

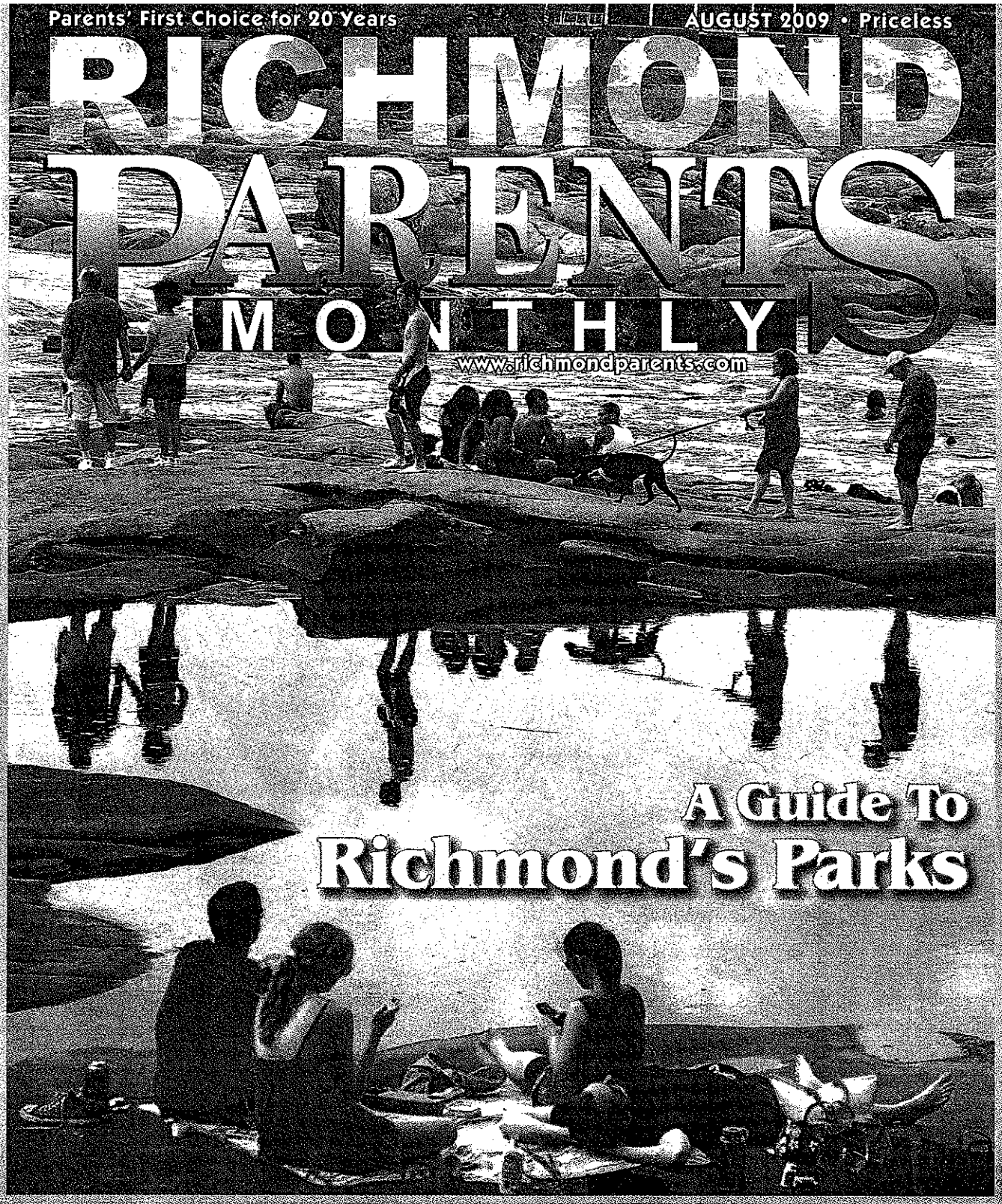
Parents' First Choice for 20 Years

AUGUST 2009 • Priceless

# RICHMOND PARENTS MONTHLY

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## A Guide To Richmond's Parks



# A GUIDE TO RICHMOND

BY LIBBY CARTY M.

