engaging the invaders behind the Red Clay Creek. Washington would soon be routed in Chadds Ford, in part because his knowledge of that countryside was vastly inferior to the British.

Trail Sense: The trails are blazed but they are short and the markings are of no real consequence.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to share the trails behind the recreational areas.

Traffic

The trail system is too short to attract mountain bikers and most of the people who visit the park stay in the recreational areas.

Canine Swimming

The Red Clay Creek is deep enough for your dog to take a plunge and the fast-moving Hyde Run is fun to romp in.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.



Holts Landing State Park

The Park

Nanticoke Indians harvested seafood and hunted in the surrounding marshes and forests along the shores of Delaware's inland bays. Later, this property was farmed by the Holt family until 1957 when the farm was sold to the state highway department. In 1965 the first parcel of what would become the 203-acre Holts Landing State Park was transferred to the State Park Commission.

The Walks

The star hiking trail here is the 1.7-mile *Sea Hawk Trail* that takes in three different ecosystems: beach, marsh and forest. You'll start (assuming high tide has left the trail passable) with a walk down the beach and expansive views of Indian River Bay. As you turn away from the water the route utilizes old access roads in a once-cultivated field that is morphing back into woodlands. In this open part of the hike scan the skies and treetops of tall pines for evidence of the ospreys - or sea hawks - that give the trail its name. Ospreys can grow to 23 inches long with a wingspan of more than five feet. They fish by swooping down and snaring fish as big as 4 pounds in their talons.

The trail travels up a small grade as you enter the the shade of the canopy. Here you'll find spokes of trail that lead to local residences and can be used to extend your canine hiking day. The sandy paths are wide and easy on the paw.

Trail Sense: Mapboards are available at the trailheads.

Sussex

Phone Number
- (302) 539-9060

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May-October

Directions
- Holts Landing State Park is located on the southern shore of the Indian River Bay. From Route 26, take County Road 346 or 347 north to the park entrance.

Bonus

You can enjoy the activities that have gone on for centuries on the bayshore - fishing, clamming or crabbing. The park sports a new crabbing pier and a convenient boat ramp to pursue flounder, trout and bluefish.



The *Sea Hawk Trail* reaches the beach and the wind-whipped waves of the Indian River Bay.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the park.

Traffic

Holts Landing is one of the lesser known of Delaware's state parks and you can expect little competition for the trail.

Canine Swimming

The shallow waters of Indian River Bay is ideal for splashing and freshwater dog paddling can be had in several borrow pits created by the highway department's road-building crews that have filled with water.

Trail Time

About one hour.

Lums Pond State Park

The Park

In the early 1800s the Army Corps of Engineers dammed the St. Georges Creek, once home to Lenni Lenape Indian hunting camps, to hold water for the original Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. The result is Delaware's largest freshwater pond, a 200-acre water playground for boaters, fishermen, swimmers - and dogs.

The Walks

The *Swamp Forest Trail* at Lums Pond circumnavigates the water and covers over seven miles. Along the way you will hike through woods and fields and cross 26 wooden bridges. Look for the toothwork of the active colony of beavers at Lums Pond along the way.

If three or four hours of trekking with your dog isn't on your menu, however, don't attempt this trip - unless you flag down a boat you will have to do the whole shebang. The hike around Lums Pond is a little too long and not varied enough to rank higher. Beware that after heavy rains this water-level dirt trail gets very muddy.

There are also another ten miles of multi-use trails on the park's 1,757 acres but no short- or medium-length hiking-only trails. You can also take your dog on a unique 200-yard "sensory trail" at Lums Pond that encourages the exploration of nature with other senses beside sight.

Trail Sense: The *Swamp Forest Trail* is not always marked but as long as you keep the water on the same side all the way around you shouldn't get lost. The path through the disc golf course is confusing, however.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 368-6989

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May-October

Directions
- Lums Pond is in Kirkwood, with the main entrance on Howell School Road between Red Lion Road (Route 71) and Route 896. The dog park is east of the Main Entrance on Buck Jersey Road.

Bonus

Lums Pond features one of the 7 tournament-ready, 18-hole disc golf courses in Delaware (all in state parks). The course is noted for its many holes threaded through the park's trees.

You can take your dog along for a casual round or watch the pros each May when the Professional Disc Golf Association visits Lums Pond for tournament play.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed on the Lums Pond trails but not in swimming area. There is also an off-leash dog training area with easy access to the water.

Traffic

Foot traffic only is allowed on the Swamp Forest Trail; the multi-use trails can host horses, bikes and snowmobiles. Not many people are attempting the entire trip around the pond.

Canine Swimming

Just about all the way along the trail your dog can enjoy swimming in Lums Pond.

Trail Time

Two to three hours to circle Lums Pond.



24

Brecknock Park

The Park

Alexander Humphreys received a warrant of 600 acres here in 1680 and is believed to have called it “Brecknock” after a shire in Wales. The first mill along the banks of the Isaac Branch of the St. Jones River was constructed in 1740, beginning almost two centuries of grain production. By 1812 a state-of-the-art, three-story Oliver Evans mill had replaced it. Evans, a Delawarean born in Newport, built the nation’s first automatic mill on the Red Clay Creek. In 1928 a hurricane washed away the mill’s dam and the mill itself was demolished during a World War II scrap metal drive. The land was acquired for a Kent County park in 1993 and the boardwalk for the Isaac Branch Nature Trail was a construction project of a team of Americorps volunteers. The mansion on the property dates to the mid-1700s and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Walks

Your canine hiking day at Brecknock begins with an easy walk around an open field studded with plantings of Virginia Pine, River Birch, Scarlet Oak and Red Cedar. A completely different park awaits you as drop down to the *Isaac Branch Nature Trail* at the back of Brecknock. The remainder of your canine hike will be along and over

Kent

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions -
Brecknock Park is in Camden.
From Route 113 veer right
onto Old Camden Road and
the park is immediately on
the right.



A boardwalk traverses the swampy segments of the Isaac Branch Nature Trail.

Bonus

Take time to visit the Native Butterfly Garden created at Brecknock Park. Different species of butterflies have different preferences of nectar, in both colors and tastes so a wide variety of food plants give the greatest diversity of visitors. In a butterfly garden you'll see groups of the same plants that are easier for butterflies to see than singly planted flowers.

Wild and cultivated plants are staggered, as well as blooming times of the day and year.



the slow-moving wetlands. This is an out-and-back trail of about one mile, much of it on boardwalk. Back in the recreational section of the park there is an exhibit on the history of milling and plenty of greenspace for a lively game of fetch.

