

Duke Farms

Park Overview: A magnificent new park has opened to the public with the transformation of the Doris Duke estate into a landscape with an ecological accent to experience and explore while hiking.

Trail Uses: Hiking, Mountain biking, X-C skiing, Handicapped

Dogs: No dogs

Trail Miles: 18 miles

Park Acreage: 2740 acres

City/County/State: Hillsborough/Somerset/NJ

Situated amid the gentle hills of the Raritan River valley in suburban New Jersey, Duke Farms opened to the public on May 19, 2012. Once the home of Doris Duke -- heiress of the American Tobacco fortune -- the 2,700-acre lavish estate is said to be one of the largest privately owned public spaces in the United States. It has taken the trustees of Doris Duke Charitable Foundation more than a decade and \$45-\$50M to transform the estate into "a model of environmental stewardship in the 21st century ... to inspire visitors to become informed stewards of the land." What a transformation it will be, from a mysterious iron-gated property to an open greenspace on the way to becoming a sanctuary for native New Jersey flora and fauna.

Park Description:

- In a *New York Times* interview, John E. Zuccotti, chairman of the board of trustees of the Foundation stated, "There's so many different objectives in this space. I daresay there were plenty of people in the State of New Jersey who said, 'Just give it to us, and we'll make it a park.' This isn't just a park. That's the whole point." [May 3, 2012, Arts Section. This is the same Zuccotti of "Zuccotti Park" in the Wall Street area.]

Images posted on FLICKR by visitors can be viewed by clicking on Contact Information below, follow the "Visit" tab. For additional photos see the [New York Times slideshow](#) [2]

Visits begin at the orientation center, housed in the Farm Barn located on Duke Parkway West between Route 206 and Roycefield Road. This 22,000-square-foot former horse and dairy barn, which has been renovated to LEED Platinum standards of the U.S. Green Building Council, also houses a classroom and café on the first floor.

Trails Overview: Duke Farms' 18 miles of trails wind through woodlands and meadows, past fountains and sculptures, around lakes and lagoons. Along the way, more than two dozen interpretive signs and audio tours explain the history of the property, the significance of the native habitat and the stewardship practices in use. The network of trails includes "Walk on the Wild Side," a self-guided nature trail. Twelve of these miles are open to bikes and four are wheelchair accessible and friendly to strollers.

An overview map (slightly undersized) is available showing the three types of trail usage; click on Contact Information below to follow the “Visit/Map” tabs.

Trails at Duke Farm are open from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily; closed Wednesdays. Admission is free. A modest fee may be charged for some programs, classes and events.

Driving

- The parking area and orientation center are located at 1112 Duke Parkway West, Hillsborough, N.J. For additional information click on Contact Information below, follow the “Visit/Plan your Visit” tabs. The Google map in the tab above is out of date because of the extensive renovations made to the property. The overview map on the official web site provides a more accurate rendition.

Train

Directions:

- Duke Farms is located approximately 1½ miles from the Somerville station on the N.J. Transit Raritan Valley Line. In addition to weekdays, the schedule permits a feasible roundtrip from NYC on Saturday/Sunday/Holidays. See www.njtransit.com [3], or call 800-722-2222 (in New Jersey) or 973-762-5100 (outside New Jersey).