

Girl Scouts Love Virginia State Parks

Self Guided Patch Program

Sept. 8-10, 2023



Present this booklet to park staff at the entrance or leave a copy on your dashboard for free parking.

The admission fee for Natural Bridge is not included but parking at the Children's Discovery Area and Track Trail on Golf Course Road is.

Know before you go!

When visiting the park, come prepared for the weather and for exploring by wearing appropriate clothes and shoes.

To be safe, and to complete the activities bring:

- water and snacks
- something to write with
- crayons or colored pencils
- a notebook or scrap paper
- sunscreen and bug repellent
- Visit virginiastateparks.gov to learn about your park before your visit. Discover the park's history, print a trail guide or access the map through the Avenza app, and review any important announcements.

**VIRGINIA
STATE PARKS**

Welcome, Girl Scouts and Scout Families to Virginia State Parks!

We are nature and nature is us so when we take care of our natural world, we also take care of ourselves. The activities here will help you lead the way in taking care of your favorite state parks and help create a better planet for all!

As part of this year's national Girl Scouts Love State Parks weekend, we invite you to use these activity pages to explore a park near you, find your nature connection, and earn a Girl Scouts Love Virginia State Parks patch* while also meeting the requirements to earn the Daisy Eco Learner, Brownie Eco Friend, or Junior Eco Camper badge. (Please note—VSP will only provide the VSP specific patch, not the GS badges—you'll need to purchase badges from your council shop.)



How it works:

- Print or download this booklet.
- Present this booklet to park staff at the entrance or leave a copy of this page on your dashboard for free parking in any Virginia State Park from Friday, Sept. 8 through Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023. The free parking is for a Virginia State Park only.
- Complete all the activities in your age category, choose and complete a "Take Action" option, and discuss the Leave No Trace principles with your adult.
- By September 30, 2023 log your visit here <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=qeUKYsFOoE-GQV2fOGxzCaAWJ7uf40tJs5os1mWe359UN0IDWEE5SE NITk5URjFHVUMxSjE4TFBaUi4u> . **
- While you are at it, sign up for our VSP Adventure Programs including Trail Quest and Wandering Waters Paddle Quest. For more information visit <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/contest> .
- Patches will be ordered and mailed after all entries are in and will take a while to process.

** You can also earn a patch by participating in any ranger led or volunteer program or stewardship opportunity offered during the GS Love State Parks weekend. Just log your visit in the same way.*

*** Trouble with the link? Send an email to this address: christen.miller@dcr.virginia.gov*

Daisy Eco Learner



Nature gives you so many gifts, like sunshine, flowers, and shady trees. Learn some ways you can give back by protecting our Virginia State Parks.

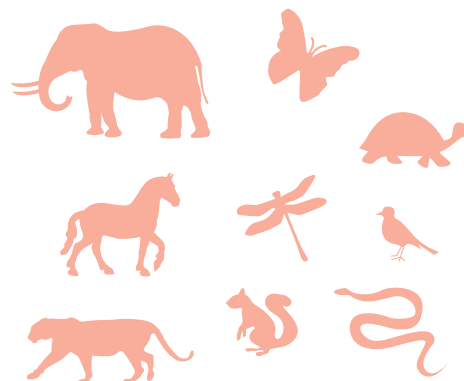
These activities will help you learn how to protect yourself and the environment when you are in nature.



Before you explore be prepared to keep yourself and nature safe:

- I have water and a snack.
- I am wearing the right clothes for the weather.
- I am with a buddy.

Circle the animals you might see at the park. Make a pledge to give them space and watch or listen but don't touch!



Make a mini nature trail.

On a trail, sidewalk or in an open area, lay down a piece of yarn at least 3 feet long next to the walk or path. Look at everything within a foot of the string and count how many things you find that live there, like plants or bugs. What would be injured if you walked off a path?

Gross, TRASH!

Trash does not belong on the ground or in the water. It can damage plants, injure animals, and it can last for hundreds of years. While you explore see if you find trash, big or small. If it is safe, please pick it up and dispose of it. Make sure you check with an adult before picking up any trash!

What is Nature?

Nature is the world around you and you are nature, too. Butterflies, oceans, deer, and trees are all part of nature. Draw the things in nature you love the most.

Supplies: Something to write on and with, a piece of yarn or string at least 3 feet long. Optional: trash bags.

Brownie Eco Friend



When we treat Virginia State Parks with kindness, we are also kind to all the living things that live or visit here! Explore different ways to be a friend to nature and to each other.

