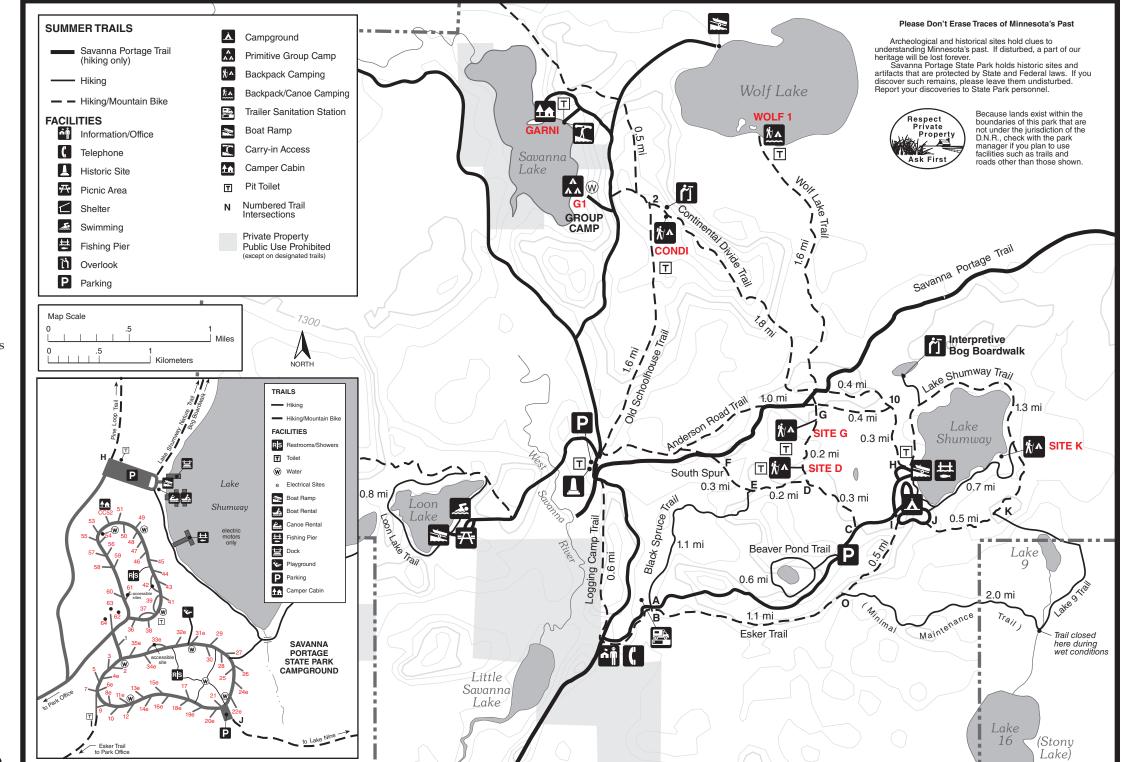
# **SAVANNA PORTAGE** STATE PARK

### **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 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
- Wildlife photography
- Children's playground at Loon Lake picnic grounds
- Continental Divide interpretive overlook





# **SAVANNA PORTAGE STATE PARK**

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

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

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

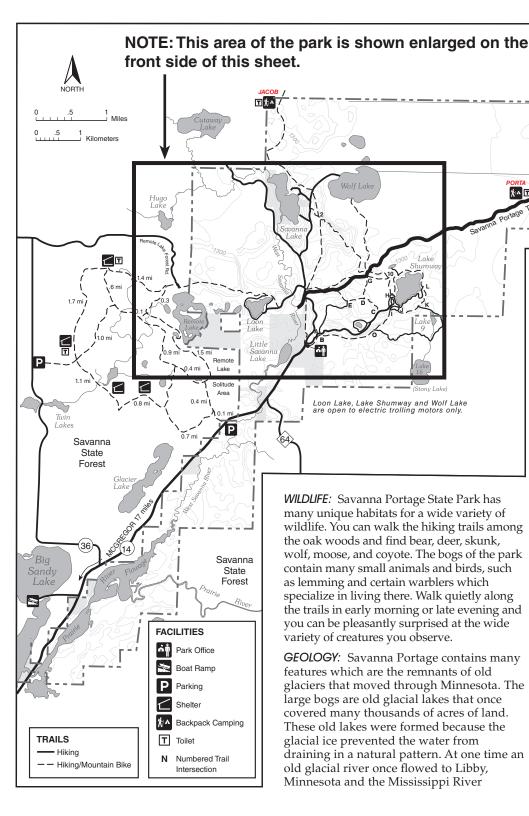
TDD (Telecommunications Device for Deaf) (651) 296-5484 (Metro Area) 1-800-657-3929 (MN Toll Free)

mndnr.gov/parks

#### **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.



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.

Savanna

State

Forest

Savanna

State

Forest

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.

> This information is available in alternative format upon request.

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