

Southern Illinois

River Experiences

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

Get outside and enjoy our natural treasures.

Shawnee National Forest

RIVERS: Big Muddy River, Cache Lake and River, Johnson Creek, Lusk Creek, Mississippi River, and Ohio River

Counties: Pope, Jackson, Union, Hardin, Alexander, Saline, Gallatin, Johnson, and Massac

WHAT TO DO: Boating, camping, equestrian trails, fishing, hiking, swimming, rappelling, and wildlife viewing

50 Highway 145 South 1005
Harrisburg, Illinois 62946

618/253-7114

WEBSITE: www.fs.fed.us/

Nearby Outfitters and Supplies:

- High Knob Campground--Equine Outfitters
- Shawnee Adventure Guides--Guides and Tours, Camping, Hiking, Paddling, and Rappelling gear
- Shawnee Trails Wilderness Outfitters--Camping, Paddling, and Rappelling gear
- Dick's Sporting Goods (Carbondale)--Basic Outdoor Equipment

Bay Creek Wilderness is a wilderness area located in Pope County. It contains a lake fed by its eponymous waterway, and over 2800 acres of wilderness and hardwood forest.

Big Muddy River Boat Launch provides boat access to the Big Muddy. Located in Union County, the boat launch allows boaters to make their way down to the Mississippi or up into the Shawnee National Forest. It is located at the end of Lakewood Bottoms Road in southern Union County.

Burden Falls Wilderness lies next to Bay Creek Wilderness and boasts scenic hiking and a beautiful waterfall at its southern tip.

Cache Lake is a small control pond that offers angling in SNF adjacent to the Cache River. It is also home to extensive wildlife viewing opportunities.

Clear Springs Wilderness stands adjacent to Larue Pine Hills and offers great scenic views and rugged hiking.

Garden of the Gods Wilderness sports unique rock formations and beautiful, varied ecology. Lying adjacent to Eagle Creek Management Area (soon to be Eagle Creek Wilderness) the Garden of the Gods is one of the largest and most scenic wildernesses areas in the park.

Larue Pine Hills offers nature viewing and hiking along the Mississippi River, and represents a pristine, intact wilderness in southwestern Illinois. Contained within the SNF, Larue Pine Hills is a Research Natural Area, meaning collection of any kind is strictly prohibited, but backpacking is allowed.

Lusk Creek Wilderness snakes a long way through the eastern reaches of the SNF, and hosts a variety of species in a variety of ecosystems. As a consequence, it is also one of the best wildlife viewing spots in the state. Its topography is varied as well: the area possesses beautiful cliff walls and a number of hiking opportunities. Besides wildlife viewing, the area offers hiking, some small caves, and canoeing.

Panther Den Wilderness is an area near the Devil's Kitchen Lake. It houses a number of ancillary streams and winding trails for some of the western SNF's best hiking and most scenic views.

Beall Woods State Park

Wabash County

RIVER: Wabash River

9285 Beall Woods Ave
Mount Carmel, Illinois 62863
618/298-2442

WHAT TO DO: Camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing

WEBSITE: www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r5/beall.htm

Nearby Supplies: Rural King Supply, 2419 W. 9th Street P.O. Box 280, Mt. Carmel, IL, 62863

Located just outside of Mount Carmel in southwestern Illinois, Beall Woods State Park offers a rare opportunity to experience a virgin old-growth forest east of the Mississippi. Situated on the banks of the Wabash River, Beall Woods contains 5 hiking trails, 16 Class C campsites, picnicking, and wildlife viewing, along with a visitor's center, and ample lodging in the surrounding area. The site's 329 acres house a delicate indigenous ecosystem with native flora and fauna, and a unique glimpse into southern Illinois' ecological history; one of very few that has not been altered or destroyed.



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.

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

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

217/344-2371



Cache River State Natural Area

RIVER: Cache River

Johnson County

WHAT TO DO: Wildlife viewing, hiking, fishing, and canoeing

930 Sunflower Lane,
off Highway 37
Belknap, IL 62908
618/634-9678

WEBSITE: dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r5/cachervr.htm

Nearby Supplies: White Crane Pirogues and Canoe Rentals on the Cache (canoe rental and tours), 618/201-4090

Ancient and beautiful, the Cache River watershed houses two distinct subunits (the Upper and Lower Cache River Areas) that are each home to enormous levels of biodiversity, including some of the finest wetland ecosystems in the lower 48 states. As part of the conservation-oriented Cache River Wetlands Joint Venture which aims to protect 60,000 acres of wetlands along 50 miles of the Cache River riparian area, the Cache River State Natural Area protects 15,000 acres. The northernmost cypress and tupelo swamp in the US, the Cache River SNA's blackwater swamps, floodplains, and forests, are monuments to Illinois' commitment to conservation and restoration. Its position at the crossroads of the country provides a unique habitat for a wide variety of migratory species, creating wildlife viewing opportunities like nowhere else.

