

**FIVE-STAR TRAILS**

# **LOUISVILLE & SOUTHERN INDIANA**

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**40 SPECTACULAR HIKES  
in the Derby City Region**

**VALERIE ASKREN**



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# **Five-Star Trails: Louisville & Southern Indiana 40 Spectacular Hikes in the Derby City Region**

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For information about trail and other closures, check the “Contacts” listings in the hike profiles.

**FIVE-STAR TRAILS**

# **LOUISVILLE & SOUTHERN INDIANA**

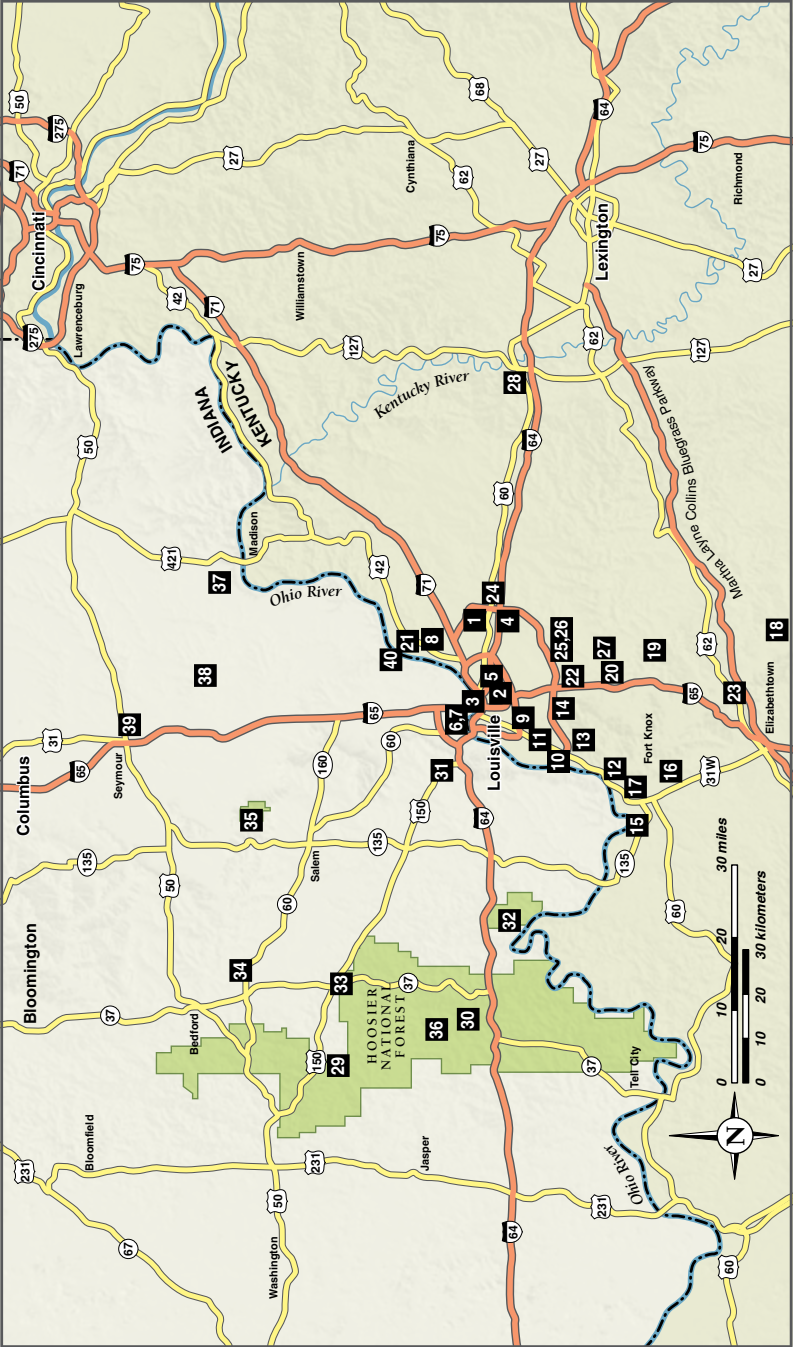
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in the Derby City Region**

**VALERIE ASKREN**



Five-Star Trails: Louisville & Southern Indiana





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## Dedication

*To my parents, who shared their love of the outdoors with me;  
to my husband, who understands my need to be immersed in nature;  
and to my children, who have inherited the joy of frolicking with  
Mother Earth.*



## Acknowledgments

**HIKING AND WALKING OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND** in the Greater Louisville area, thanks in part to those 19th-century visionaries who believed that communing with nature was essential in order for urban dwellers to thrive. With the establishment of the city's first park, Baxter Square Park, in 1880 and the purchase of a 313-acre tract of land called Burnt Knob (which later became Iroquois Park) authorized by Mayor Charles Jacob in 1888, Louisville laid the foundation for a metropolitan area laced with urban forests, walking trails, picnic areas, and other forms of outdoor recreation.

