

## Six Hidden Secrets About Ohio's Largest State Park

CAMBRIDGE, OHIO (May 1, 2021) – The landscape of rural Guernsey County appears as a patchwork of forested hills, open meadows, and misty valleys threaded by numerous streams. At its heart is Salt Fork State Park, Ohio's largest state park.

The park boasts 20,000+-acres of land with 14 scenic hiking trails and six bridle trails, a 3,000-acre lake for fishing and boating, not to mention the state's largest inland beach. However, the park also offers up a few hidden gems you won't want to miss.

**Bigfoot.** It's been rumored to live in Ohio since the mid-1770s. It has also been rumored to live in Ohio's largest state park, Salt Fork. Over 36 sightings have been reported in the park since the middle 1980s. As a result, Salt Fork Lodge & Conference Center and Salt Fork State Park host several conferences and events to celebrate the legend of Bigfoot. Make plans to attend the Annual Bigfoot Conference, enjoy Bigfoot Adventure Weekends, Creature Weekends, or Monthly Bigfoot Night Hikes at Salt Fork State Park. USA TODAY ranked the park one of the Top 10 "Squatchiest" Places in the Country!

**Front Desk Friends.** Winnie, the pygmy hedgehog, is part of the Salt Fork family, and lives behind the front desk at the lodge. If you are lucky, you will get to meet her when arriving, but she loves it when people ask how she's doing.

**The Kennedys Lived Here.** Well, OK...so it's not the Kennedys you're thinking of but none the less a Kennedy clan did stake their claim here. Two connecting hiking trails will lead you straight to the Stone House Museum. In 1837 Benjamin Kennedy, whose ancestors hailed from Ireland and Scotland, purchased an 80-acre tract of land in Guernsey County, and built a two-story Federal style house from sandstone quarried nearby. Fast forward to 2002 and the Stone House (the last remaining original homestead structure) was converted into a museum and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Open seasonally for tours.

**Civil War Hide-Out.** Hosak's Cave is a 60-foot-tall sandstone cliff where the bottom part has eroded away, creating a rocky overhang and a natural shelter. The cave was once used as a hide-out for the Confederate Army. Today, families may hike an easy trail to the cave's "opening."

**Gem Mining.** From early spring through fall, the park offers a wonderful gem mining station for kids at the entrance of the camping area. Bags consisting of sand and various precious and semi-precious gems, fossils and more, may be purchased and then taken to the slew trough for sifting.

**Heritage Tour.** It's easy to forget life existed before "the park". Over 200 years ago, the first settlers arrived and carved homesteads from the seemingly endless forest. Generations passed homes were built and farms cultivated. At one time, there were three communities, at least six one-room schools and several small cemeteries on the park property. The park has a created a self-guided Heritage Driving Tour with 11 historic sites for visitors to see what remains.

To learn more about Salt Fork State Park, visit <https://ohiodnr.gov/wps/portal/gov/odnr/go-and-do/plan-a-visit/find-a-property/salt-fork-state-park> or Salt Fork State Park Lodge & Conference Center at <https://www.saltforkparklodge.com/> .

For more information about Cambridge/Guernsey County, call the Cambridge/Guernsey County Visitors & Convention Bureau at 800-933-5480 or log onto VisitGuernseyCounty.com.

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