The Cache River SNA houses six miles of canoe trails, immersing visitors in its lush aquatic and swamp ecosystems, and twenty miles of foot trail throughout the park's land. The area also offers ample angling and hiking, and some wildlife viewing. A sizable information center, the Barkhausen Cache River Wetland Center provides more information about the area and is located at 8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, IL. It is reachable by phone at 618/657-2064.

Fort Massac State Park

RIVER: Ohio River

Massac County

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

1308 E. 5th St
Metropolis, IL 62960
618/524-4712

WEBSITE: dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r5/frmindex.htm

Nearby Supplies: Gander Mtn., 3240 James Sanders Blvd, Paducah, KY 42003, Phone: 270/538-0444

Next to the bustling city of Metropolis, Fort Massac State Park is a historical preserve and recreation area where American history and nature converge. The fort itself is an integral part of regional history as a key point at America's great rivers' crossroads, while the surrounding area offers beautiful nature viewing and scenic trails. The structure is also situated just beside the Ohio River, where visitors can use a public boat dock and fish for species including carp, bullhead, and large mouth bass. Visitors are instructed to call and verify camp and trail availability before making their visit.

Johnson Creek Recreation Area, Shawnee National Forest

RIVER: Johnson Creek and Kinkaid Lake

Jackson County

WHAT TO DO: Camping, fishing, picnicking, boating, and hiking

South of Ava, IL, off of
Highway 151, Ava, IL, 62907
618/833-8576

WEBSITE: www.fs.fed.us/

Nearby Supplies: Shawnee Trails Wilderness Outfitters

Offering year-round boating, March-December camping, and summer swimming, Johnson Creek Recreation Area is a popular recreation destination in Shawnee National Forest. The area sports a campground, two picnic areas, a two lane boat dock, and a number of hiking trails. It is situated in the SNF, connected to Kinkaid Lake and near the Big Muddy

River. Its beach is a unique recreation feature for the area (one of only two such beaches in the region) and amenities more advanced than more rugged campgrounds.

Kaskaskia River State Fish and Wildlife Area

RIVER: Kaskaskia River and Baldwin Lake

St. Clair, Monroe and
Randolph Counties

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

10981 Conservation
Rd, Baldwin, IL 62217
618/785-2555

WEBSITE: dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r4/kaskas.htm

Nearby Supplies: Rich's Rod & Reel Repair (Used rod and reel, plus repair), New Athens, IL, 618/475-9922, 618/475-3624

Not to be confused with its northeastern cousin, the Kaskaskia River State Fish and Wildlife Management Area, the Kaskaskia River State Fish and Wildlife Area snakes along the Kaskaskia housing over 20,000 acres of aquatic environment in southwestern Illinois. Located between Fayetteville and the Kaskaskia's eventual joining point to the Mississippi, the area's main feature is Baldwin Lake, a man-made basin and cooling pond. The area offers excellent catfish angling on 36 miles of river, as well as numerous boating slips located along the river in Fayetteville, New Athens, Evansville, White Swan, and just outside of Baldwin on Route 154. The area contains 12 miles of hiking trails allowing nature enthusiasts to observe the riparian habitat, as well as a variety of wildlife. Baldwin Lake, a large, man-made reservoir, offers recreational boating and angling as well.

Pere Marquette State Park

RIVER: Mississippi River, Illinois River

Jersey County

WHAT TO DO: boating, fishing, biking, hiking, equestrian trails, and wildlife viewing.

13112 Visitor Center Lane
Grafton, IL 62037
618/786-3323

WEBSITE: dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r4/peremarq.htm

Twelve miles of hiking trails, twenty miles of equestrian trails, and access to both the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers define the experience of Pere Marquette State Park. Offering excellent fishing opportunities and exceptional bird watching, Pere Marquette captures the ecosystem surrounding the Mississippi and Illinois River Basins. Boaters can launch from two on-site ramps with no motor restriction. There is ample lodging as well, with 80 Class A campsites, two Rent-A-Camp cabins, and a conference center with over 70 total guest rooms. A 20 mile bike trail connects Pere Marquette to the historic city of Alton, IL as well.

Saline County State Fish and Wildlife Area

RIVER: Saline River, Glen O. Jones Lake

Gallatin County

WHAT TO DO: Camping, equestrian trails, fishing, hiking, boating, and wildlife viewing

85 Glen O. Jones Road,
Equality, IL, 62934
618/276-4405

WEBSITE: www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r5/saline.htm

Nearby Supplies: Concession stand on-site for basic supplies. Strictly Outdoors, 835 East Poplar Street, Harrisburg, IL 62946, 618/253-5300

Saline County State Conservation Area is a family-friendly recreation area located near the banks of the Saline River and Glen O. Jones Lake. The area spans over 1,000 acres, with 4 trails stretching nine rugged miles that twist through the site's backwoods and along the river bank. Seasonal tent and trailer camping is available by permit in a large camping area. The site provides drinking water, fireplaces, and trailer disposal, while a concession stand located within the camping area offers supplies, boat rentals, and fishing bait.