Richmond may not have Central Park, but we've pretty much got everything else covered in terms of great public parks.

We're actually spoiled here with so many great parks that we can afford to be downright choosy. What is a "great park" for you and your kids? Which activities and amenities are most important to you? Here are our choices of parks to visit:

## MAYMONT

Maymont is perhaps the best-known park in the city. Only two miles west of downtown, Maymont is along the James River with 100 acres of lush grounds, rolling hills, and enormous old trees, all accessible by a trusty tram.

**GREAT PARK BECAUSE:** This former Victorian estate contains a new bald eagle habitat, a children's farm with hay rides, a zoo and aviary, Japanese and Italian formal gardens, an nature center, as well as the Dooley Mansion, carriage rides, and outstanding educational programs and summer camps.

**DRAWBACKS:** No traditional "playground" per se, no kites.

**RESTROOMS:** At both the Children's Farm and the Nature Center.

**PARKING:** Maymont has three parking lots - Hampton Street, which is closest to the mansion and the gardens; the Robins Nature Center and the Children's Farm. There is limited street parking as well, but be prepared to walk several blocks.

**STROLLERS:** Highly recommended for hilly terrain.

**ADMISSION:** None, except at the Nature Center, which is \$2-\$3. Other attractions encourage a donation. There is a \$2-\$3 tram fare.

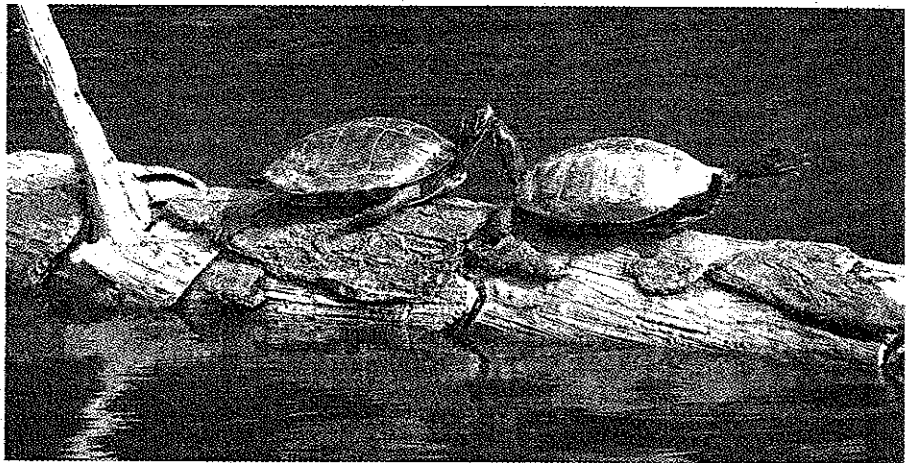
**FOOD:** Maymont Café in the Nature Center, weather permitting. Plan on bringing your own snacks and refreshments.

**PETS:** No.

**BICYCLES:** None

**ADDRESS:** 1700 Hampton Street, plus another entrance on Spottswood Road near the Boulevard Bridge, Richmond 23220

**CONTACT:** 358-7166



Turtles on a log are a common, yet an extraordinary sight at Three Lakes Park. (Photo: D. West)

## THREE LAKES PARK AND NATURE CENTER

**GREAT PARK BECAUSE:** Slides, ramps, swings, and that foamy rubber fake mulch stuff. It's a great set-up with climbing ropes that look like Spidey's web and some real climbing walls. The nature center has a large outdoor fish tank and a huge collection of turtles, snakes and fish arranged in tanks along the walls of the building. There's fishing and hiking. The playground has three main play areas and plenty of open grass areas in between.

