

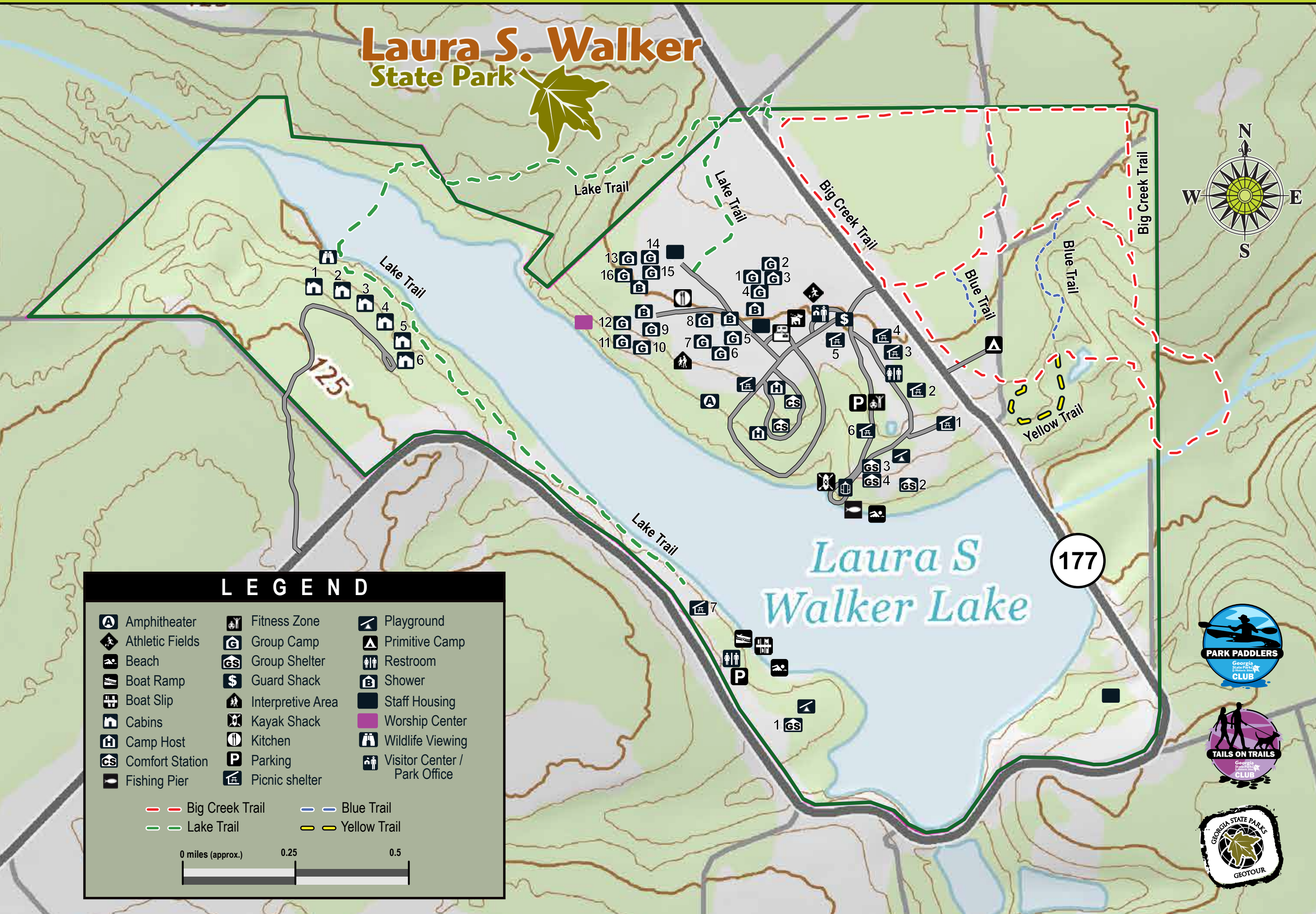
Laura S. Walker State Park



Laura S. Walker State Park Trail Map



5653 Laura Walker Road • Waycross, GA 31503 • Park: 912-287-4900 • Reservations: 800-864-7275 • Emergency: 911 • GaStateParks.org



