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Things to do with your kids outside



Another way to have fun with the kids is to explore nature in a Texas State Park. Here are a few ideas to help you get started.

1. Go to a Park Ranger-led program.
2. Let the kids build a house with sticks, leaves, rocks, etc.
3. Try to identify bird calls.
4. Identify rocks.
5. Fly a kite.
6. Roll down a hill.
7. Have a scavenger hunt.
8. Draw what you see.
9. Identify leaves.
10. Watch ants.
11. Hike a trail.
12. Look for animal tracks.
13. See how many kinds of plants you can find.
14. Make a mud pie.
15. Play tag.
16. Play "I Spy."
17. Look at tree bark with a magnifying glass.
18. Ride a bike.
19. Play catch.
20. Listen to sounds and look for what makes them (crickets, birds, squirrels, frogs).
21. Watch the sunrise.
22. Look at the moon and stars.
23. Watch fireflies and their flashing patterns.
24. Look for nests, webs, dens, mounds and other animal homes.
25. Look for fossils in rivers, rocks and cliffs.



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Huntsville State Park

P.O. Box 508, Huntsville 77342-0508 ☎ (936) 295-5644

GPS Latitude N 30 37 42.20 | Longitude W 95 31 33.09



The Civilian Conservation Corps, which helped build state and national parks all over the U.S, accepted all citizens, a remarkable decision for the times. As a result, African American companies were formed to help develop parks and public lands, including Huntsville State Park. The park quickly became a favorite of tourists and outdoor enthusiasts. Located among loblolly and shortleaf pines, the park boasts an extensive trail system, and equestrian stables are conveniently located onsite. The park also has a 210-acre lake, Lake Raven, with canoes for rent, and plentiful wildlife and birds, as well as great fishing. A CCC-built group facility is available for rent for weddings, parties and reunions.

Lake Bob Sandlin State Park

341 State Park Road 2117, Pittsburg 75686 📞 (903) 572-5531

GPS Latitude N 33 03 14.54 | Longitude W 95 05 56.76



Foliage on the sweet gum, hickory, maple and other hardwood trees turns to red and gold here in the fall. The lake offers great bass fishing, for which East Texas is famous. And the park's proximity to Interstate 30 makes it a popular destination from the DFW Metroplex. Visitors to the park enjoy a host of recreational activities, from fishing and boating to hiking and wildlife viewing of animals

such as bobcats, white-tailed deer and bald eagles. Campers can choose from among water/electric sites, screened shelters or limited-use cabins.

Lake Livingston State Park

300 State Park Road 65, Livingston 77351 📞 (936) 365-2201

GPS Latitude N 30 39 23.65 | Longitude W 95 00 05.14



Located on the shores of a huge 84,800-surface-acre lake, this Southeast Texas park is an angler's delight. The Trinity River white bass run in January attracts thousands. Catfish are plentiful, and in 1976, a 114-pound flathead set a state record. Lake Livingston Stables offers a terrestrial alternative to water-based activities: horseback trail riding in the pines by the hour. Or take a packaged trip that includes meals. The park store offers boat rentals, gas for boating and camping supplies. The park has a wide range of campsites, including unique shelters, some of which are ADA compliant. An air-conditioned activity center for up to 100 is welcome in the summer heat, as is a cool plunge into the park's crystal-clear swimming pool.

Martin Creek Lake State Park

9515 County Road 2181D, Tatum 75691 ☎ (903) 836-4336

GPS Latitude N 32 16 40.80 | Longitude W 94 33 57.56



A small island in the lake, reached via a footbridge, has primitive campsites for back-packers wanting a quiet retreat. There are limited campsites available on the island, so be sure to make a reservation. Because the lake water cools a power plant, the water stays warm, making this an excellent channel cat and bass fishery, even during cold-weather

months. Bluegill and redear sunfish are also present in high numbers. The park also has a lighted fishing pier and boat ramps. Stay overnight in this unique Pineywoods park in cabins, cottages or enclosed shelters as well. Enjoy tent camping, or park your RV for a spell and make yourself at home.