**DRAWBACKS:** This 90-acre park may not have as many amenities as some others. However, the 50,000-gallon aquarium is the only one of its kind in Richmond.

**RESTROOMS:** In the nature center

**PARKING:** Lots

**STROLLERS:** Jogging strollers recommended for gravel trails.

**ADMISSION:** Free, including the aquarium.

**FOOD:** None for sale on the premises, but an ideal place for a picnic with plenty of tables.

**PETS:** Welcome.

**BICYCLES:** Not forbidden, but there are no biking trails.

**ADDRESS:** 400 Sausilita Drive, one main entrance

**CONTACT:** 261-8230

## JAMES RIVER PARK SYSTEM

**GREAT PARK BECAUSE:** This 550-acre park is the largest in Richmond and arguably the most unusual and diverse. The wilderness takes all forms - rocks, the river itself with its class 4 and 5 rapids, meadows, and lots of forest. It offers biking, jogging, swimming, tubing, canoeing, fishing, climbing and everything in between. The park includes Pony Pasture, Huguenot Flatwater, Belle Island, Manchester Climbing Wall, the Slave Trail, and many educational programs.

**DRAWBACKS:** You're definitely roughin' it there more than in most urban parks. The park is not geared to the needs of small children, and there is no designated playground. Make sure to tell others of your specific plans prior to setting out, and don't forget to bring a cell phone in case of emergency.

**RESTROOMS:** Available on special occasions at the Park Headquarters by Reedy Creek canoe launch area.

**PARKING:** Room for 15 cars at HQ, 30 cars at the 43rd Street entrance, and 45 cars at the 22nd Street entrance.

**STROLLERS:** Jogging stroller highly recommended for trails.

**ADMISSION:** Free.

**FOOD:** None for sale on the premises, so bring plenty of your own food and lots of water for your own rustic picnic.

**PETS:** Welcome

# ND'S PUBLIC PARKS

AMEE

**BICYCLES:** Bring them!  
**ADDRESS:** 4301 Riverside Drive.  
**CONTACT:** 646-8911

## ROBIOUS LANDING PARK

**GREAT PARK BECAUSE:** This gorgeous 50-acre park set on the south bank of the James River has full river access. It has a large secluded playground with slides, swings, and lots of funky things to play on, nature trails, river access for swimming, boat launch, horseshoe pits, sand volleyball, and floating dock for fishing.

**DRAWBACKS:** No restroom or much shade at the playground.

**RESTROOMS:** At the main entrance to the park.

**STROLLERS:** Jogging stroller recommended for trails.

**ADMISSION:** Free.

**PARKING:** Plentiful - enough for about 30 cars with some at the playground and others at the boat launch area.

**FOOD:** No concessions, but ideal for a covered picnic at the playground or on the bluff overlook-

ing the James and the dock below.

**PETS:** Dogs will love the water!

**BICYCLES:** The playground has a paved circle that is perfect for kids to ride their tricycles and small bikes.

**ADDRESS:** 3800 James River Road, Midlothian.

**CONTACT:** 323-1700

## CRUMP PARK/MEADOW FARM MUSEUM

**GREAT PARK BECAUSE:** The expansive 150-acre Crump Park is one of Henrico's most enjoyable recreation areas. Don't miss the adjoining Meadow Farm, an old farmhouse that has become a living museum of middle-class life in the 1860s, right down to the traditional garb. It has a state-of-the-art wooded playground area complete with tire swings, slides, and a covered picnic area. There is a fully covered shelter area filled with picnic tables that connects to both play areas. At Meadow Farm you will find many period buildings and a barn with farm animals.

**DRAWBACKS:** It's a bit off the beaten path. But the two adjoining parks are great finds for toddlers, preschoolers, and big kids alike.

**RESTROOMS:** Next to the Crump Park playground there is a small Colonial-looking building with clean, modern restrooms. At Meadow Farm there are indoor restrooms in the modern Orientation Center.

