

RAMBLING TYLER STATE PARK

By Randy Mallory

My wife Sallie starts the fitness app on her smartphone, and we're off on our hike at Tyler State Park. Its tree-shaded hills lie just eight miles north of our Tyler home, so the park has become our "go-to" getaway. A lazy stroll meanders the easy two-mile Lakeshore Trail that skirts the park's cool, clear 64-acre lake. A challenging hike winds the rollercoaster ridges of the two-mile D Loop Trail. If we want to push it, we ramble another 1.5 miles on the connecting C Loop Trail with an elevation rise of 131 feet.

We walk for fitness and fresh air, but also for stopping and looking and listening. Maybe it's a ramrod-straight loblolly pine vaulting 100 feet in the air. Maybe it's the rat-a-tat-tat of an unseen woodpecker boring for a bug. Maybe it's the wind rattling leaves on the oaks, sweetgums, and hickories.

Inevitably, our hikes end lakeside with a sunset picnic. When our kids were young, we picnicked near the playground. These days we simply spread a blanket and set our camp chairs on the grassy slope by the boat ramp for dinner with a view. To our left, anglers reel in their lines from a narrow pier. Straight ahead, paddle-boaters and kayakers zigzag across the cove. To our right, RV'ers lounge beside their rigs, as the smell of cooking wafts through the campground.

Golden shafts of light cast a spell across the shoreline trees and tall grasses, signaling the end of a very fine day.

RESOURCES:

--<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/tyler>

--http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_bk_p4508_0039j.pdf

--www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/park_maps/pwd_mp_p4508_0039c.pdf