

SAVANNA PORTAGE STATE PARK

FACILITIES AND FEATURES

- 61 semi-modern campsites with modern sanitation building with showers.
- 5 backpack campsites
- 2 canoe-in/backpack sites (1 on Wolf Lake & 1 on Lake Shumway)
- A primitive group camp
- Picnic shelter on Loon Lake
- Lake fishing for northerns, bass, trout, and panfish
- Boat, motor, and canoe rental
- 22 miles of good hiking trails
- 10 miles of mountain bike trails
- 18 campsites with electricity

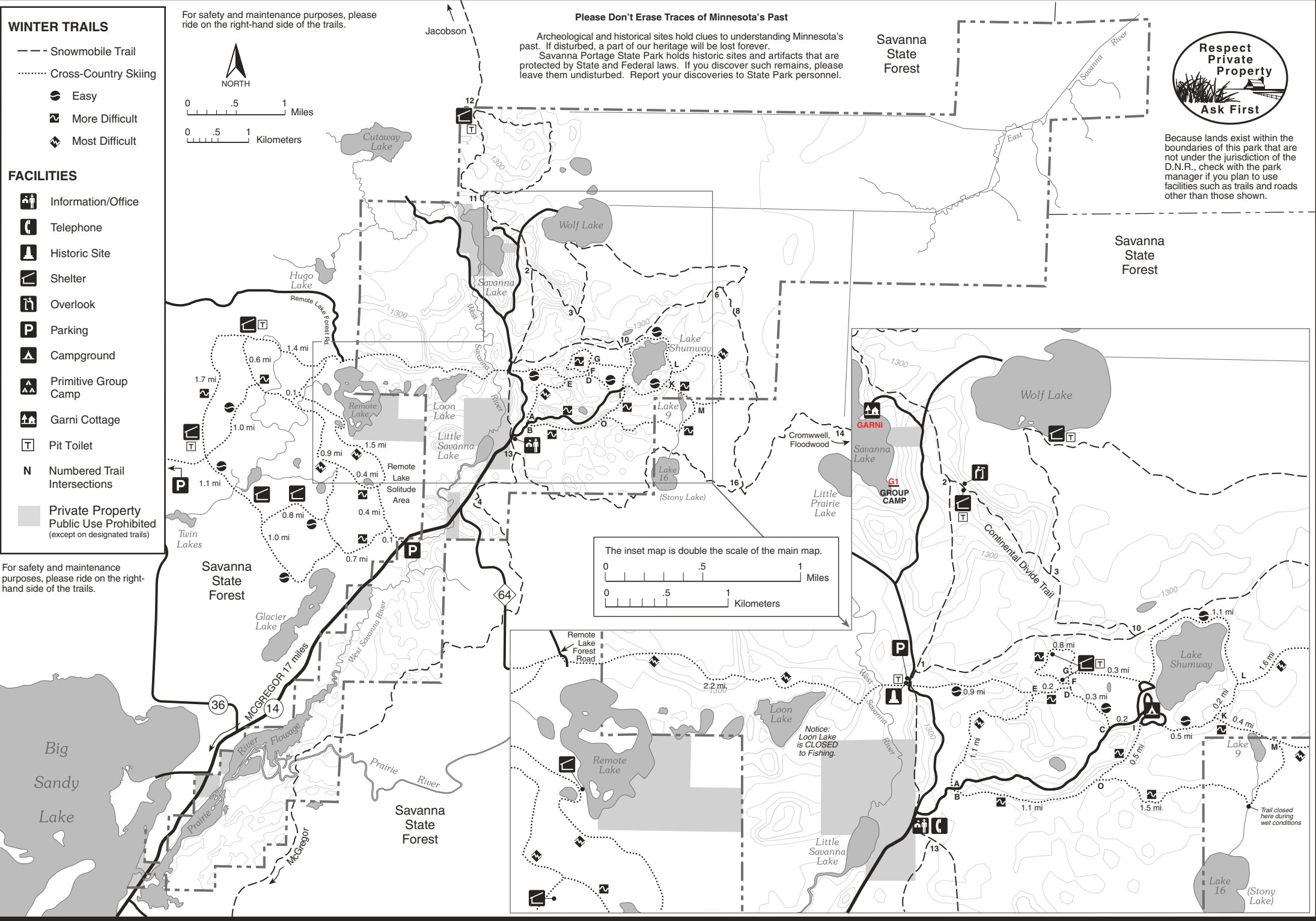
VISITOR FAVORITES

- Camping on beautiful Lake Shumway
- Swimming at the beautiful pine-covered swimming beach at Loon Lake
- Snowmobiling on 36 miles of snowmobile trails
- Hiking the Savanna Portage
- Cross-country skiing on 12 miles of well-groomed trails
- Wildlife photography
- Children’s playground at Loon Lake picnic grounds
- Continental Divide interpretive overlook

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION ?