Take the activities listed below out on a trail, to learn new ways to protect our natural world and the living things in it.



Think of ways to help the outdoors:

Take an Eco Hike.

Take a hike and practice different ways to care for the environment – Stay on the trail, pick up trash, don't pick any flowers, and use reusable water and snack containers.

Observe outdoor spaces: Find homes in nature. As you hike, look carefully around you. Can you find animals homes? Holes in trees or in the ground, nests of all kinds, a leaf curled up could all be places where something lives. As you explore the park, count how many different kinds of animals you see, and discuss how you can keep their homes safe for them.

Be the best guest: Pick one of the animals homes that you found and write a story or draw a picture to show why that spot was chosen, and how you can help keep it safe. Share with your troop, a friend, or your family!

Practice being kind: Come up with three ways you can be kind to others when you're outdoors. You might try using your "indoor voice" when you're outside to keep from disturbing others, or you could invite a new friend to join a hike or outdoor game. Visit an outdoor area and practice all three ideas.

Build a safe campfire: Fire is a tool used to help clear forests, cook food, and warm us when it is cold. It can also be dangerous if it's not treated with respect. First, do the following activity. Then, practice lighting a fire and putting one out! If there isn't a safe place at the park, do one at home!

Draw an appropriate place to have a fire - (like a fire ring or grill)

Draw all the supplies you need to start a fire (small sticks, larger sticks, matches, an adult,)

Draw what you need to safely put out a fire - (Bucket of water, shovel)

Supplies: Something to write on and with. Optional: If you are doing a fire at the park bring matches or lighter, a bucket for water, and a small shovel.

Junior Eco Camper

Whether or not you've been camping before, you will earn this badge by learning how to protect the environment on your trip. It will shape the way you camp forever!

Before your visit: Low Impact Meals

What you eat and how you cook at camp will make a big difference in how you impact the environment. For example, you should only pack and prepare food that will leave the least amount of waste on a campground. Practice this by preparing and packaging snacks for your conservation exploration. Make your own brand of trail mix by combining the things you love most, like banana chips, dried berries, pretzels, raisins, granola, and more. And don't forget to pack water in a reusable container.

Conservation Exploration

Conservation means to protect or preserve or limit how much you use of something. Explore a trail, a picnic area, or a play ground and look for things such as hikers going off trail, a campfire in a prohibited area, or an abandoned campsite with trash. Or you might see soil erosion and dead trees. When you finish your exploration, make notes of things you saw and ways you can protect the area. Make sure to share your findings with the park.



Talk to an Expert

Interview an experienced camper, park ranger or troop leader about the Leave No Trace Principles. Find out how they practice Leave No Trace. Gather some tips and tricks that you can use on your next camping trip.

Leave No Trace Skit

Learn the seven Leave No Trace principles by creating and performing a fun skit to act out, or write and perform a song using the Leave No Trace principles. If you'd rather not perform, draw a comic showing camping trip dos and don'ts to share with your camp mates.

The Perfect LNT Campsite

State Parks have lots of places to camp. Some you can drive to, others you canoe or walk to. However you get there, the camping areas are already set up. For other types of parks or natural areas you choose where you camp. To practice for this kind of camping, use your exploration time to look for places that would make a good low impact campsite. Discuss as a group: Is the site at least 200 feet from water or trails? Is it level? Are there plants or animals already there? What other things do you need to consider?

Supplies: Something to write on and with.

Take Action

Now that you've explored a park and learned different ways to be a friend to the great outdoors, what are you inspired to do? There are many wonderful ways that you can bring what you discovered out into the world:

At the Park

- Volunteer! There are a lot of ways to be a part of the park:
 - Create or clean up a flower bed.
 - Pick up trash.
 - Donate bird, bat or owl houses.
- Help talk to other visitors about how they can "Leave No Trace" when they visit.
- Choose a project for your Bronze, Silver or Gold Award.

At Home

- Make an outdoor themed gift for a loved one who needs cheering up.
- Make and share a video about caring for nature.

In Your Community

- Create a collage of nature photos or your original artwork for your local library, school or senior center.
- Teach younger scouts what you learned.
- Work with your troop to create mini gardens using native plants.



Always Remember – Leave No Trace



All badgework in this packet is based
on these seven principles!

Plan ahead and prepare

Travel and camp on durable surfaces

Dispose of waste properly

Leave what you find

Minimize campfire impacts

Respect wildlife

Be considerate of other visitors

For more information visit <https://lnt.org/>