LEGEND

Amphitheater	Fitness Zone	Playground
Athletic Fields	Group Camp	Primitive Camp
Beach	Group Shelter	Restroom
Boat Ramp	Guard Shack	Shower
Boat Slip	Interpretive Area	Staff Housing
Cabins	Kayak Shack	Worship Center
Camp Host	Kitchen	Wildlife Viewing
Comfort Station	Parking	Visitor Center / Park Office
Fishing Pier	Picnic shelter	

Big Creek Trail	Blue Trail
Lake Trail	Yellow Trail

0 miles (approx.) 0.25 0.5



Big Creek Nature Trail - - - - -

Easy to Moderate - Natural surface - About 2.5 miles

This trailhead begins just outside our park office, across Hwy 177. The Interpretive panel marks the start of the trail, where you can learn more about the local ecosystem of the swamp. If you head left (north), you can take the entire Big Creek Nature Trail loop or connect with the Lake Trail after 0.2 miles. To access the Lake Trail (Green trail), once you come to the dirt road look to the other side of Hwy 177 and you will see a chain-link gate. The trail continues to the right of that gate.

The Big Creek Nature Trail is an easy to moderate 2.5 mile round trip hike. On the southern end you will find an elevated boardwalk that gives you close look into the black water of the Big Creek, a tributary of the Satilla River.

Hiking this trail might give you a chance encounter with Georgia's state reptile, the Gopher Tortoise, as well as a variety of birds such as the pileated woodpecker, American goldfinch and other native wildlife. Some of the pines in the area still show historical signs from a time when sap (also called 'naval stores') was collected to coat the exteriors of the great ships that sailed our Georgia coastline. Look for features called "cat whiskers" and collection tins on many of the trees in this area. Visit our Interpretive Center to see our display on the naval stores to learn more about the role of the forests surrounding our Park.



Lake Trail - - - - -

Easy to Moderate - Natural surface - About 1.2 miles

The Lake Trail is an easy to moderate, out-and-back trail that follows the contours of the 120-acre Laura S. Walker Lake, and impoundment of the Big Creek. The trail crosses over a boggy wetland by way of a 1,500-foot boardwalk, where lots of critters can be found wading, swimming, flying, creeping and crawling through the murky waters or hiding among the cypress trees and Spanish moss. You will eventually cross Laura S. Walker Lake, and the bridge offers a good location to fish and observe wildlife. Once you cross the bridge, within 0.5 miles the Lake Trail meets up with the Big Creek Nature Trail by Hwy 177.

There are a few options for starting this hiking trail. The primary trailhead starts across from picnic shelter #7, in the same parking lot as the boat ramp. If you want to start from the park office, take a right and walk to the dog park. Turn right and follow the park road for .1 miles toward the group camp, staff residence and maintenance area. As you approach the end of the road, you will come to a wooden fence with a sign pointing right for the nature trail. Follow the fence where you will eventually make a sharp right turn and see the trail continue to the left of the metal gate.

The dark colored water of the Laura S. Walker Lake comes from tannic acid, which is characteristic of watersheds dominated by oaks and pines. In this area, some fascinating species unique to this wetland include carnivorous pitcher plants and lily pads. The lake is home to many types of fish including warmouth, bowfin (mudfish), chain pickerel (jackfish), bream, bass and others.

The Lake Trail provides an opportunity to view the sandhill crane and saw palmettos which are native to southeast Georgia. You may encounter animals like fox, black bear, or snakes (since we also border Dixon Memorial Forest). You'll notice that pine trees look like they have been through a recent fire. Prescribed burning by forest professionals help to ensure the ecology of the forest and swamp remains healthy.