**STROLLERS:** Welcome.

**ADMISSION:** Free at both facilities.

**PARKING:** Free lots next to both Crump Park and Meadow Farm. Please note: The distance between the two areas requires a short drive.

**FOOD:** No concession or food options on site, but handy picnic spots abound.

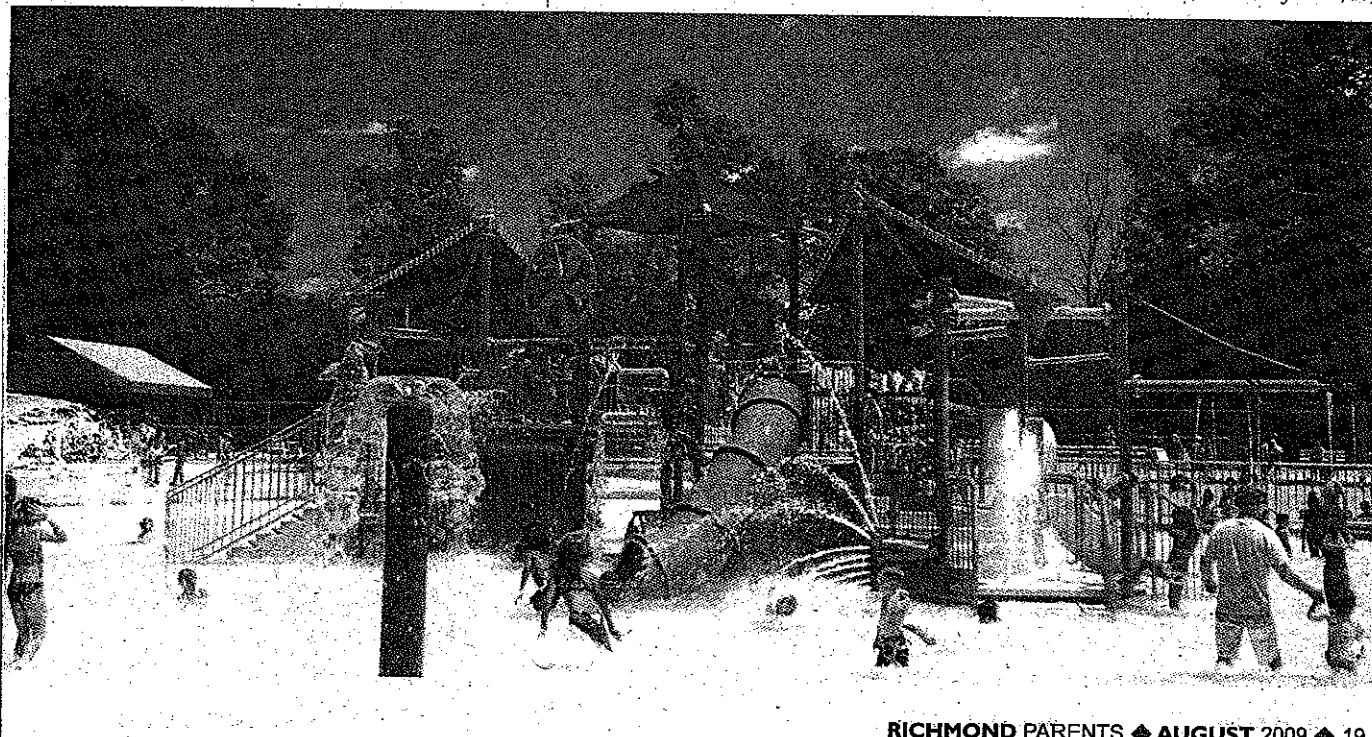
**PETS:** Yes, as long as they can get along with the many animals at Meadow Farm.