The DNR has mapped the state showing federal, state and county lands with their recreational facilities.
Public Recreation Information Maps (PRIM) are available for purchase from the DNR gift shop, DNR regional offices, Minnesota state parks and major sporting and map stores.

Check it out - you'll be glad you did.





SAVANNA PORTAGE STATE PARK

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Savanna Portage State Park
55626 Lake Place
McGregor, MN 55760
(218) 426-3271

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Department of Natural Resources
Information Center
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

(651) 296-6157 (Metro Area)
1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free)

TDD (Telecommunications
Device for Deaf)
(651) 296-5484 (Metro Area)
1-800-657-3929 (MN Toll Free)

DNR Web Site: www.dnr.state.mn.us
State Parks page: www.mnstateparks.info

SAVANNA PORTAGE STATE PARK is located 17 miles northeast of McGregor, Minnesota. Take US Highway 65 to Aitkin County Highway 14. Follow 14 ten miles to the park. Highway map index: J-10.

Savanna Portage State Park has over 15,000 acres of rolling hills, lakes, and bogs. The park holds four fishing lakes and visitors

can enjoy swimming, boating, hiking, and fishing in this historically unique park.

WILDLIFE: Savanna Portage State Park has many unique habitats for a wide variety of wildlife. You can walk the hiking trails among the oak woods and find bear, deer, skunk, wolf, moose, and coyote. The bogs of the park contain many small animals and birds, such as lemming and certain warblers which specialize in living there. Walk quietly along the trails in early morning or late evening and you can be pleasantly surprised at the wide variety of creatures you observe.

GEOLOGY: Savanna Portage contains many features which are the remnants of old glaciers that moved through Minnesota. The large bogs are old glacial lakes that once covered many thousands of acres of land. These old lakes were formed because the glacial ice prevented the water from draining in a natural pattern. At one time an old glacial river once flowed to Libby, Minnesota and the Mississippi River through the park. When the great ice dams melted the glacial lake water began to seek its natural drainage. These glacial lakes helped form the present-day Savanna River and the St. Louis River. If you stand in the right place in the park, water on one side of you will flow to the Gulf of Mexico via the Mississippi River, water on the other side flows to the Atlantic Ocean via Lake Superior and the St. Lawrence Seaway. The rolling hills and the sandy soil are all remnants of the glaciers that once covered Minnesota.

HISTORY: The Savanna Portage was a vital link between the St. Louis River watershed and that of the Mississippi River on the canoe route from Lake Superior to the Upper Mississippi. Savanna, meaning open grassland, refers to the expanse of marsh grass on the eastern portion of the trail. Before the white man, this portage was used for centuries by the native North Americans.

In 1763, the fur traders began to penetrate this region to trade beads, knives, blankets, wampum, trinkets, and alcohol to the Indians in exchange for the wealth of furs this