Trail Sense: There are no trail guides or mapboards or blazes to take you around the park - but there aren't many choices to make either.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed on the Brecknock trails.

Traffic

This is a popular park for joggers and strollers.

Canine Swimming

Isaac Branch is not a canine swimming hole.

Trail Time

About one hour.

Bombay Hook National Wildlife

The Park

European settlement of this area began in 1679 when the Indian Machacksett, Chief Sachem of Kahansink, sold Dutch settlers some marshland called “Boompies Hook” - roughly translated as a thicket of trees in German. The cost was “one gun, fower hands of powder, three Mats coats, one anckor of Liquors and one Kittle.” Many of the trees that gave Bombay Hook its name were destroyed in the Great Storm of 1878. Bombay Hook joined the National Wildlife Refuge System, a legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, in 1937. Since then the refuge’s 15,978 acres have been managed to provide a

diversity of habitats: freshwater, brackish and salt marsh, bay, grassland, cropland and forest to encourage plant and animal diversity.

The Walks

National Wildlife Refuges are often overlooked by dog owners as hiking destinations. At Bombay Hook there are several short nature trails but your best canine hiking bet may be around the refuge on the hard-packed dirt auto road. Vehicle traffic is sparse and moving turtle-slow when it comes.

The first trail you meet in Bombay Hook is the *Boardwalk Trail* that explores four different habitats, including a boardwalk into a high marsh of salt meadow cordgrass. Your dog may take particular interest in the droppings often seen on the boards - they are courtesy of raccoons, often after a meal of persimmon seeds or fiddler crabs.

Parson Point Trail is a half-mile linear trail into an isolated forest of tall trees that are nesting areas for bald eagles. The trail is often closed in winter and spring

Kent

Phone Number
- (302) 653-9345

Website
- bombayhook.fws.gov

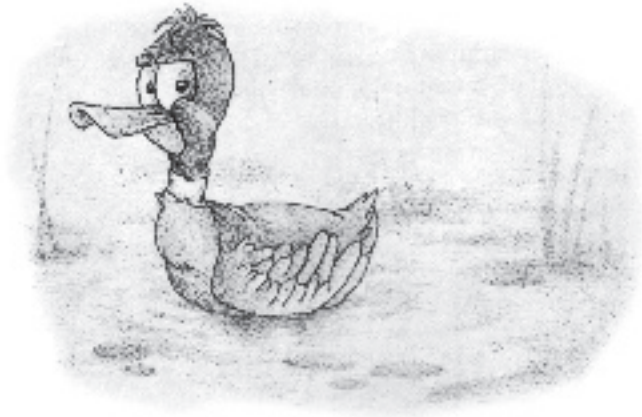
Admission Fee
- Yes, \$4

Directions
- Bombay Hook is situated off of Scenic Route 9, north of Leipsic. From Delaware 1 take the Smyrna South Exit, following signs to Route 6 East.

Bonus

Much of the energies at Bombay Hook are devoted to supporting migrating geese and ducks. There are even crops of winter wheat and clover grown for the wildlife.

As a result the refuge lists 278 species of birds that can be seen along the western shore of the Delaware Bay. If you want to see waterfowl, visit during March and November. If you are interested in shorebirds and songbirds come during May, August and September.



to protect the privacy of these majestic birds. Another half-mile trail takes in the landscape beside Bear Swamp, a 240-acre freshwater impoundment constructed in 1961. There are many mammals that might be seen at Bombay Hook Wildlife Refuge, including mink, weasels, otters and even harbor seals but bears aren't one of them. The last bear sighting in Delaware was in 1905 - the name dates to early records.

Trail Sense: There are maps and trail guides available.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to admire the wildlife at Bombay Hook.

Traffic

The refuge is lightly visited at most times.

Canine Swimming

Over 13,000 of the refuge's acres are tidal marshes intersected by winding rivers and creeks but none of it is for doggie aquatics.

Trail Time

You can spend well over an hour hiking with your dog through the Refuge.

26

Brandywine Park

The Park

Brandywine Park, Delaware's first park, created in 1885 and partially designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, can stand beside any of America's downtown riverwalks for person and dog. The 178-acre park of wooded trails, formal gardens, and sculptures was added to the National Historic Register in 1976.

The Walks

The 1.8-mile *Brandywine Nature Trail* connects Brandywine Village and Rockford Park. Through Brandywine Park it traces the north shore of the Brandywine River for about a mile.

Once across the Swinging Bridge, the trail veers away from the water towards Rockford Park via Kentmere Parkway. Along the way you'll enjoy native and ornamental plantings in the Rose Garden, the Waterwalk Garden, the Four Seasons Garden, the historic Josephine Gardens and elsewhere. Under paw will be concrete sidewalk and macadam on this canine hike.

Trail Sense: There are several mapboards in the park.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 577-7020

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- In Wilmington, the main parking lot for Brandywine Park is on the north banks of the river at the foot of Monkey Hill, off of 18th and Van Buren streets.

*If there are no dogs in Heaven,
then when I die I want to go where they went.
-Anonymous*

Bonus

A canine hike through Brandywine Park provides a quick lesson in the history of bridge architecture. The classical arch form is represented in grand style with the magnificent stone viaduct across the river and numerous reinforced concrete spans.

There is even a small iron arch bridge over the mill race. A prototypical 19th century pier and girder iron bridge transports trains over the Brandywine River.

And the pedestrian footbridge across the water, the Swinging Bridge, is a little suspension bridge employing the same engineering principles as the legendary Brooklyn Bridge.

Dog Friendliness

There are off-leash sections in the park. You cannot walk your dog through the Brandywine Zoo, Delaware's only zoo, in the park.

Traffic

This is the place to go to be with other dog-walkers, not for solitary canine hiking.

Canine Swimming

Dogs can enjoy a dip in the Brandywine River and in the mill race cut on the south side. In 1954, the Brandywine Canoe Slalom, America's first ever slalom race for kayaks, ran in these waters south of the Washington Street bridge. Two decades later water kayaking would become a popular Olympic sport.

Trail Time

About one hour.



27

Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Wildlife Area

The Park

The land between the Delaware River and the Chesapeake Bay was first surveyed for a canal as early as the 1760s but construction on a great ditch did not begin until 1822. With 2,600 men digging and hauling dirt, the waterway finally opened for business in 1829, slicing 300 miles and eliminating the ocean route between Philadelphia and Baltimore. The federal government took complete control over the canal in 1919 and deepened and widened the channel to eliminate the need for locks. Today the 14-mile long, 450-foot wide Chesapeake and Delaware Canal is one of only two vitally commercial sea-level canals in the United States.

