

Girl Scouts Love Virginia State Parks

SELF GUIDED PATCH PROGRAM

Sept. 11-13, 2026



Present this booklet to park staff at the entrance or leave a copy on your dashboard for free parking.

The admission fee for Natural Bridge State Park is not included but parking at the Children's Discovery Area and Track Trail on Golf Course Road is.

Leesylvania State Park parking fees are waived for all Girl Scouts participants, but a weekend/holiday day-use reservation is required. Reserve at dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/saveyourspot

Know before you go!

When visiting the park, come prepared for the weather and for exploring by wearing appropriate clothes and shoes.

To be safe, and to complete the activities bring:

- water and snacks
- something to write with
- crayons or colored pencils
- a notebook or scrap paper
- sunscreen and bug repellent
- Visit virginiastateparks.gov to learn about your park before your visit.

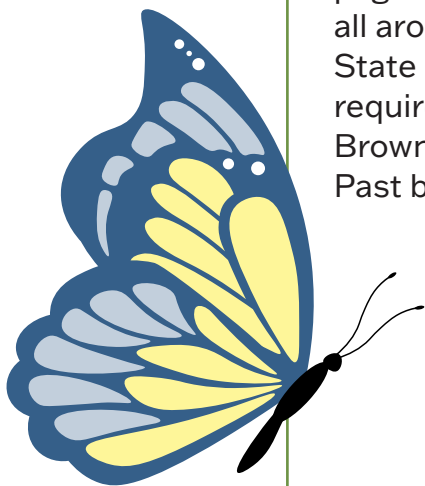
VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

www.virginiastateparks.gov

History and nature go together like Girl Scouts and Virginia State Parks.

This year, Virginia has a lot to celebrate! The Commonwealth turned 250, Virginia State Parks turned 90, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation is marking its 100th anniversary. Our first state parks were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps; young people, some barely out of their teens, who worked hard to create places we all still love today.

As part of this year's national Girl Scouts Love State Parks weekend, we invite you to use these activity pages to explore a park near you, discover the history all around you, and earn a Girl Scouts Love Virginia State Parks patch* while also working towards the requirements to earn the Daisy Good Neighbor, Brownie Outdoor Adventure, or Junior Playing the Past badge.



* You can also earn a patch by participating in any ranger led or volunteer program or stewardship opportunity offered during the GS Love State Parks weekend. Find all those programs here: www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/girl-scouts Just log your visit the same way.

Please note: Virginia State Parks will only provide the Virginia State Parks specific patch, not the GS badges – you'll need to purchase badges from your council shop.

How it works:

- Print or download this booklet.
- Show the cover page for free parking in any Virginia State Park from Friday, Sept. 11 through Sunday, Sept. 13, 2026. If no one is available to show, please put the cover page in your vehicle window. *The free parking is for a Virginia State Park only.*
- Complete all the activities in your age category, choose and complete a “Take Action” option, and discuss the Leave No Trace principles with your adult.
- In order to receive the VSP patch, you MUST log your visit here: **<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/Z5bchzmMn1>** Fill out the form in its entirety between September 11 - 30, 2026 in order to receive your state park patch. *Note: the form will not open until September 11th.*

Trouble with the link? Send an email to this address:

vsp.education@dcr.virginia.gov

- While you are at it, sign up for our VSP Adventure Programs including Trail Quest and Wandering Waters Paddle Quest. For more information visit **www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/contest**.
- Patches will be ordered and mailed after all entries are in.

FORM



PROGRAMS



Daisy: Good Neighbor Badge

The Good Neighbor badge is all about being kind, helping others, and taking care of the world around you. Being a good neighbor means treating people, animals, and nature with respect. When you visit a Virginia State Park, you get to practice these skills by exploring the outdoors, learning about the history all around you, and helping protect the plants, animals, and special places that call the park home.

Complete the following activities to fulfill the Good Neighbor badge requirements.

Explore Your Park

Pick up a park map online, at the trailhead or visitor center, then hit the trail! As you explore, look for clues that tell the story of this place from long, long ago. History is hiding everywhere if you know where to look!

