

OLD GROWTH PINE FOREST

The key reason for the park's existence is for the preservation of the old growth red and white pine, as well as the lakes and Mississippi River.

Once dominating large portions of northern Minnesota, today 25 percent of the remaining old growth pine is found within the 50 square miles that is Itasca State Park. Red and white pine, adapted to the cold and dry conditions of northern Minnesota, grow on the rolling glacial hills of the park. Growing straight and tall, their wood fiber was highly prized by timber interests in the 1800s.

Seeing the rapid loss of Minnesota's pine resources to logging, Jacob V. Brower, a historian, lawyer, anthropologist and land surveyor, helped pass legislation establishing Itasca State Park in 1891. Although only a park on paper, Brower diligently worked at acquiring lands for the park before all was lost to timber interests. Others followed in his footsteps, including Mary Gibbs, a 24-year old woman, who in 1903 stood off armed timber men in defense of the Mississippi River and surrounding park land.

Itasca State Park
36750 Main Park Drive
Park Rapids, MN 56470
218-699-7251
www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks

THE MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS



Today the Mississippi River looks similar to the wild river that explorer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft first saw while searching for the river's source in 1832.

Visitors can wander miles of hiking paths and experience pine forests as people have done for hundreds of years. The wildlife and vegetation is much as it was prior to European settlement. Visitors might happen upon a gray wolf or hear the screech of a bobcat. The plaintive wail of common loons can be heard rising up from the misty waters of nearly 100 lakes while black bears shuffle through patches of raspberries.

This pristine wilderness experience is just hours away from major cities. The sound of the wind as it whispers between the towering pine branches beckons for visitors to return. As has been said by visitors for over 100 years, "We come for the river, but we return for the pines."

Here 1475 ft above the ocean the mighty Mississippi begins to flow on its winding way 2552 miles to the Gulf of Mexico.

Itasca

Itasca State Park Map and Guide Minnesota State Parks and Trails



*Come for the Mississippi River.
Return for the Pines.*

VISITOR INFORMATION

Itasca State Park preserves 25 percent of Minnesota's remaining old growth red and white pine. It is here that the Mississippi River begins, the headwaters of America's greatest river system beginning at Lake Itasca.

Location:

Itasca State Park is located in the three corners of Clearwater, Hubbard and Becker Counties in northwest Minnesota. Contact information: 36750 Main Park Drive, Park Rapids, MN 56470. Telephone: 218-699-7251. Web: www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks. The closest towns include Park Rapids—21 miles south, Bemidji—35 miles to the northeast and Bagley—27 miles to the northwest. The park is bounded by Highway 200, Highway 71 and Highway 113. For current travel information go to the Minnesota Department of Transportation Website for road construction and road condition reports. www.dot.state.mn.us

Climate:

Itasca State Park's weather is characterized by warm, humid summers and cold, dry winters. A mixture of moist Gulf air, cold Arctic air and dry Pacific air help create the dramatic four seasons within the park. Summer average temperatures range from 60 to 70 degrees, but one can expect days in the upper 80s. Winter temperatures range from 0 to 10 degrees, with temperatures below zero not uncommon. Average moisture is 28-inches, with about 17-inches coming as rain in the warm months and up to 48-inches falling as snow in the winter.

Visiting:

The park is open daily from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day of the year. There is a fee for admission—a Minnesota State Parks Permit is good at any of the 74 Minnesota state park and recreation areas. Purchase a permit as either an annual, daily or motorcycle permit. Permits are available for purchase at any Minnesota state park or toll free 1-888-MINNDNR (646-6367).

Visitor Centers:

Inside the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center you will find exhibits on the park's natural and cultural history, restrooms, public telephone, classroom and a gift shop. Learn about Mississippi River exploration, the red and white pine forest ecosystem, the Ojibwe culture and the era of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). A 5-minute seasonal video is shown. The Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center is open daily except Thanksgiving Day and December 25. •The Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center offers outdoor exhibits for year round access. From mid May to mid October there is a gift shop and café available.