Dredged to a depth of 35 feet, the “C&D” is deep enough to handle ocean-going ships. Over 20,000 vessels of all shapes and sizes float down the waterway, making it one of the busiest canals in the world. The lands on either side are managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and their mandate is to keep the maritime traffic flowing, not to create a recreational paradise for you and your dog.

The Walks

Old, unpaved service roads on either side of the canal provide wide, flat, easy-walking paths. There are also informal trails along the length of the canal. A canine hike is best designed with a two-car shuttle to eliminate the need for back-tracking but otherwise you will just amble along until you decide to turn back.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Wildlife Area is accessible from many spots: the town of St. Georges, the Grass Dale Center of Fort DuPont State Park and Summit Road on the north side; the C&D Canal Museum in Chesapeake City, Ratledge Road, and Dutch Neck Road on the south, among others.

Bonus

The dredging of the canal in the 1800s unearthed pockets of fossils from the Cretaceous Period (144 to 65 million years ago). Today, the C&D Canal is still the best place in Delaware to hunt fossils, mostly "steinkerns." These are shells that fill with mud and later harden. The best places for your dog to dig for relics are the dredge spoils near St. Georges and at the foundation of the Reedy Point Bridge.

Be on the lookout for a pen-shaped fossil that is a belemnite, the State Fossil of Delaware. It is found only around St. Georges.

The scenery doesn't change mile after mile and there is no shade for your dog on a hot day so make sure you pack drinking water on any hike in the C&D Canal area.

Trail Sense: There is nothing here to help you plan your canine hiking agenda.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome to romp along the C&D Canal but take care during hunting season.

Traffic

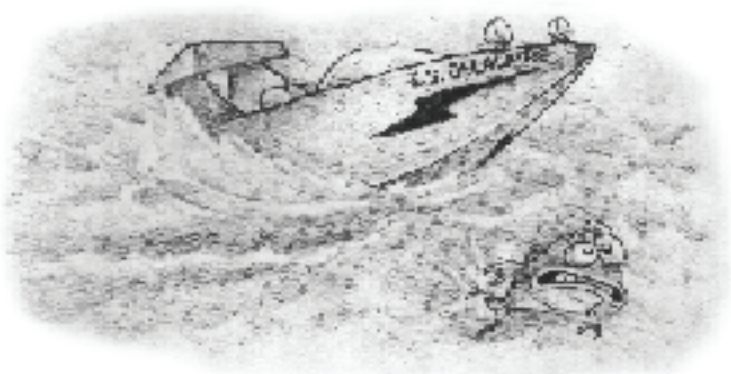
You may spend an entire canine hiking day and not see another soul but the dirt roads are open to vehicle traffic.

Canine Swimming

The water is tantalizingly in view but the shores of the channel are lined with large boulders and not designed for swimming - dog or otherwise.

Trail Time

Many hours possible.



Rittenhouse Park

The Park

Rittenhouse Park is a small 45-acre nature area administered by the city of Newark. It would be of little interest to canine hikes beyond being a pleasant picnic park save for the segment of the *Mason-Dixon Trail* that runs through the property. The 190-mile long *Mason-Dixon Trail* starts at Whiskey Springs, on the *Appalachian Trail*, in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania and dips into Delaware before continuing to its eastern terminus at Chadds Ford on the banks of the Brandywine River.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Rittenhouse Park is in Newark, adjacent to Route 4 across from the Chrysler plant. The entrance is on West Chestnut Hill off of Route 896.

The Walks

Wooded Rittenhouse Park has its own small trail system that works up a hillside but these unmaintained paths are rocky under paw and not rewarding. Instead, stick to the *Mason-Dixon Trail* that hugs the shoreline of the Christina Creek. The ramble through the park is scenic and pleasant but soon deteriorates - both visually and aromatically - as you reach industrial areas, railroad tracks and busy roadways. A satisfying turn-around point on this linear trail is the residential road about a mile into the hike.

The adventure begins beyond this bridge. The trail bounds up and down, becomes deep sand in stretches, crosses over water on makeshift bridges and, if the water isn't high, under overpasses. Don't be surprised if your dog sniffs out a feral cat or two. This part of the *Mason-Dixon Trail* ends at Elkton Road.

Trail Sense: The trail is blazed through the park.

Bonus

The Christina Creek is one of six designated New Castle County trout streams - if you want to bring your dog along on a fishing expedition.



This scenic creekside stretch of trail in Rittenhouse Park is not quite as bucolic deep into the canine hike.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in Rittenhouse Park.

Traffic

Once you leave the park and get deep into the trail there is little traffic - an occasional mountain biker or fisherman perhaps.

Canine Swimming

The entire hike is along the Christina Creek, that sometimes pools deep enough for a doggie dip.

Trail Time

More than one hour.

Happiness is dog-shaped.
-Chapman Pincher

29

St. Jones Reserve

The Park

This land was purchased in 1740 when Samuel Dickinson, a wealthy Quaker tobacco planter and merchant in Maryland moved his family to the Jones Neck in the home they called Poplar Hall. His son John was eight years old and would live here until he was 18 before going on to fame as a philosopher in the cause for liberty. Although opposed to open warfare with England, Dickinson donned a uniform in his mid-forties and fought on the side of the Revolutionaries. John Dickinson would come to own six plantations along the St. Jones River before his death in 1808. Part of that land is now the St. Jones Reserve, part of the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve, one of only 25 in the United States.

Kent

Phone Number
- (302) 739-3436

Website
- dnrec.state.de.us/DNREC2000/Divisions/Soil/DNERR/Stjones.htm

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The reserve is located on Kitts Hummock Road off US 113 or Route 9, south of Dover, 1/2 mile past the John Dickinson Plantation.