Blue Trail - - - - -

Easy - Natural surface - About 0.3 miles

Connector Trail and Service road to Pioneer Campground. This trail connects the Northern and Southern ends of the Big Creek Nature Trail. Please be considerate, as guests might be camping in the pioneer campground near this area.

Yellow Trail - - - - -

Easy - Natural surface - About 0.37 miles

This is an extension of the Big Creek Trail that is blazed in yellow.



History of Mrs. Laura S. Walker

One of Waycross' most distinguished citizens, Mrs. Laura Singleton Walker was known for her literary ability, profound interest in mankind, and crusading spirit that launched many movements for the betterment of her community and state. She also was the author of the History of Ware County.

Mrs. Walker was born of Colonial ancestry in Milledgeville Georgia, February 28, 1871. She came to Waycross in 1886 as the wife of Dr. J.L. Walker, the former mayor. Mrs. Walker's friends included presidents, governors, military leaders and the great leaders of the South. Her home, 502 Gilmore Street, was the most visited in Waycross.

Mrs. Walker was a teacher, writer and civic leader. She worked tirelessly for land conservation and tried in vain to persuade Ware County officials to buy land for conservation and financial benefits for the county. She not only advanced the interest of forestry by her speaking with officials and the public, but also by writing in the local paper. In the Waycross Journal Herald of December 24, 1924, Mrs. Walker outlined a comprehensive program of forestry activities including forest parks, roadside beautification, forest programs for schools, activities for civic organizations in forestry, and forestry legislation.

Her work in Waycross made history. Earlier in 1924, she planned a ceremony on the banks of the Suwannee River marking the centennial of General Floyd's victorious march through the Okefenokee Swamp. In 1934, she produced a pageant with 800 characters marking the 100th anniversary of Ware County and depicting the historical significance of Waycross. She erected markers and monuments at old trails and historic sites so that history and romance would not be forgotten. Agricultural developments in Ware County advanced because of her interest. She was responsible for Ware County securing a home demonstration agent and 4-H club. She also engaged herself in school and church welfare.

Interested in issues faced by African Americans, she lent her efforts to their progress. She was responsible for starting the Negro Library. She was a member of the First Methodist Church, Daughters of the American Revolution, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Waycross Woman's Club, and other civic groups. In the Great Depression of the 1930s, the federal government bought eroded, worn out and uneconomical land from farmers and developed it for recreational purposes. The land that became Laura S. Walker State Park was purchased under these programs and built in 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Work Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Guests can still stay in the original CCC cabins at Laura S. Walker State Park.

Laura S. Walker is the first park in Georgia named for a woman. It was a National Park for four years, and in 1941 became the 13th State Park of Georgia.

Laura Singleton Walker died on April 9, 1955 in Waycross at the age of 94.

SAFETY TIPS & ETIQUETTE

- Tell someone your itinerary and expected return time.
- Be prepared for unexpected weather changes by dressing in layers and carrying rain gear. Avoid wearing cotton. Today's hikers can choose from numerous fabrics that wick moisture, dry quickly or conserve heat. Many experienced hikers wear a lightweight shirt that wicks moisture, while carrying a fleece pullover and rain jacket.
- Take a map, water, snacks, first aid kit, flashlight and whistle. Three short blasts on a whistle are known as a call for help.
- Do not stray from trails. If you become lost, stay in one location and wait for help. This will make it easier for rescuers to find you.
- Don't count on cell phones to work in the wilderness, but if they do, be able to give details about your location.
- Invest in good hiking socks such as those found at sporting goods stores. Avoid blisters by carrying "moleskin" and applying it as soon as you feel a hot spot on your feet. Available in the foot care section of drug stores, moleskin is like felt that sticks to your skin.
- Pack out all trash.
- Keep pets on a leash.
- Do not pick flowers or disturb wildlife.
- Protect the landscape by staying on trails.