Camping:

Year-round camping is available at Pine Ridge Campground. Bear Paw Campground is open from mid May to mid October. Both campgrounds have fire rings, picnic tables, water spigots, shower buildings and restrooms (water and shower buildings/restrooms available in the warm season only). Many sites have 50-amp electric hook-ups. Reservations are strongly encouraged during major holidays and the summer season. Eleven backpack sites are available year round. Backpack sites have fire rings and vault toilets only. Two group camps are available May to early October; reservations strongly encouraged. Elk Lake Group Camp has a fire ring, hand-pump for water, vault toilet and picnic shelter. Ozawindib Group Camp offers a dining hall, Counselor's Cabin, camping for up to 70 people and shower building. For camping reservations, go to: www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/ and click on 'reservations'.

Accommodations:

The Douglas Lodge in the park has food and lodging available Memorial Day Weekend to early October. Lodging includes lodge suites, cabins, the 21-person Club House, and the Itasca Four-Season 6-Plex Suites. Additional cabins available mid-May to early October in Bear Paw Campground and Lake Ozawindib. Winter lodging available in the Douglas Lodge Four-Season 6-Plex. See also Park Concessions. For lodging reservations, go to: www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/ and click on 'reservations'.

Dining:

The Douglas Lodge restaurant offers breakfast, lunch and dinner dining Memorial Day Weekend to early October. The Headwaters Café offers food Memorial Day Weekend to mid October. Year round dining is also available at various businesses bordering the park.

Gift Shops:

The gift shop at the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center is open year round. Forest Inn Gift Shop, adjacent to Douglas Lodge, offers north woods themed items from Memorial Day Weekend to early October. The Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center Gift Shop offers Mississippi River themed items from mid May to mid October.

Additional Facilities:

•A variety of meeting rooms are available seasonally/year round in Douglas Lodge, Forest Inn and the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center for meetings, conferences, weddings and family reunions; rental fees apply. •Douglas Lodge catering available seasonally. •A swim beach changing house is located at the swimming beach providing changing rooms and bathrooms. •A large picnic grounds offers numerous fire rings, grates and picnic tables. •A picnic shelter is available in the picnic grounds; available by reservation (fee applies) or first-come, first-served basis. •The Lakeside Museum, located in the picnic grounds offers additional exhibits; open early May to mid October.

Permit for Fishing:

Minnesota residents do not need a fishing license when fishing a lake entirely located within Itasca State Park's boundary during the open-water season. All other rules and regulations to fishing apply. See regulation book for details. Non-residents are required to have a Minnesota Fishing License, available at an Electronic Licensing Site at either the Itasca Sports Rental, at local businesses outside the park or at www.dnr.state.mn.us.

Lake Access:

Boat launches available on •Lake Itasca on the northeast side; parking plowed for winter access. •Lake Ozawindib, road is plowed for winter access. •Elk Lake; vehicle access is along the one-way Wilderness Drive; parking is limited; road is not maintained for winter access. •Mary Lake; vehicle access is along the road to Douglas Lodge, watch for signs; limited parking; one lane plowed for winter access. •Fishing Pier is located on the east arm of Lake Itasca below Douglas Lodge.

Nature Programs/ Guided Tours:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) naturalists offer a variety of nature programs throughout the year. Private tours to the Mississippi Headwaters and along Wilderness Drive by MNDNR staff are available on a limited basis. Prices vary according to the variety and length of the trip. •The Lake Itasca Tours, a park concession, offers Lake Itasca boat excursions on board the Chester Charles II.

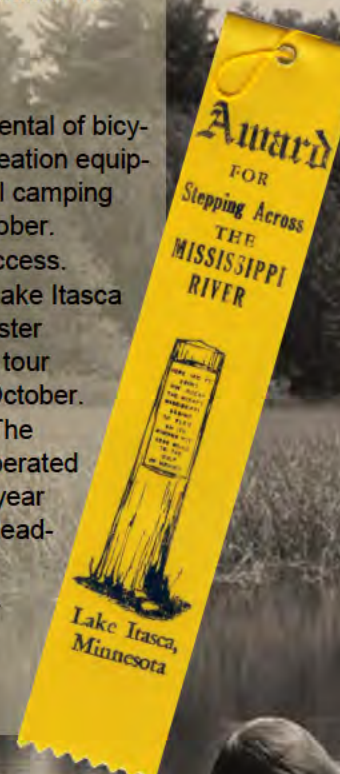
Park Concessions:

•The Itasca Sports Rental offers rental of bicycles, boats and other outdoor recreation equipment. Camp store offers additional camping items. Open early May to mid-October. Located at the Lake Itasca boat access. •Lake Itasca Tours offer 2-hour Lake Itasca boat excursions on board the Chester Charles II. Purchase tickets at the tour boat. Available late May to early October. Located below Douglas Lodge. •The Mississippi Headwaters Hostel, operated by Hostelling International, offers year round lodging in the 1920s Park Headquarters Building. Located across from the Lake Itasca Boat Access. •See park kiosks or the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center for current brochures listing rates.