Keep your eyes open for things like:

- A building or structure built long ago
- A giant tree, or a rock or landform that has been here for many years
- Trails, stonework, or traces left by the people who lived, worked, or traveled here long ago

In your journal, draw a detailed picture of your favorite “thing from the past” — notice its colors, shapes, and textures up close.

Then talk about it with your family or troop:

- How long ago do you think it's from?
- Who might have used or cared for this place?
- How can you be a good neighbor to this piece of history?

Talk to a Ranger

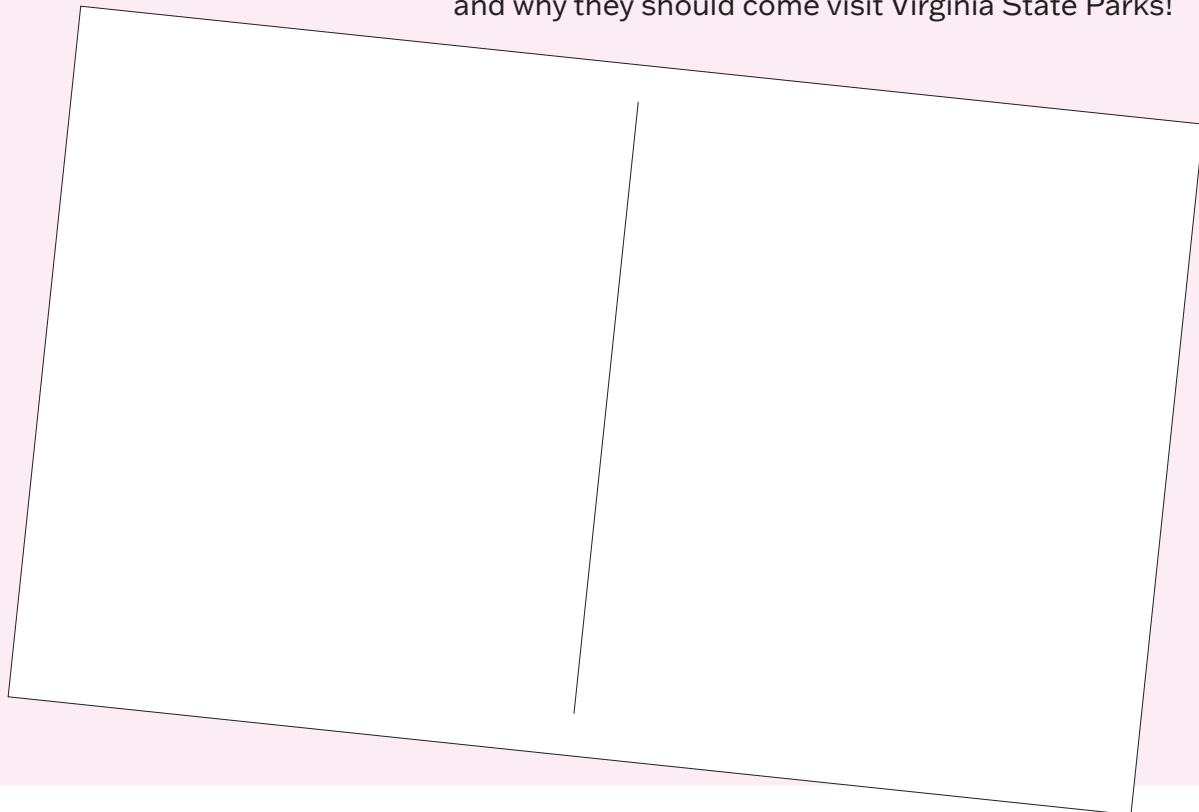
Rangers are some of the park's most important good neighbors. They help take care of the land, the wildlife, and the history all around you. Some of that history goes back millions of years! Find a ranger and ask them a few questions:

- What is your favorite piece of history in this park?
- Did anyone live or work here a long, long time ago?
- What is something in this park that most visitors don't notice?
- How can I be a good neighbor to this park?

Write down their answers in your journal to share with your troop!

See What Makes Virginia Special

Good neighbors share the things they love! Draw and write a postcard to a friend or family member in another state. Tell them one special or historic thing you discovered today and why they should come visit Virginia State Parks!



