



WILLIAM O'BRIEN STATE PARK

FOR MORE INFORMATION

William O'Brien State Park
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St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

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1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free)

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

DNR Web Site: www.dnr.state.mn.us

Camping Reservations: 1-866-85PARKS
(1-866-857-2757)
www.stayatmnparks.com

WILLIAM O'BRIEN STATE PARK is located on the St. Croix River in Washington County on Highway 95, two miles north of Marine-on-St. Croix, the oldest logging settlement in the state. Highway map index: Z-24 or K-16.

William O'Brien State Park offers visitors a variety of recreational opportunities within an hour's drive of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Camping, hiking, fishing and swimming are favorite summer activities. Exceptional cross-country skiing and camping are wintertime specialties. Fall leaf colors, spring wildflowers, and bird-watching keep people coming back the rest of the year.

GEOLOGY: Sandstone outcrops formed millions of years ago by inland seas are found along the St. Croix River. Glacial activity played a major role in developing the picturesque valley. As the huge glaciers lumbered south, they scoured the sandstone and deposited soil and rocks of various sizes. As large masses of ice melted, the tremendous volume of released water cut through the soft sandstone, creating the St. Croix and landscaping the wide, boulder-strewn valley.

HISTORY: Dakota and Ojibwe Indian tribes utilized the resources of the valley for centuries. Eventually, the land, rich in fur-bearing animals, wild game and useful plants, was dominated by the Ojibwe. European trappers entered the area in the 1600s to engage in the lucrative fur-trade industry. Trappers were followed by lumberjacks in 1839 seeking to harvest the "endless stands" of white pine to provide building material for an expanding nation. Numerous sawmills were established along the St. Croix. The industry flourished in the mid-1800s until the valley was cleared of white pine. William O'Brien, a lumber baron, bought much of the land once owned by the lumber companies.

In 1945, Alice O'Brien, daughter of William O'Brien, donated 180 acres to be developed as a state park in memory of her father. In 1958, David Greenberg donated Greenberg Island in memory of his parents. Accessible only by canoe, the island has become a haven for wildlife and wildflowers. Today, the park totals 1650 acres.

WILDLIFE: The variety of natural communities – the St. Croix River floodplain, oak savannas, upland prairie, hardwood forests, wetlands, lakes and rolling meadows – provides habitat for diverse wildlife populations.

Park visitors can fish the St. Croix River for northern pike, walleye, bass, and brown trout. Numerous springs and streams flowing through heavily-wooded valleys and ravines provide excellent wildlife habitat.

