

Parks and Recreation in Rochester Minnesota

Recreation and outdoor activity is an essential and rewarding part of life. Taking time off to relax and simply enjoy leisure activities can improve the quality of life of anyone. The Park and Recreation Department of Rochester, MN has known this for years, and has been providing a wide range of recreation opportunities for many years. The Park Board turned 100 years old in 2004, but parks have played an important role in the lives of visitors and residents of Rochester for almost 150 years. Considering that Rochester was founded in 1854, which is 154 years ago as of 2008, it is obvious that outdoor recreation has been a critical element of people's lives since the city was founded.

The park system back then was most likely a simple field of grass, or a place where the children would come to play games. Today, the Park and Recreation Department in Rochester offers over 3500 acres of park land spread throughout more than 80 parks. Amidst this land one will find over 60 miles of trails (biking/hiking), 56 playgrounds, 42 tennis courts, 14 picnic shelters, 2 outdoor pools, a beach, 35 horseshoe courts, 46 baseball/softball diamonds, 28 soccer fields, 11 basketball courts, 2 dog parks, 18 sand volleyball courts, 3 cross country ski trails, 2 Frisbee golf courses, 2 garden plots, and an archery range. The Department not only provides the land and upkeep of these locations, but also works with private organizations to provide activity opportunities. On almost any day of the year, one can watch or participate in a number of different sports, including baseball, football, soccer, rugby, lacrosse, softball, cricket, volleyball, golf, cross country skiing, and many others. If there is a desire for a particular activity, one will be able to find a place to try it. The park system is able to offer practically any outdoor activity, and because the system is so spread out, there are parks available in all areas of the city. Two of the more unique locations in town include Quarry Hill Park and Soldiers Field Park.

Quarry Hill Park, located on the northeast edge of town, is a 290-acre park with hiking trails, fishing ponds, historic sandstone caves, fossil beds in a prehistoric limestone quarry, tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a playground, and a picnic area. Popular with both adults and children, Quarry Hill is able to offer a number of different activities through these facilities. The park is also home to the Quarry Hill Nature Center. The goal of the Center is to open the minds and eyes of children and parents alike through science and discovery. It offers programs, classes, workshops, and a number of special activities throughout the year. The Center is also home to over 100 mounted animals, a 1,700 gallon fish tank, and a collection of live animals. During the school year, Quarry Hill is a popular destination for class field trips, and is visited by about 35,000 students annually.

Closer to the downtown area, Soldier's Field Park is also a popular destination for residents and visitors. The park is a favorite spot for picnics and parties, with picnic shelters, baseball diamonds, a pool, a golf course, and playground equipment close by. It has also become a popular spot for Ultimate Frisbee, and a game can usually be found on any given evening if the weather is nice. A major attraction of Soldier's Field Park is the Soldier's Field Veterans Memorial. It was built to honor the Veterans from Southeast Minnesota who have died serving their country, and is dedicated to those who served the country to help keep freedom a reality.

Each park in Rochester holds its own unique characteristics and charm. Even in a world that is becoming more automated and dependent on electronics, the desire for outdoor activity and recreation will not subside. The Rochester Park and Recreation Department has had a long and successful history, and holds an even brighter future. There is no doubt that the quality of life of Rochester's citizens and visitors will continue to improve as the Park System moves forward.

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About the Author

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