

Presque Isle Hiking & Biking Trail



FRENCH CREEK COUNCIL

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

General Park Rules and Safety Notices

Outdoor recreational activities are restricted to locations where physical improvements or posting designates the appropriate purpose and use. Similarly fires and the disposal of hot coals are permitted only in provided facilities.

- Place trash and all other litter in provided containers and only dispose of trash and litter accumulated during the use of state recreation areas.
- Inflatable or buoy devices are prohibited in swimming areas except for US Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices worn by swimmers.
- Swimming is only permitted on guarded beaches during times when guards are on duty.
- Diving at beach areas is prohibited. This includes running entry devices and diving from the shoulders of another.
- Winter ice conditions on the Lake Erie side of the park are unpredictable, PLEASE STAY OFF ICE DUNES.
- DO NOT FEED THE WILDLIFE. When wildlife loses their fear of people, these animals become pests and dangerous or nuisance situations can result.
- DEER TICKS are found at the park. Precautions should be taken when walking through grassy or bushy areas.
- All Pennsylvania state parks have instituted a recycling and waste reduction program. We urge all park visitors to join us in the recycling effort. During your stay, please use the recycling containers placed at various locations in the park.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Outdoor recreational activity shall be restricted to locations where physical improvements or posting designates the appropriate purpose and use. Similarly, fires and the disposal of hot coals are permitted only in provided facilities.
- Trash and all other litter shall be placed in containers provided for this purpose and shall be limited to litter accumulated during the use of state recreation areas.
- Soliciting and the posting of signs is prohibited.
- Natural areas may possess hazards not normally encountered. You are responsible for your own safety.

Presque Isle State Park Contact -- (814) 833-7424

Attractions at Presque Isle State Park:

Stull Interpretive Nature Center - A good place to begin your visit at Presque Isle State Park is at the Stull Interpretive Center, located near Barracks Beach. At the center, you can learn about the park's resources by viewing exhibits on the ecological succession of the sand spit and the natural and man-made forces that continue to shape Presque Isle. Other displays depict the park's impressive inventory of birds, plants and flowers. Books, field guides and other nature-related items are available here. The Stull Interpretive Center can be reached at (817) 833-0351. Hours: Spring, Fall & Winter: 10-4. Summer: 10-5.

Perry Monument: Perry Monument towers over the Presque Isle shoreline, overlooking the City of Erie. Visit this monument to Commodore Oliver Perry, a courageous military leader during the War of 1812. See more about Oliver Perry in this booklet.

Presque Isle Lighthouse - The Presque Isle Light was built in 1872 and first lit on July 12, 1873. It flashes a white light that is still maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard. An educational exhibit is located adjacent to the property. On Presque Isle. (814) 833-7424.

MILL ROAD BEACHES (guarded):

- Parking is only along the road but very close to beach
- One restroom

BEACH 9 (guarded):

- Bathhouse
- Very wide beach
- Adequate parking

SUNSET POINT (unguarded):

- Popular with wind surfers, boaters and kite flyers
- Limited parking
- No facilities

BEACH 10 (guarded):

- More than enough parking
- Actual beach has been diminished because of erosion
- Popular with boaters and all age groups
- Concession stand
- Bathhouse

BEACH 11 (guarded):

- Undergoing change because of sand spit formation. Use may change, but in past has been popular as protected and shallow area during high westerly winds
- Adequate parking
- Concession stand
- Bathhouse
- Ideal for little kids because of shallow water
- Parking area has playground.

Biking:

Presque Isle State Park is a great place for enjoying a bike ride. It is a flat, seven-mile long peninsula jutting out into Lake Erie.

You will ride along the Presque Isle Bay and return along the lakeside. Many stops along the way offer outdoor exhibits, restrooms and water. The mileage is marked along the trail pavement and plenty of parking is available along the trail.

The Stull Interpretive Center and the Administration Office are stops to make for more information.

Bike rentals are available at the park entrance and at the Waterworks area.

Area Attractions (businesses). These all charge admissions.

