

Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park

Facilities:

- 73 Semi-modern campsites (23 with electrical hookups)
- 57 equestrian campsites (23 with electrical hookups)
- Trailer dump station
- Picnic area with enclosed shelter and 60 picnic tables
- Mystery Cave visitor center and picnic area
- 19 miles of hiking trails
- 17 miles of horse trails
- Summer season interpretive amphitheater

Visitor Favorites:

- Mystery Cave tours
- Historic Forestville tours
- Trout fishing
- South Branch Root River Forestville Creek Canfield Creek
- Spring wildflowers and birding
- Overlook
- Big Spring (source of Canfield Creek)
- Historic markers throughout the park

Looking for more information?

The DNR has mapped the state showing federal, state, and county lands with their recreational facilities.

These Public Recreational Information Maps (PRIM) are available for purchase from the DNR gift shop, DNR regional offices, MN State Parks, and major sporting and map stores.

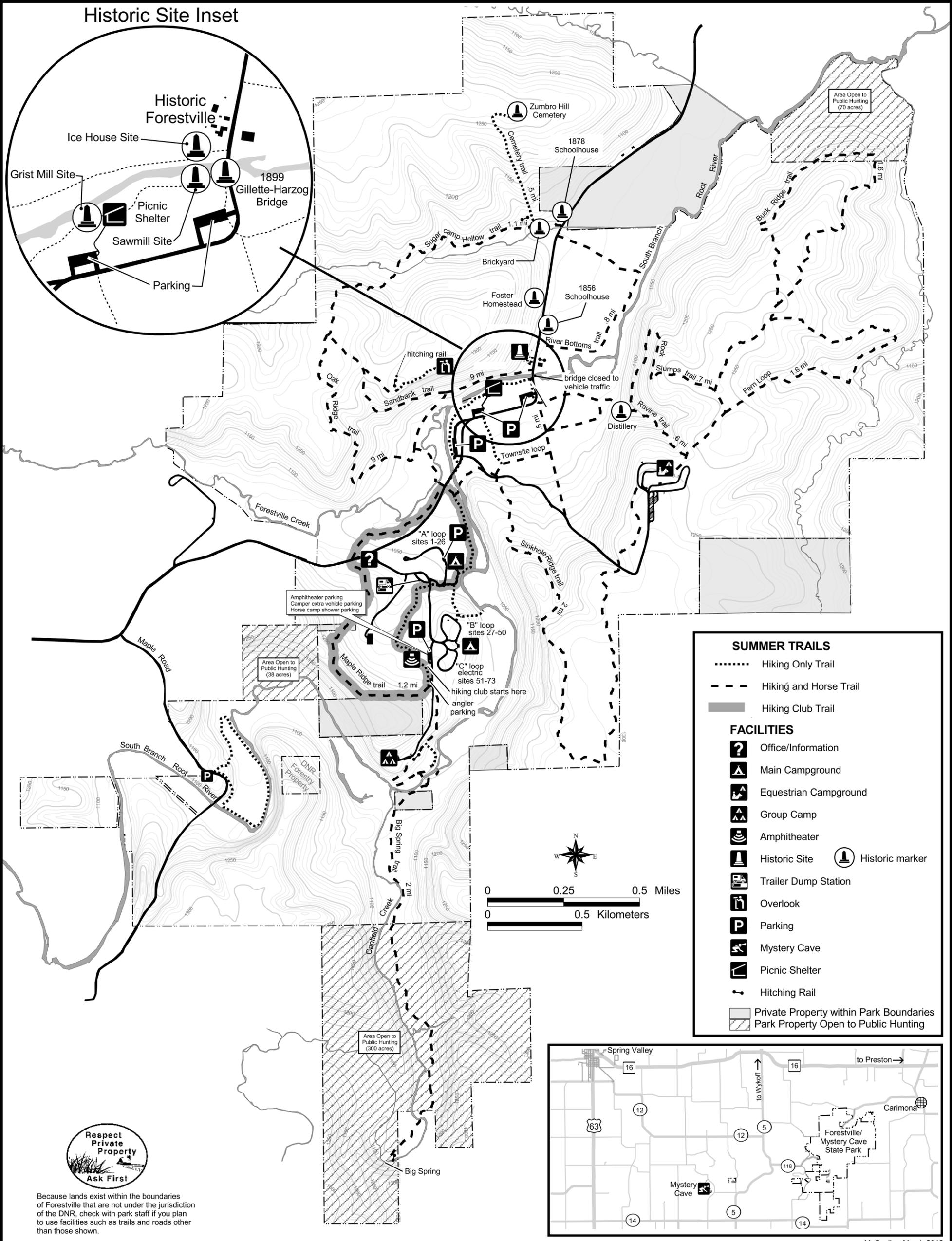
Call our information center at

888 MINNDNR
(646 6367)

Visit our website at
www.mndnr.gov

For camping reservations go online at
www.mndnr.gov/reservations

or call
866 857 2757



Because lands exist within the boundaries of Forestville that are not under the jurisdiction of the DNR, check with park staff if you plan to use facilities such as trails and roads other than those shown.