For Your Safety:

Be aware of these conditions and regulations:

•The stepping stones at the Mississippi Headwaters are very slippery. Use caution when in the area. Slips and falls can injure or break bones. •Watch out for poison ivy. Be aware of dog/wood and deer ticks; check yourself after hiking the trails. Mosquitoes and other biting flies can be present in the summer season. •Itasca's glacial landscape is rolling with rocks and uneven surfaces. Use caution when hiking. The rolling landscape can be exerting when hiking or biking. •Bicycles must stay on designated bike routes. No bicycling is allowed on hiking trails. •Wilderness Drive is open to both vehicle and bicycle traffic in the spring, summer and fall. All traffic must obey the one way. •Pets must be on a leash no longer than 6-feet and attended at all times. •Alcohol is prohibited in the park. •Thefts can occur wherever you travel. Keep valuables with you or secured out of site. Lock vehicles. •All cultural and natural features are protected by law and must be left undisturbed. Do not pick or disturb plants. Do not damage or harass wildlife. •Hypothermia is a rapid drop in body temperature and is caused by prolonged exposure to cold, especially if wet. Know the symptoms of hypothermia and how to treat them. •Lake ice is never safe, use caution when in areas of ice during the fall, winter and spring.



The *Itasca State Park Map and Guide* brochure is published by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Trails, Itasca State Park, 36750 Main Park Drive, Park Rapids, MN 56470. Phone: 218-699-7251. Alternative format available upon request. ©2011, MN DNR

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Photo: Justin Ballard

TOURING ITASCA STATE PARK

MAIN PARK DRIVE—6 miles, one way from the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center to the Mississippi Headwaters, road is open to two way traffic year round

Many of the main features of Itasca State Park can be enjoyed along this drive, including old growth pine and the Headwaters of the Mississippi River.

●**Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center** features exhibits on the park’s natural and cultural history. Open year round. In the winter serves as a trail head and warming shelter for the cross country ski trails.

●**Bicycle Trail** begins at the south parking lot of the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center. A 6-mile trail that goes from the visitor center to the Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center. Trail also connects with Douglas Lodge. Bicyclists can continue on Wilderness Drive; be aware the Wilderness Drive section is shared with vehicle traffic. Obey all traffic signs. The bicycle trail serves as a cross country ski trail in winter.

●**Preachers Grove** features 300 year old red pine. Named after a Preacher’s convention held in this location in the early 1900s.

●**Peace Pipe Vista** is the homestead location of the first European-American settlers Peter and Mary Turnbull to the Itasca area in 1883. Site offers beautiful sunset vista overlooking Lake Itasca. Named for the natural springs that flow at the base of the vista, the water was once collected using pieces of pipe. Steep steps lead to a lower viewing area.

●**Pioneer Cemetery** is the final resting place for over a dozen early Itasca homesteaders. Land originally donated by pioneer William McMullen. Please respect this historic site.

●**Lake Itasca Boat Access**, here you can launch your boat, canoe or kayak as you fish and enjoy the beauty of Lake Itasca. Fish include walleye, yellow perch, northern pike, bluegill, rock bass, largemouth bass and black crappie. Common loons, the state bird of Minnesota, can be seen on the lake. Many river canoeists begin their journey down the length of the Mississippi River at this location. **Itasca Sports Rental** is located within this area. **Mississippi Headwaters Hostel** is located across the road from the boat access.

●**Wegmann’s Store** see a replica of the original pioneer store and former homestead site of Theodore and Johanna Wegmann, early park pioneers.

●**Indian Mounds/North Picnic Grounds** is the village site of the Woodland Indians, residents to the area 500 to 1,000 years ago. This culture was noted for making clay pots and use of bow and arrow for hunting game at greater distances. Please respect this historic site.