- Family First Fun Park (seasonal) - 8155 Oliver Road, Erie
- Splash Lagoon - Peach St., Erie
- Waldameer Park (seasonal) – Entrance to Presque Isle
- Erie Zoo - 423 West 38th Street, Erie
- Erie Seawolves Baseball (seasonal) – Team plays at Jerry Uht Park, 110 E. 10th St., Erie. Contact them for home game information. Phone: (800) 456-1304
- Erie Freeze Indoor Football (seasonal) – Team plays at the Louis J. Tullio Arena at The Erie Civic Center, 809 French St., Erie. Contact them for home game information. Phone: (814) 454-0200
- Erie Otters Hockey (seasonal) - Team plays at the Louis J. Tullio Arena at The Erie Civic Center, 809 French St., Erie. Contact them for home game information. Phone the Erie Civic Center Box Office at 814-452-4857 or 814-456-7070.

For other area attractions & events contact the Erie Area Chamber of Commerce: (814) 454-7191.

HIKING SENSE

- 1) Always wear comfortable, sturdy hiking boots when taking a hike of any distance
- 2) Please be courteous of traffic, pedestrians, in-line skaters & bikers. Use good Scout sense.
- 3) Take plenty of water along.
- 4) Never litter. Always carry a trash bag with you for your own personal trash.
- 5) Always tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back. This is just good hiking sense, no matter where you go.
- 6) Dress or pack for all possible weather conditions forecast that day. Layers are the wisest way to dress for the outdoors, of course - you can add or subtract as you go. We also strongly recommend long-sleeved clothing, especially in warmer weather.
- 7) Hiking Dangers
 - A) Poison ivy growing as small plants, tall shrubs, vines, even small trees.
 - B) Ticks. Long clothing with a spray of repellent at the cuffs is your best defense.
 - C) A word on dogs. Treat any dog you may come across on the way as if it were a wild animal.
- 8) Accident, fire, emergency: 911

Gull Point: A Fragile Ecosystem

The most dynamic area on Presque Isle, the 319-acre area Gull Point, harbors the best examples of succession in the park. This dynamic area, however, is also the most fragile. To preserve the resources of Gull Point, it has been designated as a natural area. State park natural areas are set aside to provide locations for scientific observation of natural systems, to protect examples of typical and unique plant and animal communities and to protect outstanding examples of natural interest and beauty.

Jutting out into Lake Erie, Gull Point offers a safe haven and resting spot for nesting and migrating birds. It's nationally known as a birding hot spot. During some years, more species of birds have been crammed into this small area than almost anywhere else in the eastern United States. Many species occur nowhere else in Pennsylvania.

Shorebirds migrate yearly from beyond the Arctic Circle to the southern reaches of South America and back again. They begin to arrive in April and stop to rest and feed here on their return trip until late November. Water and wading birds and waterfowl live and nest here. Under the right conditions in the spring, impressive waves of migrating hawks and smaller land birds flock through.

At least four gull species can be seen year round at least three tern species can be seen in warmer seasons. About 67 acres of Gull Point have been set aside as a special management area in hopes of allowing rare and migratory shorebirds to nest, rest and feed successfully. The special management area is closed to all public use from April 1 through November 30.

HISTORICAL FACTS

- ▶ Presque Isle and the bay it creates have played many significant roles in the history of Erie and the nation. The US Government chose this location to build a fleet of ships during the war of 1812 because it formed the only protected harbor on Lake Erie. In 1813, during the battle of Lake Erie, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry successfully defended Lake Erie against the British with ships that were built on Presque Isle Bay, making a significant mark on the pages of history.
- ▶ Presque Isle is French, meaning "almost an island". The isle curves around in a long arc until it almost touches the mainland again at its farthest point. Presque Isle State Park is the most visited state park in Pennsylvania, entertaining nearly 4 million people annually. To put this in perspective, Yosemite National Park has approximately 3 million visitors per year.
- ▶ The Eriez Indians lived along the southern shores of Lake Erie and were early inhabitants of the area. They hunted game from the forests, gathered plants, and fished from the waters of Lake Erie in birch-bark canoes. According to legend, the Eriez ventured far into the lake to find the place where the sun sank into the waters. The spirits of the lake caused a great storm to arise so the Great Spirit stretched out his left arm into the lake to protect the Eriez from the storm. Where the sheltering arm of the Great Spirit had lain in the lake, a great sandbar in the shape of an arm-like peninsula was formed to act for all ages as a shelter and harbor of refuge for the Great Spirit's favorite children, the Eriez. They were traditional enemies of the Iroquois who always mentioned the Erie were great warriors, have verified the long-term hostility, and also add that the Erie frequently used poisoned arrows in war.

