



First Day Hikes 2024 in Iowa State Parks & Forests

Spend New Year's Day on a guided hike in your favorite state park! Participating parks and forests listed alphabetically.

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Backbone State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: Old Shop just east of the East Gate park entrance

Park Address: 1282 120th Street, Dundee, Iowa

Description: Join a one-mile nature hike and wildlife viewing on the Bluebird Trail with park staff.

What to Bring: Dress for the weather.

Contact: RSVP to the office at 563-924-2527.

Bellevue State Park

Park Address: 24668 Hwy. 52, Bellevue, IA 52031

Description: Enjoy a self-guided scavenger hunt. Hikes sponsored by the Friends of Bellevue State Park at both the Dyas and Nelson Units. Descriptions of each hike can be found on the Friends of [Bellevue State Park Facebook Page](#).

Contact: (563) 872-4019

Cedar Rock

1:00 PM

Meeting Location: Park Visitor Center

Address: 2611 Quasqueton Diagonal Blvd., Independence, IA 50644

Description: Refresh and recharge for the New Year with an outdoor Yoga Nidra session along with a nature hike with winter scenery. The hike is easy to moderate. Dress for the weather.

Contact: (319) 934-3572 or cedar_rock@dnr.iowa.gov

Dolliver Memorial State Park

9:00 AM

Meeting Location: Center Lodge parking lot

Park Address: 2757 Dolliver Park Ave., Lehigh, IA 50557

Description: Hike along the river trail and enjoy some winter views of Dolliver State Park. The hike is easy to moderate. Dress for the weather.

Contact: (515) 359-2539

Elk Rock State Park

Meeting Location: Campground check-in station

Park Address: 811 146th Ave., Knoxville, IA 50138

Description: Enjoy a self-guided hike along a 2-mile, all-weather trail traveling along forest edges and native prairie edges. The hike is easy. Dress for the weather.

Contact: (641) 842-6008

Gull Point State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: Gull Point Lodge

Park Address: 1500 Harpen St., Milford, IA 51351

Description: Hike the non-paved Barney Peterson Memorial Interpretive Trail that hosts tallgrass prairie, a scenic overlook, wildlife, and multiple species of trees and shrubs. Afterward, enjoy hot chocolate at the lodge. The hike is easy. Dress for the weather.

Contact: (712) 337-3211

Honey Creek State Park

Meeting Location: Park in the lot across from the North Campground

Park Address: 12194 Honey Creek Pl., Moravia, IA 52571

Description: Enjoy a self-guided hike along Honey Creek's lake bay. Follow the Bayview and Look Out Trails – this down-and-back route of two connected trails starts at either trailhead located at the tent loops in the North Campground. Discover peaceful views of Lake Rathbun amidst the oak and hickory forest, traveling over several of the park's bridges.

Contact: (641) 724-3739

Lacey-Keosauqua State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: Lodge

Park Address: 22895 Lacey Trail, Keosauqua, IA 52565

Description: Meet at the lodge for a hike along the Des Moines River bluffs. Enjoy nature such as bald eagles and waterfowl. Enjoy hot chocolate, coffee & soup at the end of the hike. Choose to hike a short 1-mile, medium 2-mile, or long 3-mile route. Bus shuttle available at the end of the hike to go back to lodge.

Contact: (319) 293-3502

Lake Anita State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: East side of beach parking lot

Park Address: 55111 750th St., Anita, IA 50020

Description: Long Hike- starting at the beach parking lot, we will travel north on the all-weather trail and continue around the lake until we get back to the parking lot. Short Hike- starting at the beach parking lot we will travel north until the picnic area and turn back around and head back the way we came until we get back to the parking lot. Both hikes are very scenic and on a paved path through mostly restored prairie.

Contact: (712) 762-3564

Lake Darling State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: Lake Darling Lodge

Park Address: 111 Lake Darling Rd., Brighton, IA 52540

Description: Meet at the Lake Darling Lodge and hike on the ADA-paved Fishing Trail across the pedestrian bridge and over to the newest section of paved trail that connects to the East Loop.

Contact: (319) 694-2323

Lake Wapello State Park

Meeting Location: Campground parking lot

Park Address: 15248 Campground Rd., Drakesville, IA 52552

Description: Suggested Trail: Park at the campground main parking lot. Hike north through the non-electric camping area, then follow trail to the bridge. Turn left and follow trail back to campground. Trail is 1.25 miles.

Contact: (641) 722-3371

Ledges State Park

11:00 AM

Meeting Location: Oak Woods Picnic Area

Park Address: 1515 P Ave., Madrid, IA 50156

Description: Not only will you kick off the New Year in one of the oldest, most iconic Iowa State Parks; you'll be joining in something historic as Ledges kicks off its 100th year as a state park! Join park staff for a short hike into the canyon area of Ledges and then stop by the park office for a free will donation chili feed, sponsored by the Friends of the Ledges. You won't want to miss this one!