Louisville established the Board of Parks Commissioners in 1890 with the intent of developing a park in each section of the city: east, west, and south, with the north bounded by the Ohio River. A year later the city hired Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of American landscape architecture, to design seven parks plus several interconnecting parkways. Olmsted was already well known for designing such notable spaces as Central Park in New York; the Niagara Reservation, adjoining Niagara Falls; George Vanderbilt's Biltmore Estate in North Carolina; Chicago's "Emerald Necklace" of parks and boulevards; and the grounds surrounding the US Capitol. Clearly, the city of Louisville was aiming high in its desire to build a world-class park system.

Throughout the 20th century, Louisville continued investing in that system by acquiring land to establish the Jefferson Memorial Forest—now the nation's largest urban forest—in 1946 and the "Rainbow Chain of County Parks" in the 1950s, as well as creating a unified city-county Metropolitan Park and Recreation Board in 1968.

And Louisville hasn't even begun to slow down. The 21st century has brought a host of new land acquisitions, including the Louisville Extreme Park



## FIVE-STAR TRAILS

and the nearly 4,000-acre Parklands of Floyds Fork, as well as several historic properties. To preserve and expand the city's park system in perpetuity, Louisville works with several nonprofit organizations such as 21st Century Parks, the Olmsted Park Conservancy, the Future Fund Land Trust, the Trust for Public Land, and the Louisville and Jefferson County Environmental Trust.

Many other nongovernmental entities work diligently to protect our natural areas while providing additional opportunities for outdoor recreation. Private endowments (such as the Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest, the Creasey Mahan Nature Preserve, and the Waterfront Botanical Gardens); nonprofit organizations (including the Nature Conservancy); state agencies (both Kentucky's and Indiana's state parks and nature preserves); and national forests and wildlife refuges all provide an endless array of hiking opportunities.

It is these partners and others whom we should acknowledge and thank for their vision and perseverance.

—Valerie Askren

### **THE PAVED ANCHORAGE TRAIL IS PERFECT WHEN WOODLAND PATHS ARE MUDDY.**

*(See Hike 1, page 20.)*





# Preface

**DESPITE THE MYRIAD HIKING POSSIBILITIES** in the Greater Louisville area, many people are familiar with only a few of the better-known outdoor locales. While these might be terrific choices, the most popular places tend to be packed to the gills on beautiful weekends and holidays. Further, hiking the same places again and again can become a bit tedious.

Wouldn't you love to find some new places to explore?

Hiking is enjoying an explosion in popularity, as more people are turning to walking for its health and relaxation benefits. And now that Boomers are beginning to retire, more people are looking for recreational opportunities. Simultaneously, Gen Xers and millennials are increasingly strapped with children and demanding careers that compete for their free time, yet they're not ready to give up their outdoor pursuits.

But how many of us have the time to hike the Appalachian Trail in its entirety? And who wants to spend more time driving to a day hike than actually being out on the trail?

Happily, Louisville and the surrounding countryside brim with hiking opportunities off the beaten path. Nearly everyone will discover a trail in this book that's just right for them—from a half-mile stroll on a level trail to a 12.5-mile hike across rugged terrain. Family visiting from out of town? Try a paved path on the riverfront. Kids out of school for the day? Check out one of the many hiking areas with a nature center. Looking for a romantic but cheap date? Seek out one of the region's many waterfalls. History buff? Geology nerd? There are trails for you too!

Situated along the Ohio River, the Louisville area is chock-full of stunning wildflower displays, towering forests, fascinating caves, quiet trails, and friendly naturalists. Stroll a paved riverfront trail during lunch to clear your head or burn off some steam. After work, you're just minutes away from a heart-pumping power walk through a forest or a slice of solitude overlooking a peaceful stream. On half- or full-day trips, you can explore a multitude of small, narrow gorges; steep ravines; tumbling creeks; and dazzling overlooks.