●**Mississippi Headwaters**, here is where the mighty Mississippi River begins its 2,552 mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. Interpretive signs share additional information about the site. Enjoy a variety of migratory birds as you follow the return trail along the boardwalk.

●**Schoolcraft Trail** offers a 2-mile round trip hiking trail along the west shore of Lake Itasca. Trail head begins at the west end of the Mississippi River boardwalk. Trail ends with a vista overlooking Schoolcraft Island, encampment location of the Henry Rowe Schoolcraft expedition on July 13, 1832.

WILDERNESS DRIVE—10 miles, one way from the Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center to Douglas Lodge, road is open to two way traffic for the first 3 miles, then becomes one way traffic at the Ozawindib Group Camp; one way traffic flow is from north to south; in winter the road is only plowed to Lake Ozawindib, the remainder is ski trails.

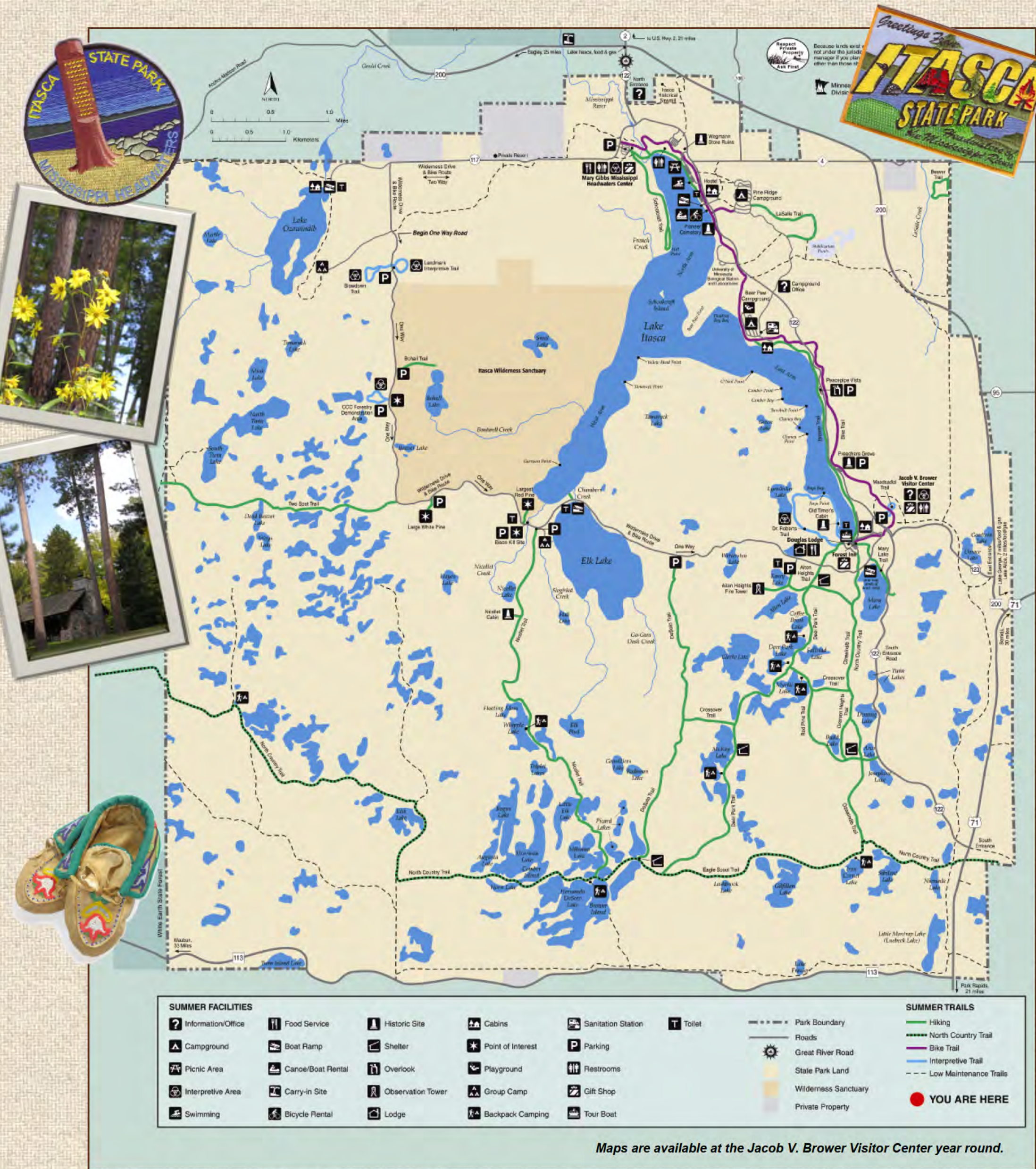
This drive takes visitors into the heart of the forests of Itasca. Towering stands of old growth pine line many of the more than 100 lakes found within the park. Wildlife is often observed including white-tailed deer, gray wolves, black bear, fisher, otter, porcupine, raccoons, beaver, owls, bald eagles, woodpeckers and a variety of song birds. Numerous hiking trails lead visitors further into Itasca’s pristine forest. This road once served as the west boundary of the park until land on the west side was purchased in 1918. Notice the difference in forest type from the east side with its old growth pine versus the west side with its predominantly aspen and paper birch regeneration.

