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TRAVEL

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EXPLORE MINNESOTA

A breath of fresh air

As summer gets underway and the nation heads outdoors, a look at the top 10 U.S. park cities

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

This spring, I've found hope hiking on wooded trails, joy spotting foxes around a forest and comfort strolling in open pastures.

For jet-setters, road trippers and backpackers alike, parks — quiet, spacious, safe and nourishing — have helped us cope with the pandemic in so many ways. Even as stay-at-home orders become suggestions over the next months and some of us cautiously travel outside our hometowns, parks will remain important destinations on our itineraries.

If and when you visit parks in other areas of the country, check for reopening updates and current restrictions (some parks require masks). Be respectful of locals and understand that residents rely on neighborhood parks for their own physical and mental health.

In my own park visits, I've had more ease with social distancing when I visit during slower times (early mornings and weekdays); if a park is too crowded, try another day or another park. According to park websites,



KATE GILLE/CINCINNATI PARKS FOUNDATION

FROM TOP LEFT: Bikers ride along a trail in Irvine, Calif. A rainbow appears shortly after rain at Gravelly Point Park in Arlington, Va. Visitors enjoy Minnehaha Falls at Minnehaha Regional Park in Minneapolis. Hikers in Ohio explore Burnet Woods, a 90-acre park in Cincinnati and a top spot for birding and hiking.

many facilities (bathrooms, visitor centers, water fountains) around the country remain closed, so plan accordingly. Some cities don't expect their outdoor pools to open this summer.

A sunny spot in this pandemic is the number of "slow streets," or roadways that are closed to all or most car traffic to create safe spaces for pedestrians, runners and cyclists. Cities that have designated slow streets include Minneapolis; Washington, D.C.; Portland; and San Francisco. Seattle announced that 20 miles of roads would permanently close to most vehicle traffic — a move that other progressive cities may follow.

In May, the Trust for Public Land released its annual ParkScore index, ranking U.S. cities on their parks, based on acreage, access for residents, amenities and investment. This year, Minneapolis unseated Washington for the top ParkScore spot.

Below are the top 10 ParkScore cities, with some spots the cities and locals suggest for social distancing.

SEE PARKS ON E16

OUTDOORS Safety is paramount as the popularity of hiking skyrockets. **E14** | **REOPENING** Attractions with a tactile component face additional challenges. **E15**

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted travel domestically and around the world. You will find the latest developments on The Post's live blog at www.washingtonpost.com/coronavirus/

Exploring the nation's trails and pastures

PARKS FROM E13

10. Chicago: With Chicago's lakefront still closed, it's a good time to explore the city's green areas. Millennium Park, Lincoln Park, Grant Park, Burnham Park, Harold Washington Park and Jackson Park all recently reopened. Humboldt Park, which features lagoons connected by a prairie river, is great for spreading out with your family, and Clark Park, on the east bank of the Chicago River, offers a new running trail that connects to Horner Park. Dan Ryan Woods is a 257-acre forest preserve on the South Side with a mile-long paved loop that connects to eight-mile-long Major Taylor Trail. The Chicago Park District is deploying 100 social distancing ambassadors to provide guidance for visitors on health and safety.

9. Boston: Boston's largest open space is Franklin Park, one of six parks that make up the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed chain called the Emerald Necklace. Head to Franklin for a walk around Scarboro Pond, or to explore the Wilderness a 65-acre native oak forest with meandering paths. Millennium Park is a 100-acre park in the West Roxbury neighborhood with hiking trails, accessible walking trails, fields and a canoe launch (formerly a landfill and covered by dirt excavated from the Big Dig). Another place to social distance: the Neponset River Reservation, a natural inlet with marshlands, wetlands and the two-mile Quincy Riverwalk path.

8. San Francisco: Intrigued by social distancing circles? You can find them at Lafayette, Mission Dolores, Washington Square and Precita parks, Little Marina Green, Alamo Square and Jackson Playground. Golden Gate National Recreation Area (composed of 37 parks, 80,000 acres and 130 miles of trails) includes spectacular spots such as the Presidio (forests, a lake and dozens of miles for hiking and biking). Also check out national parks Crissy Field, a great walking park on a former military airfield; and Lands End in the northwestern corner of the city, which offers a windy cliff trail and stunning views of the shore and Golden Gate.