*Five-Star Trails: Louisville & Southern Indiana* lets you experience all this and more.



# Recommended Hikes

## Best for Geology

- 6 Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail (p. 47)
- 17 Bridges to the Past (p. 105)
- 34 Spring Mill State Park Loop (p. 195)

## Best for History

- 4 Blackacre State Nature Preserve (p. 36)
- 10 Ohio River Levee Trail: Farnsley-Moremen Landing (p. 66)
- 12 Fort Duffield (p. 78)
- 16 Saunders Springs Nature Preserve (p. 100)
- 17 Bridges to the Past (p. 105)
- 34 Spring Mill State Park Loop (p. 195)
- 40 Rose Island Loops (p. 230)

## Best for Kids

- 2 Beargrass Creek State Nature Preserve: White Oak Nature Trail (p. 25)
- 4 Blackacre State Nature Preserve (p. 36)
- 20 Bernheim Arboretum: Forest Giants Trail (p. 122)
- 21 Creasey Mahan Nature Preserve (p. 127)
- 28 Salato Wildlife Education Center (p. 161)

## Best for Lake Views

- 14 Jefferson Memorial Forest: Yost Ridge to Mitchell Hill Lake (p. 89)
- 16 Saunders Springs Nature Preserve (p. 100)
- 31 Mount St. Francis Lake Trail (p. 178)
- 38 Hardy Lake State Park (p. 219)
- 39 Muscatatuck NWR (p. 224)

## Best for Ohio River Views

- 3 Big Four Bridge and Waterfront Park (p. 30)
- 6 Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail (p. 47)
- 10 Ohio River Levee Trail: Farnsley-Moremen Landing (p. 66)
- 40 Rose Island Loops (p. 230)

## Best Paved Trails

- 1 Anchorage Trail (p. 20)
- 3 Big Four Bridge and Waterfront Park (p. 30)
- 5 Cherokee Park Scenic Loop (p. 42)
- 6 Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail (p. 47)
- 9 Iroquois Park Summit (p. 61)
- 10 Ohio River Levee Trail: Farnsley-Moremen Landing (p. 66)
- 17 Bridges to the Past (p. 105)

## Best for Rigor

- 15 Otter Creek Loop Trail (p. 94)
- 18 Abbey of Gethsemani (p. 112)
- 19 Bernheim Arboretum: Elm Lick Trail (p. 117)
- 29 French Lick Loops (p. 168)
- 35 Spurgeon Hollow North Loop (p. 200)
- 37 Clifty Falls State Park: Clifty Falls Canyon (p. 214)

## Best for Solitude

- 18 Abbey of Gethsemani (p. 112)
- 23 Hall Hill/Vernon-Douglas State Nature Preserve (p. 136)
- 32 O'Bannon Woods State Park: Cliff Dweller Trail (p. 184)
- 33 Pioneer Mothers Memorial Forest (p. 190)
- 35 Spurgeon Hollow North Loop (p. 200)

### Best for Waterfalls

- 17 Tioga Falls and Bridges to the Past (p. 105)
- 22 Fairmount Falls Park (p. 132)
- 30 Hemlock Cliffs Nature Preserve (p. 173)
- 36 Yellow Birch Ravine Nature Preserve (p. 206)
- 37 Clifty Falls State Park: Clifty Falls Canyon (p. 214)
- 6 Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail (p. 47)
- 39 Muscatatuck NWR (p. 224)

### Best for Wildflowers

- 15 Otter Creek Loop Trail (p. 94)
- 30 Hemlock Cliffs Nature Preserve (p. 173)
- 36 Yellow Birch Ravine Nature Preserve (p. 206)
- 37 Clifty Falls State Park: Clifty Falls Canyon (p. 214)
- 40 Rose Island Loops (p. 230)

### Best for Waterfowl

- 3 Big Four Bridge and Waterfront Park (p. 30)

**CATCH TIOGA FALLS ANY TIME OF YEAR, BUT IT'S BEST AFTER A GOOD RAIN.**

*(See Hike 17, page 105.)*







**FRENCH LICK HAS MORE TO OFFER THAN POSH SPAS AND ROULETTE TABLES.**

*(See Hike 29, page 168.)*



# Introduction

## About This Book

*Five-Star Trails: Louisville & Southern Indiana* covers 40 hikes in the city and surrounding area. Given that Louisville is situated on the Ohio River, about two-thirds of the hikes are south of the river, in central Kentucky, and about one-third are north of the river, in southern Indiana.

