

NINE GREAT PLACES TO PICNIC

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It's Memorial Day weekend, and that means the unofficial start of summer. What better time to celebrate by heading outdoors for a picnic? Pack up your basket, grab a blanket, and wrap up some goodies. Whether you're on your lunch break or a Sunday drive, you don't have to go far to feel like you've slipped away to a place that's lovely and remote — places like these.

— Ryan E. Smith

1. Squadron Island Nature Trail, Point Place. This trail follows a peninsula that extends nearly a mile into the Maumee River, offering a great view of Point Place and the Port of Toledo. Sit on one of the large rocks that line the trail (accessible from the back of the parking lot at Cullen Park) and let the lullaby of bird calls and the lapping waves take you away.

2. Toledo-Lucas County Main Library, 325 Michigan St. You could stop here on your lunch break to pick up a book about picnics, but a better idea would be to head up to the roof, where there are tables, benches, and even some grass. The main attraction though is the chance to eat while taking in Toledo from above.

3. Toledo Botanical Garden, 5403 Elmer Dr. Just about anywhere in this free garden would be a lovely setting for a picnic, but a particularly secluded spot can be found behind the stone wall and hedges of the Green Garden, south of Crosby Lake. Visitors are welcomed by an arbor of wisteria and an intimate plot of grass.

4. Sleepy Hollow Park, Dorr Street and Richards Road. Don't just feed yourself on a picnic to this park. Pack some extra bread to share with all the ducks and geese that love to hang out around the pond here, which is stocked with fish. There's plenty of playground equipment to help you work off the calories when you're done.

5. Highland Park, South Avenue. For those who like watching people as much as they enjoy nature. Grab a seat on the giant grassy hill in this park, then check out the kids trying to pull off nosegrinds and ollies and whatever else they do at the skate park here.

6. Walbridge Park, Broadway. Toledo has plenty of nice parks, but this one has perhaps the most scenic view, sitting as it does 40 feet or so above the Maumee River. There's a line of benches facing the river and all the amenities you could want, from play equipment and covered shelter to grills and picnic tables.

7. Maumee Bay State Park, Oregon. When you live in Ohio and you have a chance to picnic at the beach, you have to take it. This park may be a bit far from home, but it's worth the trip to get out of the city and up close and personal with Lake Erie.

8. Blue Grass Island, Maumee River. When water levels are low, picnickers can walk from Side Cut Metropark in Maumee to this island without getting wet. Trek across it and settle down on the other side for a great view of Fort Meigs in Perrysburg and a sense of total isolation, except for maybe a few deer.

9. Bend View Metropark, Waterville Township. Be original. Everyone goes to Wildwood Preserve Metropark. Try this more remote alternative, which only can be accessed by a two-mile hike from Farnsworth Metropark. The reward is a fabulous view of a 90-degree bend in the river.



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