



## First Day Hikes 2025

Spend New Year's Day on a First Day Hike in your favorite state park or forest! This year, 19 parks will host guided hikes. An additional 26 are offering staff-picked self-guided hikes so you can visit and hike on your own, when it fits your schedule.

Parks and Forests with First Day Hike options (click on park name to jump to that entry)

Guided hikes are listed with an asterisk, and all participating parks and forests are listed alphabetically:

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- [Big Creek State Park](#)
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- [Wapsipinicon State Park](#)
- [Waubonsie State Park\\*](#)
- [Wildcat Den State Park](#)
- [Yellow River State Forest\\*](#)

## Backbone State Park\*

9:00 AM

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

**Park Address:** 1282 120<sup>th</sup> St, Dundee IA

**Description:** Join a 1 to 1.5-mile hike from the office area down the Bluebird Trail to the east gate and walk down the road to the Backbone Trail. If there is no snow or ice the group will venture down the trail for the breathtaking views and amazing rock formations that Backbone is known for. If the trail is deemed too slick, we will stick to the road. The trail has some parts paved changing to dirt and grass. The Backbone Trail is rugged and rocky.

**What to Bring:** Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** No RSVP necessary, if you have questions call the Park Office at 563-924-2527.

## Big Creek State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Trailhead Location:** Beach Parking Lot

**Park Address:** 8552 NW 142<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Polk City IA

**Description:** Enjoy a 5-mile out and back (turn around at any point on the path) hike. Start at the beach parking lot and head southeast along the Neal Smith Trail to the Big Creek Dam, then turn around and head back. The full length of the trail is 2.5 miles one way; it is paved and fairly flat. Enjoy the views of the park and lake, along with the chance to see various wildlife species along the trail. Please dress for the weather and be sure to drink plenty of water. Trailhead and turn-around will be signed.

**What to Bring:** Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** 515-984-6473

## Bellevue State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Park Address:** 24668 Highway 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](#). Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** If you have questions contact the park office at (563) 872-4019.

## Black Hawk State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Trailhead Location:** Witches Tower Parking Lot

**Park Address:** 228 S Blossom St, Lake View IA 51450

**Description:** Enjoy a 1.5-mile grass trail used by wild game in the area. The path is mostly flat.

**What to Bring:** Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** If you have questions call the Park Office at (712) 657-8712.

## Brushy Creek State Recreation Area\*

11:00 AM

**Meeting Location:** Meet at West Boat Ramp

**Park Address:** 3099 Beach Dr, Duncombe IA

**Description:** Join a peaceful 1.2-mile hike in the pine trees and admire views of the frozen Brushy Creek Lake.

**What to Bring:** Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** No RSVP necessary, if you have \*questions call the office at 515 571 3705 or email:

[brushy\\_creek@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:brushy_creek@dnr.iowa.gov).

## Cedar Rock State Park\*

**1:00 PM**

**Meeting Location:** Park Visitor Center

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

**Description:** Join us for a 1-mile hike that is easy to moderate. Hike on both grass and gravel trails, mostly flat terrain with a small hill at the beginning and end.

**What to Bring:** Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (319) 934-3572 or [cedar\\_rock@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:cedar_rock@dnr.iowa.gov)

## Dolliver Memorial State Park

**SELF GUIDED HIKE**

**Parking Location:** Parking lot just south of Copperas Beds Trailhead

**Park Address:** 2805 Dolliver Park Ave, Lehigh IA 50557

**Description:** Hike the 1-mile Copperas Beds Trail and discover this unique geological formation. The hike goes through bottomland, crosses a bridge on Prairie Creek and includes a steep stone stairway and traverses a narrow top of ridge with steep drop offs. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (515) 359-2539

## Elk Rock State Park

**SELF GUIDED HIKE**

**Meeting Location:** Campground check-in station

**Park Address:** 811 146<sup>th</sup> Ave, Knoxville IA 50138

**Description:** Enjoy a self-guided hike along a 1.7-mile, all-weather trail traveling along forest edges and native prairie edges. The hike is a flat, rockered trail. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (641) 842-6008

## Geode State Park\*

**10:00 AM**

**Meeting Location:** Beach Parking Area at Shelter

**Park Address:** 3333 Racine Ave, Danville IA 52623

**Description:** Join us for a 2.5-mile hike meandering from the beach to Shelter #2. There is one moderate hill, otherwise the crushed rock and dirt trail is relatively flat. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (319)392-4601

