Lots of history happened here!

Ohio State Parks encompass more than 174,000 acres of Ohio's finest natural landscapes. Because these areas have remained largely undeveloped, much of Ohio's history has been preserved here.

Come see for yourself.

Bring your imagination, and we'll bring history to life with tours of historic structures, interpretive programs, nature center exhibits, demonstrations of frontier life and reenactments of historic events. Our state parks offer a variety of heritage-themed events year-round celebrating Ohio's rich history.

A Solid Foundation

There's plenty of evidence of Ohio's prehistoric past saved in stone. Exposed fossil beds at several state parks are studded with the remains of primitive plants and creatures that thrived when Ohio was covered by a shallow inland sea during the Paleozoic Era, more than 500 million years ago. Glaciers carved Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes, and shaped nearly two-thirds of Ohio's landscape as they crept forward from Canada until the end of the last Ice Age about 12,000 years ago. As the glaciers retreated, they left interesting landforms in their tracks, such as glacial grooves gouged into the limestone bedrock by granite boulders.

The First Ohioans

Ohio's first human inhabitants left behind traces of their quest for food, shelter and spiritual fulfillment. Ancient burial mounds dating back to 800 B.C. are the hallmark of Ohio's prehistoric woodland Indian cultures, the Adena and Hopewell. During the 1700s, Ohio was home to several major Native American tribes who established their own bustling towns and trade networks. Relics of their lives have been found in recess caves and rock shelters, and scattered in the soil beneath village sites and hunting camps. Many of today's state parks were once Indian hunting grounds.

Pioneers also left their mark on the wild Ohio frontier. They aggressively cleared the primeval forests to establish farms, build cabins and found villages. Nearby streams were straddled with grist mills where corn and wheat were ground into flour. Some of these structures still stand in our state parks, and serve as reminders of frontier craftsmanship and the hardships of frontier life.

Shaping a State

Violent clashes between the Indians and pioneers escalated as the pioneer settlements multiplied, and the struggle for control of the land continued after Ohio's designation as the seventeenth state in 1803. Tensions between the United States and the English and their Indian allies culminated in the War of 1812. Many battles took place in the Ohio countryside, and the pivotal victory for the Americans was won on Lake Erie. Following the War of 1812, the Indian resistance disbanded and left Ohio, leaving the state safe for settlement and ripe for commerce.

Ohio on the Move

Ohioans needed a reliable transportation system to take their flour and farm products to eastern markets and bolster the fledgling economy. By the 1830s, work had begun to link the Ohio River and Lake Erie via the Ohio & Erie Canal, the Miami & Erie Canal, and the Sandy & Beaver Canal. Locks and dams were also constructed along the mighty Muskingum River to improve navigation from Marietta to Coshocton and connect with the Ohio & Erie Canal. Reservoirs dug by hand to supply water for the canals became public parks after the canals were abandoned, and were
The nineteenth century brought prosperity to Ohio and Ohioans as cities grew, industries thrived, and agriculture shifted from subsistence for families to commercial ventures. With inexpensive railroads, Ohioans began to look out on unimaginated opportunities to travel. Railways were developed on the slopes of the canal feeder lakes, which had been built in the 1820s as public works, so community amusements were built along electric railway lines to boost weekend business. The canal feeder lakes were visiting the first state parks when the Ohio State Park system was first established. A few reminders of the former amusement parks still exist in some state parks.

Ohio State Parks' Heritage map

Jacket called the area near Independence Dam his home. He is closely associated with the Miami River. One of the most tragic frontier figures, Chief Logan, was killed by the murder of his family at their hunting camp near Bunker Hill, and he goes down in history singing "Who is there to mourn for Logan..." under the shade of the Logan Elm, near Streetsboro. The notable Simon Kenton established "Canyon's Town" near today's Independence Dam. St. Marys, and the influential French for tradesman, Pierre Latture, set up his trading post near modern-day Lake Loramie. At Buck Creek, a stone inscribed by frontier scout Louis Ward in 1857 marks the site where he killed two Indians. The infamous modern-day day gangster Fred "Killer" Weir killed his foe near Buck Creek, where an historical marker tells the tale.

Ohio's First Parks

Hueston Woods - Little Miami - Sycamore - Caesar Creek - Deer Creek - Shawnee - Great Seal - Middle Bass Island - East Fork - Indian Lake and Sycamore. While staying at Cajuns Bed, and Crestwood, a stone inscribed by frontier scout Louis Ward in 1857 marks the site where he killed two Indians. The infamous modern-day day gangster Fred "Killer" Weir killed his foe near Buck Creek, where an historical marker tells the tale. The First Ohioans

Native American History

Confederate General John Hunt Morgan brought the War between the States to Ohio's doorstep in 1863 when he dashed across the state in the longest raid of the Civil War. While Morgan's Raid sparked a thriving new industry, by the middle of the nineteenth century, Ohio was the nation's second largest producer of iron. As more blast furnaces were erected to smelt the ore, local industries were chopped down to make room for the furnaces. Weathered skeletons of these furnaces have grown cold, but still stand amid the restored forests in a few of our state parks.

Kentucky Arnold Glacial Groves - Ohio's oldest are now part of the landscape at Caesar Creek, Delaware, and are part of the Ohio Historical Society site. More to See - Indian mounds dot the Ohio countryside, and are part of the landscape at Caesar Creek, Delaware, East Fork, Indian Lake, West Fork, and are part of the Ohio Historical Society site. More to See - Indian mounds dot the Ohio countryside, and are part of the landscape at Caesar Creek, Delaware, East Fork, Indian Lake, West Fork, and are part of the Ohio Historical Society site.
Ohio State Parks offer lots of ways to explore the past. Check out our calendar of events and activities. The Ohio State Parks offer lots of ways to explore the past. Check out our calendar of events and activities.