



MORAIN STATE PARK

by **Charles Cantella** photos by the author

Nestled among western Pennsylvania's rolling wooded hills, Lake Arthur glimmers in the sun, the jewel of Moraine State Park, Butler County. At 3,225 acres, Lake Arthur sports 42 miles of shoreline and is surrounded by a 16,725-acre park with overnight cabins. Over a million visitors annually explore the park to fish, boat, picnic, hike, or bike. The 7-mile paved Multi-use Trail from the bike rental to Davis Hollow Marina is popular with bicyclists and hikers. Rent a pontoon boat, kayak, or canoe. Play on the 18-hole disc golf course, bird watch, or swim at the beach or with an organized open water swim organized by Get Fit Families. The park also

hosts an annual Moraine State Park Regatta, a Striped Bass fishing tournament, an ice fishing tournament, Largemouth Bass fishing tournaments, and kids fishing tournaments. There is something for everyone to do here.

The lake is fertile, with relatively shallow depth allowing good vegetation growth, which provides prodigious amounts of nutrition and habitat for a solid population of forge fish to thrive. The fish in Lake Arthur can grow large.

Species in the lake include Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass, Muskellunge, Northern Pike, Striped Bass, hybrid Striped Bass, Walleye, and panfish. There is always potential for a big fish. But, that doesn't mean that the fish will be easy. A multitude of coves, inlets, submerged structure, and weed beds provide cover to allow the fish to hide and thrive. Local angler Steve Weaver chases Striped Bass among other species. Weaver believes fish movement and activity are usually triggered by water temperature. Temperatures in the 55- to 65-degrees F range produce the best results. The fish also seem to be more active at night. If you are on the water at night, have your boat equipped with the correct running lights.

James Swearingen, who targets toothier fish like Muskellunge and Northern Pike, suggests using big lures for big fish. Swearingen believes that many anglers new to chasing the "fish of 10,000 casts" do not fully comprehend the size and strength of fish in the *Esox* family. "Have patience and be persistent. Keep plugging along and keep casting. The success will come with being persistent," said Swearingen. Swearingen suggests targeting weeds and weed beds where fish may hide and wait to ambush passing prey or, hopefully, your lure.

**For more information on
Get Fit Families:**

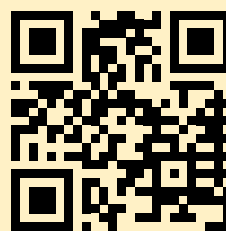


visitbutlercounty.com/services/get-fit-families



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For an ice thickness chart:



FishandBoat.com

For more information

Moraine State Park (Lake Arthur)
225 Pleasant Valley Rd
Portersville, PA 16051-2031
724-368-8811

Overnight Reservations:
888-727-2757 (888-PA PARKS)

Bicycle Rental:
www.morainepreservationfund.org

Moraine State Park Regatta
www.morainestateparkregatta.org

North Country Trail Association
www.northcountrytrail.org

Angler Ryan Ireland likes to ice fish at Lake Arthur, because the slower pace of ice fishing allows him the opportunity to hit the ice with good friends. Ireland says ice fishing presents anglers with even greater challenges than open water fishing. For starters, you only fish the water column under the hole in the ice, so the location is much more critical. Ice safety is always a priority. Also, the presence of, or lack of, snow on the ice will affect light penetration. When I talked with Ireland, he just finished a “successful but fishless” day. The puzzled look I gave him must have cued him to explain, “Catching fish is great, spending time with your friends is even better.” ☐



When ice fishing, you only fish the water column under the hole in the ice, so location of the drilled hole is critical.



Cabin at Moraine State Park, Butler County