Brownie: Outdoor Adventurer Badge

The Outdoor Adventurer badge is all about exploring the world outside in new ways; from discovering nature to learning camp skills to playing games with your friends.

When you visit a Virginia State Park, you get to practice these skills while exploring the same lands that Virginia's Indigenous people, early settlers, and Civilian Conservation Corps workers once called home. The plants, structures, and nature all around you tell the story of the people who shaped this place.

Complete the following activities to fulfill the Outdoor Adventurer badge requirements.

Nature Detectives

The plants growing along this trail have been used by people for thousands of years; from Virginia's Indigenous people to early settlers. When you learn to spot and respect them, you're connecting to everyone who walked this land before you.

Match each plant to its historical use, then hit the trail and see how many you can find!

PLANT

1. American Beech

Bark is famous for being smooth, papery thin, and light gray. Oval toothed leaves

2. Goldenrod

Vibrant yellow wildflower

3. Maple Tree

Winged seeds, broad leaves like an open hand

4. Pine

Long needles in clusters

5. Fern

Feathery looking fronds and curled shoots near the ground

HISTORICAL USE

A. Sap made into syrup, a natural source of energy and minerals

B. Needles brewed into vitamin-C rich tea

C. Bark used for cuts and fevers; prepared nuts eaten for stomach ailments

D. The Cherokee used the fronds and roots of this plant as a medicinal remedy to treat fever

E. Commonly used herbal tea with anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties

Answer key: 1-C, 2-E, 3-A, 4-B, 5-D

Bonus: Spot a Virginia State Symbol!

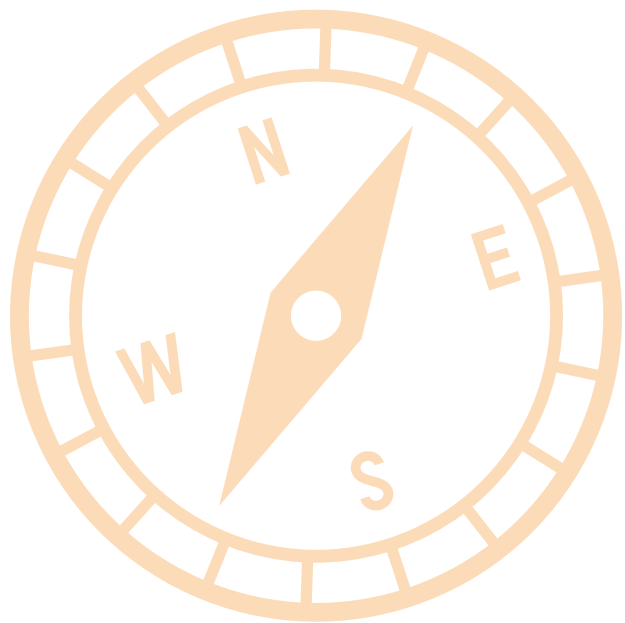
SYMBOL	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Dogwood	State Flower & Tree: clusters of glossy, bright red berry-like fruits with oval leaves and lateral curved veins.
Cardinal	State Bird: bright red (male) or brownish-red (female)
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	State Butterfly: large yellow wings with black stripes

Find Your Way: Outdoor Skills and Survival

Long before GPS, Virginia's Indigenous people, early settlers, and explorers navigated using the sun, stars, and cardinal directions (North, South, East, and West). Knowing which way you're heading is one of the most important outdoor survival skills you can learn!

Before you explore, find north by using a compass or the shadow tip method.

Push a stick straight into the ground on a sunny spot. Mark the very tip of the shadow with a rock (this is your first mark, and it points west). Wait 15 minutes and mark where the shadow tip has moved with a second rock (this mark points east). Stand so your left foot is on the west mark and your right foot is on the east mark. You are now facing north! The sun always moves from east to west across the sky.



Blindfolded Navigator: One person is blindfolded while their buddy guides them using only cardinal directions (ex: "Take three steps North!") to find a hidden object. Then switch!

Four Corners: Label four spots N, S, E, and W. A leader calls out a direction and everyone races to that corner — the last one there becomes the new caller! Make it harder by calling Northeast or Southwest.

The same skills that helped explorers navigate Virginia's wilderness can help you find your way in the park today.