## George Wyth State Park

**SELF GUIDED HIKE**

**Parking Location:** Lodge Parking Lot

**Park Address:** 3659 Wyth Rd, Waterloo IA 50703

**Description:** Hike the .5-mile Bird Observation Blind Trail - start behind the George Wyth Lodge. Take a pit stop at the Audubon Bird Blind. Continue down the trail and turn right at the trail intersection. Northern Saw-whet Owls often frequent this area in late fall and winter; look in cedar trees where branches meet the trunk. Just before the trail opens up into the picnic area, take a right to get onto the Lodge Trail to make a loop. The trail is a dirt path. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (319) 232-5505

## Green Valley State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Southeast parking lot on 140<sup>th</sup> St for the 5-mile hike on paved trail. OR South Shelter parking lot on 140<sup>th</sup> Street for 6-mile hike on grass path.

**Park Address:** 1480 130<sup>th</sup> St, Creston IA 50801

**Description:** Enjoy 2.5 miles of paved trail (5 miles round trip) from SE Parking Lot on 140th street to the main boat ramp. Or mowed grass path for three miles (6 miles round trip) from south shelter parking lot on 140th Street to North End of the lake. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (641) 782-5131

## Gull Point State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Gull Point Lodge parking lot or at the trailhead for the Barney Peterson Trail

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

**Description:** Hike the 1.5-mile non-paved Barney Peterson Memorial Interpretive Trail that hosts tallgrass prairie, a scenic overlook, wildlife, and multiple species of trees and shrubs. The hike is on natural terrain and follows the slope of the land. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (712) 337-3211

## Honey Creek State Park\*

9:00 AM

**Meeting Location:** Park Office

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

**Description:** Enjoy a guided hike through the campground to view Indian Mounds in the park. Discover peaceful views of Lake Rathbun amidst the oak and hickory forest. The trail is a dirt path.

**Contact:** (641) 724-3739

## Lacey-Keosauqua State Park\*

10:00 AM

**Meeting Location:** Lodge

**Park Address:** 22895 Lacey Trl, Keosauqua IA 52565

**Description:** Meet at the lodge for a guided 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. The trail is a mix of crushed rock and dirt. This is a moderate hike with a few steep sections.

**Contact:** (319) 293-3502

## Lake Ahquabi State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Boat ramp parking lot

**Park Address:** 16510 118<sup>th</sup> Ave, Indianola IA 50125

**Description:** Enjoy this 1-mile hike around the lake. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (515) 961-7101

## Lake Anita State Park\*

**10:00 AM**

**Meeting Location:** East side of beach parking lot

**Park Address:** 55111 750<sup>th</sup> St, Anita IA 50020

**Description:** Long Hike, 4 miles - 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, 1.3 miles - 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. This hike is on a paved trail with some moderate slopes.

**Contact:** (712) 762-3564

## Lake Darling State Park\*

**9:00 AM**

**Meeting Location:** Lake Darling Lodge

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

**Description:** Meet at the Lodge and plan to hike the newly finished Ding Darling Interpretive trail. Participants will get a chance to view the ten new educational panels that have been installed. The hike will continue through the campground and along the fishing trail back to the Lodge. The trail is wide, flat and paved.

**Contact:** (319) 694-2323

## Lake Keomah State Park

**SELF GUIDED HIKE**

**Parking Location:** Park at the campground

**Park Address:** 2720 Keomah Ln, Oskaloosa IA 52577

**Description:** Enjoy this ¾ mile out and back hike to the beach house. Park at campground, enter trail near site 37 and walk down the hill and across the road. Follow the trail along the lakeshore.

**Contact:** (641) 673-6975

## Lake Macbride State Park\*

**9:00 AM**

**Meeting Location:** Main Lodge

**Park Address:** 3525 Highway 382 NE, Solon IA 52333

**Description:** Join us for a 2.5-mile hike on the Beach to Dam Trail: Park/Start at the Main Lodge. Feel free to hike out to the spillway/waterfall and enjoy a scenic view from the Rock (be careful climbing on icy/slippery surfaces), before or after your trail hike. Please keep pets on leashes at all times. DNR staff will have the fireplace going at the lodge, and will provide hot water/cocoa. The only restroom available will be a vault toilet along the hike (at the Main Boat Ramp). The crushed rock trail is mostly flat, with a steep section from the lodge to the trailhead, and then at the dam.

**Contact:** (319) 624-2200

## Lake of Three Fires State Park

**SELF GUIDED HIKE**

**Parking Location:** When entering the park, turn left. You will find parking available at the boat ramp or at the top of the hill.