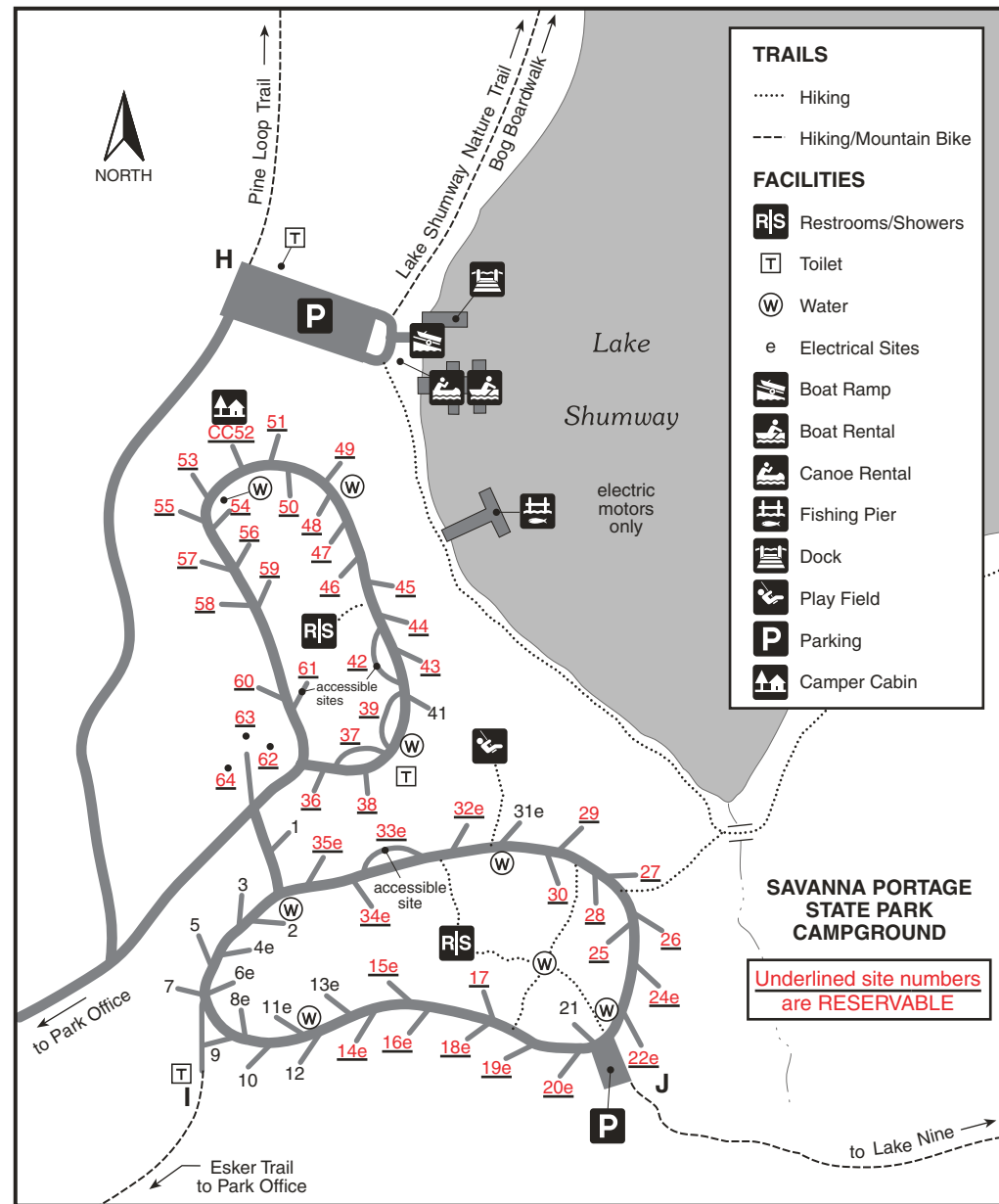
land held in beaver, marten, fox, lynx, bear, otter, wolf, and muskrat. LaVerendrye, the son of the famous explorer, operated out of LaPointe (Bayfield, Wisconsin) in the 1750s. Licensed to trade in the upper sections of the Mississippi River, he was one of the earliest voyageurs to traverse this region and maintained a wintering house or temporary trading post either at Leech Lake or Sandy Lake.

Upon the ascent of the East Savanna River from the St. Louis River, canoes had to be pushed forward with poles through a continual series of narrow, short turns for nearly 12 miles. From this point the river is almost lost among the high grass, reeds, and wild rice. Here a canal had been dug in order to avoid portaging any further than necessary. Small wharves were built to store goods for successive trips when the water level was too low to safely move the heavily loaded canoes. The canoes were then poled or pushed by hand through the quagmire.

When the canoes could go no farther, the route continued on poles laid lengthwise through the tamarack swamp. The canoe men often chose to trudge through the swamp as the rough, sharp points of the poles were too hard on their feet, and made balancing their heavy pack difficult.

After the first three pauses, the ground became higher and the portaging easier as the trail undulates through the forests of maple, birch, and basswood and long sandy pine ridges. The portage took an average of five days in order to reach the West Savanna River. Near Savanna Lake the river is but a few feet broad with only enough water to float a canoe. Here, as the trail meets the West Savanna River, the fur traders traveled by canoe into the Prairie River. From this junction it was only three miles into Big Sandy Lake and the expanses of the Upper Mississippi.

The old Indian trail was traversed by the early explorers, French fur traders, and travelers alike in spite of the difficulty in portaging through swamp, bog, blood-sucking insects, and severe weather. This glimpse of the past is tempered with the romantic vision



of the brightly costumed voyageur in streaming, gaudy sashes and stocking caps echoing his old French folk songs throughout the river highways of the North Woods.

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This information is available in alternative format upon request.

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