

Girl Scouts LOVE Virginia State Parks

**Self Guided Patch Program
For the weekend of
September 11—13, 2020**

**Contact your Girl Scout troop or Council
for a version of this booklet that
includes a free pass for park entrance**

Welcome, Girl Scouts and families to Virginia State Parks! As part of this year's national Girl Scouts Love State Parks weekend we invite you use these activity pages to explore a park near you, find your nature connection, and earn a Girl Scouts Love Virginia State Parks patch.**

How it works:

- Print or download this booklet.
- Show the cover page for free parking in any Virginia State Park from Friday, September 11 through Sunday, September 13, 2020. If no one is available to show, please put the cover page in your vehicle window. If you can't make it to a State Park, any nature will do—even your own back yard! The free parking is for a Virginia State Park only.
- Complete at least three activities in each of the four categories and discuss the Leave No Trace principles on the last page.
- By September 26, 2020 send the following information to girlscoutslovevsp2020@gmail.com: Girl Scout's name, mailing address, and park visited.
- Patches will be mailed out after all entries are in.
- While you are at it, register for our Trail Quest program. For more information visit <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/trail-quest>.

Know before you go! Come prepared for the weather and for exploring by wearing appropriate clothes and shoes. Bring water and snacks. Bring something to write with, and a notebook if you didn't print the pages. You might want to have sunscreen and bug repellent as well. Please keep six feet from other groups, and wear a mask when you enter any building.

**You can also earn a patch by participating in any ranger led or volunteer program offered during the GS Love State Parks weekend. Just log your visit in the same way.



Recreate responsibly. Learn more at www.virginiastateparks.gov/besafe

800-933-PARK (7275) | www.virginiastateparks.gov

Nature's Art Gallery

The natural world is full of beauty and wonder. Everywhere you look, in any season, and any time of day or night you'll see, smell, or feel something that could be a work of art. The shape of leaves, the glitter of sun on water, the smell of a stream or a summer rain, the music of bird song are all part of a tapestry of senses that weave through nature and through us.

When we combine the natural world with our own creativity, we become a part of the art too.

Use these activities to help you explore your own creativity and your connections to nature.

Hey, that looks like....: Find something that reminds you of something else. A knot on a tree might look like a face. A patch of moss like a bed for a fairy. A log in the water can resemble a snake. What did you find?

Take a rainbow hike: As you travel a trail or enjoy a picnic area look for all the colors of the rainbow. What color was the hardest to find?

Capture It! Take or draw a picture of the amazing textures and patterns you see around you. Take a close up of the rough and smooth bark of trees, a lily pad, the different shapes of flowers, or the sunlight filtering through the leaves. Did you find anything that surprised you?

Pass it on: Take time to tell a friend or family member about what you discovered when you explored a park. Take pictures of your favorite things, and share them, or use the log in a geocache to share a cool sighting. What was your favorite thing about your visit today?

Nature's Human Story

Imagine Virginia with no people. You have to go back really far to do that. Virginia has some of the oldest documented evidence of human activity in all of North and South America. The Cactus Hill site on the banks of the Nottaway River date back 15,000 to 17,000 years.

Humans have impacted nature going back hundreds of years. Farming, forest burns for clearing, building towns, and harvesting seafood all made impacts in one way or another. It wasn't until European colonization that started just over 400 years ago brought even more changes.

Creating and managing parks and natural areas is a way save some of the special places for all people, plants and animals to use.

Use these activities to help you discover history in nature.

Tools to live by: There was a time when everything a person needed to survive was gathered from the land around them. Look for things that might be used for tools, food, fuel, or shelter. What did you find? How would you use it?

Why is it there? People settled in certain locations for a reason. Look around a historic area and think about why they chose the site they did. Is it close to water? Protected from wind? Places to grow or find food?

Hidden history hike: The forest can be full of clues of past human use. Look for old road beds, fencing grown into trees, piles of rocks, or a tree that grew before the forest grew around it. What other clues can you find?

Un-natural hike: Sometimes you see things on the trails and in water that doesn't belong. Keep your eye out for trash. If it's safe to pick it up and dispose of it please do so. If not, tell a ranger where you found it. How can you help prevent litter?

Nature's Medicine

Being in nature can be medicine for brain, body, and spirit. Our bodies take in all the good chemicals that nature puts out. Our brains become sharper and more focused. Our spirits are lifted by the beauty around us in the colors and sounds and smells.

People have always turned to nature for what they need. Most of what you use every day for food, water, and shelter started out as a natural product. But nature provides a level of comfort and escape that we can't find anywhere else.

Use these activities to help you find ways to connect with the natural world.

Sit a Spell – and Smell!: Take a moment to close your eyes and use your nose. Smell the forest? Salt water or a forest stream? A campfire? OR... what do you NOT smell? Bread in the oven? Cleaning supplies? Auto exhaust? How many things can you name each way?

The whisper of the wind: Take a minute to just close your eyes and listen as the wind travels through the trees. Do different trees make different sounds? Is the wind steady or does it ebb and flow.?

Songs from the sky: Take a minute to sit quietly and listen for birds. How many different songs can you hear? Do they all come from high in the trees, or do you hear them from down low, or from the middle of the trees?

Here today, here tomorrow: Parks can be around forever, if we all help out. Pledge to help nature everywhere by turning off lights when you aren't using them, don't waste water, and recycle whenever you can. What are other ways you can help nature?

Nature's Team

Everything in nature works together as a team in a cycle of birth, growth, and decay. Each element of the natural world, down to the smallest thing, is a part of this, and guess what? You are, too.

By using some simple observation skills you can start to notice how different things in nature interact. Plants, animals, water, soil, rocks, and people all come together in our parks to create the places that we love and cherish.

Use these activities to help you discover how nature works together and how you fit in it, too.

Birds of a feather: How many different kinds of birds can you find? Observe what they are doing. You'll see some soaring high in the sky, others pecking on the ground. What do you notice about the color of their feathers? Can you tell what they eat by the shape of their beak? What are they doing?

A Fun-gi!: Mushrooms and lichen come in all shapes and sizes and are everywhere. Do the same kinds grow next to the same kinds of trees? How many different kinds can you find?

The seeds of the future: Find as many seeds as you can. Can you tell by looking at them how they travel? Do they blow in the wind, fall straight to the ground, or stick to fur or clothes? Leave them where you found them!

Follow the bees and butterflies: Notice which flowers have the most insects on them. Why are they there? What are they doing? You can plant many of the same kinds of flowers in your yard to help attract insect helpers. This helps everyone out.

Always Remember—Leave No Trace

Discuss with an adult why these are important.

Plan ahead and prepare

Travel and camp on durable surfaces

Dispose of waste properly

Leave what you find

Minimize campfire impacts

Respect wildlife

Be considerate of other visitors