

# Wisconsin Celebrates “Year of the Trails”

(NAPSA)—With an abundance of natural beauty, health benefits, accessibility and pure, simple enjoyment to offer, Wisconsin’s nationally renowned trail system draws people to the outdoors. Add a statewide celebration, and 2002 is the perfect time to experience Wisconsin’s recreational trails.

2002 has been declared the “**Year of the Trails**” in Wisconsin, and the yearlong celebration will involve communities statewide.

“The Year of the Trails is a chance for all of us to recognize the positive contributions that trails make to the quality of life in Wisconsin,” Gov. Scott McCallum said. “Whatever activity you choose—whether it’s walking, biking, horseback riding or snowmobiling—a trail can be a great community resource. We’re celebrating the benefits that trails give to us today and looking forward to the future development and progress of Wisconsin’s trail system.”

Throughout the year, special events celebrating the Year of the Trails will be held statewide. From moonlight hikes to trail dedications, bike tours to candlelight skiing, a variety of events will mark the occasion.

Thousands of miles of recreational trails in Wisconsin are used year-round for a variety of activities. Trail users include walkers, joggers, hikers, cyclists, in-line skaters, horseback riders, wildlife watchers, snowmobilers, snowshoers, dog sledgers and cross-country skiers. Wisconsin’s trails traverse a wide range of landscapes, from forests to farmland, urban centers to lakeshores. Some are loop trails within state parks, others connect small towns and still others are popular commuting routes.

Covering more than 1,400 miles, Wisconsin’s State Trail System is



Wisconsin’s Elroy-Sparta State Trail is famous for its tunnels.

the nation’s largest and includes old railway corridors that have been converted into multi-use paths. This trail network includes the country’s first “rails to trails” conversion, the famous **Elroy-Sparta State Trail**. Spanning 32 miles in the southwestern portion of the state, the trail includes three century-old, stone railroad tunnels. It is a mecca for people who want the unique experience of walking with flashlights in hand through the cool, dark tunnels, the longest of which spans almost three-quarters of a mile.

Two trails in Wisconsin have unique features that have earned them the designation of being among the country’s eight National Scenic Trails. Wisconsin’s **Ice Age National Scenic Trail** traces what is considered to be one of the best glacial imprints in the United States. Continually under development, the 1,200-mile trail marks the furthest advance of Wisconsin’s last glacier, which covered about two-thirds of the state between 12,000 and 15,000 years ago. While traveling the Ice Age Trail, hikers can see rare glacial land formations. Currently, about 600 miles of the trail are open to the public.

The **North Country National Scenic Trail**, a 4,200-mile footpath that links seven states and will eventually become the nation’s longest continuous trail, crosses northern Wisconsin. With scenery that includes wetlands, wooded ridges and an ancient mountain range, the Wisconsin segment of the trail spans 220 miles. Ninety-seven miles are now open to the public and offer hikers the chance to explore areas graced with picturesque waterfalls, rare pine barrens, abundant wildlife and other beautiful natural features.

For more information about Wisconsin’s Year of the Trails celebration, including a calendar of events:

- Call (608) 266-2181
- Visit [www.wiparks.net](http://www.wiparks.net)

For free Wisconsin travel-planning guides, including the Wisconsin State Parks Visitor Guide, and other travel information:

- Call Wisconsin’s 24-hour hot line, 1-800-432-TRIP (8747)
- Visit [travelwisconsin.com](http://travelwisconsin.com)