

French Regional Park Social Narrative



Introduction

I am going to French Regional Park, which is part of Three Rivers Park District. The park is located at 12605 Rockford Rd, Plymouth, MN 55441 and is open daily from 5 AM–10 PM. At the park there are many activities and spaces available for visitors, including a visitor center, play area, shuttle, trails, boat rentals, swimming, fishing, and nature exploration. Each of these spaces and activities are described in detail in the following sections, I can read through them all or choose the ones that I am interested in for my visit.

Planning for My Visit

Before I leave home to visit the park, it is a good idea to pack a bag with some supplies. I can choose to bring a water bottle, a snack, a shade hat, sunscreen, a change of clothes, a towel and bug spray. I will also check the weather to make sure I wear clothes that will help me stay comfortable while I'm outside. If I am too cold or too hot, I might feel uncomfortable.

Arriving at French Regional Park

When I arrive at the park, I will see a small building where a Three Rivers staff member will greet our car and answer questions we might have as we arrive.



Sometimes the staff member may be inspecting motor boats. If they are busy inspecting boats, I can stop at the stop sign and continue driving into the park. I am allowed to enter the park without paying a fee.

At the bottom of the hill, I will see a parking lot, a play area, and a building. The building is the French Visitor Center. The visitor center is where I will go to start my visit if I need information about the park. There are two parking lots to choose from. Sometimes the parking area closest to the visitor center is full, so I may need to park at the next lot just a little ways down the road.

Visitor Center Building

Primary Entrance

When I arrive from the parking lot, I will walk past the play area to enter the building. I may notice that the play area can be loud and busy. Sometimes, I might notice a loud bus or truck parked near the building. If I have a service animal with me, we can explore the park and facilities together during our visit.



To enter the visitor center building, I will go through the front doors into a vestibule.



On the wall of the vestibule near the entrance, there is a rack that has paper maps and other information about programs. I can take some of these materials if I want.



Break Area

Inside the visitor center I can take a break in the air conditioning during the summer. To my right I will see an alcove space with cushioned chairs, a couch, board games, puzzles, and a sensory kit.



At the concession counter, I can:

- Buy a snack.
- Rent equipment.
- Ask a staff member for a paper map of French Regional Park.
- Check in for a program or pay any fees.

There is also a space with tables and chairs, where I can sit down and have a snack or take a break inside. There is also a large window where I can look outside and watch for birds or other wildlife. During busy times, this space can be crowded and loud.

Visitor Center Restrooms

Just past the concession area tables and chairs, I will see a hallway with restrooms. There is a restroom for women, a restroom for men, and a gender-neutral restroom. The restrooms have lights that turn on automatically when I enter. It may be dark until I open the door.



Through the first door on my left I will see a gender-neutral restroom and a drinking fountain with a water-bottle filler.



Near this restroom, there is a door to access the outside. I can access the gender-neutral restroom through this door even if the visitor center building is closed.



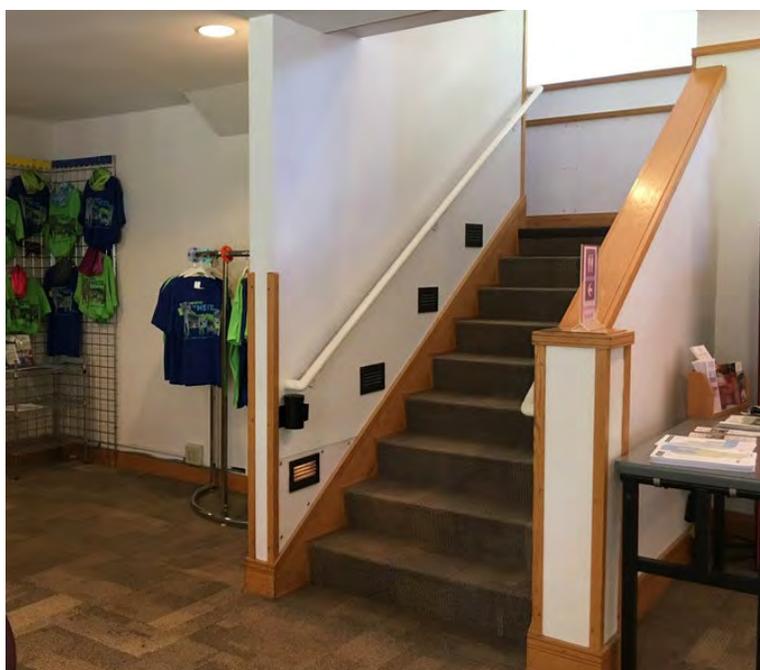
At the end of the hallway I will see one restroom for men and one for women. Each of these has more than one stall.