**Park Address:** 2303 Lake Rd, Bedford IA 50833

**Description:** Start this 1.5-mile hike at the trail head west of the dam. There is a bridge that will cross the spillway. Once across the spillway, keep making left turns and you will find yourself back at on the east side of the dam. Maps at the trail intersections with "you are here" arrows can help you find your current location.

**Contact:** (712) 523-2700

## Lake Wapello State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking 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\*

**10:30 AM**

**Meeting Location:** Oak Woods Picnic Area

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

**Description:** Join us for a 1.5 mile 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. The path is paved with some slopes.

**Contact:** (515) 432-1852

## Lewis and Clark State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Parking lot for the beach area, which is near the entrance

**Park Address:** 21914 Park Loop, Onawa IA 51040

**Description:** Hike 1 mile around the loop along Park Loop Road to get the best the park has to offer, including views of the woods and lake. This trail is flat and paved. Dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (712) 337-3211

## Maquoketa Caves State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Lower Stone Shelter House

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

**Description:** Hike the ½ mile Woodland trail and under the Natural Bridge. The trailhead is across the street from the shelter, behind the informational kiosk. This trail will loop you around the upper valley going under the Natural Bridge. A staircase leads back up to parking lot. This will be a moderate hike, dress for the weather.

**Contact:** (563) 652-5833

## Mines of Spain State Recreation Area\*

**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:** For more information visit the [Mines of Spain Friends Group Facebook page](#). (563) 556-0620

## Nine Eagles State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Electric campground visitor parking lot.

**Park Address:** 23678 Dale Miller Rd, Davis City IA 50065

**Description:** Start this 2-mile hike at the trailhead west of the campground and walk around the lake. This is a moderately flat hike with some hills and steeper terrain.

**Contact:** (641) 442-2855



## Palisades-Kepler State Park\*

Noon

**Meeting Location:** Palisades Lodge

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

**Description:** Join us for a 1-mile guided hike starting at the Palisades-Kepler Lodge. Please sign the guest log upon arrival. This year's hike will go to the Dam Overlook, where a staff member will be to answer questions. Enjoy the view from the bluff tops on Overlook trail and make your own adventure in the afternoon. There will be hot beverages and snacks available, while supplies last. The Lodge will be closing at 2:00 p.m.

**Contact:** (319) 895-6039

## Pikes Peak State Park\*

11:00 AM

**Meeting Location:** Stone Shelter

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

**Description:** Join us for a 2.5-mile guided hike that starts 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. The hike includes dirt, board walk and concrete paths, plus some steep sections and stairways.

**Contact:** (563) 873-2341

## Pilot Knob State Park\*

1:00 PM

**Meeting Location:** Warming House/Lake Parking Lot

**Park Address:** 2148 340<sup>th</sup> St, Forest City IA 50436

**Description:** Join us for a 1.4-mile guided hike through the forest put on by the Friends of Pilot Knob with sledding, s'mores, and other winter activities to follow! The hike will begin at 1pm with other activities following. Please keep all pets on a leash.

**Contact:** (641) 581-4835

## Pine Lake State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Iowa River access parking lot.

**Park Address:** 22620 Country Highway S56, Eldora IA 50627

**Description:** Enjoy the 1-mile Wildcat-Hogsback Trail. Start at Iowa River Access and hike north along Iowa River and up to the Hogsback area and back to the Iowa River Access parking lot. This is a rock trail with some steep sections.

**Contact:** (641) 858-5832

## Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area\*

TBD

**Meeting Location:** Playground

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

**Description:** Each year the Pleasant Creek Trail Runners host a run on New Year's Day. Check the [Pleasant Creek Runners Facebook page](#) for details. Or choose a self-guided hike on the 9-mile multi-use trail.

**Contact:** (319) 436-7716

## Prairie Rose State Park\*

3:00 PM

**Meeting Location:** Park Office

**Park Address:** 680 Road M47, Harlan IA 51537

**Description:** Join us for a 2-mile 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. The grass trail is fairly wide and flat, with a few moderate slopes.

**Contact:** (712) 773-2701

## Rock Creek State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Park at the concession area

**Park Address:** 5627 Rock Creek E, Kellogg IA 50135

**Description:** Enjoy a self-guided hike on the .5-mile Interpretative Trail. Start at the trail head by the concession building and walk through a half mile trail in oak timber.

