

Memorial Lake State Park

by Kelly Houghton



Photo: Spring Gearhart

Good things certainly do come in small packages when referring to Memorial Lake State Park; a 230 acre escape in scenic Lebanon County.

Surrounded by the 18,000 acre Fort Indiantown Gap Military Reservation and identified by rolling mountains and calm waters, this wonderful, small park offers many activities within its boundaries. The state park is primarily recognized for its 85-acre Memorial Lake, which was created by the U.S. military in 1945 to honor the Pennsylvania National Guard soldiers that served in World War I and

World War II. Today, the state park provides fantastic outdoor activities for military personnel, boaters and anglers and families seeking a great day trip.

Since the majority of the park's acreage is water, it's easy to understand why fishing and boating surfaced as visitor favorites. Spring anglers effortlessly pull crappies from the lake while ice anglers commonly catch chain pickerel, pike, panfish and largemouth bass. However, while the warm water lake does offer year round angling opportunities, things

especially heat up during the summer when the panfish and largemouth fishing is hot. Bass anglers should recognize that the lake is designated as a Big Bass Lake, meaning that bass must be at least 15 inches long with a daily limit of four.

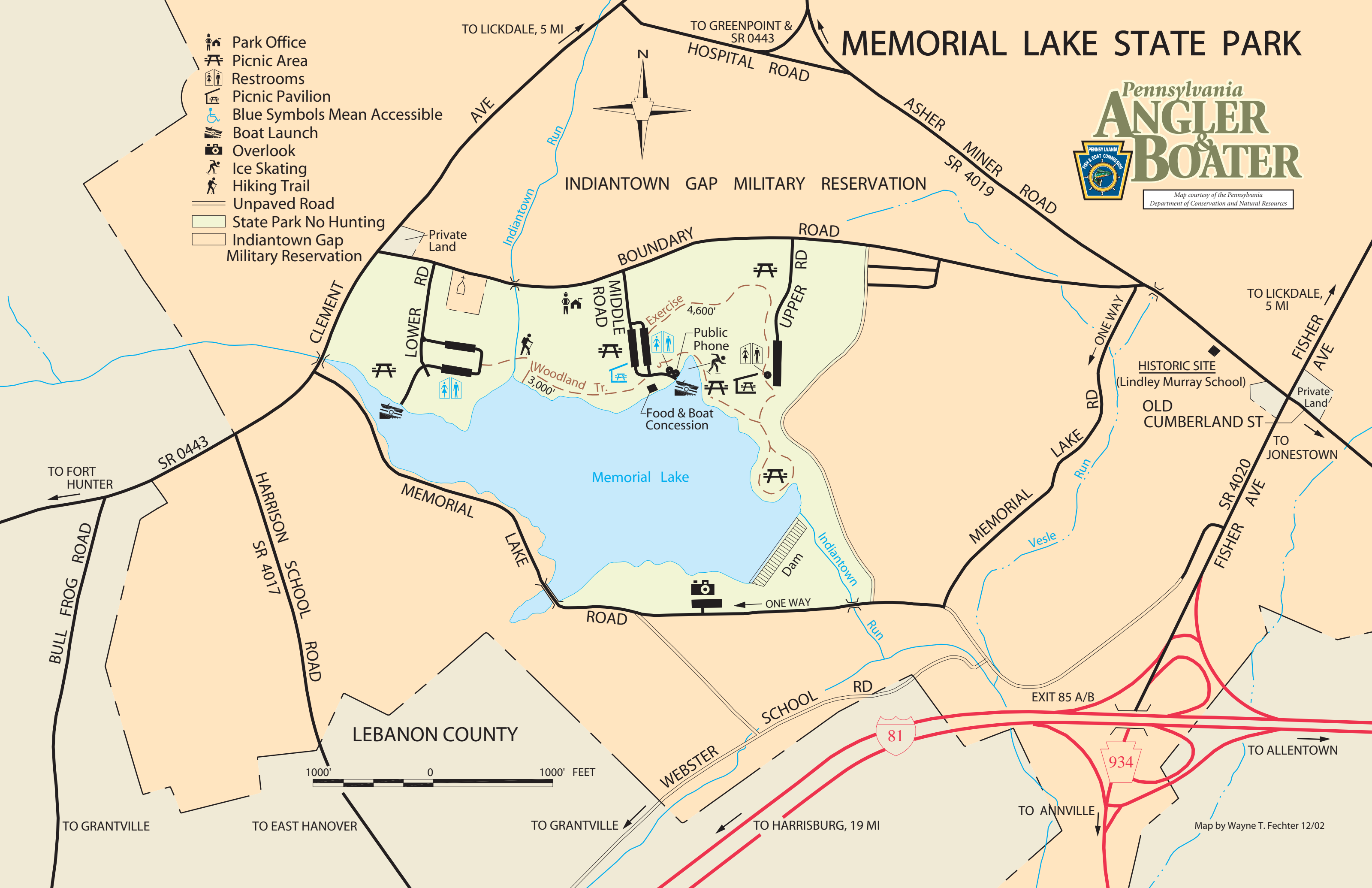
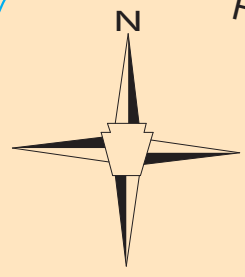
While the entire lake provides fishing opportunities, the southern shoreline's dam area is a favored location. The dam area is home to the lake's deepest waters, measuring 22 feet, and is also a hot spot for largemouth bass since it's where the majority of the lake's bass structures