The restrooms may have surprising noises and automatic features. To learn more about the restrooms, I can read the section about restroom details on page 25.

Elevator/Stairs

The visitor center has two floors. I can get to the upper level by taking the stairs in the lobby or by taking the elevator that is located near the base of the stairs.



Visitor Center Upper Level

There is an upper level of the visitor center, where there are two large rooms that can be reserved for gatherings and events. There are also staff offices, an elevator and a water fountain.



The larger room with the chairs and fireplace is the Oakwood Room. In this room, there is a door to access an outdoor amphitheater.



The smaller room that overlooks the play area is called the Eastwood Room.



Play Area

French Play Area is large and has many different places to explore. There are ropes, towers, tunnels, swings, slides, and sensory stations. I can take a [virtual tour](#) of the play area before I visit.





During busy times, the play area can be crowded and loud. I might see children running and hear them yelling and laughing.

If I want to visit the French Play Area during a quieter time, weeknight evenings and Sensory-friendly Sundays may be a good time to visit.

If I need a space to take a break, I can go back inside to the break area or ask my guardian to go with me for a walk to find a quieter space along the trail nearby.

Shuttle/Trail Choice

From the visitor center, I can walk to the beach and boat rental facility or take the shuttle. If I have a pet with me, I must walk instead of taking the shuttle. If I have a service animal with me, we can ride the shuttle and explore the park together.

Trail to the Beach

The trail to and from the beach is a 1-mile loop. The trail is paved and flat. Walkers, inline skaters, and bikes may be moving to and from the beach and the visitor center.



On this trail, I will cross three wood-plank bridges with metal railings. Bridge planks may be noisy as bikes or inline skaters cross them.



If I need to take a break on the way to the beach, there is a bench halfway between the visitor center and the beach. If I am walking toward the beach, the bench will be past the first bridge.



Along the trail I may notice lily pads, frogs, turtles, ducks, and geese. These plants and animals live in the park. I can choose to continue walking calmly past them or stop and watch them. In the spring, I may see fireflies along the tree line and near the shoreline at dusk.

Shuttle

The shuttle is an open-air vehicle with three connected tram cars. It has one start location and one end location and runs continuously between the main parking lot and the beach. To ride the shuttle I will walk to the shuttle stop, where there is a small shelter. I may need to wait up to 20 minutes for the shuttle to pick me up, and other people may be waiting to ride the shuttle, too.



The shuttle can carry approximately 60 people, and there is space for two wheelchairs on the first tram car.



When the shuttle begins to move, I will feel the wind blowing through the tram. The shuttle driver may make announcements over the intercom. Sometimes, the intercom makes a crackling noise.

Once the shuttle begins, I will be at the beach and boat rental area in approximately five minutes. When I get off the shuttle, I will be near the boat rental building, the beach, and the fishing pier. I can choose where to visit next.

Trails

In addition to the paved trail from the visitor center, there are many other trails that I can take through the park.

The trails have different surfaces to walk on. Some of the trails have woodchips; some have gravel; some have grass; some have blacktop; and some have bridges to walk across. Some trails are narrow and some trails are wide. Some trails are flat and some are hilly. I can ask visitor center staff about what trails would be best for me.