▶ During the War of 1812, Little Bay was the temporary home of the fleet of ships commanded by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry. Six of his eleven vessels were built in Erie at a hastily constructed boatyard near the foot of Cascade Creek (6th & Cascade Sts.). Captain Dobbins (e.g. – “Dobbins’s Landing”) built the fleet of ships that would lead to the defeat of the British on Sept. 10th, 1813 near Put-in-Bay, Ohio. The shores and waters of Presque Isle protected the fleet during construction.

▶ After the Battle of Lake Erie, Perry and his men returned to Little Bay and Presque Isle Bay to repair their fleet and seek medical treatment for the wounded. They stayed in the protection of the bay because of threats of another British uprising. During the winters of 1812-1814, many of Perry's crew suffered from poor living conditions and the harsh winters. As legend has it, many of them died and their bodies were buried in the adjacent pond known as Graveyard Pond. In remembrance of their hardships during those winters, Little Bay was renamed Misery Bay by the surviving sailors.

▶ The hull of Perry’s flagship *The Lawrence*, then, eventually *The Niagara*, were sunk in Misery Bay to preserve and protect them from the weather. The Lawrence was raised in 1875 but was destroyed by fire in Philadelphia during the Centennial Exhibition of 1876. The Niagara was raised in 1912 and rebuilt for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie in 1913.

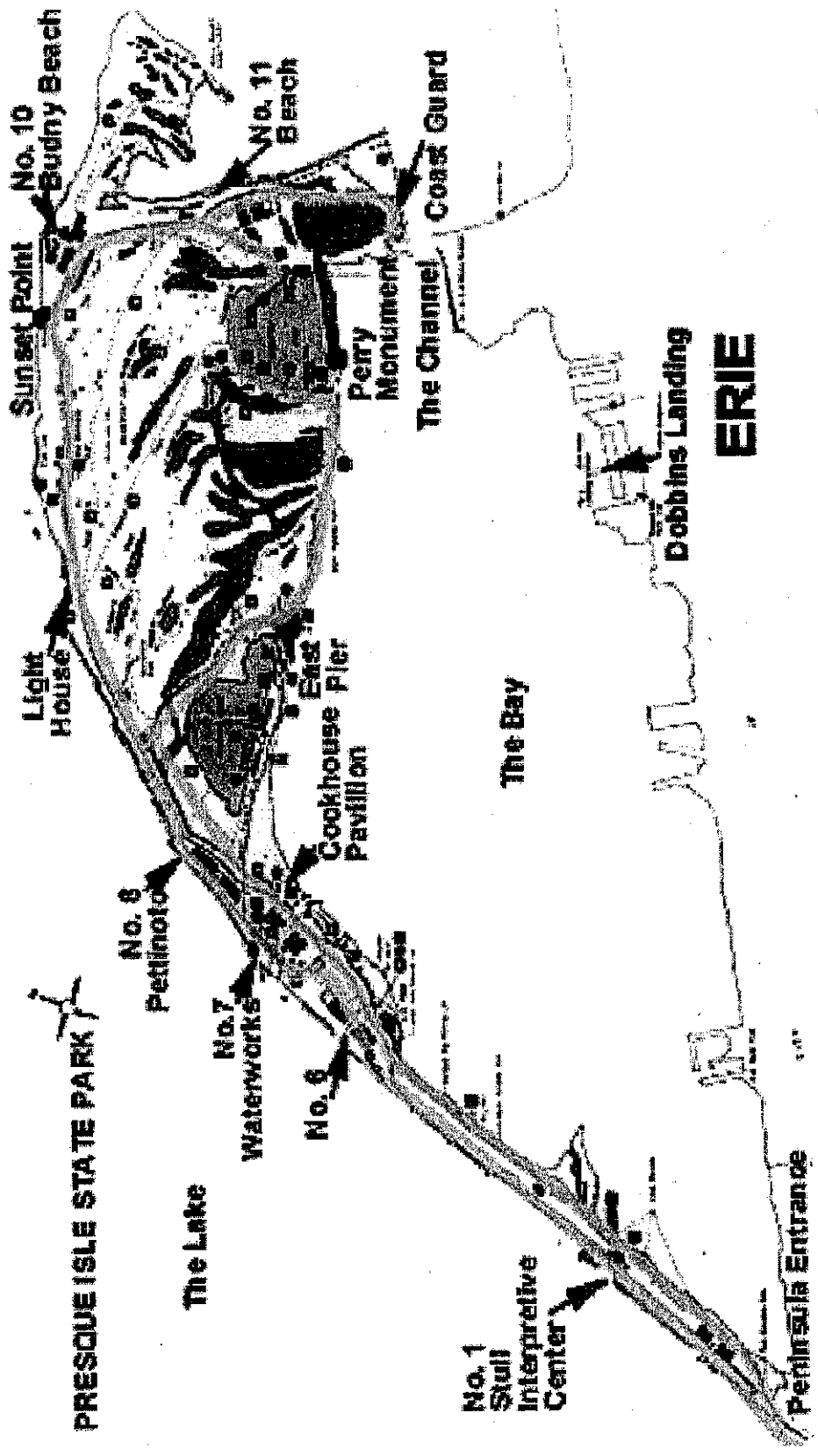
▶ "Bury me on the hill at the foot of the flagpole," requested General "Mad Anthony" Wayne just before he died in Erie in 1796. A military funeral obliged his last wish at Fort Presque Isle. In 1809, however, the Society of the Cincinnati decided to erect a monument to Wayne in his family plot at St. David's Churchyard in Radnor, PA. Wayne's son and a doctor friend trundled to Erie in a one-horse wagon to fetch the bones. But they found the corpse almost perfectly preserved and were thus faced with a serious transportation problem: the wagon simply didn't have enough space for one supine body plus two upright ones. The practical solution, perhaps suggested by the doctor, was to condense "Mad Anthony" for the trip. The two boiled Wayne's corpse in a cauldron, separating flesh from bones. Wayne's flesh and viscera plus the knives used were placed in the old coffin and reburied. The general's dutiful caretakers then returned to Radnor with a neat package of bones and deposited them in the plot now marked as Anthony Wayne's grave. Although the grave at Presque Isle "had by weight the greater part of Wayne's body," wrote one Wayne biographer, that grave lay forgotten for many years.

