

Dorothea Dix Park Troll Photo Walk

A relaxed, story-driven route for photography & wandering

Dorothea Dix Park





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Best overall timing

- **Morning option:** 8:00–10:30 AM (soft light, fewer people, calmer mood)
- **Evening option:** 4:30 PM–sunset (warmer light, dramatic skies, silhouettes)

Total walking time is about **1.5–2 hours**, depending on how long you linger with each troll.

Stop 1: The Big Field (Start here)

Time: 15–20 minutes

Why it works: This is your visual reset button.

Start in the open. The Big Field gives you breathing room, literal and photographic. Wide skies, rolling grass, and downtown Raleigh sitting quietly in the distance.

Photo ideas:

- Wide landscape shots with the skyline low in the frame
- Minimalist compositions using negative space
- People walking dogs or flying kites for scale

Lens tip: Wide angle (16–24mm equivalent)

Mood: Calm, open, unhurried

Stop 2: Enter the Woods – Troll Territory Begins

Time: 20–30 minutes

Why it works: The transition from open field to trees feels intentional, like entering another chapter.

As you move toward the wooded areas, slow down. This is where the magic shifts. The **Thomas Dambo trolls** are meant to be discovered, not announced.

Thomas Dambo

Photo ideas:

- Trolls partially hidden behind trees
- Low-angle shots to emphasize scale
- Include people in the frame for storytelling

Lens tip: Standard zoom (24–70mm equivalent)

Mood: Curious, playful, slightly mysterious

Stop 3: The Troll Family (Main focus)

Time: 30–40 minutes

Why it works: This is the heart of the walk.

There are **five trolls**, each placed with intention. Don't rush to find them all. Let the walk dictate the order. The experience matters as much as the sculpture.

Photo ideas:

- One wide environmental shot per troll
- One close-up showing wood texture and recycled materials
- One “human moment” per troll (kids climbing nearby, someone pointing, laughter)

Story angle for your blog:

This isn't just art, it's a scavenger hunt that pulls you off the path and into the woods.

Stop 4: Stone Houses & Pause Point

Time: 15–20 minutes

Why it works: Visual contrast.

After organic shapes and woodland textures, the Stone Houses feel grounded and historic. It's a great spot to slow down, hydrate, and reset your eyes.

Photo ideas:

- Doorways and windows as frames
- Stone textures and shadows
- Benches and resting visitors for candid moments

Lens tip: 35mm or 50mm equivalent

Mood: Quiet, reflective, timeless

Stop 5: Gipson Play Plaza (Optional but lively)

Time: 10–15 minutes

Why it works: Energy and movement.

If you want life in your frames, this is it. The plaza adds motion, color, and joy to balance the serenity of the trolls.

Photo ideas:

- Motion blur of kids playing
- Parents watching from benches
- Abstract details of playground elements against sky

Mood: Joyful, human, warm

Final Stop: Return to the Big Field for Sunset

Time: 15–25 minutes

Why it works: Full-circle storytelling.

End where you began. The same field you saw in soft light now glows gold. This is where your strongest closing images will come from.

Photo ideas:

- Silhouettes of people walking
- Sun dipping behind the skyline
- Long shadows stretching across grass

Lens tip: Wide or short telephoto

Mood: Peaceful, complete, grounded

Whispering Yak pro tip

Don't try to photograph *everything*. Pick **one troll** to spend extra time with. Sit. Watch how people interact. Let the scene come to you. Those are the photos that feel honest.