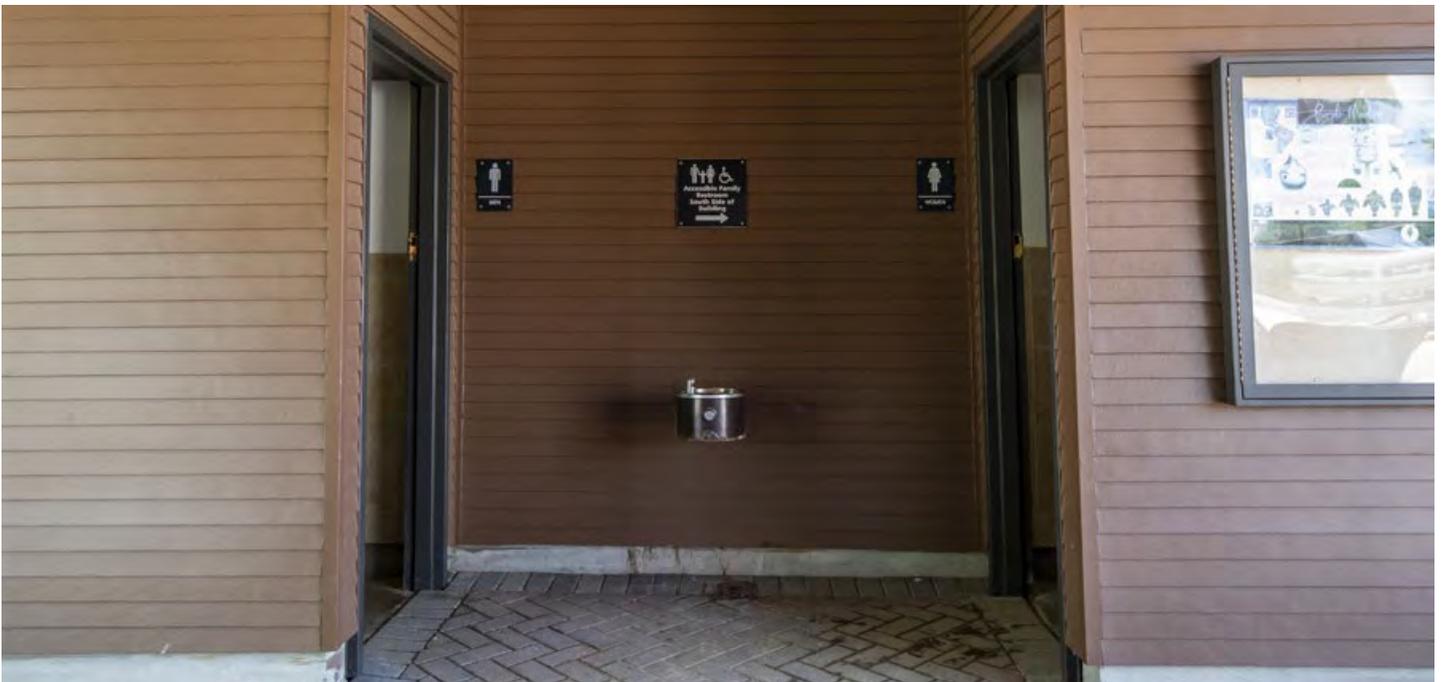
Boat Rental, Changing Rooms & Concessions

To access the boat rental building I will follow the sidewalk around the left side of the cul-de-sac. It is safest to use the sidewalk instead of the road.

At the boat rental building, I can use the restroom, rent paddling equipment, or purchase ice cream, soda, or water. The building has a breezeway with a roof where I will find the service counter and the restroom entrances.