**Contact:** (641) 236-3722

## Springbrook State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Meeting Location:** Parking lot above lake OR small parking area near informational kiosk below dam

**Park Address:** 2437 169<sup>th</sup> Rd, Guthrie Center IA 50115

**Description:** This 1.37-mile hike travels around the lake, with optional side trails for those who wish to adventure out. If parking at the dam, walk up the stairs to the boat ramp for the trailhead. If parking above the lake, walk down to the shelter and take the trail to the right. 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

## Stone State Park\*

10:00 AM

**Meeting Location:** Park Office Parking Area

**Park Address:** 5001 Talbot Rd, Sioux City IA 51103

**Description:** Join us for 2- to 3-mile guided hike along Buffalo Run Trail, Dakota Point Trail, and Stone Park Drive. This moderate hike has some changes of elevation and a few stairs. The paths are made of dirt with some crushed rock in area, along with a stretch of paved road.

**What to Bring:** Please dress for the weather.

**Contact:** An RSVP is not necessary. If you have questions please call the park office at (712) 305-5476

## Union Grove State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Dam Parking (220<sup>th</sup> St/C Ave parking area)

**Park Address:** 1215 220<sup>th</sup> St, Gladbrook IA 50635

**Description:** Enjoy this self-guided out-and-back South Trail Hike, which is about 1.5 miles. Start at the parking lot near the spillway/waterfall area at 220<sup>th</sup> St and C Ave. The South Trail starts across the bridge. Hike to the dam, going across and up the hill near the dam parking lot. Turn right part way up the hill to stay on the trail, which continues below Union Grove's cabins and campground. The bridge west of the campground is a great spot to turn around. The trail is mostly grass and is a moderate hike.

**Contact:** (641) 473-2556



## Viking Lake State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Go to the extra-vehicle park lot near the campground entrance.

**Park Address:** 2780 Viking Lake Rd, Stanton IA 51573

**Description:** Enjoy the 1-mile Burr Oak Trail. This is a grass-mowed path.

**Contact:** (712) 829-2235

## Volga River State Recreation Area

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Once in the park, turn onto Hill Road and follow that to the Albany Equestrian Campground. Parking will be at the pit latrine/kiosk area.

**Park Address:** 10225 Ivy Rd, Fayette IA 52142

**Description:** Enjoy this 1-mile hike on dirt and paved pathways. Hikers will start in the Albany Equestrian Campground and learn about the old town of Albany that once sat upon the site. They will continue down the Albany Bridge Road to the historic bridge and return on the same path.

**Contact:** (563) 425-4161

## Walnut Woods State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Playground parking lot

**Park Address:** 3155 SE Walnut Woods Dr, West Des Moines IA 50265

**Description:** Enjoy a 1.5-mile hike through the woods along the Raccoon River. Start at playground trail head. Follow the trail east until the trail closed sign. Take trail to east picnic area and follow the road back to the playground area. This is a mostly flat dirt trail.

**Contact:** 515-285-4502

## Wapsipinicon State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Parking Location:** Hale Bridge Parking Lot

**Park Address:** 21301 County Road E34, Anamosa IA 52205

**Description:** Enjoy a 1.9-mile hike on the Hail Bridge Trail. The scenic hike will begin at the Hale Bridge entrance into the park. It will follow the Prairie Trail past the Rotary Lodge, then follow the Pond Trail to Red Fox Road. Follow the road down past Dutch Creek and playground shelters. This will create one big loop back to Hale Bridge. Go enjoy the first day of the New Year at Wapsi!

**Contact:** 319-462-2761

## Waubonsie State Park\*

**Noon – shelter open for potluck/refreshments. Hike starts at 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. The trail is mostly compacted dirt, with some intermittent steep sections and rolling terrain.

**Contact:** (712) 350-0873

## Wildcat Den State Park

### SELF GUIDED HIKE

**Meeting Location:** Upper Picnic Area Shelter

**Park Address:** 3489 State Park Rd, Muscatine IA 52761

**Description:** The 1.3-mile 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. The gravel/dirt trail will have steep terrain and stairs in several spots.

**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:** There is both a guided hike or you can choose to do this same hike as self-guided; the trail will be marked.

The three-mile hike will start at the Firetower Cabin with a nice warm fire and hot drinks provided by the Friends of Yellow River State Forest. The hike will venture by the only state-owned saw mill, and go up the Firetower Road, and then to Cedar Point Overlook Road. We will circle around to the iconic, one-of-a-kind Firetower for pictures and a short break. We will finish up on Brown's Hollow Trail, to the Forester's Trail, and back at the cabin, to warm back up at a cozy fire. The trail is mostly grass and dirt, with some steep sections.

**Contact:** (563) 586-2254