

UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK

VISITOR FAVORITES

- River fishing
- Minnesota River overlook
- Interpretive center
- Historic Upper Sioux Agency site
- Winter sliding hill

FACILITIES AND FEATURES

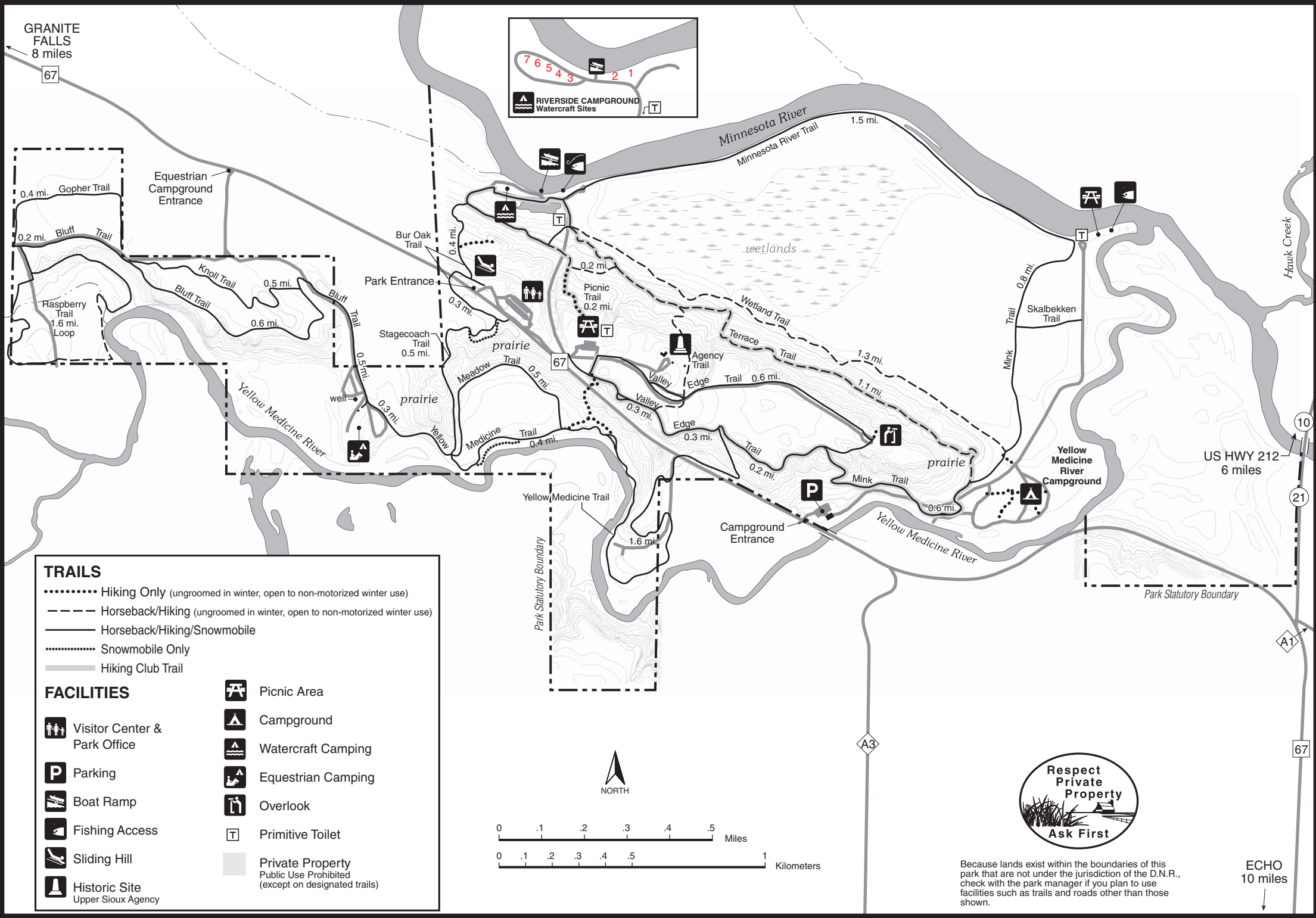
- Public canoe access to Minnesota River
- Picnic area
- Equestrian camp
- Picnic shelter building
- Interpretive center
- Trails:

19 miles hiking

16 miles snowmobiling

16 miles horseback

Note: trails are ungroomed in the winter, except for snowmobile.





UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Upper Sioux Agency State Park
5908 Highway 67
Granite Falls, MN 56241-3609
(320) 564-4777

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)

mndnr.gov/parksandtrails

UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK is located on Minnesota State Highway 67, eight miles southeast of Granite Falls in Yellow Medicine County, Highway Map index: E-17.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Established in 1963, Upper Sioux Agency State Park contains the historic site of the Upper Sioux or Yellow Medicine Indian Agency. The park covers 1,066 acres on the southern bluffs of the Minnesota River and the confluence with the Yellow Medicine River.

Challenging as well as relaxing, all-season trails weave through open prairie knolls and bluffs, cool wooded slopes, sunny old-field meadows, and wander along the Yellow Medicine River. The rugged scenic beauty of the river valley can be enjoyed from the many vantage points in the park. Wildlife is readily observed along the trails and from the prairie knolls. The peaceful silence of this hilly river valley park is broken only by the prairie’s wind, sounds of wildlife and people enjoying the natural beauty.

GEOLOGY: For tens of thousands of years, glaciers advanced, covered and retreated over central Minnesota. These glaciers left several hundred feet of rock, sand and gravel, known as glacial drift, covering the bedrock of granite and gneiss. Upper Sioux Agency State Park sits on a plateau of this glacial drift between the Minnesota and Yellow Medicine Rivers. The lower reaches of the park are alluvial, water carried materials, deposits from the Yellow Medicine and Minnesota Rivers.

When the last glacier retreated, its meltwater formed glacial Lake Agassiz in the area of the present Red River Valley. Meltwater in the lake drained south through an already existing river valley forming the glacial River Warren. The valley was cut wider and deeper in many spots, all the way to bedrock. As Lake Agassiz declined, water no longer drained south. Left behind was a huge valley with only a tiny river, the Minnesota, to meander on the valley floor 200 feet below the bluffs.

Starting at Big Stone Lake, the Minnesota River travels through 330 miles of central Minnesota on its way to the Mississippi River.

WILDLIFE: Upper Sioux Agency's grasslands, wetlands, woods and rivers abound with wildlife and opportunities to observe them.

Slowly and peacefully the Minnesota River flows along the park’s northern boundary. Patient anglers catch walleye, northern, catfish, bullhead and carp while fishing from the river’s bank. Great blue herons stalk the shallows for frogs and fish. Pelicans can be spotted hunting along edges of shallow pools. Woodducks explode from backwaters and oxbows when disturbed by canoeists and hikers.

Falling rapidly over rocks and beaver dams, the wildly meandering Yellow Medicine River holds scrappy smallmouth bass for the clever angler. Pools in slow water areas or behind beaver dams attract belted kingfisher, muskrat and turtles. Spotted sandpiper, killdeer and other shorebirds frequently hunt the gravel bars and mud flats in the river for insects. Song sparrows and yellowthroats sing amongst the grasses and shrubs along the river bank.

Circling high over the open prairie knolls and old-field meadows, redbilled hawks hunt for mice, rabbit, and ground squirrel. On the openings’ edges, bluebirds nest in the cavities of dead trees. Eastern kingbirds can be seen perched on small cedar trees, occasionally darting out after flying insects. Late in the summer, hundreds of monarch butterflies feed on the prairie’s wildflowers, such as blazing star and butterfly milkweed. On the last warm sunny days of autumn, bull, garter and red-bellied snakes can be found in the browning grasses of the prairie knolls.