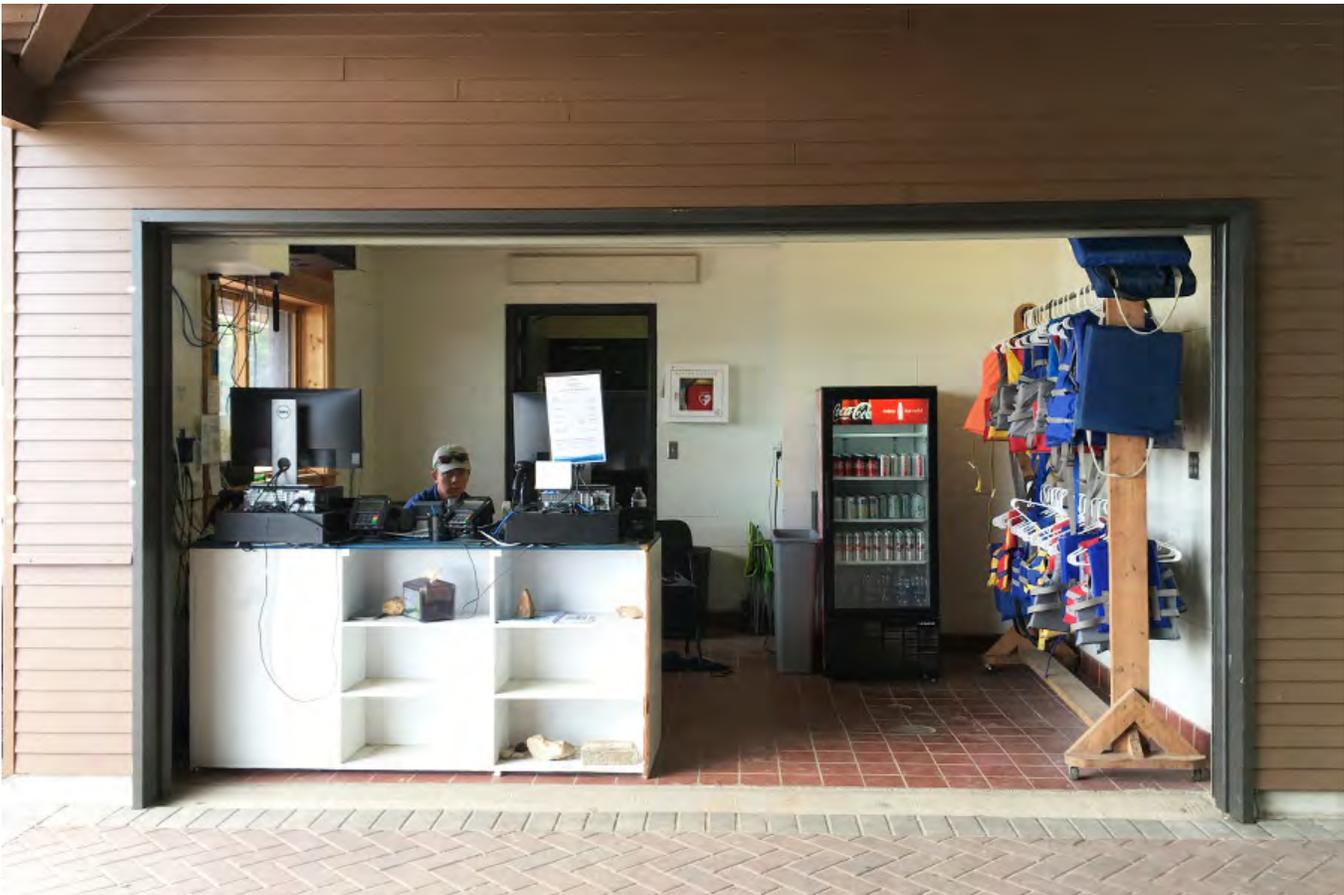


To learn more about the restrooms, I can read the section about restroom details on page 25.



If I need to change clothes, I can use an individual changing room with a lock. Changing rooms are on the outside of the building, near the cul-de-sac. The changing rooms have a concrete floor that may be sandy and wet. I may notice that they smell damp and feel humid.

The boat rental area can be busy and crowded. People and equipment move in and out of the building often. I may notice a damp smell near the equipment.



To rent a watercraft, I must sign a waiver. If I am under 18 years old, my parent or legal guardian must sign a waiver for me. I can rent a boat by myself if I am 16 years old or older and bring a signed waiver.

The rental options include: paddleboats, kayaks, canoes, and rowboats.

If I rent a watercraft, I will be provided a life jacket and a paddle if needed. I must wear the life jacket the whole time I am in a watercraft. Life jackets must fit snugly to be effective. It may feel tight and uncomfortable at first, but it is necessary for safety. I may notice that the life jacket smells damp.

Boat rental detail

Paddleboats

I will get in a paddleboat from a floating dock, so my feet will not get wet. The floating dock may feel wobbly when I walk on it. Staff members will hold the boat steady while I enter.



On a paddleboat I will sit high above the water in a seat with a back on it. I will have at least one partner with me on the boat. To move the boat we must both put our feet on the pedals and move them like a bicycle. This boat is very stable and is difficult for me to fall out of or tip.



Kayaks

Kayaks launch from the shoreline. My feet might get wet while getting into the watercraft. I may choose to rent a kayak that holds one person or a kayak that holds two people.



In most of the kayaks I will sit low on top of a narrow boat. There is a molded seat with a place I can lean back on. I might get wet while kayaking. If I rock very gently from side to side while seated in a kayak, the boat will rock gently and water will not enter the boat. If I lean very far to one side while seated in a kayak the boat may tip and fill with water. I must be careful to keep my body centered in the boat.



There is one kayak where my body will be inside the boat. I will be seated low in a narrow boat and my arms will be near the water. There will be a back rest that I can lean on. Only one person can use this boat at a time.

Canoes

Canoes launch from the shoreline. My feet might get wet while getting into the watercraft.

In a canoe I will sit on a seat without a back on it. My body will be above the water, but if I reach down, I could touch the water. I might get wet while canoeing. If I lean very far to one side while seated in a canoe the boat may tip and fill with water. I must be careful to keep my body centered in the boat. I will have one or two partners with me to help paddle the canoe.