Geologically speaking, Louisville sits on the far western fringe of the Outer Bluegrass, characterized by rolling hills and narrow ridgetops. Deciduous-hardwood forests dominated by oak, maple, beech, and hickory cover most of this area, except for the occasional meadow, a leftover remnant of land that was cleared for farming. Just south of Louisville lies the Knobs, a region distinguished by distinctive steep-sloping, often cone-shaped hills capped with limestone and sandstone, rendering their peaks more erosion-resistant compared with the rock beneath. Southwest of Louisville lie the Mississippian Plateau and the far-eastern edge of the Muldraugh Hills. Unlike the isolated hills of the Knobs, the Muldraughs are an escarpment, or ring of continuous hills, that divides the Plateau from the Bluegrass.

North of Louisville, in southern Indiana, the terrain is also quite hilly and in geological terms is referred to as the Southern Hills and Lowlands. This part of the Hoosier State was largely untouched by encroaching glaciers, preserving a rich ecosystem of plants and animals that thrive on the steeper topography found closer to the river.

The hikes in this book are divided into five geographic regions:

**LOUISVILLE: INSIDE I-265** This section comprises hikes close to the heart of the city, bounded by Interstate 265 to the south (in Kentucky, where it's known as the Gene Snyder Freeway) and to the north (in Indiana). Most of these hikes are lightly wooded trails traversing a gently rolling landscape in urban parks, or they consist of level paved walkways adjacent to the Ohio River. (The exception is the trail at Iroquois Park, which ascends a 260-foot knob.) Several of the hikes begin at nature centers, making them perfect for cold or rainy days.

**KENTUCKY: SOUTH OF LOUISVILLE AND WEST OF I-65** The trails southwest of Louisville generally travel through moderately hilly woods, including the Jefferson

Memorial Forest. Four hikes lie just south of the Ohio River and several others include lake, creek, and waterfall views.

**KENTUCKY: SOUTH OF LOUISVILLE AND EAST OF I-65** Most of the terrain in this region encompasses gently rolling hills, with the exception of the Knobs area due south of Louisville. Adding to the diversity of trails in this region are Fairmount Falls Park, Pine Creek Barrens, and Salato Wildlife Education Center.

**INDIANA: NORTH OF LOUISVILLE AND WEST OF I-65** Hiking areas in the northwest quadrant can vary from rolling hills to steep ravines and cliffs, the latter being representative of the karst geology of southern Indiana. The Hoosier National Forest dominates much of this region. Also found here are the remnants of an old-growth forest.

**INDIANA: NORTH OF LOUISVILLE AND EAST OF I-65** The terrain in this section varies tremendously, from small, intimate gorges (which escaped the leveling glacial flows that transformed other parts of Indiana) to the shallow lakes and waterfowl-breeding grounds of the Muscatatuck Plateau.

## How to Use This Guidebook

The following section walks you through this guidebook's organization, making it easy and convenient to plan great hikes.