**ADDRESS:** 3400 Mountain Road, Glen Allen

**CONTACT:** 501-5520

*-continued on next page*

*Waterplay at Pocahontas State Park (Photo: Larry Haake, IV)*





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<b>Shipwith Academy</b> 7344 Townes Road Richmond, 804-292-5519	<b>Minnieland at Wellerley</b> 3450 Lauderdale Drive Richmond, 804-360-2823	<b>Minnieland at Pebble Creek</b> 7306 Creighton Parkway Mechanicsville, 804-569-1717
<b>Minnieland at Huguenot</b> 11211 Huguenot Road Richmond, 804-323-6804	<b>Minnieland at Hanover</b> 304 Ashenok Road Ashland, 804-323-6804	<b>Minnieland at Woodlake</b> 7051 Woodlake Commons Loop Midlothian, 804-639-2401

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### POCAHONTAS STATE PARK

**GREAT PARK BECAUSE:** Pocahontas is the largest state park in Virginia, spanning more than 7,000 acres. It includes Swift Creek Reservoir within its boundaries for lots of water adventures. There's swimming, boating, 58 miles of hiking and biking trails, camp sites, two fishing lakes, as well as nature hikes. There are campfire programs, night hikes, and other educational programs at the Nature and Heritage Centers. The aquatic center includes a kiddie pool, a modern activity pool for ages 12 and under, 3-foot and 5-foot swimming pools, and two enclosed water slides.

**DRAWBACKS:** Although easily accessible by Route 288, it may be a longer drive to get there than to some other local parks.

**RESTROOMS:** Throughout the park as well as the aquatic center, campgrounds, amphitheatre, etc.

**STROLLERS:** Jogging-stroller recommended for trails.

**ADMISSION:** Separate entry and swimming fees depending upon ages, weekday/weekend, and activity. Annual passes and the swimming coupon book offer greater savings for frequent visitors. Kids under 3 are free.

**PARKING:** \$4 on weekdays and \$5 on weekends. Check into the annual pass.

**FOOD:** There is a snack bar at the aquatic center, but bring plenty of your own snacks and water. The campground also has a store with souvenirs, toiletries, camping supplies, and snacks.

**PETS:** All welcome, including horses.

**BICYCLES:** Yes! This is a biker's paradise.

**ADDRESS:** 10301 State Park Road, Chesterfield

**CONTACT:** 796-4255.

### LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN

**GREAT PARK BECAUSE:** Lewis Ginter typically ranks as one of the top five tourist destinations in Richmond. With plants from around the world, it truly has something for everyone. It has more than 50 acres of gardens where something is almost always in bloom. The Children's Garden has a tree house, adventure parkway, international village, and water and sand play areas complete with sprinklers. The KidQuest will set the kids on a treasure hunt all over the garden.

**DRAWBACKS:** The Garden has a relatively higher admission fee than other parks.

**PARKING:** Huge lots at no charge.

**RESTROOMS:** Yes, plus changing tables, water fountains, and picnic tables.

**STROLLERS:** Yes. Pathways are paved.

**ADMISSION:** \$10 for adults and \$6 for kids age 3-12. Kids under 3 are free, and an annual family pass is \$85.

**FOOD:** The Garden Café is a casual self-serve eatery with an inexpensive menu. In addition, the Tea House offers restaurant dining overlooking the gardens with moderately priced meals.

**PETS:** Only on advertised evenings.

**BICYCLES:** No.

**ADDRESS:** 1800 Lakeside Avenue

**CONTACT:** 262-9887 [RPM](http://RPM)

*Libby Carty McNamee can't decide which of these Richmond parks is her favorite, so she'll have to keep visiting them all over and over again. Check out her parenting blog at [www.libbywithay.blogspot.com](http://www.libbywithay.blogspot.com) and website at [www.libbymcnamee.com](http://www.libbymcnamee.com)*

*Johnny stands at the entrance to the Children's Garden at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens (Photo: D.D'Angelo)*

