

# 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) encourages Wisconsinites to join the DNR at one of several First Day Hikes scheduled at state properties on New Year's Day.

Participating in a First Day Hike is a healthy, refreshing way to kick off the new year.

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

“Starting the new year in the outdoors is refreshing for both our body and mind,” said Steve Schmelzer, DNR Parks and Recreation Management Director. “Our OutWiGo initiative promotes the physical, mental and emotional benefits that recreating in nature provides. We invite everyone to attend a First Day Hike and feel good in the outdoors in 2024.”

Several properties offer one to three-mile guided hikes led by property naturalists or local experts. These hikes have a specific start time and gathering spot, providing a great introduction to winter adventuring for beginner hikers or those new to exploring Wisconsin's natural areas. Experienced hikers are invited to share their knowledge and help build the state's outdoor community. Some guided hikes are pet-free, so please check with the property before bringing your furry friends.

Self-guided hikes allow participants to choose their own pace or difficulty level, from gently sloping nature trails to advanced routes. Drop by anytime during the event window, and property staff may offer maps and recommendations for self-guided

adventuring.

Remember, it will be January in Wisconsin. Warm clothing, hats, gloves, warm boots or insulated hiking shoes are highly recommended. Some properties will also have bonfires or warming shelters to help you fight off the cold.

“First Day Hikes bring together visitors from all walks of life looking for winter fun. We hope that events like this will inspire passion for the outdoors and a desire to explore our state’s natural treasures throughout the year,” said Schmelzer.

First Day Hikes are free, but a [Wisconsin state park admission sticker](#) or [state trail pass](#) may be required. For those who need a state park daily admission pass, a free one may be available at your local library. Learn more about [participating libraries](#).

Most events include options beyond hiking, like snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, refreshments and winter activities. Those interested in snowshoe [rentals](#) or [reserving an outdoor wheelchair](#) should contact the property beforehand. Additionally, check with the property for universally accessible trail conditions.

If a First Day Hike is unavailable in your area, you are still invited to visit a Wisconsin state park, forest, trail or recreation area. Properties are open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. year-round.

### **First Day Hikes Scheduled:**

- Buckhorn State Park
- Copper Falls State Park
- Council Grounds State Park
- Devil’s Lake State Park
- Havenwoods State Forest
- Interstate State Park
- Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit
- MacKenzie Center
- Newport State Park
- Peninsula State Park
- Perrot State Park
- Kettle Moraine State Forest – Pike Lake Unit
- Point Beach State Forest

- Red Cedar State Trail
- Rib Mountain State Park
- Richard Bong State Recreation Area
- Roche-A-Cri State Park
- Straight Lake State Park
- Whitefish Dunes State Park

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

For details on First Day Hike events, visit the [DNR's event calendar](#). Note that events may be canceled in cases of inclement weather.

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