The Walks

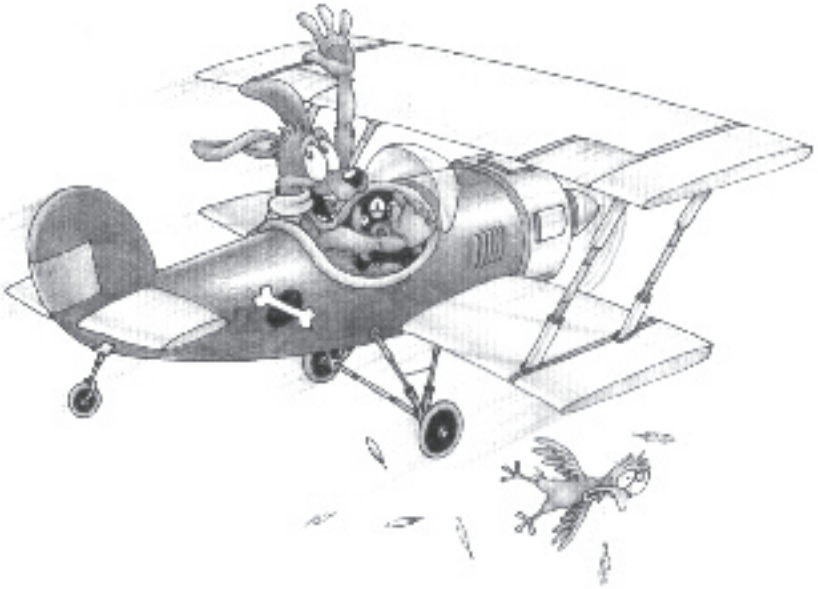
There is a one-mile trail that leads from the reserve to Kingston Upon-Hull, a five-bay rectangular wood-and-brick home that dates to 1730. The trail begins with a boardwalk passage through lush marsh grasses that even poke through the slots of wood. The grass pathway then skirts the saltwater marsh before entering a small woodland and finishing through cultivated fields on an old farm road.

Estuary Expedition Backpacks are available during Visitor Center hours. These include trail guides, field guides, binoculars, dog down the and bird checklists to enhance your canine hike through the wetlands.

Trail Sense: There is a mapboard at the parking lot to orient your visit to the estuary.

Bonus

This walk is on the edge of the Dover Air Force Base and you are likely to get close-up looks of some of the world's largest aircraft sharing the skies with bald eagles, peregrine falcons, ospreys and Northern harriers.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs can trot this trail.

Traffic

You may encounter education tours on your exploration; foot traffic only.

Canine Swimming

There are no opportunities for dog swimming here.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.

30

Battery Park

The Park

New Castle, originally named Fort Casimir, was founded in 1651 by Peter Stuyvesant, who was sent to provide the Dutch with command of all river traffic. Its strategic location led to constant bickering among colonizing European nations until the English established permanent control. William Penn stepped ashore a few yards from Battery Park in 1682 to take possession of his extensive land holdings that would become Pennsylvania and Delaware. The Trustees of New Castle Common, a body of 13 Trustees, oversee a non-profit charitable organization founded by Penn, which was incorporated in 1764 and reincorporated by assembly in 1792. The Trustees bought and developed Battery Park, established the river walkway and rehabilitated the adjacent wetlands.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions -
Battery Park is located in New Castle at the end of Delaware Street, off Route 9. Convenient parking lots are located along 3rd Street.

The Walks

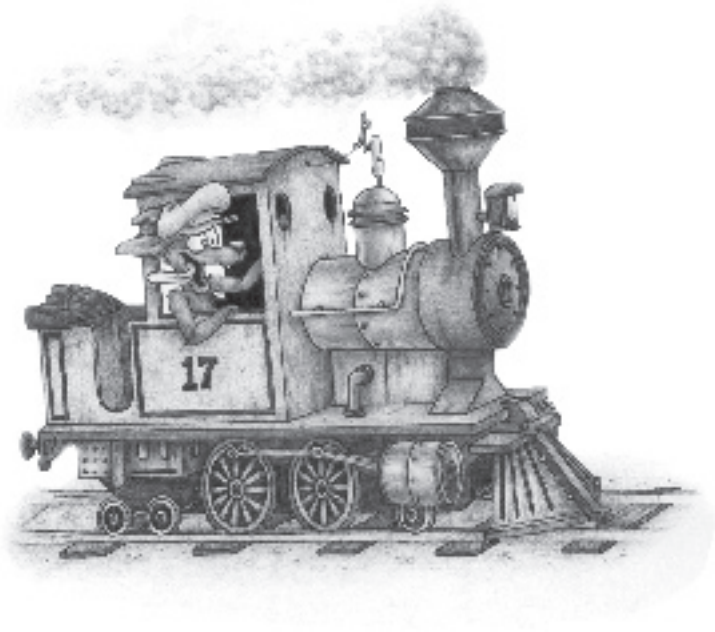
The walking path out of Battery Park reaches 2.5 miles along the Delaware River. It begins as a paved exploration and turns into hard pack. In addition to unobstructed vistas across the Delaware, there are some interesting marsh views on the opposite side of the trail as well. The walking is flat and easy.

When you arrive back in Battery Park, reverse your course and take your dog on the brick sidewalks through historic New Castle.

Trail Sense: There are no maps or guides and no real need for them.

Bonus

The ticket office of the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad in Battery Park dates to 1832 and is the oldest ticket office in the United States. Battery Park was the terminus for the pioneering railroad.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs can join in the fun along the walking path.

Traffic

This is a heavily used park and walking path. Expect rollerbladers, baby strollers, joggers and more in both directions.

Canine Swimming

The Delaware River laps gently to shore here and there are several points of access for your dog to enjoy a great swim - a concrete boat ramp, small sand beaches and a rocky beach at the end of the trail.

Trail Time

It will take more than an hour to complete the walking path and return to Battery Park.

31

Bellevue State Park

The Park

Bellevue is the former estate of William du Pont, Jr., one of Delaware's greatest sportsmen. Here he stabled his Foxcatcher Farms horses and five Kentucky Derby horses worked on the training track now used by cyclists and joggers. He brought pari-mutuel racing to Delaware and designed Delaware Park. As president of the Wilmington Country Club he donated the golf course's original holes to the city of Wilmington for the Porky Oliver Golf Course. The tennis courts at Bellevue were one of the greatest private tennis complexes ever when du Pont hosted international stars at his famous "tennis Sundays." He married one of America's greatest court stars, Margaret Osbourne, in 1947. Bellevue became a 328-acre state park in 1976, ten years after William du Pont's death.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 761-6963

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May to October

Directions
- Bellevue State Park is north of Wilmington. The main entrance is on Carr Road, between Marsh Road (Exit 9 off I-95) and Silverside Road.

The Walks

The main attraction for hikers at Bellevue is the 9-furlong (1 1/8 miles) training track. It is wide, flat and exceedingly pleasant to walk. Unfortunately for canine hikers, in recent years the dirt track has been covered in crushed stone and dogs have been banned. Your dog can still trot on the grass shoulder, however.

You can also cobble together a canine hike around the perimeter of the park by following paved bike paths and unpaved horse trails. These lead to community gardens, a small nature preserve, the historic paddocks and estate buildings.

Trail Sense: A park mapboard is available at the parking lot.

Bonus

When William du Pont took over the property he transformed a Gothic Revival castle into a graceful replica of President James Madison's home, Montpelier. It is now the centerpiece of the park.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the park but not on the main training track.

Traffic

You will always find folks using the training track but there is plenty of room to stretch out.

