Explore the Shore

DCR State Parks South Region

TRIP-TIP SELF-GUIDED ADVENTURE

Welcome

Explore the shore this season! This DCR Trip-Tip self-guided adventure features three parks located within 20 minutes driving time of one another in the Plymouth area. Most people associate the shore with the summer and beach but the land, the landscape, the history and coastal ecosystem are alive with stories and life all year long, even in the winter! This Trip-Tip features:

> **Sagamore Hill Hike & Ship Watching at the Cape Cod Canal at Scusset Beach State Reservation in Sagamore**
>
> **Beachcomber Scavenger Hunt & Winter Seal Watching at Ellisville Harbor State Park in Plymouth**
>
> **Monuments and Memorials Tour & Oral Traditions at Pilgrim Memorial State Park in Plymouth**

Trip-Tip gives families information and some fun ideas to explore the great outdoors at DCR Massachusetts State Parks and Watersheds. With a little preparation and a sense of adventure, people of all ages can safely enjoy our outdoor spaces during our coldest months.

Look through this guide to help plan your outing. Choose one park, two parks, or make it a multi-day adventure. Visit them in any order; you decide. Challenge yourself to visit all the parks with your family during February Vacation Week, or anytime this winter. We hope you enjoy this Trip-Tip tour.

Share Your Adventure!

Share your Trip-Tip adventure with others through word of mouth, or on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtriptip**.

Things To Know, Before You Go

Remember, at all DCR parks:

- Carry-in, carry-out all of your belongings, including trash.
- Stay on designated trails.
- All pets on 10-foot maximum leash, attended to at all times. Clean-up after your pet and dispose of waste off-site.
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate.

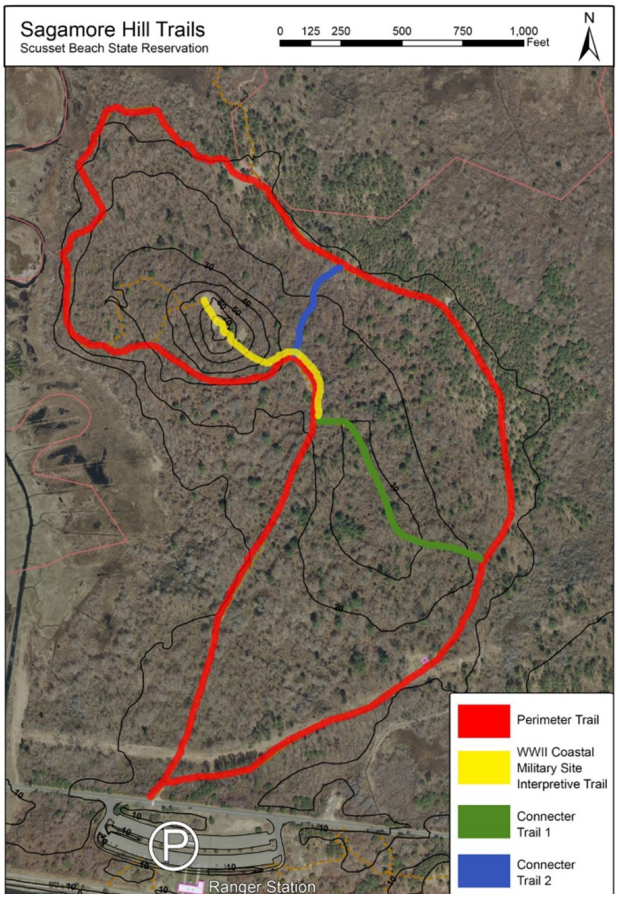
Sagamore Hill Hike & Ship Watching at the Cape Cod Canal
Scusset Beach State Reservation

20 Scusset Beach Road, Sagamore, MA 02562
Phone: 508-888-0859
Website: https://www.mass.gov/locations/scusset-beach-state-reservation
Hours of Operation: Dawn to dusk; the lower beach parking lot and jetty parking lot close at 3pm.
Parking Fees: No parking fees charged from December to Memorial Day weekend.
Restrooms: No public restroom access at this time due to COVID restrictions.