Contact: (515) 432-1852

Maquoketa Caves State Recreation Area

9:00 AM

Meeting Location: Lower Shelter House

Park Address: 9688 Caves Rd., Maquoketa, IA 52060

Description: Hike around the woodland trail and under the natural bridge. This will be a moderate hike, please dress for the weather and if it is snowing or raining the hike will not be guided.

Contact: (563) 652-5833

Mines of Spain State Park

Noon

Meeting Location: EB Lyons Nature Center

Park Address: 8991 Bellevue Heights, Dubuque, IA 52003

Description: Join the Friends of Mines of Spain and Dubuque County Conservation Board on a variety of guided hikes. Refreshments will be provided at the EB Lyons Nature Center after hikes.

Contact: (563) 556-0620

Palisades-Kepler State Park

Noon

Meeting Location: Palisades Lodge

Park Address: 700 Kepler Dr., Mount Vernon, IA 52314

Description: Check in at the Lodge to join the Palisades First Day Hike. Following the hike, warm up in the Lodge by the fireplace with a warm beverage. Find more event details and let us know you're coming on the Friends of Palisades-Kepler Facebook page. See you there!

Contact: (319) 895-6039

Pikes Peak State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: Stone Shelter

Park Address: 15316 Great River Rd., McGregor, IA 52157

Description: Start at the stone shelter, coffee and hot chocolate and a light snack will be provided. We will hike from the stone shelter to the main overlook, down to Bridal Veil Falls, continue to Hickory Ridge, then back to the stone shelter. 2.5 miles.

Contact: (563) 873-2341

Pilot Knob State Park

1:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Meeting Location: Warming House/Lake Parking Lot

Park Address: 2148 340th St., Forest City, IA 50436

Description: Kick off Pilot Knob's 100th year with a hike, hot chocolate, s'mores, cider, and sledding.

Contact: (641) 581-4835

Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area

2:00 PM

Meeting Location: Playground

Park Address: 4530 McClintock Rd., Palo, IA 52324

Description: Run or hike the 9-mile multi-use trail.

Contact: (319) 436-7716

Prairie Rose State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: Park Office

Park Address: 680 Road M47, Harlan, IA 51537

Description: We hope to hike around the east side of the lake. The Friends of Prairie Rose usually provides hot chocolate and popcorn following the hike. We should see lots of animal signs on this hike.

Contact: (712) 773-2701

Shimek State Forest

Meeting Location: Black Oak Lake Parking Lot

Park Address: 33653 Route J6, Farmington, IA 52626

Description: Enjoy a self-guided hike starting at the Black Oak parking lot area for a short .25-mile loop around the lake. For a longer 3-mile hike, start at marker 6 then to marker 5. At marker 4 go up the long steady hill to marker 3 then out to the road and back down to the parking lot. Please go to www.iowadnr.gov and visit the Shimek Forest page for a trail map and other trail options.

Contact: (319) 878-3811

Springbrook State Park

9:00 AM

Meeting Location: Park Office Parking Area

Park Address: 2437 169th Rd., Guthrie Center, IA 50115

Description: Join us for a hike around the lake, with optional side trails for those who wish to adventure out. Hot chocolate and cookies will be available at the park house/office after the hike. Trail is moderate, but not ADA accessible, and may include stairs and possible areas of ice and snow. Please dress for the weather.

Contact: (641) 747-3591

Waubonsie State Park

1:00 PM

Meeting Location: Wa-Shawtee Lodge

Park Address: 2585 Waubonsie Park Rd., Hamburg, IA 51640

Description: The 2-mile hike will begin at Wa-Shawtee Lodge and wind off-trail through the woods of Waubonsie State Park and the Militia Hollow Wildlife Management Area. The Friends of Waubonsie will be providing food and beverages before and after the hike. Watch the Friends of Waubonsie Facebook page for cancellation information.

Contact: (712) 382-2786

Wildcat Den State Park

10:00 AM

Meeting Location: Upper Picnic Area Shelter

Park Address: 1884 Wildcat Den Rd., Muscatine, IA 52761

Description: The hike will begin at the Upper Picnic Area Shelter and follow the Punch Bowl trail through the Devil's Punch Bowl. The hike will then follow the Lower Picnic Area Trail along Pine Creek, past Steamboat Rock, then loop back up the hill to the shelter. Hot chocolate will be served before the hike.

Contact: (563) 263-4337

Yellow River State Forest

9:00 AM

Meeting Location: Firetower Cabin

Park Address: 729 State Forest Rd., Harpers Ferry, IA 52146

Description: This two-mile hike will start by going up White Pine Trail and circle Camp Glen Wendel, and head back on the Forester Trail to the hike's beginning at the Firetower Cabin.

Contact: (563) 586-2254