

# Suggested Hikes, Rides and Paddles!

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## Chester-Blandford State Forest

800 US-20, Chester, MA 01011, (413) 354-6347 Summer / Winter (413) 269-6002

To help you plan your visit to DCR's Chester-Blandford State Forest, 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/chester-blandford-state-forest-trail-map/download>

## Introductory Hike

### Sanderson Brook Falls

**Trailhead:** Sanderson Brook Falls parking lot off US Route 20 in Chester. **Lat/Long:** 42.255996, -72.946898

**Distance:** 2 miles round-trip **Difficulty:** Easy

**Brief Description:** An easy trail to a 60-foot high waterfall. From the parking lot the trail follows Sanderson Brook Road (wide and unpaved). The road gradually ascends following the stream for 0.8 miles. Look for a sign and footpath to the waterfall, on the right, and follow that. The footpath descends below the road to the base of the falls. Enjoy the view, perhaps a picnic, and return by the same route.

## Signature Hike

### CCC Ski Trail & Observation Hill Loop

**Trailhead:** Sanderson Brook Falls parking lot off US Route 20. **Lat/Long:** 42.25606, -72.94680

**Distance:** 4.0 mi **Difficulty:** Difficult

**Brief Description:** This route highlights features of Chester-Blandford State Forest, including some of the recreational elements built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Starting at the parking lot kiosk head (south) up Sanderson Brook Road. At 0.8 miles a short side trail to your right, allows you to visit to the falls, if you like. Back on the road, continue past the waterfall and uphill to a gate. This was once the hub of a modest short-lived ski area built by the CCC in 1937, and no longer in use. The site of the

former warming hut is found on a nearby rise. Passing the gate, turn left onto the CCC Ski Trail and begin to climb. Imagine yourself having to hike up and ski down this steep route! At the top, intersecting with Observation Hill Road, turn left. Follow to the intersection with Mica Mine Road. Turn left onto Mica Mine Road and connect with the H. Newman Marsh Memorial Trail, keeping right, and continuing around the summit of Observation Hill. Several great scenic vistas look down into the Westfield River valley. After leaving Observation Hill follow the Newman Marsh Trail down a steep stretch to Sanderson Brook Road. At the road, turn right and return to your starting point.

## Signature Hike

### H. Newman Marsh Memorial Trail

**Trailhead:** Sanderson Brook Falls parking lot off US Route 20.

**Lat/Long:** 42.25606, -72.94680

**Distance:** 2.2 miles **Difficulty:** Difficult

**Brief Description:** This steep, wooded, ascent of Observation Hill is great for wildlife viewing, nature study, scenic views and fall colors. Around the summit of Observation Hill are three scenic vistas looking down into the Westfield River valley. Numbered stops correspond to a self-guided interpretive trail brochure. From the kiosk at the parking lot head (south) up Sanderson Brook Road. In 0.2 miles turn left onto the Newman Marsh Trail and begin to climb, at times steep. Cross a rocky brook and in 0.45 miles intersect with the Memorial Trail. Turn left and follow around the summit of Observation Hill. Completing the summit loop turn right at the intersection, and head back down by the route you ascended. At the bottom, turn right onto Sanderson Brook Road and return to your starting point.

## 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.*