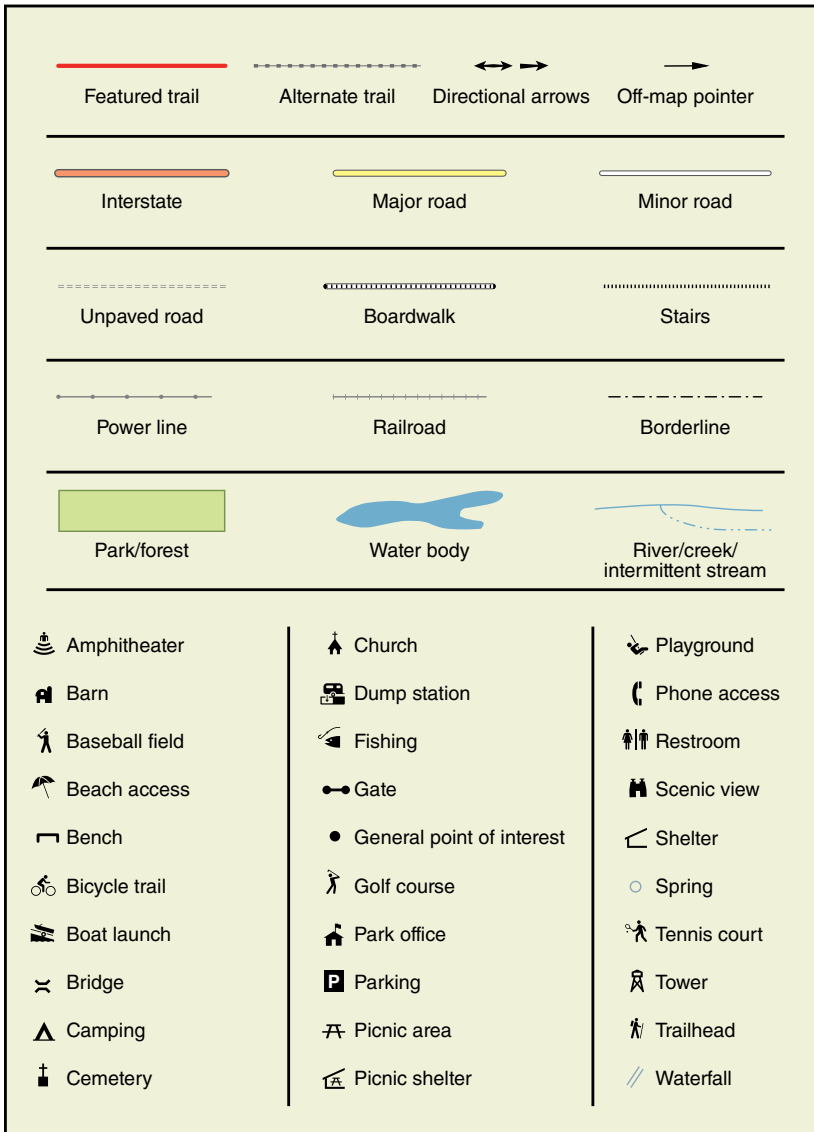
### Overview Map, Regional Maps, and Map Legend

The overview map on page iv shows the primary trailheads for all 40 of the hikes described in this book. The numbers on the overview map pair with the table of contents on the facing page. Each hike's number remains with that hike throughout the book. Thus, if you spot an appealing hiking area on the overview map, you can flip through the book and find those hikes easily by their numbers at the top of the first page for each profile. This book is divided into regions, and prefacing each regional chapter is a regional map. These maps provide more detail than the overview map, bringing you closer to the hikes. A legend explaining the map symbols used throughout the book appears at right.

### Trail Maps

In addition to the overview map, a detailed map of each hike's route appears with its profile. On each of these maps, symbols indicate the trailhead, the complete route, significant features, facilities, and topographic landmarks such as creeks, overlooks, and peaks.





To produce the highly accurate maps in this book, I used a handheld GPS unit to gather data while hiking each route, then sent that data to the expert cartographers at Menasha Ridge Press. Be aware, though, that your GPS device is no substitute for sound, sensible navigation that takes into account the conditions that you observe while hiking.

Further, despite the high quality of the maps in this guidebook, the publisher and I strongly recommend that you always carry an additional map, such as the ones noted in each profile opener’s “Maps” listing.

## Elevation Profile (Diagram)

For trails with significant changes in elevation, the hike descriptions include this graphical element. Entries for fairly flat routes, such as a lake loop, do *not* display an elevation profile. Also, each entry’s key information lists the elevation at the start of that specific route to its highest and/or lowest point.

For hike descriptions that include an elevation profile, this diagram represents the rises and falls of the trail as viewed from the side, over the complete distance (in miles) of that trail. On the diagram’s vertical axis, or height scale, the number of feet indicated between each tick mark lets you visualize the climb. To avoid making flat hikes look steep and steep hikes appear flat, varying height scales provide an accurate image of each hike’s climbing challenge.

## The Hike Profile

Each profile opens with the hike’s star ratings, GPS trailhead coordinates, and other key information—from the trail’s distance and configuration to contacts for local information. Each profile also includes a map (see “Trail Maps,” page 2). The main text for each profile includes four sections: Overview, Route Details, Nearby Attractions, and Directions (for driving to the trailhead area). Below is an explanation of each of those elements.

