

MERIDIAN COUNTY PARK AND HERTER-MATTER SANCTUARY

Door County Parks Department

6799 Hwy 57, south end of lake

Area, 130 acres. Miles of hiking trails, 1.5. Hiking time: 2 hours + for each trail. See attached map and trails of this Park. An information kiosk is present at the parking area. Restrooms and trash receptacles are available.

Meridian Park gained its name from location, location, location. It is on the 45th parallel, halfway between the equator and the North Pole. The trail is located at the east end of the wayside and passes very close to the restroom; the trail is not on top of the dolomite bluff.

The trail passes along the base of a dolomite stone bluff, passes through a lowland of dense evergreen woods that include very old white pine and hemlock trees and continues on through a dense grove of arbor-vitae (white) cedars. This trail slowly ascends to the top of the bluff into a hardwood forest. You'll observe different wildflowers along the trail through these woods. Yellow lady-slipper orchids and baneberry can be observed as you ascend into the hardwood forest. Near the end of this trail you will suddenly come upon a large marsh. In spring this marsh is filled with water from melted snow and its water will drain into Kangaroo Lake via a small creek. When northern pike and several other fish spawn in spring they find this creek and migrate up to this marsh to spawn. You will see an old house about now on your hike. The trail now circles back upon itself and returns to the parking area.

As you return along the trail, you'll see another trail that leads off to the east. It is a SEPARATE trail in that hiking it will take another 1.5 to 2 hours. It is more rugged. It follows the length of a low wooded ridge that formed about 4000 to 6000 years ago when Lake Michigan, higher at that time, lapped the shores of the south end of the Kangaroo Lake area. As Lake Michigan slowly receded it formed long ridges of gravelly sand that alternate with water-filled troughs (swales) between the ridges. Unusual, some rare, plants have adapted to the cool waters of the swales and the humus soil along the ridges. The ridges are densely covered with cedar trees; alder and other shrubs develop in the swales. Several such ridges and swales parallel Hwy 57 along this portion of the Park. At any time during your walk along the ridge you can simply reverse direction and follow this same trail back to the parking area.

To get there: follow Hwy 57 north from Jacksonport about 2 miles, or south from Baileys Harbor about 3.5 miles, to the Wayside at 6799 Hwy 57.

