

JIM SERVI

Northern Highland American Legion State Forest

Something for everyone, in every season

Wisconsin is full of natural, scenic gems – some that everyone knows, some tucked away, and some hidden in plain sight. Northern Highland American Legion (NHAL) State Forest is one of those treasures. At more than 232,000 acres, it's hard to miss and anyone that has been there likely has plans to return. That's because there is so much to do and no matter what your interest or favorite season, there is likely something that will stop and make you appreciate our Wisconsin wilderness.

The NHAL was designated in 1925 with the goal of protecting the headwaters of three important rivers – Wisconsin, Flambeau and Manitowish. It draws roughly two million visitors a year, but you'd never know. Visitors sift through to find their favorite activity and in an area that large, there is room enough for everyone. Seclusion is easy to find.

Here is just a few of the many adventures that await:

Hiking and Snowshoeing Trails

Beautiful, well-groomed trails transect the local landscape. Look for Shannon, Powell, Madeline, McNaughton,

Escanaba and Lumberjack, the longest at 12.5 miles, for superb hiking. Five other trails – Tom Roberts, North Trout, Raven, Star Lake and Fallison – are set up as nature trails with interpretive signs explaining wilderness facts, history and geology. Of all of our adventures this summer, my kids are still raving about catching frogs, seeing snakes and doing a scavenger hunt along the Fallison Lake Nature Trail.

Mountain Bike Trail System

Approximately 1,000 miles of woods roads are open to hiking and biking, or you can visit the refined trails that connect nearly every community, along with many of the campgrounds and area lakes, within NHAL. These trails are nicely paved, weaving through the woods, rather than fighting traffic. McNaughton, Madeline, Lumberjack and the Bearskin State Trail are all excellent. For more rugged, off road biking, try Razorback Ridges Trail, just east of Crystal Lake.

Fishing, Canoeing, and Kayaking

With more than 900 bodies of water and over 300 miles of creeks and rivers in the NHAL, you'll have a lifetime of exploring. Public boat landings provide access to more

than 100 of these, while there is a plethora of options to carry in a canoe or kayak to fish secluded lakes. If you don't have either, there are some great fishing piers at Plum Lake, Upper Gresham Lake, Star Lake, Clear Lake and Carroll Lake. Some of the more popular fishing destinations include Lake Tomahawk, Rainbow Flowage and Big and Little Arbor Vitae. You can't go wrong with any choice. All of these are great for canoeing and kayaking as well, but you can't go wrong with a secluded, crystal clear lake where you can see everything under the water, almost like an aquarium, as you float.

Camping

Some of the premier destinations in the state – Crystal, Clear, Big Muskellunge – are located in NHAL as part of the Wisconsin State Park System. You can book campsites 11 months ahead of your visit, so now is the perfect time to plan a trip for next summer. If you like to go on the spur of the moment, there are plenty of first come, first serve sites. There are also sites that are only accessible by backpack and nearly 100 beautiful, waterfront campsites that are only available by canoe or kayak.

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That's just the beginning. In the fall, there is hunting and breath-taking views of leaves changing color. Winter brings cross country skiing and snowmobiling. Birdwatching opportunities abound in the spring. In the summer, there are many beaches, places to swim and picnic, and playground areas to enjoy. Plus, there is delicious food and unique shopping venues year-round. It's easy to get overwhelmed by

the huge expense of wilderness and seemingly endless activities. Start with one destination and one activity and it will soon escalate into the adventure of a lifetime and the start of a lifetime of adventures.



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