





# SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Split Rock Lighthouse State Park  
3755 Split Rock Lighthouse Road  
Two Harbors, MN 55616  
(218) 226-6377

Department of Natural Resources  
Information Center  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

**(651) 296-6157 (Metro Area)**  
1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free)

TDD (Telecommunications  
Device for Deaf)  
(651) 296-5484 (Metro Area)  
1-800-657-3929 (MN Toll Free)

DNR Web Site: [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)

## FOR HISTORIC SITE INFORMATION OR

**GROUP TOUR RESERVATION:**  
Minnesota Historical Society  
3713 Split Rock Lighthouse Road  
Two Harbors, MN 55616  
(218) 226-6372

[www.mnhs.org/splitrock](http://www.mnhs.org/splitrock)

**SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK** is located about 20 miles north of Two Harbors, Minnesota on MN Highway 61. Highway map index number is O-9.

The Minnesota Historical Society administers the 25-acre Split Rock Lighthouse Historic Site and Visitor Center adjacent to the site. Today, restored to its pre-1924 appearance, Split Rock Light Station offers visitors a glimpse of lighthouse duty in the years when the isolated station could be reached only by water. The Visitor Center houses a 90-seat theatre which features the 22 minute film, "SPLIT ROCK LIGHT: Tribute to the Age of Steel," exhibits on commercial fishing and North Shore tourism, and a museum store. Summer visitors to the historic site may also tour the lighthouse, fog-signal building and the restored keeper's dwelling (10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M., mid-May to mid-October). From late October through early May, typically only the Visitor Center is open; (11 A.M. - 4:00 P.M., Thursdays thru Sundays) however, the grounds are open daily until dusk.

Facilities available within the park boundaries of 2200 acres include: 14.5 miles of biking, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, a paved segment of the nonmotorized Gitchi-Gami State Trail, a lakeshore picnic area with well-spaced, private picnic sites, a year-round trail center/picnic shelter building, an open picnic shelter and a unique cart-in campground where campers park their vehicles in the campground parking lot, load their gear into lightweight carts (carts are included with campsite rental), then wheel their gear on gravel trails to well spaced, secluded campsites. A modern sanitation building with showers is located in the campground.

**WILDLIFE:** Although the wildlife at Split Rock has not been inventoried, it is suspected that the species are similar to that of nearby Gooseberry Falls State Park. This would indicate a variety of small songbirds, herring gulls and common loons. The once threatened peregrine falcon nests on cliffs along the lake. Other wildlife includes the white-tailed deer, moose, black bear, raccoon, and snowshoe hare. A beaver colony can be found on the Split Rock River.

**GEOLOGY:** The geologic history of this area tells a story that is more than a billion years old. Ancient lava flows today are evident in the many