Build Like the CCC

During the Great Depression, young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps — many just teenagers — built the trails, cabins, and shelters that made Virginia's first state parks. Like Girl Scouts, they worked as a team, learned new skills, and took pride in doing the job right. They worked with their hands, used natural materials found right in the park, and relied on each other to get the job done.

Find a structure in the park — a shelter, bridge, stone wall, or building. It could be brand new or over 90 years old — some parks still have their original CCC structures! Look closely:

- What materials did they use?
- How did they fit pieces together?
- How has it lasted so long?

Now it's your turn! As a team, build your own mini-shelter using only natural materials you find on the ground — sticks, rocks, leaves, and pinecones.

Ground rules: collect only what's already fallen. Keep it small enough to dismantle in seconds.

Challenge: Can your structure survive a team "wind test" (everyone blowing on it at once)?

When you're done, snap a photo and Leave No Trace; just like the CCC left these parks better than they found them.

Be A Park Champion

Park Rangers work hard to keep Virginia State Parks safe, healthy, and beautiful for everyone. When we follow Leave No Trace, we help protect these special places for future generations.

Park Champion Challenge: On your own or with a team, choose an area of the park and collect as much litter as you can in 10 minutes! (Bring disposable gloves and trash bags, or call the park ahead of time to borrow supplies.)

When time is up, sort everything into



Recycling



and Trash

Junior: Playing the Past Badge

The Playing the Past badge is all about stepping back in time and imagining what life was like for girls just like you — researching a time period, creating a historical character, and bringing her story to life through creativity and role-play. You can bring to life someone who really existed or a girl from your imagination. Give her a name and get ready to live history!

Virginia State Parks are the perfect place to do this! The landscapes, historic sites, and stories within these parks connect us to real girls who lived here generations ago — from Virginia's Indigenous people, to early settlers, to families who farmed this land long before it became a park.

Complete the following activities to fulfill the Playing the Past badge requirements.

Girls in History

Talk to a ranger, visit a park museum or visitor center or read the park map to learn about the history of this place. Then create a historical girl who lived here and answer these questions in your journal:

- What is her name and what time period does she live in?
- Where does her family live and what do they do for work?
- What does she eat, wear, and use every day — does she gather it from nature, trade for it, buy from a store, grow it?
- Looking at the park around you, what challenges does she face?
- What special skills did she need to survive?
- If you were friends, what would you do together outside?

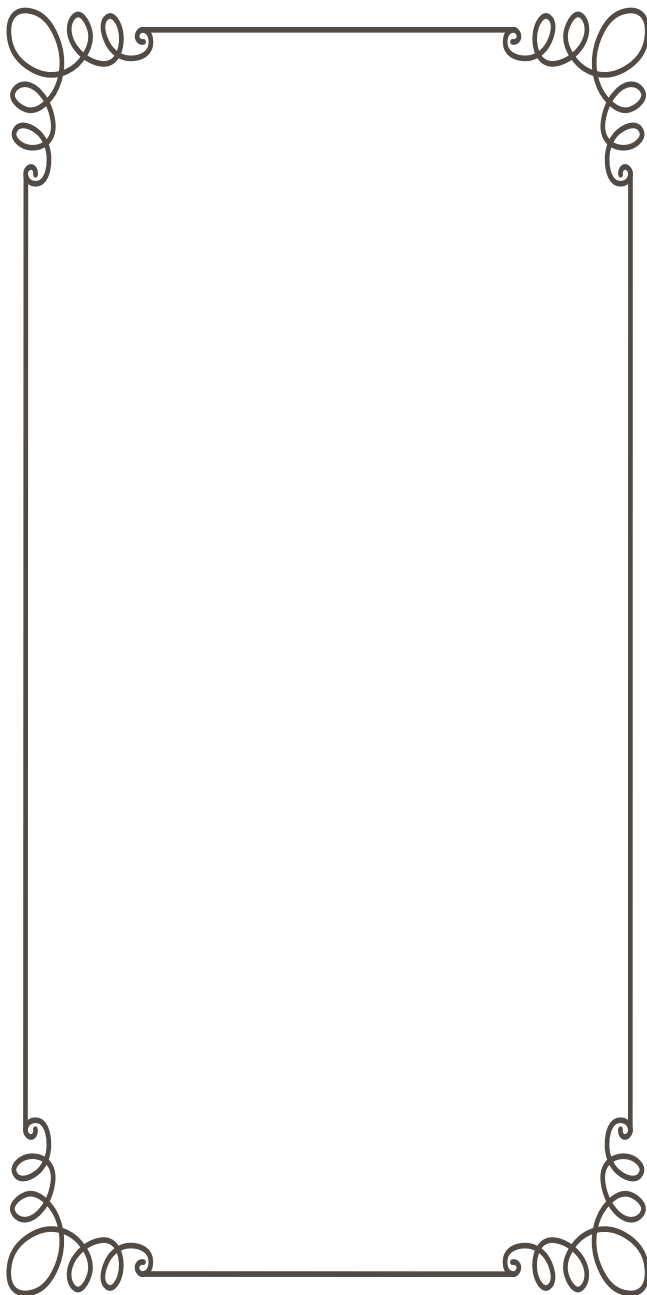
Write a journal entry as her — one day in her life at this very place.