●**Lake Ozawindib Boat Access**, once served as a railroad loading location when this section of land was owned by timber companies in the late 1800s. Wood pilings are still visible underwater near the boat access from this era. This smaller lake offers ideal canoeing, kayaking and fishing opportunities. Fish include largemouth bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed, black crappie, and northern pike. A vault toilet is located at the parking lot.

●**Landmark Interpretive Trail/ Wilderness Sanctuary**, this self-guiding trail tells the natural history of Itasca’s forest. The Landmark Trail meanders through pristine pine stands that have never been logged. This trail marks the north boundary of the Itasca Wilderness Sanctuary, a 2,000 acre tract of primeval land. Designated a Wilderness Sanctuary in 1939, the location is also designated as a National Natural Landmark (1965) and a State Scientific and Natural Area (1982).

●**Blowdown Trail** is a self-guiding trail interpreting the effects of a tremendous windstorm that hit the area in 1995. Straight-line winds at over 120 miles per hour altered over 3,000 acres of forest within Itasca State Park. This rugged trail shares the story of this natural event. The lack of large pine is a result of logging prior to the park acquiring the land in 1918.

●**Bohall Trail** winds through towering stands of old growth red pine. This rugged trail concludes at Bohall Lake; benches randomly scattered along the trail. Evidence of prescribed burns conducted in the early 2000s is visible. Black-backed woodpeckers frequent this area.



Maps are available at the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center year round.

●**CCC Forestry Demonstration Site** was once a pasture after the area was clear-cut in the early 1900s by timber interests. Park acquired the land in 1918. Members of the Civilian Conservation Corps replanted the site in the 1930s as a tool to demonstrate forestry practices. Self-guiding trail interprets the area.

●**Two-Spot Trail/Middle-West Cabin**, this straight trail once served as an access road to the west boundary of the park. Named after an old railroad engine the “Two Spot” that hauled red and white pine logs from Lake Ozawindib to the short-lived lumber town of Mallard to the north. Aspen and white pine line the route. The Middle-West cabin ruins (no longer visible today), located on the east side of Wilderness Drive, once served as a forestry cabin, used by park staff as they protected the park’s timber stands during the era of logging.

●**Large White Pine**, this tree is symbolic of the monarch large white pines that once forested large tracks of Itasca State Park. White pine was highly sought by the timber markets in the late 1800s.

●**Bison Kill Site** uncovered in 1937 during the construction of Wilderness Drive over Nicollet Creek, ancient bison bones, dating back over 8,000 years, were unearthed. Archaeological surveys in 1964 and 1965 revealed the site as bison refuse dumps used by Archaic hunters and gatherers. The bones are from the now extinct bison species *Bison occidentalis*, a species significantly larger than today’s modern buffalo. A replica of a skull unearthed at the site can be found in the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center.

●**Large Red Pine**, this short walk passes by some of the remaining old growth red pine. At trails end stands the former national champion red pine. The affects of time and weather have taken their toll on this former monarch tree, vividly depicting the lifecycle of all living things. All that remains is the boll or trunk but other pine of comparable size can be seen on the surrounding slopes. A vault toilet is located at the parking lot.

●**Elk Lake Boat Access**, anglers can gain access during the open water season at this boat access. Elk Lake is the first lake to become catch-and-release for muskellunge. Other fish include walleye, northern pike, and bluegill. This area is good for viewing bald eagles that nest within the area between Elk Lake and the west arm of Lake Itasca. A vault toilet is located at the parking lot.

