Central Illinois
River Experiences

Illinois has over 120,000 miles of rivers and streams.   **Get outside and enjoy our natural treasures.**

Big River State Forest

Mercer County

RIVER: Mississippi River

WHAT TO DO: Fishing, boating, camping, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, and wildlife viewing

RR 1 Box 118
Keithsburg, IL 61442
309/374-2496

WEBSITE: dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/BIGRIVER.HTM

The Big River State Forest offers recreation in addition to serving as a demonstrative laboratory for sustainable forestry practices. Located near Keithsburg, along the Mississippi, there are 50 miles of horse and foot trails for outdoor enthusiasts. Four campsites, Class B/S and C are available for camping, while three boat launches offer access to the Mississippi and its tributaries. Bank fishing is allowed along the Mississippi and Spring Slough, or by boat. The area hosts 15 miles of scenic roadways as well, and offers ice fishing and snowmobiling during the winter. Sheltered picnic areas are found throughout the park. Visitors should inquire about the schedule of controlled burns before visiting, as access is denied unavailable during these times.

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge

Mason County

RIVER: Illinois River, Lake Chautauqua

WHAT TO DO: Fishing, boating, hiking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing

19031 E. County Road 110N
Havana, IL 62644
chautauqua@fws.gov
309/535-2290

WEBSITE: www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles index.cfm?id=33650

Chautauqua is a large wildlife refuge located in the heart of northern Illinois. The area is dedicated to the preservation of the key Illinois waterfowl migration corridor, which once spanned the length of the Illinois River, but has been drastically reduced by development. Primarily characterized by floodplains, the Lake Chautauqua Refuge also contains marsh and forest land, painting a complete picture of the varying habitats that once characterized the Illinois River basin. It hosts a vast array of species, including its signature migrating waterfowl and over 50 species of fish. Offering a wheelchair-accessible interpretive trail, the area offers a stunning snapshot of the wild side of Illinois, where nature comes first. Restrictions apply on recreation to allow proper wildlife management, call before visiting to clarify available opportunities.

Donnelley/DePue State Fish and Wildlife Area

Bureau County

RIVER: Illinois River, DePue Lake, and Spring Lake

WHAT TO DO: Boating, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing

1001 W. 4th St.
P.O Box 52
DePue, IL 61322
817/447-2353

WEBSITE:www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r1/don.htm

Dominated by water and accessible via boat ramp in the adjoining village of Depue, Donnelley/DePue Wildlife Area comprises a key part of the North American waterfowl migration corridor running through the State of Illinois. Consequently, the area offers some of the best waterfowl and wildlife viewing in the state, with turkey vultures and bald eagles occasionally making their way over and into the park, but be sure to bring your boat! Wildlife viewing is best done on the water. The area offers fishing and boating along a long stretch of the Illinois River and on DePue Lake, with limited access during migration periods. Trails are open all year, with foot and equestrian access to bluffs and scenic views. There is a city-run, family-friendly open area attached to the park as well, with a playground and picnic grounds.

Bear Creek Public Use Area

Adams County

RIVER: Access to Mississippi River

WHAT TO DO: Boating, camping, canoeing, fishing, hiking, nature interpretation, and wildlife viewing

PO Box 447
Pittsfield, IL
217/285-2221

Quincy office: 217/228-08907,
 US Army Corps
309/794-4200