

# INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK

Chesterton, Indiana



# Indiana Dunes State Park



**Indiana Dunes State Park** was established in the summer of 1925, although negotiations had been under way for acquisition of the park as early as 1916. Original park acreage was 334 acres. Today the three-mile stretch of fine white sand is one of the distinguishing and attracting features of the park.

**The park** is located on Indiana 49 north of U. S. highways 12 and 20 near Chesterton, Indiana.





## The Dunes Region Described

**As Seen From the Lake**—The Dunes region of Indiana is a far-stretching crescent of sand hills and ridges forming the southern boundary of Lake Michigan—a crescent reaching from Michigan City to Gary. The view is at its best when one is opposite the dunes park with its giant hills looming up and the embossed shore curving away westward like a slender sickle till it narrows down to the vanishing point.

**A Birdseye View**—Another long-range view that shows the topography of the region much more in detail is the survey to be had from the top of one of the towering sandhills that here and there overtop the general altitude of the dunes. The highest of these is Mt. Tom, which with Mt. Jackson and Mt. Holden, of almost equal height, make a group of three dominating dunes in the state park. The first named is officially credited with a rise of 190 feet above the mean level of the lake—no great elevation, doubtless, for a real hill or mountain country, but here it suffices to command the landscape in all directions.

**The State Park**—A half mile to the west of Mt. Tom and two and a half miles to the east approximately speaking, lies that most picturesque part of the region, which is now in possession of the State of Indiana, and made into a public park. This area of about three and a half square miles (2,210.47 acres), and much more beyond its boundaries is, in the main, heavily forested. It all lies before the eye, and its topography may be understood at a glance. That part of it lying nearest the lake shore is heaped up into dunes, or hills and ridges of sand with their verdure-choked valleys and pockets, but back of these one sees the low, flat areas where swamps and marshes



give diversity to the place. Here and there amid the general vestment of greenery gleam whitely the naked sands in spots and tongues, showing where the winds have conquered the vegetation. The crest of Mt. Tom itself has been scooped out by aerial attacks till it suggests a great crater, and the shifted sands piled up on the western side of it gives this hill its preeminence for altitude.

Half a mile away, just at the west boundary of the park, lies a fine example of the "blowout" and traveling dune, which present the most famous features of this sand region, and of which more will be said in another place.

**Dune Making, Past and Present**—Looking far to the southward over an intervening level country one with a little geologic lore realizes that this process of dune making is a very old one, for there ridge lies beyond ridge till their blue is limned against the gray horizon. These are old dune regions, marking ancient beach lines formed when the waters of the big lake reached many miles further south. All that is part of a larger story, but it quickens the appreciation that here in the present duneland we are in the midst of nature's great laboratory and an eyewitness to her works as they still go on.

**Nature Versus Civilization**—Another thing that challenges interest in this birds-eye view from the hill top is the unusual juxtaposition of primeval nature and a seething civilization.

**The Battle Field**—Thus far the waters, but the winds are not yet done. When the ridged sand swept up the strand and left there gets its chance to dry it becomes subject, like dust, to easy shifting, and the push of the winds from the north, west or east carries it farther shoreward. It is a

veritable invasion of the land—an invasion that threatens to smother down whatever lies in its path. The vegetation opposes this, and if the contending forces were sentient and intelligent creatures the scene of their conflict could not more appropriately be called a battle field. For a short distance up the sloping shore the mechanical forces have it all their own way; then life in the form of sundry sand plants—grasses, vines and shrubs—appear on the shifting waste and flourish where it would seem no live thing could find sustenance. The part these play in arresting the invasion seems almost incredible. Their astonishingly long surface roots and lateral rootlets, wherever they grow, bind down the loose particles of sand, and even their upright stems, by some curious lay, make nuclei for the fine drift that forms about them in little cones. Multiply and enlarge these roots and stems, add small trees to the obstructing growths, and the cones become proportionately larger, and here we have the beginning of the dune-making process.

Thus these living pioneers of the battle field fix the surface so that other vegetation can reinforce them, and so we find the flora of the region from grass to tree, crowding toward the lake front. The dunes, forever replenished from the beach, forever pushed by the winds, and as persistently stopped by a sea of vegetation may take the shape of cones or ridges or any intermediate form. Paralleling the lake front and running along the beach for miles we find a massive, lofty ridge that suggests a great rampart guarding Dune-land. For the most part this rampart is fixed there by luxuriant growths of vegetation, but here and there the battalions of Aeolus have forced breaches through it; the rooted flora is undermined and dragged

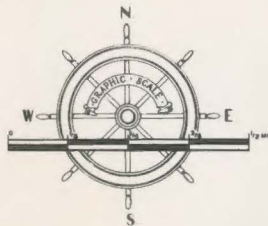


# INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK

Established 1925

2182 Acres

CHESTERTON, INDIANA



*Legend*

PARK BOUNDARY  
ROADS  
DITCHES  
STREAMS  
TRAILS  
TIMBER



DUNES PAVILION  
AND BATH HOUSE

HOTEL

PAGEANT  
BLOWOUT

SHELTER  
WEST  
PICNIC AREA

GATE HOUSE

CAMP  
NISSAKI

PARK ENTRANCE

STATE ROAD 49  
TO CHESTERTON

LAKESHORE

MT. HOLDEN

MT. TOM  
152' ELEVATION

PRAIRIE CLUB  
BEACH HOUSE

CAMP GROUND

PICNIC  
GROUNDS

GATE HOUSE

CAMP  
NISSAKI

DUNESIDE  
INN

GATE HOUSE

CHICAGO

REPORT  
STATION

CHICAGO

CHICAGO

CHICAGO

PRAIRIE CLUB  
BEACH HOUSE

MT. HOLDEN

MT. JACKSON  
74' ELEVATION

CAMP GROUND

GROUP CAMP

CAMP GROUND

SHUTTER  
WILSON  
PICNIC AREA

SHUTTER  
WILSON  
PICNIC AREA

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THIS IS  
YOUR PARK  
TO ENJOY  
AND PROTECT