●**Nicollet Trail** passes through magnificent white and red pine stands. One mile down the trail, nestled amongst towering pines, stands the restored Nicollet Cabin, one of six forestry cabins built in 1917. This trail

was named by Jacob V. Brower in memory of Joseph N. Nicollet, early Minnesota explorer who mapped the Itasca basin in 1836. Used as a cross-country ski trail in winter.

●**DeSoto Trail** passes through a variety of conifer and hardwood stands. Cross-country skiers often see signs of wolf activity during the winter along this trail. Named by Jacob V. Brower after Hernando DeSoto, first European to enter the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1541. Used as a cross-country ski trail in winter.



●**Aiton Heights Fire Tower**, restored in 1998, this 100-foot tall old forestry fire tower is open from spring through the fall so visitors can experience the Mississippi watershed. Parking is located just off of Wilderness Drive. It is a half-mile walk from the parking lot to the tower. For a longer hike, begin at Douglas Lodge and connect with the east-west Aiton Heights Trail. Check park maps for trails to the tower. A vault toilet is located at the parking lot.

●**Deer Park Trail** passes by several beautiful lakes, including Coffee Break and Deer Park lakes. The trail is rolling and passes through stands of mixed pine and hardwood. Probably named by the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) after the extremely high deer population in the park during the 1930s. Used as a cross-country ski trail in winter.

●**Ozawindib Trail** was named by Jacob V. Brower to honor Ozawindib, Ojibwe guide who lead Henry Rowe Schoolcraft to the source of the Mississippi River in 1832. This hilly trail connects with the Eagle Scout Trail, an east-west trail on the south end of the park. Eagle Scout Trail passes numerous lakes located along the park’s higher points. It also connects with Deer Park, DeSoto and Nicollet Trails, before continuing to the western boundary of the park. Named for the 1930s scout camp by DeSoto Lake, it today serves as part of the national North Country Hiking Trail route. Both Ozawindib and Eagle Scout Trails serve as cross-country ski trails in winter.

●**Mary Lake Boat Access**, this small lake offers panfish opportunities. Fish include bluegill, pumpkinseed, rock bass and northern pike. Kayakers and canoeists might see otter playing in the lake. Trumpeter swans occasionally feed on the lake. The lake and nearby trail were named by Peter Turnbull, first settler in the park area, after his wife.

DOUGLAS LODGE COMPLEX—located at the four-way stop near the East Entrance/Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center; Wilderness Drive concludes at the road leading to the lodge.

●**Douglas Lodge** has been serving guests since 1905. Built in rustic style, this fully modern lodge offers lodging and dining opportunities Memorial Day Weekend to early October. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Douglas Lodge also offers packages for meetings, weddings, and tour operator groups.

●**Forest Inn** houses both a gift shop and 75-person capacity meeting room. Constructed in 1941 by members of the Veteran’s Conservation Corps, Forest Inn is a premier example of the Depression-era log and stone construction. Open late May to early October.

●**Mary Lake Trail**, this trail begins behind Forest Inn, winding its way along Mary Creek and along the shores of Mary Lake. It concludes at the **Mary Lake Deer Enclosure** site on the South Entrance Road. Used as a snowshoe trail in winter.

●**Dr. Roberts Trail**, winds for 2 miles through pine, aspen, oak and maple stands. Trail guides are available for purchase in the park gift shops. Trail head is below Douglas Lodge near the Lake Itasca Tours dock and concludes behind the Clubhouse. The first quarter-mile follows a boardwalk through a natural bog to the **Old Timer’s Cabin**, a Civilian Conservation Corp cabin that is only four logs high! Used as a snowshoe trail in winter.

●**Brower Trail**, named after Jacob V. Brower, first superintendent of Itasca State Park, follows the east shoreline of Lake Itasca, passing below Preacher’s Grove and Peace Pipe Vista before concluding in Bear Paw Campground.

Used as a snowshoe trail in winter. Trail head is below Douglas Lodge by the fishing pier.

●**Lake Itasca Tours/ Chester Charles II tour boat**, park concession tour boat, located below Douglas Lodge. Purchase tickets for the boat tour at the Chester Charles II dock.