Canine Swimming

There is a small fishing pond that is reserved for fishing, not dog paddling.

Trail Time

It will take more than an hour to fully explore the grounds of the former estate.

Fort DuPont State Park

The Park

On the shore opposite Fort Delaware, Fort DuPont was actively garrisoned during the Civil War and the Spanish-American War; used as a training base in World War I; and detained German prisoners in World War II. It is named for Samuel Francis du Pont who, during the Civil War commanded a fleet of 77 vessels and 12,000 men to a critical Union victory in the Battle of Port Royal Sound. It was the largest United States naval expeditionary force ever assembled up to that time.

The Walks

The 1-mile *River View Trail* loop begins a gently sloping canine hike in the marshland along the Delaware River and finishes in shaded woodlands. If you walk it backwards you have longer sustained views of the river and Fort Delaware on Pea Patch Island. The grass trail takes you past several ruins of the military installation, camouflaged to river traffic.

Trail Sense: You are left on your own here.

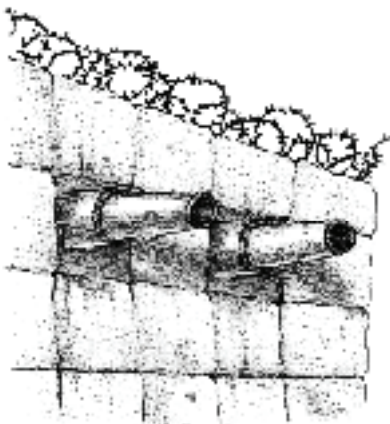
New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 834-7941

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- Yes, May to October

Directions
- The main parking lot for DuPont State Park is in the back of the Governor Bacon Health Center. The entrance is off Route 9 on the south side of the Delaware City Branch Canal. The trailhead is directly behind the small parking lot.



Bonus

The heronry on Pea Patch Island (the story goes that in colonial times a boat hauling peas ran aground on this 178-acre mud flat spilling its cargo and planting a pea patch) is the largest Atlantic Coast nesting ground north of Florida for wading birds. There is ample opportunity to watch ibis, egrets and herons - who live in pairs - go about their lives in the Delaware River.



A field of green grass in front of Fort DuPont will make any dog kick up his feet with joy.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the former military outpost.

Traffic

More times than not you will not find any other visitors in this park - an ideal spot for a quiet hike with your dog.

Canine Swimming

There is a small section of the park where a really water-starved dog can reach the Delaware River but it is not a beach.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.

33

Tidbury Creek Park

The Park

Tidbury Creek in the St. Jones watershed has long been a hub of commerce in central Delaware. The waterway supported a shipping industry and a bustling cannery, said to be the nation's largest, packed peaches and tomatoes from the area in the late 1800s. Today, Tidbury Creek Park is part of the Kent County park system.

The Walks

This is the kind of slightly scruffy park with unmaintained trails that is a magnet for dog owners. As a rule of thumb, the less manicured the park, the more welcoming it is to dogs. But in the case of Tidbury Creek Park, it retains a scenic appeal while treading the ungraded paths.

There is enough elevation change in the park to once require a stairway of 20 steps to move from a lower trail to an upper trail. These hard dirt trails circle a central picnic pavilion through a mixed pine and hardwood forest. Watch for glass that can cut a paw pad as you move atop the ridges. The trails drop down to an open field that ideal for a romp with your dog.

Trail Sense: There is nothing to guide you on the trails in this compact park.

Kent

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Tidbury Creek is east of Camden, south of Route 10, on US113A/Delaware 10A. The park is on the left, a short distance after the intersection with Lebanon Road.

"Dogs' lives are too short. Their only fault, really."

- Agnes Sligh Turnbull

Bonus

Tidbury Creek Park has two warm season freshwater fishing ponds, stocked with trout in March. If there are no fishermen pursuing their daily limit of six, this is one of the best canine swimming holes in Delaware.



Dog Friendliness

This is a park where folks bring dogs.

Traffic

The rolling trails are attractive to dirt bikes, otherwise you'll see few trail users.

Canine Swimming

Some of the best around when no fishermen are present.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.

34

Rockford Park

The Park

Rockford Park dates to 1889, when there were still fears of visitors being harmed by explosions in the DuPont Company black powder yards down the street. William Poole Bancroft began his life-long efforts to preserve open space in the Brandywine Valley here, with a gift of 59 acres. Today the park comprises 104 acres.

The Walks

The main walk at Rockford Park is along the circular road through the property but there are narrow, informal trails in the woods that run in parallel terraces around the steep hill, including one on an old rail bed.

You can sculpt a canine hike by circling the road up top and introduce a hill by descending “Sledding Hill.” You can also hike through the woods down to the Brandywine River. Other options include the connecting path to Brandywine Park or across the river to Alapocas Woods, providing the gate is open.

Trail Sense: The trails in the woods are unmarked but are short. If you don’t retrace your steps you may be able to bushwhack up the steep hill without the aid of a trail.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 577-7020

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The entrances to the Wilmington city park are at 19th Street and Tower Road and Riverview Avenue and Red Oak Road.

“No one appreciates the very special genius of your conversation as a dog does.”
- Christopher Morley

Bonus

Rockford Park is home to one of the city's most cherished and recognized landmarks - the 115-foot Rockford Tower.

The Italian Renaissance Revival style tower, designed by Theodore Leisen, engineer for the Wilmington Board of Park Commissioners, was built on what was called Mt. Salem Hill, the highest point in the city at 330 feet above sea level and completed in 1902.

The beautiful natural field stone tower encloses a steel water tank holding 500,000 gallons of water.

The Observatory at the top was once a popular tourist destination but closed during repairs in 1972.

For the tower's centennial in 2002 the Observatory re-opened and visitors can once again climb the 132 steps to the top weekends from May to October.



Dog Friendliness

At the bottom of Sledding Hill dogs and owners gather to romp and run one another ragged in an off-leash dog area.

Traffic

This is a popular park but you won't find many folks plying the informal trails on the hill.

Canine Swimming

There is no water in the park unless you make your way down to the Brandywine River at the bottom of the hill.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.

35

Ted Harvey Conservation Area

The Park

This land was the site of Kent County's first European settlement, a 1670 land-grant known as "Kingston Upon-Hull." Owners included the family of Caesar Rodney's mother and John Dickinson, "the Penman of the Revolution." The agricultural lands bordered by the St. Jones River and Delaware Bay were once regarded among the richest in all of the original 13 colonies. The 2,016 acres of woodlots, wetlands and fields are today preserved in the Ted Harvey Conservation Area.