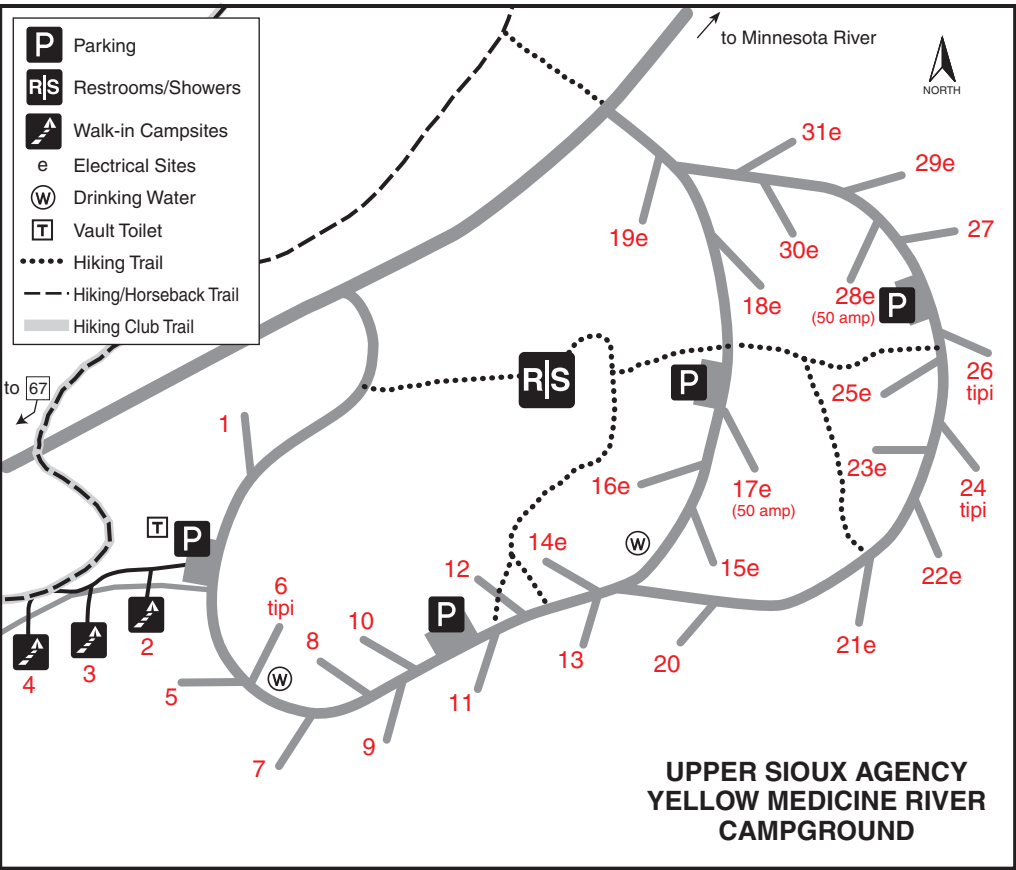
The blossoms of spring wildflowers dot the woodland floor about the same time the yellow- rumped warblers migrate through. The quiet hiker may find hollow trees drilled full of circular holes that contain the woodland nest sites of downy woodpeckers or barred owls. Look for large spreading bur oaks in the woods. These are the oldest trees in the park. The patient visitor standing near one of these large oaks can usually find deer, squirrels and woodducks feeding on the annual crop of acorns.

HISTORY: For hundreds of years before the first white men explored the Minnesota River Valley, the Dakota (Sioux) people hunted, fished and lived here. The Dakota’s intimate knowledge of the valley’s plants and wildlife allowed them to utilize their environment to its fullest extent. In spring and summer, bison were hunted on the surrounding prairies. Roots, berries, nuts and acorns were collected when ripe, from the prairie or then sparse woodland. The once abundant wetlands teemed with muskrat, the main winter food of the Dakota. Once the white man set foot in the river valley, changes in the Dakota lifestyle were inevitable and irreversible.

No accurate record exists of the date or identity of the first white man to travel into the Minnesota River Valley wilderness. It is assumed independent French fur traders called “coureurs de bois” came into the valley in the late 1600s.

These traders deliberately distorted the truth of their travels and gave inaccurate accounts of the region’s inhabitants and natural wealth, and for good reason. They needed to protect themselves, for the area was officially off limits to traders and settlers. More importantly, they wished to protect their lucrative Indian trade from outsiders.

A few adventurers openly entered the area and accurately recorded the customs and manners of its inhabitants. George Catlin, an amateur artist, naively, but authentically painted the Dakota and their lifestyle.



- People in the east began clamoring for southern Minnesota to be opened for settlement. The momentum of events led to the treaty of Traverse des Sioux of 1851. This treaty removed the Dakota Indians from Iowa and Minnesota to a reservation 20 miles wide along the Minnesota River Valley extending from Big Stone Lake to Fort Ridgely.
- In summer of 1862, the Dakota attempted to drive the whites from their ancestral homeland. The agency was destroyed in their unsuccessful uprising.
- Upper Sioux Agency State Park was established to preserve the old agency site and provide recreational opportunities in the scenic Minnesota River Valley. In 1969, the historic site was given to the Minnesota Historical Society for research, preservation and development purposes.
- SO EVERYONE CAN ENJOY THE PARK ...**
State parks were established to preserve and protect the natural and scenic features of Minnesota. Please help us protect your park by observing these rules:
- Plants, flowers, rocks or artifacts are for all to enjoy. Please leave them where they are.
 - Buy firewood from the park manager. Leave dead wood on the forest floor.
 - Build fires only in fire rings or fireplaces provided.
 - Pets must be kept on a leash not longer than six feet.
 - Motorized vehicles may not use park trails.
 - Loud noises or other disturbances are prohibited after 10:00 P.M.
 - Park is closed from 10:00 P.M. until 8:00 A.M.
 - Park permits are required on all vehicles.

This information is available in alternative format upon request.

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