Rowboats

Rowboats launch from the shoreline. My feet might get wet while getting into the watercraft.

In a rowboat I will sit on a seat without a back on it. My body will be above the water, but if I reach down, I could touch the water. This boat is very stable and is difficult to fall out of or tip. I might get wet while using a row boat.

I can row the boat by myself or with another person. One person moves the oars and the other person rides along.



Swimming Beach

If I choose to visit the swimming beach, I will be in a sandy area along the lake's shoreline. If I go swimming, I will swim within the designated swim area, which is marked by ropes and buoys.



There is limited shade on the beach. If I need shade, I can choose to use one of the large beach umbrellas or take a break in the shaded picnic areas across the paved trail, near the beach.



I can use small inflatable water-wings in the lake if I need to. If I brought a large inflatable innertube or raft I will leave it on the beach when I go swimming.

The deepest part of the swimming area is 6 feet deep. The bottom of the swimming area is sandy. If I want to learn more about the depths of the swimming area I can look at the beach map near the beach restrooms.

There are also restrooms for me to use at the beach. To learn more about the beach restrooms, I can read the section about restroom details on page 25.



Fishing Pier

If I want to visit the fishing pier, I can access it near where the shuttle drops people off for the boat rental area. At the fishing pier I might see ducks, geese, or swans on the water. I might see turtles, fish, frogs, or insects in the water. I might see birds flying over the water.



Nature Exploration Area

I can access the Nature Exploration Area from the north end of the overflow parking lot. This is the parking lot that is on the left as I drive past the visitor center after entering the park.

This area might be busy. I might see children running through the trails, and I might hear children yelling and laughing. This is a fun place for everyone to play. If I want to visit the Nature Exploration Area during a quieter time, the evening is a good time to visit.

In this area, I can:

- Climb on logs and boulders.
- Build forts.
- Explore beyond the trail.
- Look for toads and bugs near a pond.
- Sit and enjoy nature.
- Go for a walk among the trees or go for a walk on a path.

Some paths are 5 feet wide, some paths are narrow. Some areas are flat, some areas have steep hills.



Restroom Details Section

Visitor Center Restroom Details

The **gender-neutral restroom** is single stall with a locking door and automatically flushing toilet, which can make unexpected loud noises. It has a bench and can be used as a family restroom.

This bathroom has an automatic soap dispenser, an automatic water faucet and an automatic hand dryer, which may be loud. I can wear headphones or ear plugs in the bathroom if I want to block out some of this noise.



The **men's restroom** has urinals that flush automatically and a toilet that flushes with a handle. This bathroom has a manual soap dispenser, a manual water faucet and push-button hand dryers, which may be loud. I can wear headphones or ear plugs in the bathroom to block out some of this noise. There is a stool in the restroom I can use to reach the sink.



The **women's restroom** has four stalls with toilets that I can flush with a handle. This bathroom has a manual soap dispenser, a manual water faucet and an automatic hand dryer, which may be loud. I can wear headphones or ear plugs in the bathroom if I want to block out some of this noise. There is a stool in the restroom I can use to reach the sink.



Boat Rental Area Restrooms

At the boat rental area there is a restroom for women and a restroom for men. Each of these restrooms has a concrete floor which may be sandy and wet. I may notice that the restrooms smell damp and feel humid.

These restrooms have automatically flushing toilets, which can make unexpected loud noises. These restrooms also have automatic soap dispensers, automatic water faucets and automatic hand dryers, which may be loud. I can wear headphones or ear plugs in the bathroom if I want to block out some of this noise.

I will be able to access these restrooms when I visit the park even if the service counter is closed.



Men's restroom



Urinals in men's restroom



Women's restroom



Toilet in women's restroom

Beach Area Restrooms

At the beach area there is a restroom for women and a restroom for men. Each of these restrooms has a concrete floor, which may be sandy and wet. I may notice that the restrooms smell damp and feel humid.

I can flush these toilets using a handle. These restrooms also have manual soap dispensers, manual water faucets and push-button hand dryers, which may be loud. I can wear headphones or ear plugs in the bathroom if I want to block out some of this noise.

I will be able to access these restrooms when I visit the park even if the service counter is closed.



Women's restroom



Men's restroom

Leaving French Regional Park

When it is time to leave, I will gather my things. If I borrowed items from the sensory kit at the visitor center, I will return them to the kit. I can come back to visit French Regional Park on another day and do the same activities or choose to do different activities. I can bring a program guide booklet and map home with me to learn about other activities I might like.