

Get Outdoors Georgia



It's a perfect time to start getting healthy and fit. Why? Because it's good fun and good for you. Turn off the TV, step away from the computer, put down the iPod and spend some time in nature. You'll feel better - physically and mentally.

Get Outdoors (GO) Georgia focuses on family-friendly, nature-based, healthy outdoor recreation throughout the state. So, it's time to "Get Out, Get Dirty and Get Fit" in the safety and scenery of Georgia's exceptional state parks. Our fun, fitness-loving gopher character challenges you to "go for" a walk, a hike or a day in the park and to participate in planned promotional and recreational events and activities.

Get Outdoors Georgia Badge

What could be a better way to get off the couch and enjoy the great outdoors than with a fun-filled program and a Gopher badge as the incentive? The program is targeted toward ages 7 to 14, although younger ages have successfully participated, too.

Choose from a list of 16 different badge requirements. If you are age 7 to 10, complete 5 activities while the older kids from age 11 to 14 must complete 8.

Fun ideas such as setting up a campsite, paying close attention to a sunrise or sunset, taking outdoor photography, or participating in the Canyon Climbers or Muddy Spokes Clubs are among the list of badge requirements.

Have fun learning in the outdoors as you work toward earning a Get Outdoors (GO) Georgia badge with a fun Gopher mascot pictured on it. By following the guidelines and activities listed here, you will experience nature first-hand, explore Georgia's fascinating history and enjoy outdoor recreational activities.

There are 63 sites statewide and a site within about 50 miles of almost every Georgia resident. So "Get Out. Get Dirty. Get Fit." and go for a "Gopher badge."



To earn your Get Outdoors Badge you must complete the required number of activities stated below:

- Age 7-10 Must complete at least 5 activities
- Age 11-14 Must complete at least 8 activities

To receive your free badge you can present this checklist to any Georgia State Park or Historic Site OR mail it to: Chief Naturalist, Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites, 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Suite 1352 East, Atlanta, Georgia 30334.

Please Print Clearly:

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Signature of parent or other adult to verify that the required activities have been completed

Parent or Guardian's email address: _____

Activity Checklist:

Hike Near Home

Find a trail within 15 miles of your neighborhood and take a walk/hike there with your family or friends. Many urban areas have local parks and recreational trails. Other areas to consider include state parks and state historic sites, wildlife management areas, nature centers, national forests, national parks, national recreation areas, national wildlife refuges, and public fishing areas.

Make a Snack to Enjoy on Hikes

It is important to take a high energy snack and water with you on a hike. Make a batch of trail mix for your family to enjoy on an outing and pack it in a zip-lock bag. This high energy food (sometimes called GORP - Good Old Raisins and Peanuts) is easy to make and can be eaten on the go. Your trail mix should include 1 part raisins or other dried fruit, 1 part salted nuts (peanuts, almonds or other favorites) and 1 part M&Ms.

Learn a New Outdoors Skill

Take lessons in swimming, tennis, horseback riding, canoeing, kayaking, sailing or golf. Lessons can be taken in formal classes (city/county recreation departments usually have quarterly publications of their outdoor classes) or from an experienced friend or family member. Go to a public park or natural area and use the new skills you have learned.

Enjoy a Sunrise or Sunset

Enjoy the exciting events that happen as the sun is rising or setting. To plan your activity, look in the newspaper to find out what time the sun sets and rises each day. Find an open field or area away from bright lights. Take a blanket to sit on and a flashlight. Things to watch and listen for are: bird song either increasing or getting quiet, sky color changes, shadows shifting, colors beginning to appear or fade, temperature getting cooler or warmer, stars appearing or fading, fluttering bats, wind speed or wind direction changes, artificial lights appear or fade. Remember to look to the east and the west to observe changes.

Walk Instead of Riding

Walk to an activity in your neighborhood instead of riding a bus or having someone drive you there. This may include walking to school, walking to the store or walking to a friend's house. Talk to a parent or guardian before selecting this activity to be sure that there are no safety concerns.

Outdoor Photography

Go outdoors and photograph places in nature that are interesting to you. Email or mail a copy of your favorite photograph to Georgia State Parks and tell us why this place appeals to you (pictures may be sent to Cindy.Reittinger@dnr.state.ga.us or the address listed at the top of the checklist). Include your name and age, the name of the site photographed and the location (city or town in Georgia). Your photo may be displayed on our Junior Ranger website!

Set-up a Campsite

Learn how to put up a tent and make a checklist of items to bring on a camping trip. Camp out in a tent for at least one night – it can even be in your backyard!

Go on a Club Outing

Go on a field trip with a recreation or nature club. Club members are always eager to welcome new attendees. Select a club that offers activities that you enjoy. Possibilities include: The Appalachian Trail Club (www.georgia-atclub.org), Pine Mountain Trail Association (www.pinemountaintrail.org), The Georgia Botanical Society - for plant lovers (www.gabotsoc.org), The Audubon Society - for bird lovers (www.audubon.org), and The Georgia Canoeing Association (www.georgiacanoe.org).

Document Your Outdoor Adventures with Writing and Sketches

Much about the natural history of Georgia is known today because naturalists and explorers wrote about what they saw in journals. Take a hike and write about what you saw. You can also use sketches to illustrate your journal. To see how others have done it visit your local library and look at journals written by two famous naturalists who wrote about their hikes in Georgia: William Bartram and John Muir. To learn more about sketching in the outdoors look for books written by Claire Walker Leslie.

Hike on the AT

Take a hike on the Appalachian Trail with your family or friends. This famous trail, sometimes call “The AT”, stretches from Springer Mountain in north Georgia all the way to Maine. There are several access points in north Georgia. Since 1936 more than 9,000 hikers have completed the entire 2160-mile trail. For more information go to www.appalachiantrail.com or www.georgiaatclub.com.

Participate in a Rivers Alive Cleanup

Rivers Alive is Georgia’s annual volunteer river clean-up that targets all waterways in the state including streams, rivers, lakes, beaches and wetlands. It happens every year in October and is sponsored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Environmental Protection Division and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. For details go to www.riversalive.com.

Attend a Public Fishing Event

Participate in a fishing derby or other public fishing event at any state park or public fishing area. To find an event at a Georgia State Park check the event calendar at www.georgiastateparks.org. To find an event at a Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources Public Fishing Area go to www.georgiawildlife.com.

Attend a Junior Ranger Camp

Attend a Junior Ranger Day Camp at a Georgia State Park or Historic Site. Many parks and historic sites offer day camps in the summer months. For a listing of camp offerings go to www.georgiastateparks.org – the Junior Ranger webpage is listed under “Kids and Educators”

Enter a Golf Tournament

Participate in a Junior Golf tournament in your community or at any of Georgia State Parks’ eight golf courses. Our State Park tournaments are for girls and boys age 6-18. For more information go to www.georgiagolf.com.

Climb a Canyon

Join the Georgia State Parks’ Canyon Climber’s Club. Hike the “canyons” at Amicalola Falls State Park & Lodge, Cloudland Canyon State Park, Providence Canyon State Park and Tallulah Gorge State Park and earn a free tshirt. Tell state park staff you are working on your Get Outdoors Badge and the fee to join will be waived. For more information go to www.georgiastateparks.org.

Check Out our Bike Trails

Join the Georgia State Parks’ Muddy Spokes Club. Visit 3 of the 11 state parks in the Muddy Spokes Club, ride the designated bicycle trail at each and earn a free t-shirt. Tell state park staff you are working on your Get Outdoors Badge and the fee to join will be waived. For more information go to www.georgiastateparks.org.