▶ The city of Erie developed the Waterworks Park area on Presque Isle in search of a cleaner water source. In 1908, workers began placing a pipe from the lake to the settling basins. In 1917, the pumphouse was built. At that time it contained a steam boiler and engine. Water was drawn from the lake to the settling basins and then pumped across the bay to the city of Erie. This pumphouse and water supply system operated from 1917 until 1949. Currently the pumphouse is used as a zebra mussel control facility for Erie's water supply.

▶ The Presque Isle Lighthouse was built in 1872 and first lit on July 12, 1873. The 57-foot tower has a redbrick dwelling at the base and is currently used as a park residence. It flashes a white light that is still maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard

▶ At its peak in the 1920s, over 140 fishing tugs steamed out of Erie’s harbor, bringing their catch back to the city’s 14 fish processing plants. Commercial fishing was a million dollar a year industry, employing 3,500 men full time. In 1920, Erie was proclaimed “the Fresh Water Fishing Capital of the World.”

▶ Commissioned in 1844, the USS Michigan (recommissioned in 1905 as the USS *Wolverine*) was the first Iron hulled ship build by the United States Navy. She made her home in Erie for almost 80 years and was scrapped in the late 1940's. Built in Pittsburgh and re-assembled in Erie, she was 167 feet long, displaced 450 tons, and was powered by side-paddlers and sails. *Michigan* provided a formidable and grand naval presence on the Great Lakes. Her prow is now on display at the Erie Maritime Museum.



PRESCQUE ISLE STATE PARK

Sunset Point No. 10 Buddy Beach

No. 11 Beach

Perry Monument The Channel Coast Guard

Light House

The Bay

Dobbins Landing

ERIE

No. 6 Pettinotoke

No. 7 Waterworks

No. 8

Cockhouse Pier East Pier

The Lake

No. 1 Stull Interpretive Center

Peninsula Entrance