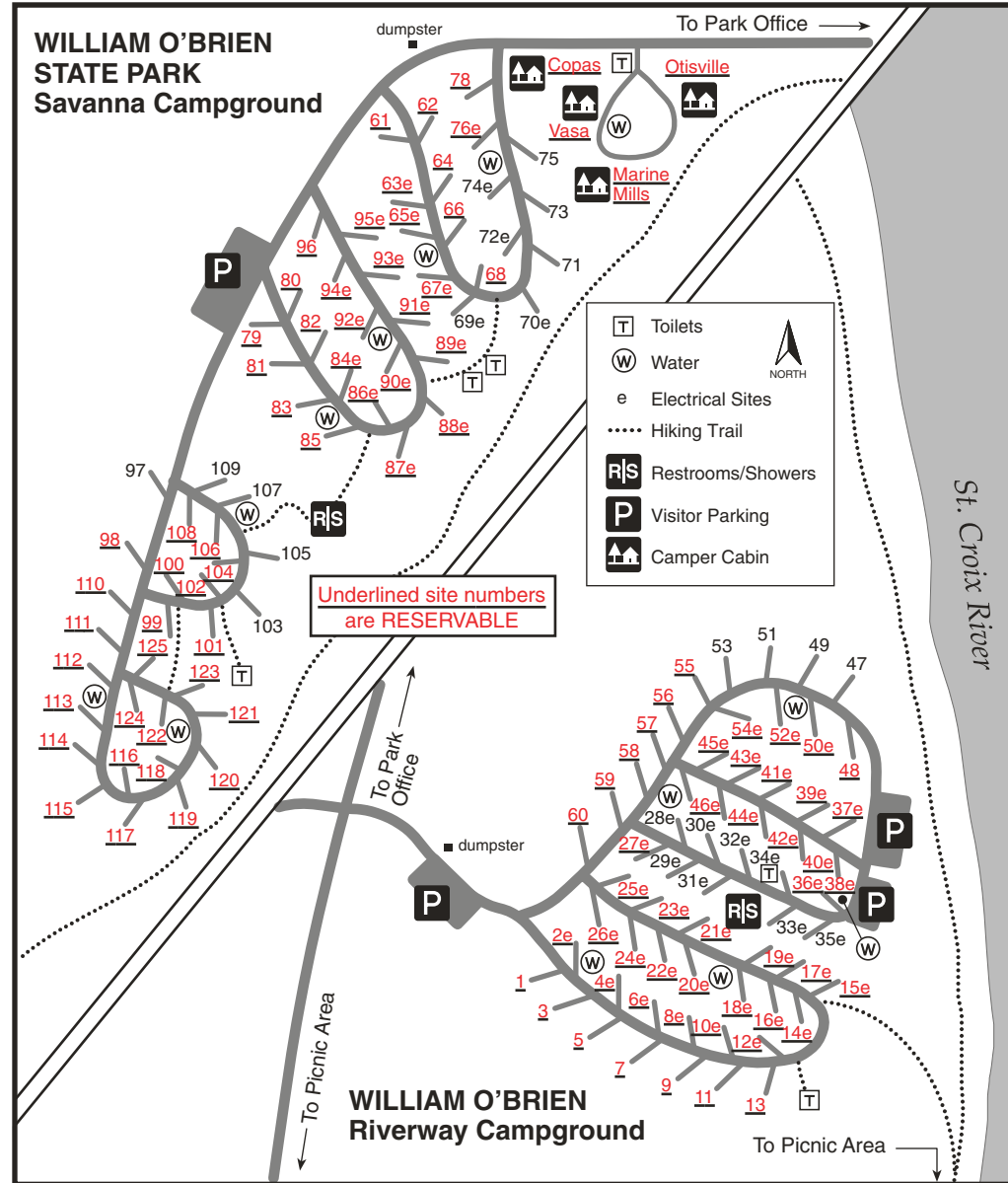
Raccoon, mink, beaver, and woodchuck are prevalent. Upland meadows and woods foster white-tail deer and fox. Birdwatchers frequently spot bald eagles, red-shouldered hawks, woodpeckers, bluebirds, orioles, herons and a variety of warblers.

CANOEING: One of the best canoeing rivers in the nation, the St. Croix offers pristine scenery just minutes from a major metropolitan area. Canoes can be rented from within or outside the park from concessionaires by the day or hour. A shuttle service for cars and/or passengers is provided during the summer season.

SWIMMING BEACH: Visitors can jump right in or just cool their feet at the Lake Alice Beach. Some choose to simply sunbathe on the sandy shore. Swimming is not permitted in the river because of currents. For safety reasons, air mattresses and flotation devices are only allowed inside the roped area.

PICNIC AREA: Visit William O'Brien for a day; bring a picnic lunch to the large picnic area, conveniently located near the swimming beach, boat launch and river. Relax in the shade of a basswood tree and enjoy the surroundings. There are three picnic shelters. All are available for advanced reservations.

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS: William O'Brien interpretive programs offer many activities relating to the natural and cultural features of the area through hikes, demonstrations, canoe floats, bike tours, slide shows, movies, ski tours and special events.



The Visitor Center contains displays regarding the natural and cultural features of the park. A naturalist is available year-round to answer questions and share information. Interpretive program schedules are posted on bulletin boards throughout the park.

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