Scusset Beach is located at the southwest corner of Cape Cod Bay. Enjoy a 1-mile hike to the top of Sagamore Hill for an expansive view of Cape Cod Bay and watch ships pass through the Cape Cod Canal.

Sagamore Hill Hike

The Sagamore Hill Trail is a great family-friendly hike that will take you on a journey back in time. The hill overlooking Cape Cod Bay and Scusset Marsh has a rich history from Indian Council ground to a golf course to a World War II gun battery. Subtle clues to obvious historic remnants are found throughout this trail system. The most obvious are near the top of the hill. The view from the top of the hill includes a breath-taking vista of Cape Cod Bay. Curious? Take a hike! Explore the rich cultural and natural history of this area on this 1.1 -mile roundtrip walk that is mostly easy with one short, steep section with some stairs.



- To access the Sagamore Hill Trail, park at the Camping Registration & Headquarters lot.
- Carefully cross Scusset Beach Road using the crosswalk which will bring you immediately to the trailhead.
- Walk through the gray gate and bear right along the Red Trail. You will pass under utility lines and by a picnic table.
- Take a left onto the Green Trail. At the next fork, take a right back onto the Red Trail. Bear left at the picnic table onto the Yellow Trail which will climb up to the top of Sagamore Hill.
- Take in the view of Cape Cod Bay from the top – a great spot for some family photos! Retrace your steps to the bottom of the hill and either return the way you came, or use the trail map and colored trail markers to return via another route.

Art Activity

Draw a picture of the view from the top of Sagamore Hill. If you don't have anything to draw with, try drawing the view from memory or from a photo once you get home.

A Winter Ship-Watching Picnic



The Cape Cod Canal provides a unique, close-up view of ocean-going ships and tugboats underway as they use the canal route to travel between Cape Cod Bay and Buzzards Bay. Cruise lines, cargo ships and jumbo car carriers can be seen from the Canal banks. From the simple lines of a working harbor tugboat to the sleek look of a luxury yacht, the Cape Cod Canal provides a continuous parade of vessels to observe and enjoy.

Stay parked in the Camping Registration & Headquarters parking lot. Walk over to the Headquarters building. There are plenty of spots along the Canal here to watch the ships. Pack a picnic lunch and bring along a thick blanket or lawn chairs to set up an outdoor picnic spot along the Cape Cod Canal. Watch the ships pass through the Canal. You can also spend some time doing some winter birdwatching at the Canal. Bring along a pair of binoculars and a field guide to birds if you have them.

Extend Your Experience!

- There is a lot to explore along the Cape Cod Canal Recreation Area. Check out this map for more ideas of places to visit: https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/docs/Recreation/CCC/CanalRecreationMap2018.pdf?ver=2020-06-26-114558-180
- Continue driving down Scusset Beach Road to the beach parking lot and take a walk along the beach to the jetty and back.
- Although it's usually too chilly for a bike ride in the winter, once in a while we get a winter day that feels like spring. If that happens, consider bringing your bikes and bike helmets along and taking a family bike ride along the 7-mile Cape Cod Canal bike route.

Beachcomber Scavenger Hunt & Winter Seal Watching
Ellisville Harbor State Park

1861 State Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
Phone: 508-866-2526
Website: https://www.mass.gov/locations/ellisville-harbor-state-park
Hours of Operation: Dawn to dusk.
Parking Fees: No parking fee.
Restrooms: No restrooms at this location.

Ellisville Harbor State Park offers a unique coastal experience on the South Shore. Explore the park's rolling meadows, salt marsh and barrier beach on Cape Cod Bay. Winter is the best time to see harbor seals from the shoreline!

Beachcomber Scavenger Hunt

Park in the dirt lot that is at the end of the short dirt road to the right of the Ellisville Harbor State Park entrance sign. Take the path at the far end of the dirt parking lot, to the right of the information kiosk. Take a one-mile walk (2-miles round trip) along a wide, easy trail down to the beach. Enjoy the views of Ellisville Harbor on your right as you walk along – the best views of Ellisville Harbor are in the winter when there are no leaves on the trees. On the left you'll see glimpses of the meadows and fields that are now a reminder that this land was once part of the 17th-century farmstead owned by the Harlow family.

