



STATE PARKS & HISTORIC SITES

Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites Offer Affordable Star-Spangled Celebrations

ATLANTA, June 23, 2009 ~~ Grilling burgers in the shade, watching fireworks over a lake and camping under the stars are just some of the July 4th activities offered by Georgia's 63 State Parks and Historic Sites. Want to learn about colonial Georgia and our nation's beginnings? Visit Fort King George in Darien for "Cannons Across the Marsh." Looking to challenge your sister to an old-timey sack race? Meet up at Unicoi State Park's "Mountain Style Games." Or see how far you can spit a watermelon seed at Vogel State Park's "Independence Day Celebration."

July 4th weekend is always one of the busiest holidays in Georgia's state parks, so visitors are encouraged to reserve accommodations early. In late June, several state parks still had campsites available, a few had cottages for rent, and Amicalola Falls had lodge rooms left for the three-day weekend. Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-864-7275 or online at www.GeorgiaStateParks.org.

Can't get away for the whole weekend? State parks welcome visitors to come for just the day as well. For a \$5 parking fee, guests can cool off at lakeside beaches, boat across lakes, explore hiking and biking trails, and even fish for their dinner – all for free. Some of the state's historic forts will showcase America's history with musket firings, military drills and displays. Historic site admission ranges from \$3.50 to \$5 per person.

Park rangers encourage visitors to bring picnics, but to leave fireworks at home. Sparklers and explosives are not allowed in Georgia's state parks. For those who want to see fireworks, Georgia Veterans, Reed Bingham and Elijah Clark state parks will offer professional displays this year. Panola Mountain State Park is offering a rare chance to visit at night, offering views of fireworks from across the Atlanta area.

Want more ideas on affordable July 4th activities? The State Park System has these suggestions:

- Dozens of Independence Day events are posted at www.GeorgiaStateParks.org/events.
- Lakeside swimming beaches are free once visitors pay a \$5 parking fee. The largest is at John Tanner State Park in Carrollton, but Hard Labor Creek, Reed Bingham, Indian Springs, Red Top Mountain, Tugaloo, Unicoi and many others have sandy beaches as well.
- Covered picnic shelters and enclosed group shelters can be reserved for family reunions, parties and other gatherings. All offer pretty views, and grills and restrooms

are nearby. Reservations should be made in advance for these shelters. Individuals can use picnic tables scattered throughout all of Georgia's state parks – and many state historic sites – for free.

- Too pooped to pack a picnic? The lodges at Amicalola Falls, Red Top Mountain, Unicoi, Little Ocmulgee and George T. Bagby state parks all feature restaurants.
- Sliding down the rocky shoals at Watson Mill Bridge State Park in Comer is a popular activity for children. Be sure to wear shorts that can resist wear-and-tear.
- Amicalola Falls, Magnolia Springs, Unicoi, Black Rock Mountain, Skidaway Island, Florence Marina and a few other parks have planned old-fashioned “field day” games such as egg toss and relay races.
- Swimming pools at High Falls, Magnolia Springs and Victoria Bryant state parks are open this summer and charge a small fee for the day.

To learn more about Georgia's 63 state parks and historic sites, visit www.GeorgiaStateParks.org or call 1-800-864-7275.

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