FORESTVILLE/ MYSTERY CAVE STATE PARK

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park
21071 County Road 118
Preston, MN 55965
(507) 352-5111

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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

FORESTVILLE/MYSTERY CAVE STATE PARK is located in Fillmore County in southeastern Minnesota about halfway between Spring Valley and Preston. The entrance to the park is located four miles south of MN Highway 16 on Fillmore County Highway 5, and two miles east on Fillmore County 118. Minnesota highway map index: M-21

Perhaps no other Minnesota state park offers visitors

a greater variety of attractions than does Forestville /Mystery Cave State Park. The park is rich in both historical and natural resources including the 1853-1910 townsite of Forestville, meandering blue-ribbon trout streams, diverse plant and animal life, and dramatic Mystery Cave, Minnesota's longest known cave.

CAVE TOURS/ INTERPRETIVE SERVICES:

The very popular guided tours of Mystery Cave are available every day from Memorial weekend through Labor Day and on weekends in spring and fall. Other interpretive programs are offered on summer weekends including hikes, field trips, and evening campfire programs. The Mystery Cave Visitor Center is open during the tour season and contains a number of exhibits relating to the cave. Other self-guided signage in the park relates to natural and cultural features found here.

HISTORIC FORESTVILLE: The Minnesota Historical Society has restored a portion of the townsite of Forestville. In the summer months, visitors discover Forestville's past by stepping back in the summer of 1899. Costumed interpreters portray Forestville residents. Explore the "latest" styles of merchandise in the brick store or visit the Thomas and Mary Meighen residence. Pass the time with farm laborers as they go about their daily chores around the farm buildings.

While in the historic district, you can help preserve the 1899 character of Historic Forestville.

- Please park vehicles, bicycles, and horses only in designated areas.
- Pets are not allowed within fenced areas.
- Please refrain from smoking in the restored village area.

Besides the restored portion of the village, there are many historic sites to explore including the Zumbro Hill cemetery, south townsite, schools, brick yard, residences, mills, and distillery.

Call Historic Forestville for more information about summer living history tours (507-765-2785), or see the MHS website at mnhs.org.

RECREATION: Camping in Forestville's lovely wooded campsites are very popular, especially on summer weekends. For this reason reservations are recommended. Showers and flush toilets are typically available from mid-April through mid-October. Each site comes with a gravel parking spur, fire ring and picnic table.

Horse Area – Forestville has the highest horseback use of any state park in Minnesota. The hilly terrain and winding streams provide interesting and scenic

riding. These features also require extra effort on the part of riders to preserve fragile plants, soils, and waters for future generations. Many of the trails are surfaced with crushed rock to prevent erosion. Because of this, shod horses are recommended. There are also several streams to ford (57 sites are available for horse campers (23 with 50 amp electrical hookups). Other amenities in the horse area include drinking water, picnic tables, fire rings, hitching rails and vault type outdoor toilets.

Fishing – Three of Minnesota's top trout streams converge within the park. Angler parking is available in the picnic area and near the main campground. A special catch and release winter season is in effect on most park streams from January 1 to March 31. Slot restrictions apply during the regular season. Canfield Creek is restricted to artificial lures.

Hiking – Many park trails are shared with horseback riders. Most trails climb about 200' in elevation from valley floors to ridge tops. The scenic overlook, cemetery, and Big Spring are favorite destinations.

Winter Trails – Cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are both popular here in winter. Ski trails are scenic touring trails and are groomed in classic fashion. Three Grant-In-Aid snowmobile trails converge in the park, providing access to dozens of miles of trails outside the park. Snowshoeing is allowed almost everywhere in the park. Off trail use is encouraged.

Other popular recreation activities include bird watching, wildlife observation, photography, and wading.