The Walks

The canine hiking here is along gravel and dirt access roads, impoundment dykes and sandy bayshore. There are some nine miles of these trails in essentially one large loop with a short cut across the middle. So any canine hiking adventure in Ted Harvey Conservation Area will last at least an hour.

Setting out from the parking area you'll hike along some shady lanes but as you reach the wetlands your dog will be exposed to the full brunt of the sun on hot days for a large part of this walk - bring plenty of drinking water.

Trail Sense: An information board with a map is located shortly after entering the refuge.

Kent

Phone Number
- (302) 739-5297

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The conservation area is located on the Delaware southwest of Dover. From Route 1/Route 113, make a left onto Kitts Hummock Road. Go two miles and turn into the refuge at the sign.

Bonus

The wild turkey is among the wildest of game birds, so revered for its wits by Benjamin Franklin that he advocated it for the nation's symbol above the bald eagle. Delaware's estimated population of wild turkey is only 3,000 - fewer than any other state other than Nevada. One place to spot a wild turkey is in the Ted Harvey Conservation Area; an observation/ photography blind is located at the north end of the bayshore portion of the trail.



The St. Jones River flows into the Delaware Bay creating a sandy beach at their confluence.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are free to run in the Ted Harvey Conservation Area.

Traffic

The dirt roads are open to vehicles but don't expect to see many; portions of the refuge are subject to closings for hunting and wildlife management at every time of the year except July and August.

Canine Swimming

The trail takes in a big chunk of Delaware Bay shoreline and the waters are gentle enough to entice any dog in for a swim.

Trail Time

Up to several hours of canine hiking available.

36

Taber State Forest

The Park

Taber State Forest is the smallest of Delaware's three state forests, a bit more than 1,200 acres. It is the only one of the trio contained completely on a single tract of land. Taber State Forest is managed for recreation, wildlife conservation and timber production. The primary tree types found here are loblolly pines and mixed upland hardwood forest.

The Walks

Although a state forest, much of the canine hiking here is in wide open fields. Even the fire roads you are walking on are wide enough to give the hikes an airy feel. The terrain is flat throughout and easy going for any dog.

Trail Sense: There is a park map that outlines the property but no trails are marked. You'll see an occasional trail marker out in the forest but the trails don't lead anywhere. From the park office, the hike begins through an avenue of trees and from that point you are free to wander.

Kent

Phone Number
- (302) 698-4500

Website
- state.de.us/deptagri/forestry/forest.shtml

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Taber Forest is 12 miles southwest of Harrington. Take Route 14 West into Maryland and take the first left on Burrsville Road that will bring you back into Delaware and down to the park office on the right at 1953 Burrsville Road.

"Dog. A kind of additional or subsidiary Deity designed to catch the overflow and surplus of the world's worship."

-Ambrose Bierce

Bonus

Solitude. This is probably the most remote public hiking location in Delaware.



**You can get a lonely feeling on a canine hike
at the Taber State Forest.**

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome in the Taber State Forest.

Traffic

If you see anyone, it is probably a hunter and if it is hunting season you should probably not be out hiking with your dog.

Canine Swimming

There are creeks flowing through the property but more for splashing than swimming.

Trail Time

More than one hour.

37

Port Penn Wetlands Trail

The Park

Port Penn was named after William Penn when he stopped for a drink of water in either 1682 or 1699. Now, that's star power! For the watermen who toiled along the coast here life pulsed to a regular rhythm: hunting waterfowl in the fall, trapping muskrat in the winter, harvesting the shad runs in spring and fishing for sturgeon in the summer. The *Wetlands Trail* takes you into the heart of this maritime heritage.

The Walks

The *Wetlands Trail* covers 1.5 miles from the trailhead at the Port Penn Interpretive Center. The vistas of the Thousand Island Marsh and the Delaware River are stunning but too many stretches of the trail usher you into green tunnels of close-growing trees and exuberant marsh grasses where you can't see anything. Spurs to observation decks are worth the trip.

Under paw the trail is mostly grass but at the end, follow the road back to the Interpretive Center and do not follow the trail across the marsh to the foot-bridge - the mowers have left the stalks of the reeds that are waiting to impale your dog's paws.

Trail Sense: The *Wetlands Trail* is the only path cut through the marsh.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 834-7941

Website
- destateparks.com

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The Port Penn Interpretive Center is on Route 9 at the corner of Liberty and Market streets. You can also park in the Augustine Wildlife Area, up Congress Street, at the middle of the *Wetlands Trail*.

Bonus

There is also the chance to take a half-mile *Village Walk* through Port Penn where several structures date to pre-Revolution times. The Interpretive Center itself began life as a schoolhouse and then served time as a bait shop.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs can hike the Port Penn *Wetlands Trail*.

Traffic

Foot traffic only, and minimal.

Canine Swimming

The shorelines here are not for canine aquatics.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.



Silver Lake Recreation Area

The Park

The St. Jones River meanders through Dover's legislative center and is the focal point for the park. In the 1880s, the St. Jones was famous for its lotus lillies, found only in the Nile River and one other location in the world. Legend has it that a dredging crew in the river in 1887 unearthed a ship of Egyptian design, explaining the presence of the lillies and stirring images of ancient civilizations in Delaware long before Columbus in 1492. Sadly, when the St. Jones was straightened to improve navigation after World War I, the increased salinity in the river killed the flowers. The St. Jones was dammed here and bulges out to form Silver Lake. Lumber and grist mills thrived here as far back as the 1780s and when William M. Shakespeare milled here his oak lumber was a leading material for shipbuilding during the Civil War. The last flour mills closed during the Depression and were torn down in 1944.

The Walks

Paved pathways traverse the 182 acres of open space and hardwood/holly woods along through Silver Lake Park. These trails snake back and forth across the water and extend deeper into the city if you choose to cross the roadways.

Trail Sense: There are no prescribed routes or maps here.

Kent

Phone Number
- (302) 736-7050

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Silver Lake is in central Dover. From Delaware 1, use Exit 98, North Little Creek Road (Route 8). The road becomes Division Street as it crosses Route 13. Cross the water and make a right on State Street. Turn right on Washington Street and continue to the Silver Lake parking area.

Bonus

A fish ladder has been constructed at the dam that enables visitors to watch close-up as fish pass around the barrier by swimming and leaping up a series of relatively low steps. Fishways date to 17th century France where bundles of branches were used to create steps in steep channels to bypass obstructions.

The fish ladder at Silver Lake is an Alaska Steeppass, based on an original design developed in 1909 by a Belgian scientist, G. Denil, but it has been adjusted and adapted in many ways since then. This type of modular prefabricated fishway was used extensively in remote areas of Alaska.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs can enjoy the heart of Dover at Silver Lake.