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MEMORIAL LAKE STATE PARK



- Park Office
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Picnic Pavilion
- Blue Symbols Mean Accessible
- Boat Launch
- Overlook
- Ice Skating
- Hiking Trail
- Unpaved Road
- State Park No Hunting
- Indiantown Gap Military Reservation



Map by Wayne T. Fechter 12/02



WCO Doug Deppen and Jay Bucher stock fish in Memorial Lake, Memorial Lake State Park, Lebanon County.

are located. Other anglers visiting this area may be casting a line at the dam's outflow for catfish or carp.

Good fishing also exists along the park's northern shoreline. One of the most heavily used fishing spots at this location is found where Indiantown Run meets the lake. While this area presents great opportunities for panfish, it also attracts eager trout anglers. Although trout aren't stocked in Memorial Lake, it's not uncommon to hook one at this outflow site since Indiantown Run empties from Marquette Lake, a trout stocked water above Memorial Lake.

Memorial's northern shoreline is also situated at one of eastern Pennsylvania's best locations to take a young angler for the first time. According to State Park Manager, Angel Croll, the state park stands out from others because of it is friendly, family fishing. "You see a lot of families regularly visiting the park who come to fish and to keep a family tradition alive," said Croll. The easily accessible day use area on

the lake's northern shore is the ideal location for families who are looking for a beautiful place to picnic while their kids are able to explore the flat shoreline and the shallow waters for sunfish, bluegill and perch. Another hot spot for panfish is the ADA accessible fishing pier, found in the middle road area.

If choosing to navigate Memorial by boat, the electric motor's only lake has two boat launching ramps, 48 shoreline mooring spaces and eight rack spaces. Since boaters are restricted to electric motors, the state park has become the area's ideal paddling destination. Kayaking popularity is especially starting to escalate since recreators commonly see a wide variety of wildlife and waterfowl while paddling near the shorelines of the peaceful lake. For visitors not traveling with personal equipment, Green Way Outdoors, a brand new boat concession, offers kayak, canoe and rowboat rentals from Memorial Day through Labor Day, and into some fall weekends.

Reasons to visit the picturesque Memorial Lake State Park also exist on land, and include hiking, picnicking and wildlife viewing. While the park's open grounds allow visitors to explore the park's beauty beyond the beaten path, the established woodland trail is a short and pleasant walking adventure along the northern shoreline. The open nature of the park additionally lends itself to excellent opportunities for short distance cross-country ski trips during the winter.

The park has numerous picnic tables and two pavilions with easy lake access and nearby playfields. Birding is very popular and gives visitors the opportunity to view over 100 different species. Be sure to keep a sharp eye out for the park's bald eagle.

For additional recreational opportunities, the neighboring Swatara Creek State Park, although presently undeveloped, may be worth the quick trip if looking for a paddling adventure or some great creek fishing. Eight miles of Swatara Creek wind through the park and are great habitats for smallmouth bass and panfish. During the spring season, trout anglers are drawn to Trout Run, the park's only stocked, cold water trout fishing stream. There are also several small streams within the park that hold native populations of brook trout. Other fishing opportunities include Irving's Pond for largemouth bass and panfish.

Whether you are an outdoor enthusiast, someone who needs to escape the city for a weekend or a family looking for a great day of fishing, a trip to Memorial Lake State Park is certainly worth the drive. Although the state park doesn't offer any overnight lodging, a number of fantastic, family-friendly campgrounds are nearby. The park is 30 minutes northeast of Harrisburg and a short drive from Hershey. It is easily reached from Interstate 81 at Exit 85. For more information, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us or call the state park office directly at 717-865-6470. ☐