GEOLOGY: About 450 million years ago material was deposited in the bottom of shallow seas which intermittently covered large portions of North America. As the deposits increased in thickness, the layers on the bottom were compressed to form limestone, dolomite, shale, and sandstone. Today in the park, these rocks are 1300 feet above the sea. In the past million years, some of the limestone and dolomite layers have been dissolved by water. This has created a landscape that is characterized by sinkholes, underground streams, and caves. This landscape is called *karst*, and is represented here by features such as Mystery Cave, Minnesota's longest known cave. With over 13 miles of passages, Mystery is a maze of linear corridors. During dry periods, the entire South Branch Root River sinks into the cave through gravel filled crevices in the river bottom. Forestville also exhibits features of the unglaciated or "driftless" region. The last major glacial advance did not cover the vicinity of Forestville. Down-cutting of stream valleys by powerful glacial meltwater created the steep hills and bluffs we see in the park and surrounding area today.

VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE: The steep bluffland topography has created a marked variety of localized climate conditions. South-facing slopes are warmer and drier. North-facing slopes are cooler and wetter. In addition, Forestville/Mystery Cave is located at the edge of two great biomes: the tallgrass prairie to the west, and the eastern deciduous forest. This combination has resulted in a striking mosaic of plant communities included prairie, savanna, oak woodland, maple/basswood forest, and even white pine and fir. The streams that converge in the park also provide habitat for a rich variety of aquatic life.

The great variety of habitat supports remarkably different wildlife ranging from rare glacial snails to timber rattlesnakes. While a few rattlers live in the park, they are of very little threat if left alone. Please report sightings.

Other wildlife of note include deer, raccoon, beaver, mink, opossum, woodchucks, four species of squirrels, red and grey fox. Coyote numbers have grown in recent years and can often be heard at dusk. Several species of reptiles and amphibians are also present.

At least 175 species of birds have been recorded in the park including several important Neotropical migrants (scarlet tanager, ovenbird, American redstart) and a sizeable population of wild turkeys. Barred owls often wake campers with their evening calls and soaring turkey vultures delight summer visitors.

HISTORY: In the center of the park along the South Branch Root River is the townsite of Forestville. Founded in 1853, the village emerged as a rural trade center, typical of hundreds that emerged across southern Minnesota during the 1850s. Area farmers came to Forestville to trade their farm produce for goods and services. By 1858, Forestville numbered 100 inhabitants and 20 buildings including: two general stores, a gristmill, a brickyard, two hotels, a school, and "mechanics of several trades."

Forestville prospered until the first area railroad, the Southern Minnesota, bypassed the community in 1868. Village residents watched their town struggle to survive while towns served by the railroad boomed with prosperity. By 1890, Thomas J. Meighen, son of one of the town's founders, owned the entire village. The 50 residents made their living on Mr. Meighen's farm. In return for their work, his employees received housing, board, and credit in his store. Mr. Meighen also maintained the post office, the school, and a feed and saw mill.

In 1905, Meighen moved to Preston and in 1910 he closed his general store. In 1934 he proposed establishment of the State Park, but it took nearly 30 years for the park to be formally designated.

SO EVERYONE CAN ENJOY THE PARK...

- State parks were established to preserve natural, cultural, and aesthetic features, and to help meet the diverse recreational and educational needs of visitors. Please observe rules designed to keep our parks clean and to protect park resources.
- Daily or annual permits are required for all vehicles entering a state park. They may be purchased at the park headquarters or the Information Center in St. Paul (see "FOR MORE INFORMATION" at left).
- The park is open year-round. On a daily basis, the park gate is closed from 10:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. the following morning except to registered campers. Loud noises and other disturbances are not allowed after 10:00 P.M. in the campground.
- Camp only in designated locations.
- The use of firearms, explosives, air guns, slingshots, traps, seines, nets, bows and arrows, and all other weapons is prohibited in state parks.
- Pets must be restrained on a leash no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed in park buildings.
- Motor bikes and other licensed vehicles are allowed only on park roads, not on trails. Park in designated areas only.
- Bicycles are allowed on park roads but not on trails.
- Enjoy the park wildlife and plants, but please respect them. Do not pick or dig up plants, disturb or feed animals, or scavenge dead wood.

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HORSEBACK RIDERS: You can help ensure the future of riding at Forestville.

- Ride only on designated horse trails.
- Avoid shortcutting at corners and switchbacks.
- Cross streams only at designated ford areas.
- Leave beverage containers at camp or pack them out in saddle bags.
- Avoid riding on roads.
- Save precious shade trees. Use designated hitching areas.

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This information is available in alternative format upon request.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, creed or religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, age or disability. Discrimination inquiries should be sent to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55145-4031; or to the Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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DNR Maps