Traffic

These paved pathways are enjoyed by many recreation seekers.

Canine Swimming

If the park is not busy, this can be a wonderful place for doggie aquatics.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.



A prime attraction for dogs - when the park is uncrowded - is a small sandy beach and good swimming in Silver Lake.

Bringhurst Woods/ Rockwood Mansion Park

The Park

Bringhurst Woods is part of the Northern Delaware Greenway that links northern New Castle County from Fox Point State Park on the Delaware River to the Maryland border in White Clay Creek State Park. The southern terminus of the short hike is the splendid mansion of Rockwood and trails through the 72-acre estate.

The Walks

The main path of the Greenway is paved as it cuts through mature hardwoods along Shellpot Creek. You always seem to be walking up and down

in Bringhurst Woods, but never laboriously. There are also natural trails on the opposite side of Shellpot Creek but these are neither maintained - a hodgepodge of sand, dirt, grass, rocks and discarded bricks - nor enjoyable.

Once you reach Rockwood, you are free to explore the elegant gardens and sculpted grounds of the estate with your dog. The English-style garden is home to several Delaware state champion trees. The paths are lighted and open until 10:00 p.m. Rockwood is also worth a hike during a winter's night when the grounds are elaborately decorated.

Be aware that this hike will force you to potentially walk your dog across two heavily-traveled roads.

Trail Sense: Follow the blacktop straight out and straight back.

New Castle

Phone Number
- (302) 761-4340 (museum)

Website
- rockwood.org

Admission Fee
- None, for the grounds

Directions
- The parking lot for Bringhurst Woods is off Carr Road, between Marsh Road (Exit 9 off I-95) and the Washington Street Extension.

Bonus

A canine hike through Rockwood affords a chance to study up-close a rare country home designed in the rural Gothic style. The Gardenesque landscaping, unique to Delaware estates, blends the Brandywine granite of the mansion to the boulders on the grounds.

The mansion was built as a retirement home from 1851 to 1857 by the merchant banker Joseph Shipley, descendant of the founding family of Wilmington, with apologies to Thomas Willing.

Also bordering Bringhurst Woods is the only Frank Lloyd Wright house in Delaware.



Dog Friendliness

Dogs can enjoy the park and the trails.

Traffic

You can expect to meet bikes, baby strollers, joggers, office workers on a lunch walk and more on the narrow ribbon of macadam.

Canine Swimming

Shellpot Creek boasts more rocks than water but there is an occasional pool to splash about in for dogs.

Trail Time

Less than one hour.

40 Banning Park

The Park

Banning Park is Wilmington's premier recreation park. This heavily-used urban park features a central road loop through ballfields and picnic areas. The park also offers a wooded area squeezed between the Amtrak railroad lines and busy Maryland Avenue.

New Castle

Phone Number
- None

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- The entrance to Banning Park is off Maryland Avenue (Route 4) at the intersection with Boxwood Road.



BONUS

Doggie Social Hour! The dogs gather each Sunday morning to wag tails and exchange tales of their harrowing week gone by.

The Walks

There is a certain wonderment to wandering among tall trees as you are serenaded by the bustle of passing cars and the rumble of heavy locomotives. The terrain in the woods is flat; the well-worn dirt paths are wide and dog-owner friendly. The stroll around the main road is pleasant in early morning before the park surges to life.

Trail Sense: The trails are not marked and not mapped. Expect to pop out from the woods at a park boundary and re-trace your steps as you explore this stand of woods.

Dog Friendliness

You can almost count on finding other dogs in the park any time you visit.

Traffic

This is a very busy park, especially at game time. But hardly anyone is here for hikes through the wooded area.

Canine Swimming

There is ample opportunity for your dog to go swimming in Lewis Pond and the often vegetation-choked Follies Pond.

Trail Time

About one hour.

*“They are superior to human beings as companions.
They do not quarrel or argue with you.
They never talk about themselves but listen to you while
you talk about yourself, and keep an appearance of being
interested in the conversation.”*

-Jerome K. Jerome

Some More Places To Hike With Your Dog In Delaware...

Barnes Woods Nature Preserve

Sussex County

Woodland Road, 2.5 miles north of Woodland Ferry - parking outside of the road

This wooded trail finishes stronger than it starts as loblolly pines get mixed into the arboreal mix. It is a 20-station nature loop that buttonhooks against a tidal stream for about twenty minutes. The water widens enough for a quick swim although access from the trail is a bit tricky.

Big Oak Park

Kent County

Big Oak Road off the South Smyrna exit of Delaware 1

Currently under construction as of Summer 2005, Kent County's newest park will feature a 1.5-mile nature trail through a small stream corridor that is being restored to create a natural greenway.

Browns Branch Park

Kent County

4 miles south of Killens Pond on Killens Pond Road

This 84-acre recreational park opened as Kent County's fourth park in 2004. This park stands out from similar parks with walking paths around ballfields because of the namesake stream, a clear, fast-flowing brook over smooth pebbles. The short nature trail at the back of the park slips along this tributary of the Murderkill River for a pleasant half-mile canine hike.

Delcastle Recreation Area

New Castle County

*McKennans Church Road between Limestone Road (Route 7)
and Newport Gap Pike (Route 41)*

Long the gold standard of New Castle County recreation parks, Delcastle offers a paved, multi-use 1 3/4-mile loop. Always busy, this is not the place for your dog if you are looking to commune with nature and not people. The complete loop takes 30-40 minutes and there is no water for your dog to drink along the way that doesn't come out of a fountain. If you are walking the dog and pushing a baby stroller, this is the best place to do it.

Glasgow Regional Park

New Castle County

on Route 40, north of Route 896

This new park is under construction but they kicked things off by building a paved walking path first. The full loop covers some three miles around former farm fields but any bucolic feelings won't wash over you until you reach the back of the rolling loop away from two of the busiest roads in Delaware.

Valley Garden Park









New Castle County

*Campbell Road (Route 82) between
Kennett Pike (Route 52) and Hoopes Reservoir*

This is the best park in Delaware to take your dog for a picnic. The main walking trail is a simple 10-minute loop around a tumbling brook. You can also take your dog to explore the upper regions of the park that consist of peaceful grass fields and small stands of woods.

Dog Parks In Delaware...