Once you get to the beach, turn right and you can walk along the beach to the inlet of the harbor and back. While you are beachcombing, see how many of these common winter beach items you can find. Return back to the parking lot along the same trail.

Beachcomber Scavenger Hunt List:



A red or orange rock



Blue mussel shells



Crab shells



A periwinkle (snail) shell



A cool piece of seaweed



A slipper shell

Winter Seal Watching

A sunny winter day during a mid-day low tide is one of the best times to see harbor seals basking on the shore or on exposed rocks just off shore. Grey seals also make an appearance in Cape Cod Bay from time to time. Find a sunny spot to sit for a while and quietly observe. Bring binoculars if you have them. Be sure to listen for the sounds of the seals barking. Sometimes you will get lucky and see and hear some great harbor seal behavior!



Remember that all marine mammals, including seals, are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Harassing them intentionally or unwittingly is a violation of federal law. But seeing seals at the shore is a relatively recent occurrence and a great opportunity for a life-long memory. People can easily share the beach with seals by knowing a few rules:

- Stay 150 feet or more from resting seals.
- Be quiet and still.
- Do not bring your dog.
- If concerned about the health of the animal, call the New England Aquarium's stranding hotline at (617-973-5247).

Extend Your Experience!

Take a walk along the inside of the barrier beach along the salt marsh. There are several established trails that lead over the dunes to the salt marsh trail. Please use those trails; don't walk over the vegetated dunes and be aware that the dunes are home to poison ivy. Can you see the osprey nesting platform in the salt marsh? Although ospreys fly south for the winter, the same pair will return each spring year after year to the same nest to raise their young.

Monuments & Memorials Tour & Oral Traditions
Pilgrim Memorial State Park

79 Water Street, Plymouth, MA 02360
Phone: 508-749-5360
Website: https://www.mass.gov/locations/pilgrim-memorial-state-park
Hours of Operation: Dawn to dusk.
Parking Fees: No parking fees for DCR lots from December through March. Metered town parking is available throughout the waterfront. More information can be found here: https://parkplymouth.com/parkplymouth-homepage.html.
Restrooms: No public restrooms available during winter months.

This waterfront park is home to historic Plymouth Rock and the Mayflower II. High atop of Coles Hill, you'll also find fantastic views of Plymouth Harbor and many significant monuments. Take the self-guided Monuments & Memorials Tour to learn more about them. Take a look at Plymouth Rock and learn about oral traditions.

Monuments & Memorials Tour

History happened here on the shores of Plymouth Bay! Pilgrim Memorial State Park is a memorial landscape honoring the courage, endurance, and sacrifice of the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag. Each of the monuments or memorials you visit on the tour was placed into the landscape for a reason. The route is less than 1/4 of a mile and takes about 30 minutes. Download or print the self-guided Monuments and Memorials Tour from the DCR website at https://www.mass.gov/doc/self-guided-opportunities/download.

Plymouth Rock & Oral Traditions



The first time someone wrote about the importance of Plymouth Rock was in 1741, which was 121 years after the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth. Before that, it was an oral tradition. An oral tradition is a story passed down along the generations of a family by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Have any of the adults in your family told you a story about your family's past from the time before you were born? If so, write the story down; perhaps this is the first place that you family's story has been written down! If you can't think of a story from the past, write any family story from your memory.

Extend Your Experience!

The Plymouth Waterfront is a fun place to visit any time of year. There is lots to do and you can find more ideas by visiting https://seeplymouth.com/.

Thank you for joining us for this Explore the Shore Trip-Tip! We hope you enjoyed your winter adventure exploring the natural world of the coast and learning about some of the history that happened along these shores.

During your next Trip-Tip, perhaps you'll visit a park that you didn't know about before. Maybe you'll meet a new bird or try a new sport. Winter wanderings bring you opportunities to experiment with ways you can embrace winter. We hope that you will be invigorated to take even more Trip-Tip outdoor adventures all year long!

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The 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.* For more information visit: https://www.mass.gov/orgs/department-of-conservation-recreation.

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