

OUTDOORS WITH KEN COOK

A New Year's Resolution You Can Make and Keep

Most of us make New Year's resolutions at the start of each New Year. Most of us also fail to keep them, or at least some of them. Here's an easy resolution that is wholesome, affordable, and entertaining for your entire family: Plan a getaway to a Georgia State Park in 2018.

In 2017, my writing work took me to four Georgia state parks—Unicoi, Little Ocmulgee, Stephen Foster and Georgia Veterans near Cordele. These are but four of the 60 state parks Georgia maintains for its residents and out of state visitors. Camping Life Magazine has written that Georgia has the best state park system in the nation. I fully support that description.

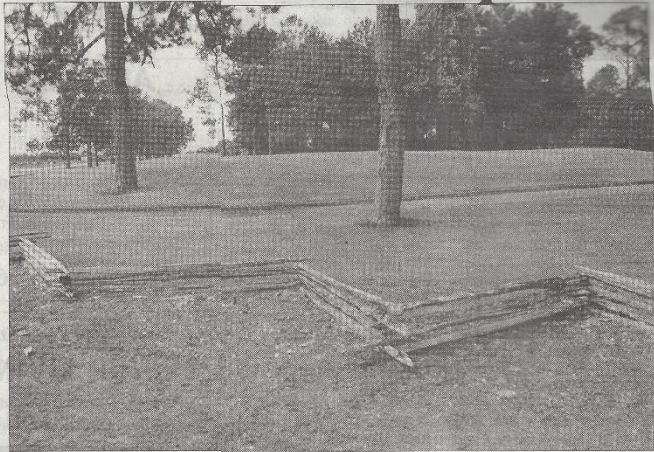
A popular perception, widely held, is that a state park is little more than a few picnic shelters in a wooded area, sometimes in view of a body of water, plus some sites for RV and primitive camping. The reality is that many Georgia parks resemble full-amenity resort properties rather than a destination for a one-day visit. Using Veterans Memorial Park for example, let me explain.

Appropriately titled Lake Blackshear Resort & Golf Club, the park is a 1300 acre property on the shores of Lake Blackshear near Cordele. Here is a snapshot of what visitors will find:

Lodging: 14 main lodge guest rooms; 64 villa guest rooms; 10 lakeside cabins; 82 campsites along with numerous comfort stations for campers and guests.

Dining: Cordelia's; Cypress Grill; and 88's Lakeside Bar, all with lake views.

Activities: 18-hole golf course; fishing; water sports; biking; outdoor pool; hiking; Georgia



The golf course at Little Ocmulgee State Park, near McRae.

Veterans Museum; train rides; fitness center.

The newest addition to the activity list is an archery and air rifle range and I attended the ribbon cutting. Scholastic shooting sports programs are all the rage among school kids these days. The addition of this new facility, as well as the range that opened this spring in Unicoi, should be a big draw for family members who enjoy archery, shooting and sharpening their bow skills.

The Veterans Park range actually consists of three ranges, two of which are ADA accessible. The first is a static, 5-lane, covered archery range where archers can shoot bulls-eye targets at 10, 20, 30 and 40-yards. The second range is a 15-station 3-D trail with life-like foam animal targets set up in realistic positions at varying distances. The third range is a covered, 10-lane facility for modern air guns.

To help maintain the range and instructors, a \$5 daily fee is charged to users in addition to the daily \$5 ParkPass. Annual range passes

are also available for individuals and families. Park passes are comped for guests.

My overnight stay at Veterans Park was exceptional. Meals at Cordelia's were superb. My villa room was most comfortable and above all, service was friendly

and personal. Veterans Park is a well-groomed and scenic resort property. Resolve to plan a family getaway to a Georgia State Park in 2018 and Georgia Veterans Park would be an excellent choice. Go to lakeblackshearresort.com" www.



New archery range at Veterans State Park.