Dog parks often begin as informal gatherings of dog owners that eventually become legitimized by local government. A dog park can be a place for your dog to run off-leash or romp with other dogs or a chance for you to play with your dog in a friendly environment. Before listing some official Delaware dog parks, here are some tips for enjoying your visit to the dog park:

-  Keep an eye on your dog and a leash in hand. Situations can change quickly in a dog park.
-  Keep puppies younger than 4 months at home until they have all necessary inoculations to allow them to play safely with other dogs. Make certain that your older dog is current on shots and has a valid license.
-  ALWAYS clean up after your dog. Failure to pick up your dog's poop is the quickest way to spoil a dog park for every one.
-  If your dog begins to play too rough, don't take time to sort out blame - leash the dog and leave immediately.
-  Leave your female dog at home if she is in heat.
-  Don't volunteer to bring all the dogs in the neighborhood with you when you go. Don't bring any more dog than you can supervise comfortably.
-  Observe and follow all posted regulations at the dog park.
-  HAVE AS MUCH FUN AS YOUR DOG.

Carousel Bark Park (*New Castle County: Limestone Road, Route 7, between Route 41 and Route 2*)

The off-leash area in Carousel Park borders a large lake with smooth banks to launch dogs for a dip. A large, unmown field serves as a gathering place. When your dog is through socializing take a hike across the rolling hills. Poop bags provided. Open during daylight hours.



There is plenty of room to swim and plenty of room to romp at Carousel Bark Park.

Lums Pond Dog Park (*New Castle County: end of Buck Jersey Road, down the road from main park entrance*)

This is an unfenced off-leash area at the edge of water. There is not a lot of room for running and playing but if your dog wants to swim for hours this is the place to come. Poop bags provided.

Rockford Park (*New Castle County: the city of Wilmington at 19th Street and Tower Road*)

A grassy field at the bottom of a sledding hill has been designated as an off-leash area, good for a game of fetch or a dog-gathering area. Poop bags are provided but you must bring your own water. Open during daylight areas.

Talley-Day Park (*New Castle County: Foulk Road between Shipley Road and Silverside Road, next to Brandywine High School*)

Delaware's first planned, fenced dog park features two separate fenced enclosures - one for large dogs and one for small dogs. A water fountain sprays into a bowl on the ground. Poop bags are provided.

Camping With Your Dog In Delaware

New Castle County

Lums Pond State Park

Bear

At 1068 Howell School Road off Route 71 from the junction with Route 896.

open March 1 to November 30 (877) 987-2757

Kent County

Houston G&R Recreation Area & Campground

Houston

From Route 14 go one mile south on Deep Grass Lane and right on Gun & Rod Club Road

open year-round (302) 398-8108

Killens Pond State Park

Felton

East of US 13 on Paradise Alley Road; following signs.

open year-round (877) 987-2757

Sussex County

3 Seasons RV Resort

Rehoboth Beach

On Road 273; 1.5 miles west of US 1.

Late March to October 31 (302) 227-2584

Cape Henlopen State Park

Lewes

At the end of SR 18; two miles east of US 1.

open March 1 to November 30 (877) 987-2757

Delaware Seashore State Park

Rehoboth Beach

on the north side of Indian River Inlet on US 1.

open year-round (877) 987-2757

Homestead Camping

Georgetown

From US 1 go west on US 9/Route 404 to Prettyman Road.

open May 1 to mid-October (570) 965-2144

Tall Pine Campground

Laurel

On Persimmon Road; three miles west of junction of US 1 and Route 9.

open year-round (302) 684-0300

Trap Pond State Park

Dingmans Ferry - Pike

East of US 13 for five miles and right on Gooseneck Road.

open March 1 to November 30 (877) 987-2757



Your Dog At The Beach

It is hard to imagine many places a dog is happier than at a beach. Whether running around on the sand, jumping in the water or just lying in the sun, every dog deserves a day at the beach. But all too often dog owners stopping at a sandy stretch of beach are met with signs designed to make hearts - human and canine alike - droop: NO DOGS ON BEACH. Below are rules for taking your dog on a day trip to one of our beaches (*from north to south*).

Delaware Bay

Kitts Hummock	Private
North Bowers	Dogs allowed anytime; a wide, long sand beach with plenty of pebbles
Big Stone Beach	Dogs allowed anytime; a remote and desolate beach with good waves and little parking
Slaughter Beach	Dogs allowed anytime with beach access at small lots between residences; a sheltered, flat beach with little wave action
Fowler Beach	Dogs allowed anytime and this is one of the best places in Delaware to bring a dog; no development and backed by dunes, this is the bay beach that most resembles an ocean beach, the sloping beach promotes excellent wave action and you can walk for hours
Prime Hook Beach	Private
Broadkill Beach	Dogs allowed anytime; good wave action for canine swimming and plenty of room to hike up and down

Atlantic Ocean










Delaware State Law prohibits dogs from all swimming and sunbathing beaches from May 1 to September 30. You may also find restrictions on beaches that have been designated as shorebird nesting areas. Otherwise:

Lewes/ Cape Henlopen	From May 1 to September 30 no dogs are allowed on the beach between 8:00 am and 6:30 pm
Rehoboth Beach	Dogs are prohibited from the beach and boardwalk from April 1 to October 31
Dewey Beach	Dogs are not allowed on the beach between 9:30 am to 5:30 pm in season
Delaware Seashore	Dogs are allowed on the beach year-round except in the swimming areas from May 1 to September 30; also banned from Rehoboth Bay at Tower Road
Bethany Beach	No dogs on the beach or boardwalk from April 1 to October 1
Fenwick Island	No dogs permitted on the beach from May 1 to September 30



Active dogs are never at a loss for things to do at the beach.

Tips For Taking Your Dog To The Beach

-  The majority of dogs can swim and love it, but dogs entering the water for the first time should be tested; never throw a dog into the water. Start in shallow water and call your dog's name - or try to coax him in with a treat or toy. Always keep your dog within reach.
-  Another way to introduce your dog to the water is with a dog that already swims and is friendly with your dog. Let your dog follow his friend.
-  If your dog begins to doggie paddle with his front legs only, lift his hind legs and help him float. He should quickly catch on and will keep his back end up.
-  Swimming is a great form of exercise, but don't let your dog overdo it. He will be using new muscles and may tire quickly.
-  Be careful of strong tides that are hazardous for even the best swimmers.
-  Cool ocean water is tempting to your dog. Do not allow him to drink too much sea water. Salt in the water will make him sick. Salt and other minerals found in the ocean can damage your dog's coat so regular bathing is essential.
-  Check with a lifeguard for daily water conditions - dogs are easy targets for jellyfish and sea lice.
-  Dogs can get sunburned, especially short-haired dogs and ones with pink skin and white hair. Limit your dog's exposure when the sun is strong and apply sunblock to his ears and nose 30 minutes before going outside.
-  If your dog is out of shape, don't encourage him to run on the sand, which is strenuous exercise and a dog that is out of shape can easily pull a tendon or ligament.

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