

# Suggested Hikes, Rides and Paddles!

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## Bradley Palmer State Park

40 Asbury Street, Topsfield, MA 01983, (978) 887-5931

To help you plan your visit to DCR's Bradley Palmer State Park, we offer the following suggested experiences that we think you might enjoy.

- **“Introductory”** are short and appropriate for most users, including families with children.
- **“Signature”** are recommended trail experiences. These may be longer or more difficult but highlight some of the best park features.

For a safe and enjoyable park experience please review the **Things to Know Before You Go** section at the end of this document. Download a map before you go:  
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/bradley-palmer-trail-map/download>

## Introductory Hike

### Accessible Ipswich Riverside Stroll

**Trailhead:** Park at the area near the Main Entrance off Asbury Street. **Lat/Long:** 42.652797, -70.911048

**Distance:** 1 mile **Difficulty:** Easy

**Brief Description:** The Accessible Trail has a level stonedust surface that is a flat grade. It is great for persons with mobility issues. Motorized vehicles and equestrians are prohibited. The trail starts just past the old Lamson farmhouse on what once was the original route of Asbury Street before Bradley Palmer rerouted it away from his house in 1925. As you start the trail note how wide it is between the stone walls on either side. The area on your right was farmland used by the Lamson Family over multiple generations. Just before you reach a boardwalk there is a turnout on your left where you will see the stone abutments from the Lamson Bridge, first built in 1730. Old Asbury Street used to turn here to cross the Ipswich River to its intersection with Ipswich Road. Cross the boardwalk which overlooks the river and a stream that has been dammed by beavers, forming a pond. On the other side of the boardwalk you enter a forest dominated by eastern hemlocks which was planted by Bradley Palmer. There is a branch to your left that takes you to the riverbank, but the many exposed tree roots are trip hazards and are hard to navigate with wheelchairs or strollers. Continuing down the main trail there are many fallen tree trunks, either dead ones cut to clear the path, or whole trees that were uprooted in storms. Continue on the trail until you reach the footbridge crossing the Ipswich River. This is as far as the Accessible Trail goes, a half mile from the start. Return by retracing your route back to the parking lot.

## Introductory Hike

### Carriage Road

**Trailhead:** Main or south parking lots **Lat/Long:** 42.650956, -70.907195

**Distance:** 2.4 miles max. **Difficulty:** Easy

**Brief Description:** The Carriage Road is a two lane asphalt road that connects the main parking lot with the south Highland Road park entrance. It is 1.2 miles end to end, and can be accessed from the main parking lot on the north, or a small parking lot on Highland Road west of the entrance. A path leads from the lot to the Carriage Road. This paved road is the most popular path in the park, used by hikers, roller skaters, bicyclists, skateboarders, and equestrians. Occasionally horse drawn carriages use the road as originally intended by Bradley Palmer. Motor vehicles use the road when the wading pool is open, so visitors should follow traffic rules for pedestrians, bicycles, and horses. The road goes through mixed woods with many rhododendrons along the side. At the north end there are beaver ponds and at the south end there are decorative iron gates and the abandoned picturesque fieldstone gatekeeper's cottage. The park wading pool is .2 mile from the south entrance, but no vehicles can enter through the south gate. Pool access by car starts at the main parking lot; it is a one mile drive to the pool parking area.

## Signature Hike

### Moon Hill

**Trailhead:** You can begin this hike at various parking or access points. Have a trail map. Intersections are numbered. **Lat/Long:** 42.652797, -70.911048

**Distance:** 2 miles **Difficulty:** Strenuous

**Brief Description:** Moon Hill is the highest elevation in the park that is not overgrown with trees and shrubs. It is open meadow. There are a number of ways to hike to it. You will need to pick up a trail map at the parking lot bulletin board or from a box outside the park Headquarters. One route is from the Ipswich River footbridge intersection on the Accessible Trail (see above); head uphill directly away from the river. You will come out in an open meadow at intersection 5 where there is a sign pointing to Moon Hill. Continue up this trail to the hill. This path is part of the Bay Circuit Trail. The path gets steeper as you near the top of the hill, and there are roots, stones, and sometimes washed out ruts. Once on top of the hill at intersection 26 you can walk around Moon Hill or cross it on a straight path. Note that the mosquitos can be bothersome in the open. If you want to return via a different path go to intersections 27 or 29 on the east side of the hill. The paths downhill from those openings take you to a fireroad at intersections 25 or 24 respectively. The fireroad circles back to the north, around the base of the hill to come back to the road between the headquarters and the main parking lot. If you want to take a longer trip back you can take the fireroad south all the way to the wading pool (see trail map), and return via the asphalt carriage road, which is a mile from the main parking lot. If you want to leave Moon Hill by going down the west side, note that the trail intersections can be confusing if you do not have a

compass to decide which way to go. Of course, you can access Moon Hill by reversing your route up these various paths.

## Signature Hike Blueberry Hill

**Trailhead:** You can begin this hike at various parking or access points. Have a trail map. Intersections are numbered. **Lat/Long:** 42.652797, -70.911048

**Distance:** 2 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate

**Brief Description:** Pick up a trail map and hike one of the many loops to Moon and Blueberry Hill and return.

## Things to Know Before You Go

- **Time, distance, difficulty.** The average hiker pace is estimated at 1.5 miles per hour. Most distances are round-trip. Plan conservatively, start early. Be aware of weather and sunset. Trail difficulty ratings based on ruggedness and gradient are *easy*, *moderate*, or *difficult*.
- **Wear weather appropriate clothing**, layer for temperature changes. Bring sunblock. Wear appropriate and sturdy footwear.
- **Parking at trailheads.** [Parking fees](#) may apply. Space may be limited. Be courteous to avoid blocking in others. Do not leave valuables in your car.
- **Bring a map and share your plans with someone.**
- **Drinking water** may not be available on site. Bring plenty!
- **Stay on designated trails.** Follow painted blazes and signs if available. Generally, double blazes indicate an intersection or direction change.
- **Pace & group size.** Keep your group together; hike only as fast as your group's slowest hiker or rider. Limit your group size to 12 people or fewer to lessen impacts.
- **Carry-in, carry-out all trash and personal belongings.** Follow the Leave No Trace outdoor ethics. [More information here.](#)
- **Know which parks are pet friendly.** Dogs are not permitted in DCR Water Supply Protection areas (such as Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs) and certain state parks. Always keep your dog leashed, 10-foot maximum. Always pick up after your dog and dispose of waste properly. [Complete guidelines here.](#)
- **Be aware of hunting seasons.** Wear blaze orange when appropriate. [More information here.](#)
- **Wear a bicycle helmet** while biking. Riders age 16 and under must wear a helmet. It is the law. [More information here.](#)

- **Wear your PFD** while boating. A Personal Flotation Device (PFD), or life preserver, must be worn by boaters age 12 and under; and canoeists/kayakers from Sept. 15-May 15. [More information here.](#)
  - **Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers.** Prevent the transport of nuisance species. Clean all recreational equipment. It is the law. [More information here.](#)
  - **Be aware some trails may not be well marked, and some may not be identified on a trail map.**
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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) oversees over 450,000 acres of state parks, forests, beaches, bike trails, parkways, watershed lands, and dams across the Commonwealth. DCR's mission is to: *Protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.*