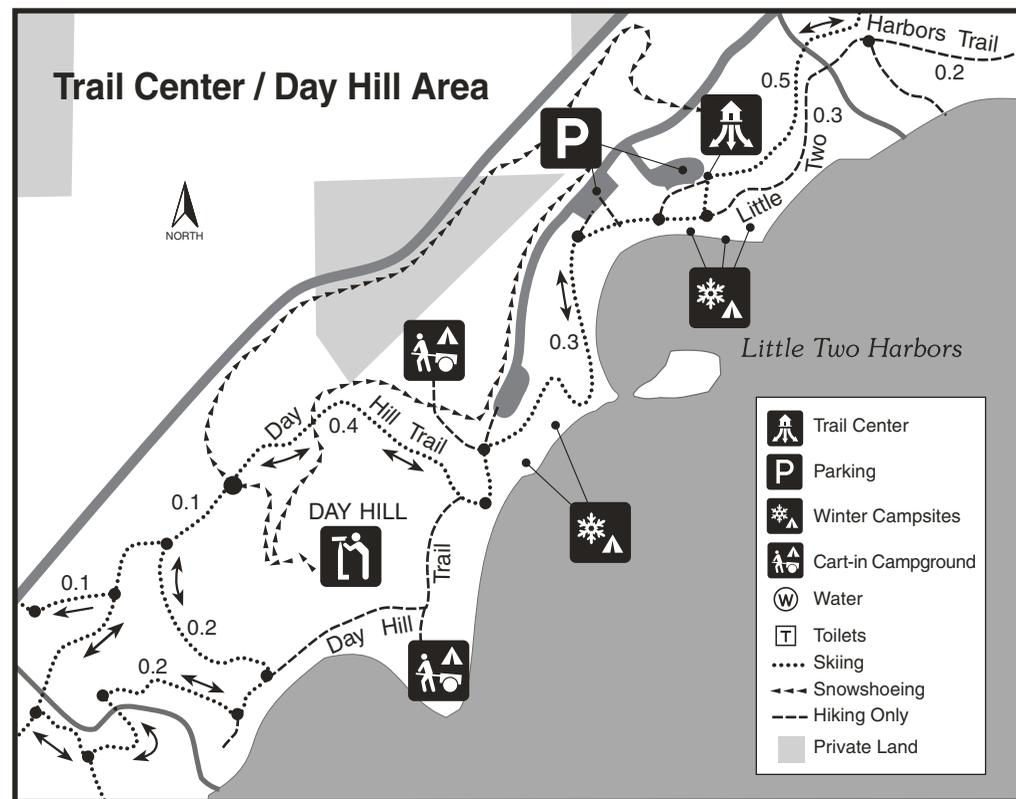
falls and rapids along the North Shore. Below, molten rock cooled more slowly to form gabbro, a harder, more resistant, rock. Intrusions of molten material into this large mass formed pockets of other types of rock and minerals. Pushed up through the earth's crust, today, large masses of gabbro make up the bold and rocky character of this region. At Split Rock, the lighthouse cliff is a fine-grained gabbro which is capped by a light green rock called anorthosite. In more recent times, glaciers passed through the area erasing much of the earth's geologic record as it scoured out the basin of Lake Superior and shaped the rock that lay underneath. Melt-water wore away less resistant rock leaving behind a barren and rugged landscape.

**HISTORY:** Due to a storm in 1905 which wrecked six ships within a dozen miles of the Split Rock River, the federal government contracted to have Split Rock Light Station built in 1909. With its fog signal building and lighthouse, the keepers at Split Rock warned ships away from the rocky and treacherous North Shore. Commissioned in 1910 and decommissioned by the Coast Guard in 1969 because of improvements in shipboard technology, the Split Rock light shone for 59 years over western Lake Superior. In 1971 the federal government decided the light station to the state of Minnesota to be operated as a public historic site. In 1976 the Minnesota Historical Society assumed operation of the site.

July 31, 2010 commemorates the 100th anniversary of the first beacon lighting.

The first white people to live in the Split Rock area were commercial fishermen who lived in a small fishing village called Little Two Harbors, located in the cove near the island one-half mile west of the lighthouse. These fishermen, predominantly Norwegians, fished for herring from the turn of the century until the 1920s.

Major logging operations were conducted at the mouth of the Split Rock River by the Merrill and Ring Company from 1899-1906. The forest then was predominantly red and white pine. Fires swept through the area after it had been logged out and today birch mixed with some spruce, fir, ash, upland and lowland brush and marsh have replaced the stately pines.



## SO EVERYONE CAN ENJOY THE PARK...

- The park belongs to all Minnesotans. Please treat it with respect and help us to protect it by following the rules.
- The park is open year-round. On a daily basis, the park is closed from 10:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. the following morning except to registered campers.
- Camp only in designated locations.
- The use of firearms, explosives, air guns, slingshots, traps, seines, nets, bows and arrows, paintballs, and all other weapons is prohibited in state parks.
- Pets must be restrained on a leash no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed in park buildings or on the historic site.
- Park in designated areas only.
- Motor bikes and other licensed vehicles are allowed only on park roads, not on trails.
- Enjoy park wildlife and plants but please respect them. Do not pick or dig up plants disturb or feed animals, scavenge dead wood, or remove rocks from the lake
- Daily or annual permits are required for all

vehicles entering a state park. They may be purchased at the park headquarters or the Information Center in St. Paul (see "FOR MORE INFORMATION" to left).

- Build fires only in designated locations — fire rings or fireplaces. Wood is available for purchase from park staff. Portable stoves or grills are permitted.

*This information is available in alternative format upon request.*

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DNR Maps