

# These State Parks Are Even Better in Winter

Ann Gibson, Tue Dec 18 2018



Of the 800 million-plus visits to America's state parks last year, up to 90 percent are during the summer months. That means a lot of people are missing out on some of the [best adventures](#) in winter, when the scenery is just as spectacular and the crowds are nonexistent.

In winter, waterfalls and ponds glisten with ice and snow carpets the ground, turning even the most familiar park into a whole new experience. Wildlife viewing is at its best against the snowy backdrop, and animals are less wary about revealing themselves without the tourists and traffic jams of summer. You have your pick of [prime campsites](#), often without a reservation. Winter conditions open the door to [new adventures](#) like skiing, ice boating and snowmobiling.

**Bundle up to visit 10 state parks that are even better in winter.**

## 1. Cooney State Park

### Roberts, Montana

Snow starts falling early in Montana, but warm Chinook Winds make winters surprisingly mild at Cooney State Park. Camp on Cooney Reservoir to fish for trout and walleye through the ice. Enjoy the wide-open views from parks trails that remain open for cross country skiing and snowshoeing.

**Where to Camp:** [Cooney State Park Campground](#)

## 2. Canaan Valley Resort State Park

### Davis, West Virginia

Lake effect snow dumps a surprising 100 inches of snow on Canaan Valley. Capitalize on the unique microclimate by skiing and snowboarding on over 40 slopes, cross country skiing on 18 miles of trails, snowshoeing in the mountains, and ice skating and snow tubing at the resort. If you don't want to camp outdoors in the elements, you can book a cabin or a room at the lodge.

**Where to Camp:** [Canaan Valley Resort](#)

## 3. Emerald Bay State Park

### South Lake Tahoe, California

Snow transforms the trail leading to Vikingsholm, a Scandinavian castle perched above Emerald Bay, into a fairytale wonderland. The one-mile snowshoe trek is a photographer's dream, with views of deep blue Lake Tahoe through the alpine forest. Continue hiking another half mile to frozen Lower Eagle Falls and Emerald Bay Beach. The greater Tahoe area offers a variety of camping options.

**Where to Camp:** [Grover Hot Springs State Park](#) or [Campground By The Lake](#)

## 4. Chugach State Park

### Anchorage, Alaska

Explore the massive glaciers, ice fields and frozen lakes of Alaska's largest state park on 280 miles of non-motorized trails. Winter goes on for 10 months here, plenty of time to find the moose, brown and black bears, wolves and mountain goats that live in the park, and the Dall sheep that inhabit the mountains. If you're a backcountry novice, start out on snowshoes at Anchorage Hillside and progress to Eklutna Lake. If you have experience exploring the backcountry in winter, ski touring, skate skiing, snowmobiling, dog sledding, skijouring and backcountry skiing in Eklutna Lake or Girdwood Valley are your best options. Go ice climbing on the frozen waterfalls of Turnagain Arm and downhill skiing at Arctic Valley Ski Area, both inside the park. A less adventurous but equally spectacular option is to catch the alpenglow, northern lights and brilliant night skies around Eagle River Nature Center.

**Where to Camp:** [Chugach State Park Campground](#)



## 5. Salt Fork State Park

### Lore City, Ohio

At over 17,000 acres, the rolling hills of Ohio's largest state park are a family-friendly winter

landscape. Snowshoe on 13 forest trails, all less than two miles long. For families with older kids, there are 19 miles of snowmobile trails. As the winter freeze deepens, you can sail your ice boat and go ice fishing for bass, walleye and muskie, and ice skate on the park lake. The winter months are hunting season for white-tailed deer, squirrel, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbit and fox.

**Where to Camp:** [Salt Fork State Park Campground](#)

## 6. St. Croix State Park

### Hinckley, Minnesota

Go snowmobiling on 80 miles of groomed trails along the St. Croix and Kettle rivers in Minnesota's largest state park. Cross country ski on groomed trails or snowshoe off-trail anywhere in the park. Try fat tire biking on the 2.3-mile trail that runs from the campground to Lake Clayton.

**Where to Camp:** [St. Croix State Park Campground](#)



## 7. Franconia Notch State Park

### Lincoln, New Hampshire

Winter's blustery chill lasts for six months in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Snowmobile the Corridor Trail through Franconia State Park that connects to thousands more miles of trail across the state. Snowshoe and cross country ski the 8.7-mile bike path from Lafayette Campground to The Basin on the ice-tinged Pemigewasset River. Ski and snowboard at Cannon Mountain, the state's highest ski summit, with 97 trails and glades and three terrain parks.

**Where to Camp:** [Lafayette Place Campground](#)

## 8. Quoddy Head State Park

### Lubec, Maine

The easternmost tip of the U.S. is a dramatic vantage point to see the steel gray North Atlantic in winter. Park gates are closed, so park outside and put on your snowshoes or cross country skis to explore the subarctic bogs shrouded in snow and fog this time of year. The entry road takes you to an Atlantic overlook, where you can pick up the Coastal Trail to the black cliffs, historic candy-striped lighthouse and the beach at Carrying Place Cove. Look for bald eagles, sea ducks and seabirds like auks and razorbills that spend the winter here.

**Where to Camp:** [Near Quoddy Head State Park](#)

## **9. Seminoe State Park**

### **Sinclair, Wyoming**

Ice fishing on Seminoe Reservoir, one of the largest man-made reservoirs in the state, might land you one of the lake's record-size trout or walleye. While you're on the ice, scan the treeless hills for pronghorn, moose, mule deer, bald eagles, mountain lions and herd of elk that winter in the park.

**Where to Camp:** [Seminoe State Park Campground](#)

## **10. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park**

### **Ashland, Nebraska**

The snowy hills of the Platte River Valley are perfect for tobogganing and cross country skiing all winter in Eugene T. Mahoney State Park. The modern lodge and cabins make a cozy base camp for ice skating and ice fishing for rainbow trout on CenturyLink Lake.

**Where to Camp:** [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park Campground](#)