

North Park
by
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As much as I wanted to sleep in, nature and an ever expanding waste line called out my name. Despite my weariness, I knew there was something special about North Park early in the morning during autumn. I didn't want to miss out before winter came along so I grabbed my dog Isis and I was off to the races.

At 7:30AM this Saturday, I could already see the brilliant reflection of the leaves on the lake as I circled around to find my favorite parking spot. It had been some time since I had been here in the morning. When the smell of wild grapes greeted my nose, I realized it had been too long.

You always get a genuine Western PA "good morning" or "hi" from most everyone that runs or walks the bicycle trail on these mornings. I run during the weekdays and those greetings are present but less frequent. People just seem more friendly in the mornings down there. I'm not sure why but I always like that.

I have this unofficial theory that some of the most creative, motivated and enterprising minds wonder around North Park at this hour. Anyone willing to get up that early on Saturday morning has to be a little determined. North Park is where the brain recharges and the mind takes a vacation.

As I stretch, I am not surprised to find the legendary Hot Harry chugging along with a twinkle in his eye as he has for years and years. "Hi" he puffs as he passes me. "Hiya," I say in awe of this marvel. If anyone needs someone to inspire them to get moving, Harry is the example. Young beyond his senior years, he is simply amazing.

Well its off to the races and Isis and I choose not to take the beaten path. We prefer to unlock the treasures of North Park deep into the woods. But first we notice we have a duty to perform as we approach Marshall Island.

It seems that the geese believe they own the road. Three cars are blaring their horn and none of the geese are moving. This is a habitually humorous routine with no real human answer. The geese seem to get braver and braver each year.

I did say there is no human answer right? Isis gets revved up as I grab her leash tightly. She understands her mission is to have fun but do no harm. She and she alone has the power to free these stranded passengers who patiently wait their turn to move. Some of the more perceptive geese have taken notice of Isis panting wildly 20 yards away. They honk the warning signal as they zero in on the wild look in her eye. Suddenly the geese take flight honking loudly in disgust. The imprisoned cars are now free to go. The

appreciative drivers give Isis the thumbs up signal and she knows she has performed her duty this morning.

Soon we make our way to the woods and the less beaten path. We get lost in another world and another time. For these moments I don't think about the past or the future. Like Isis, I now revel in the present. What a glorious treasure North Park is.

Remarkably litter free, the less beaten paths are numerous and enchanting. It doesn't matter where you go, it eventually leads to someplace beautiful and you can't stay lost for long. If you know where to venture a mile or so in, there are a few nifty places where a good retriever can still be free to swim and fetch a stick. There are also some cool places where a human can be free to be a superhuman too. Jump over a log almost like Superman. Do a pullup on a branch something like Spiderman. Or just wonder around like a kid all over again. Warning: You just might find yourself becoming more creative at work.

Where do you find these places? Hmmm... those are the secrets waiting for you to find at North Park. But it doesn't get much better than Saturday in Autumn.



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