7. Irvine, Calif.: Thanks to this SoCal city's master plan, one-third of Irvine's land is preserved for outdoor recreation — including 62 miles of off-street trails and the largest acreage of natural habitats and wild lands in Orange County. The Orange County Great Park (repurposed from a decommissioned Marine Corps Air Station), Colonel Bill Barber Marine Corps Memorial Park and Jeffrey Open Space Trail are three parks with spacious grassy areas, meadows, and paved walking and biking trails. Explore thousands of acres of native habitat through the Irvine Open Space Preserve, hiking or biking on wilderness trails such



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VISIT SAINT PAUL



TRAVEL PORTLAND

FROM TOP LEFT: Lands End, in the northwestern corner of San Francisco, offers a windy cliff trail and stunning views of the shore. Jamaica Pond, in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, is part of the Emerald Necklace, a chain of parks linked by parkways and waterways. Chicago's Humboldt Park, which features lagoons connected by a prairie river, was mostly empty on a warm spring day in early May. Walkers pass columns from the east portico of the U.S. Capitol at Northeast Washington's National Arboretum, where the columns were moved in 1958. The Changsha China Friendship Garden is one feature of Phalen Regional Park in St. Paul, Minn. A child lies on a log in Portland, Ore.'s Forest Park, which, at 5,200 acres, is one of the country's largest urban parks and a popular escape for runners, equestrians and hikers.

the city by the Fleischmann Yeast Company heirs), a beautifully landscaped four-acre park with winding walkways and an ever-green maze; and Wilson Commons on the west side, with a walking loop and an overlook of the Ohio River. Burnet Woods, a top spot for birding and hiking, is a 90-acre park near the University of Cincinnati.

4. Arlington, Va.: While some of Arlington's top trails (Mount Vernon, Four Mile Run and W&OD) are crowded at peak times, the city has plenty of open space at lesser known spots such as Fort C.F. Smith, a 19-acre park with short trails, Civil War earthworks ruins, a lush tree canopy and an open meadow. Long Bridge Park, a stone's throw from the Pentagon and the Potomac, features open spaces and a wide raised esplanade overlooking the river and Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary. Glencarlyn Park is nearly 100 acres, with wooded trails and a stream. Arlington's national park sites, Gravelly Point and Theodore Roosevelt Island, are also social-distance-friendly.

3. St. Paul, Minn.: Two local favorites are Como and Phalen regional parks, with large and picturesque lakes (walking paths around the perimeter), golf courses, open play areas, picnic spots, fishing piers and boating access. Head to Indian Mounds Regional Park, home to six Native American burial grounds, for biking and hiking trails plus views of the Mississippi River and downtown St. Paul. And Crosby Farm is one of three regional parks along the Mississippi, with six miles of paved trails.

2. Washington, D.C.: The National Park Service manages hundreds of sites across the nation's capital, much of the total parkland in the city. Perhaps best known are the iconic monuments and memorials and the Mall, with wide paths and ample grassy stretches. Rock Creek Park is a favorite among locals for its wooded hiking trails, paved paths and open roadways. Anacostia Riverwalk Trail tends to be less busy than other walking and biking trails in the city; it passes through Kenilworth Park & Aquatic Gardens, a compact national park site perfect for birding and strolling. The National Arboretum in Northeast is nearly 450 acres with hiking trails, open fields, almost 10 miles of winding roadways, and special collections of bonsais, ferns, dogwoods, azaleas and herbs.

1. Minneapolis: With 180 parks and 22 lakes, it's no surprise that Minneapolis has topped the ParkScore list four of the past five years. Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway is a giant loop that links many of the city's most popular outdoor spaces and includes 51 miles of paths for social distancing (enjoy the parkways that are now closed to cars in the area around the Chain of Lakes and riverfront). Mississippi Gorge Regional Park flanks the east and west banks of the river, stretching from Bridge No. 9 to the north edge of Minnehaha Regional Park, known for its 53-foot waterfall and hikes. Check here for updates.

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as Quail Hill (the only dog-friendly preserve area) and Bommer Canyon.

6. Portland, Ore.: Forest Park is one of the country's largest urban parks. Stretching for more than seven miles along the Tualatin Mountains, the park is 5,200 acres, with 80 miles of trails; Leif Erikson Drive, which is 11 miles long and plenty wide for distancing, is a local favorite. Peninsula Park, great for socially distanced picnics, includes formal gardens (the city's first public rose garden) and paved paths. Alternatively, visitors can loop around the Willamette River on the Eastbank Esplanade and Waterfront Park Trail, crossing the Hawthorne Bridge at the south and Steel Bridge at the north.

5. Cincinnati: Mt. Airy Forest is the city's largest park, with nearly 1,500 acres, including hiking, bridle and mountain biking trails. The 119-year-old park has a wheelchair-accessible treehouse and an arboretum. The city encourages people to visit neighborhood parks such as Fleischmann Gardens (given to