TRAIL	MILEAGE	TYPE OF TRAIL
1	1 MILE	EASY
2	3 MILES	EASY
4	3/4 MILE	MODERATE
7	1 1/2 MILES	MODERATE
8	1 1/2 MILES	RUGGED
9	3 1/2 MILES	MODERATE
10	5 1/2 MILES	MODERATE





down to perish, and through the gap one may see the loosened sands scooped out from the foreground to be spread out in a broad sheet beyond, or there piled up anew. These are what are called the "living" or "traveling dunes, and they illustrate how, in spite of the vegetation, the labyrinth of hills that make the dunes belt have been rolled inland before they were finally stopped and anchored. The gaps in the great ridge, just spoken of, are known as "blow-outs," and as allusions to these phenomena are frequent in the dunes literature.

**The Lure of the Beach**—No part of the Dunes region appeals to so many people as does the water front with its many attractions—Duneside Inn, Dunes Hotel and Pavilion. The students of nature seek the place at all seasons and witness phenomena seldom seen by the ordinary summer visitors.

### EXPLORING THE PARK

**Roads and Trails**—From the foregoing pages the reader may have gathered that what with swamps and marshes, forests and sandhills, the Dunes Park could not well be explored by vehicle. As a matter of fact the tract is traversed almost entirely by foot trails, and its inaccessibility to autos or wagons is one of the attractions of the place, for there are times and places when escape from the ubiquitous auto is a relief. But two roads connect with the park, and only one of these reaches the lake, its northern terminus being Waverly Beach. At this latter spot are situated the chief service features of the park, the improved highway thither leading directly to the tourists camping grounds, to an ample parking space near the lake front, and to a far-stretching bathing beach that may fairly be described as ideal. Here also is



a spacious pavilion, the upper story of which is equipped, temporarily, as a bath house and with a complete restaurant refreshment service and a store of supplies for cottagers on the ground floor.\* The parking space referred to has been increased by putting a stretch of the contiguous stream (Fort Creek) under cover, and about 850 autos can now be accommodated at one time. Mt. Tom, the loftiest of the dunes, is near here, as is also one of the most curious and beautiful of the "blow-outs," the hollow of which was used for staging an elaborate pageant in 1917. This performance is a part of the propaganda for rousing public interest in the establishment of the park.

The other road leads from Tremont station, passes the Duneside Inn (the present small hotel) and ends at what is known as Wilson's Camp, a half mile or so south of the lake front, from which point the beach is reached afoot over trail number 10.

Aside from these two thoroughfares that connect the Dunes Highway with the park the latter is threaded throughout its length and breadth by foot trails and marked and numbered from 2 to 10. Just how many miles of these there are has probably never been estimated, but one might spend days exploring their winding mazes before exhausting their attractions. That hiking has not become a lost art in spite of the auto is proven by the numbers of people who may be found tramping these paths through the wild places, clad for living in the rough and bearing on their backs the outer's equipment. For such as these adventuring of this sort has its own tang, especially in the fresh stimulating air of the early morning. To go questing through the forest depths where the verdure all about still glistens with dew and faint mists mingle with the sun-





light that sifts through the green canopy to sow the ground with flakes of gold; to hear the blithe notes of birds, the whispering winds among the trees, and the faint murmuring of the restless lake beyond the dunes is an experience to key up the spirit and put tonic in the blood.

**The Flora**—Willis Blatchley, former Indiana state geologist, says (report of 1897): "There is no better place for an extended botanical study of a limited area in the state than among the dunes, swamps, peat bogs, prairies and river bottoms of this area;" and at the close of a list comprising 103 botanical specimens found in Porter and Lake counties he states that these are "probably less than one tenth of the flowering plants of the two counties." While this applies to a larger area it also applies to the state park.

**The Fauna**—The faunal life is mostly in the smaller forms that are so inconspicuous as to require sharp eyes for their discovery. What makes this wilderness multitude more interesting is that it is grouped and zoned, certain fauna "associating with certain vegetation"—which is another way of saying that both flora and fauna are adapted to habitats. Sometimes there is an insect tragedy when a wind from landward carries myriads of them out to the lake, where they become food for fishes, or, in due time, are carried back by the waves to be heaped in windrows on the beach.

Birds of many kinds find food and shelter here at different seasons, and as they will be protected from destruction within the state park there is every reason to expect that it will become a bird refuge and an ideal place for ornithological study.

**Among activities** offered, camping and hiking rank high on the list of favorites. Picnicking, fishing and nature tours are other activities enjoyed by more than 200,000 persons annually at Indiana's summer playground — The Dunes!

**Unlike** any other park in the system, Indiana Dunes State Park is widely known for its hills and ridges of sand, verdure-choked valleys and pockets, densely-forested areas and marsh land.

**Nearly** every variety of mid-western plant life may be found within park boundaries including pine trees, blueberries, various forms of juniper and flowering cactus.

**Two Inns** provide overnight accommodations for park visitors. One, Duneside Inn, is situated well back in a shaded forest, area and has facilities to accommodate sixty persons in the inn and adjoining summer cottages. This inn is open from May to early September.

**The other,** Dunes Hotel and Pavilion, is open from May to early September and has fifty rooms. Dunes Hotel is situated on the beach and is ideal for the summer vacationer.