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Create Your Character

Every historical girl had a look that told her story. A colonial girl might have worn a long linen dress and apron. A CCC-era girl might have worn overalls and boots. An Indigenous girl might have worn deerskin decorated with beadwork.

Draw your character in the frame below with a full outfit, hairstyle, and anything she might carry. Label at least three parts of her outfit and explain what they tell us about her life.



A Day in Her Life

Step into your character's shoes — right here, right now! The same trails, waterways, and landscapes your character would have known are all around you.

Act out one or more of her daily chores:

- Gather sticks from the ground as if collecting firewood — just like Leave No Trace, take only what's already there
- Walk to an approved water source and imagine fetching water for the day. For an added challenge bring an empty gallon jug and fill it up with water and carry it a short distance. That was a daily chore, every single day.
- Find a flat rock and practice grinding; early settlers and Indigenous peoples used stones to grind grain and seeds
- Collect fallen natural materials and arrange a "kitchen" — what would she have cooked, and how?
- Find a quiet spot and observe wildlife — how is caring for wild animals different from caring for livestock?

Then have some old-fashioned fun!

Try something girls in her time period enjoyed:

- Play an outdoor game like tag or hide and seek
- Create something from nature using only what's already on the ground — a woven bracelet or nature arrangement.
- Teach your troop a song or rhyme from her era

The land hasn't changed as much as you might think — you're playing in the same place she did!

Become Your Character

Find a meaningful spot in the park and introduce yourself to your troop as your character:

Who are you and What time period do you live in?

What does a regular day look like?

What is the hardest part of your life?

What brings you joy?

What would surprise you most about life today?

Answer every question in character — your troop can ask follow-up questions too!

Talk together as a group: What do you have in common with your character? What has changed the most for girls over time? What hasn't changed at all?

Take Action

Now that you've explored the history all around you, what are you inspired to do? There are many wonderful ways that you can bring what you discovered out into the world:

At the Park

- Volunteer! There are a lot of ways to be a part of the park's history:
 - Help restore or maintain a historic structure or garden
 - Pick up litter along a historic trail
 - Help a ranger plant native species around a historic site or building
- Help talk to other visitors about the history all around them — and how to Leave No Trace so it's preserved for future generations.
- Choose a history-themed project for your Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award.

At Home

- Research a girl or woman from Virginia history and write or record her story.
- Make and share a video about something historic you discovered at the park.

In Your Community

- Create a display of your historical character artwork or park drawings for your local library, school, or senior center.
- Teach younger scouts what you learned about the CCC, Virginia's Indigenous people, or early settlers.
- Work with your troop to research the history of a local landmark and share what you find.

Always Remember – Leave No Trace

Discuss with an adult why these are important.

Plan ahead and prepare

Travel and camp on durable surfaces

Dispose of waste properly

Leave what you find

Minimize campfire impacts

Respect wildlife

Be considerate of other visitors

For more information visit <https://lnt.org/>



VSP Girl Scout Activity Completion Certificate

TROOP INFORMATION

Troop Number:

Leader(s):

Date of Activity:

State Park Location:

Badge Earned: