Dept. of Natural Resources: OutWiGo to Wisconsin State Parks on New Year's Day

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds Wisconsinites that 2023 is right around the corner.

Those looking for a healthy, refreshing kick-off to the new year can join one of the First Day Hikes happening at Wisconsin state parks, forests, trails and recreation areas this upcoming Jan. 1.

First Day Hikes are an initiative from the National Association of State Park Directors to encourage active outdoor recreation on New Year's Day.

From Richard Bong State Recreation Area in Racine County to Straight Lake State Park in Polk County, First Day Hikes are scheduled near most corners of Wisconsin.

"Starting the new year by getting outside and being active is refreshing not only for our bodies but also our minds," said Steve Schmelzer, DNR Parks and Recreation Management Director. "We invite everyone to a First Day Hike in the Wisconsin state park system as a great way to set the tone for the new year."

Several properties offer one to three-mile hikes guided by property naturalists or local experts. These hikes have a specific start time and gathering spot. For beginner hikers or those new to visiting state parks, this is a great introduction to winter adventures. Experienced hikers are also invited to join in and share their knowledge with the hiking community. Some guided hikes are pet-free, so please check with the property.

Self-guided hikes are available for participants to choose their own pace or difficulty

level, from nature trails to advanced routes. Property staff may offer maps and recommendations for those self-guided adventures.

Remember, it will be January in Wisconsin. Warm clothing, hats, gloves and warm boots or insulated hiking shoes are recommended.

Some properties will have warming shelters open, along with opportunities to enjoy hot chocolate and other refreshments around a bonfire. Please check with the property to see which activities are available.

"Events like First Day Hikes bring together families and individuals, children and seniors, experienced hikers and those looking to dip their mittens into winter recreation. Our park staff is ready to help all visitors find a path that fits," Schmelzer said.

First Day Hikes are free, but a Wisconsin state park admission sticker or a state trails pass may be required.

For those without a state park daily admission pass, a free pass may be available to check out from your local library. Learn more about participating libraries and check out which state parks are closest to those libraries.

Most of the events include options for hiking or snowshoeing, and some trails will be groomed for cross-country skiing. Those interested in snowshoe rentals or reserving an outdoor wheelchair should check with the property beforehand. Additionally, check with the property for more information on universally accessible trail conditions.

If a First Day Hike event is not available in your area, you are still invited to visit a Wisconsin state park, forest, trail or recreation area. Properties are open 6 a.m. – 11 p.m. year-round.

First Day Hikes Scheduled:

- Buckhorn State Park
- Devil's Lake State Park
- Interstate Park
- Kettle Moraine State Forest – Lapham Peak
- Kettle Moraine State Forest – Pike Lake

- Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit
- MacKenzie Center
- Mirror Lake State Park
- Newport State Park
- Peninsula State Park
- Point Beach State Forest
- Red Cedar State Trail
- Richard Bong State Recreation Area
- Roche-A-Cri State Park
- Straight Lake State Park
- Whitefish Dunes State Park

For details on each event, visit the [DNR's event calendar](#) and search "First Day Hike" under the "type" field. Hikers may drop in at any time during the event window. Events may be canceled due to weather.

More events may be added; check the [event calendar](#) for the latest information.