Martin Dies, Jr. State Park

634 Private Road 5025, Jasper 75951 ☎ (409) 384-5231

GPS Latitude N 30 50 47.47 | Longitude W 94 09 56.48



Pitch your tent or park your RV on the shores of this reservoir under lofty pine, oak and beech trees in the northern corner of the Big Thicket. The mix of habitats at this biological crossroads brings in arid country critters such as roadrunners, as well as swamp dwellers, like alligators. Boat ramps and rentals help get you to Lake B.A. Steinhagen, and a lighted fishing pier lets you fish from along the shore. Channel,

blue and flathead catfish can all be caught here and spotted bass can be caught in the nearby Angelina River. Crappie fishing reigns in the spring. There's a four-mile, beginner-level mountain biking trail, and for paddling enthusiasts, four marked paddling trails on the lake and river offer beginner and intermediate visitors access to the water. Both bicycles and canoes can be rented at the park. The park's environmental education center is worth a visit, and the group hall hosts many family gatherings every year.

Mission Tejas State Park

120 State Park Road 44, Grapeland 75844 ☎ (936) 687-2394

GPS Latitude N 31 32 33.28 | Longitude W 95 13 55.56



The park commemorates the first Spanish mission in East Texas. Fearing the French would claim New World dominion over lands that Spain wished to control, Spanish leaders in Mexico mounted an expedition to settle the Pineywoods in 1690. It was this pioneering effort at mission-building that resulted in the first contact with the Caddoan-speaking Hasinai people. Chancing upon an East

Texas farming village, the Spanish explorers were greeted in the Caddoan language with a word that sounded like “tayshas.” It meant “friends” or “allies,” but it was recorded as a place name, becoming the Spanish word *Tejas* and the English word *Texas*. This 659-acre park provides a relaxing retreat in the Neches River uplands for campers, anglers, picnickers and hikers. El Camino Real Historic Trail traverses through the park, enabling visitors to walk in Davey Crockett’s footsteps.

Tyler State Park

789 Park Road 16, Tyler 75706-9141 ☎ (903) 597-5338

GPS Latitude N 32 28 55.81 | Longitude W 95 16 59.91



Camping, swimming, fishing, boating, hiking and biking — there are many ways to enjoy this quiet retreat that surrounds a clear spring-fed lake located in the relaxing beauty of East Texas, near the city of Tyler. Timeless craftsmanship in the stonework and wooden buildings built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) make the

park a historic treasure. Hike and bike on approximately 14 miles of popular trails or rent a boat for a leisurely tour of the lake. While doing so, you might see deer, raccoon, squirrels, bobcats, coyote, opossum or many flowering plants, such as dogwood, redbud, standing cypress, coreopsis or purple coneflower. The clear water of the 64-acre lake is excellent for year-round fishing, swimming and scuba diving. Full RV hookups, tent sites, screened shelters and group facilities are available, and recently renovated limited-service cabins.

Village Creek State Park

P.O. Box 8565, Lumberton 77657 ☎ (409) 755-7322

GPS

Latitude N 30 15 03.34 | Longitude W 94 10 40.15
(FRONT GATES: Latitude N 30 15 03.34 | Longitude W 94 10 40.15)



A beautiful overnight facility perfectly suited for families is available for rent at this park. Village Creek State Park reveals a primeval world of backwater sloughs and swamps, carnivorous plants, various mammals and water snakes, colorful birds and hundreds of species of flowering plants. They all thrive in this region known as the Big Thicket, a pine-and-hardwood forest so dense that the early pioneers barely attempted to settle it. This ecological splendor once comprised more than 3 million acres of dense forest and bottomland. A small portion is set aside as a park with eight miles of marked trails, interpretive programs, camping facilities and access to paddling on wide, slow-moving Village Creek.

Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site

1649 State Highway 21 West, Alto 75925 ☎ (936) 858-3218

This park is under the operation of the Texas Historical Commission.

Governor Hogg Shrine Historic Site

100 Governor Hogg Pkwy., Quitman 75783 ☎ (903) 763-4411

Operated by the City of Quitman.

Starr Family Home State Historic Site

407 West Travis Street, Marshall 75670 ☎ (903) 935-3044

This park is under the operation of the Texas Historical Commission.