

Northwest Illinois River Experiences

Illinois has over 120,000 miles of rivers and streams.

Get outside and enjoy our natural treasures.

Apple River Canyon State Park

RIVER: Apple River

Jo Davies County

WHAT TO DO: Camping, fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing

8763 E. Canyon Rd
Apple River, IL 61001
815/745-3302

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

Part of Illinois' limestone covered northwest, Apple River Canyon boasts stunning natural features along with a great deal of local history. Clef by the Apple River Canyon and dotted with hardwood forest besides, the Apple River Canyon State Park is a bastion of preglacial natural beauty. Five trails wind through the area, one of which is handicap accessible, and also boasts almost 50 Class C campgrounds. The area is located in the heart of the tourist-friendly northwest region, and is surrounded by rolling hill country, vineyards, and historical sites aplenty.

Castle Rock State Park

RIVER: Rock River

Ogle County

WHAT TO DO: Fishing, boating, hiking, camping, and picnicking

1365 W. Castle Rd
Oregon, IL 61801
815/732-7329

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

OUTFITTERS: Canoes/bait and tackle TJ's bait tackle and canoe rentals: 815/732-4516 (very enthusiastic about distribution)

Fishing gear, hunting gear, outdoor clothing, no boat rental, Rock River Outfitters 815/732-9999, rockriveroutfitter.com

Running along three miles of the Rock River corridor, Castle Rock State Park is notable for its biodiversity and scenic geology. Though the park is primarily a site for the preservation of unique Illinois habitats, it also offers recreation, and is an excellent site for canoe and boat enthusiasts. The park is home to three picnic areas, six miles of trails, and a nine-plot primitive canoe campground. Boating, canoeing, and kayaking are all allowed, with no restriction on motor size and a nearby canoe rental outfitter allows the novice canoeist to try their hand on one of Illinois' finest rivers, while fishing is allowed on site in accordance with Illinois state regulations and licensing. Sporting rare outcroppings of sandstone beside these other unique features, Castle Rock is a fascinating glimpse into Illinois' geologic and ecological past.

Lowden State Park (Oregon)

RIVER: Access to Rock River

Ogle County

WHAT TO DO: Fishing, hiking, camping, and boating

8763 E. Canyon Rd
Apple River, IL 61001
815/745-3302

WEBSITE: <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/LOWDENSP.HTM>

Distinguished by a 50-foot tall sculpture associated with Chief Black Hawk, Lowden State Park has gorgeous scenery, extensive hiking, and diverse wildlife. A large campground offers 80 Class A sites, a cabin, 38 B/S sites, and 8 primitive campsites, which offer a more natural experience. Picnicking is available on site, and scenic overlook displays the area. It also has a wide variety of fish species in miles of the Rock River in Ogle County. There is no motor restriction for boats, and a boat dock and ramp are located next to the site. Canoe enthusiasts be warned: a strong current makes for challenging canoeing throughout the area, and safety is dependent upon local weather patterns. Call to inquire about water levels before embarking.



Illinois' advocate for clean water and healthy rivers.

We work to reduce water pollution, preserve flowing streams and natural areas along rivers, and promote river stewardship.

Prairie Rivers is a non-profit organization that relies on the generosity of our members to fund our work.

We invite you to join our network and learn more at: prairierivers.org

1902 Fox Drive, Suite G,
Champaign, IL 61820,

217/344-2371



Mississippi Palisades State Park

RIVER: Access to Mississippi River

Jo Davies County

WHAT TO DO: Boating, camping (Class A and C), climbing, fishing, hiking, picnicking, wildlife viewing, and winter sports

8763 E. Canyon Rd
Apple River, IL 61001
815/745-3302

WEBSITE: <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r1/palisade.htm>

Renowned throughout the state, Mississippi Palisades State Park is scenic Illinois at its very best. The park sits near the confluence of the Apple and Mississippi Rivers in northwestern Illinois. The river is lined with limestone bluffs, with 15 miles of trails snaking over, under, and around the area's unique geologic features. The trails give varying views of some of the most beautiful rock formations in the state. Rock climbing is allowed on-site. The park contains a campground with 241 campsites (110 of which have electricity) and a concessionaire, which keeps the area supplied. The rills, creeks, and streams that mark the confluence of these two Illinois waterways means the area is perfect for on-shore or boat angling, with boats of all engine sizes allowed to embark from a free boat launch.

Big River State Forest

RIVER: Mississippi River

Mercer County

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.



Donnelley/DePue State Fish and Wildlife Area

RIVER: Illinois River, DePue Lake, and Spring Lake

Bureau County

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

1001 W. 4th St.
PO 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.

Franklin Creek State Natural Area (Franklin Grove)

RIVER: Franklin Creek

Lee County

WHAT TO DO: Fishing, hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and wildlife viewing

1872 Twist Road
Franklin Grove, IL
815/456-2878

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

A mellow setting along a slow moving creek, Franklin Creek State Natural Area is a prime spot for relaxation, as well as for getting in touch with nature. Balancing recreation with biological protection, the site houses a 70 acre nature preserve, but still honors its settler past with a reconstructed grist mill. The natural area also offers creek fishing, equestrian and footpaths, and winter recreation trails for snowmobiles or cross-country skiing.

Hennepin Canal State Trail

RIVER: Hennepin Canal

Bureau County

WHAT TO DO: Canoeing, biking, fishing, boating, camping, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, hunting, and winter sports

16006 875 E Street
Sheffield, IL 61361
815/454-2328

WEBSITE: <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r1/hennpin.htm>

The Hennepin Canal State Trail is ideal for a relaxing day outdoors with biking, hiking, canoeing, fishing and picnicking in this beautiful 104.5-mile linear park. The canal's historical importance is displayed in the visitors center on site, generally open 8 am to 4 pm weekdays. Class C and Youth Camping are also available near many of the locks. The range of activities and environments in the park make the Hennepin Canal State Trail allow for a range of single and multiple day opportunities in northwest Illinois.