### STAR RATINGS

The hikes in *Five-Star Trails: Louisville & Southern Indiana* were carefully chosen to provide an overall five-star experience and represent the diversity of trails found in the region. Each hike was assigned a one- to five-star rating in each of the following categories: scenery, trail condition, suitability for children, level of difficulty, and degree of solitude. It’s rare that any trail receives five stars in all five categories; nevertheless, each trail offers excellence in at least one category.

Here’s how the star ratings for each of the five categories break down:

#### FOR SCENERY:

- ★★★★★ Unique, picturesque panoramas
- ★★★★★ Diverse vistas
- ★★★ Pleasant views
- ★★ Unchanging landscape
- ★ Not selected for scenery

**FOR TRAIL CONDITION:**

- ★★★★★ Consistently well maintained
- ★★★★ Stable, with no surprises
- ★★★ Average terrain to negotiate
- ★★ Inconsistent, with good and poor areas
- ★ Rocky, overgrown, or often muddy

**FOR CHILDREN:**

- ★★★★★ Babes in strollers are welcome
- ★★★★ Fun for any kid past the toddler stage
- ★★★ Good for young hikers with proven stamina
- ★★ Not enjoyable for children
- ★ Not advisable for children

**FOR DIFFICULTY:**

- ★★★★★ Grueling
- ★★★★ Strenuous
- ★★★ Moderate—won't beat you up, but you'll know you've been hiking
- ★★ Easy, with patches of moderate
- ★ Good for a relaxing stroll

**FOR SOLITUDE:**

- ★★★★★ Positively tranquil
- ★★★★ spurts of isolation
- ★★★ Moderately secluded
- ★★ Crowded on weekends and holidays
- ★ Steady stream of individuals and/or groups

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES**

As noted in “Trail Maps,” on page 2, I used a handheld GPS unit to obtain geographic data and sent the information to the cartographers at Menasha Ridge Press. In the opener for each hike profile, the coordinates—the intersection of latitude (north) and longitude (west)—will orient you from the trailhead. In some cases, you can drive within viewing distance of a trailhead. Other hiking routes require a short walk to the trailhead from a parking area.

This guidebook uses the degree–decimal minute format for expressing GPS coordinates. The latitude–longitude grid system is likely quite familiar to you, but here's a refresher, pertinent to visualizing the coordinates.

Imaginary lines of latitude—called *parallels* and approximately 69 miles apart from each other—run horizontally around the globe. The equator is established to be 0°, and each parallel is indicated by degrees from the equator: up to 90°N at the North Pole and down to 90°S at the South Pole.

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Imaginary lines of longitude—called *meridians*—run perpendicular to lines of latitude and are likewise indicated by degrees. Starting from 0° at the Prime Meridian in Greenwich, England, they continue to the east and west until they meet 180° later at the International Date Line in the Pacific Ocean. At the equator, longitude lines also are approximately 69 miles apart, but that distance narrows as the meridians converge toward the North and South Poles.

To convert GPS coordinates given in degrees, minutes, and seconds to degree–decimal minute format, divide the seconds by 60. For more on GPS technology, visit [usgs.gov](http://usgs.gov).

### **DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION**

**Distance** indicates the length of the hike from start to finish, either round-trip or one-way depending on the trail configuration. If the hike description includes options to shorten or extend the hike, those distances will also be factored here. **Configuration** defines the type of route—for example, an out-and-back (which takes you in and out the same way), a point-to-point (or one-way route), a loop, a figure-eight, or a balloon.

### **HIKING TIME**

A general rule of thumb for hiking the trails in this book is 2–3 miles per hour, depending on the terrain and whether you have children with you. That pace typically allows time for taking photos, for dawdling and admiring views, and for alternating stretches of hills and descents. When deciding whether or not to follow a particular trail in this guidebook, consider your own pace, the weather, your general physical condition, and your energy level on a given day.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

This section lists features that draw hikers to the trail: waterfalls, historic sites, and the like.

### **ELEVATION**

Each hike's key information lists the elevation (in feet) at the trailhead and another figure for the peak height or low point you will reach on the trail. For routes that involve significant ascents and descents, the hike profile also includes an elevation diagram (see page 4).

### **ACCESS**

Fees or permits required to hike the trail are detailed here—and noted if there are none. Trail-access hours are also listed here.

**MAPS**

Resources for maps, in addition to those in this guidebook, are listed here. As noted earlier, we recommend that you carry more than one map—and that you consult those maps before heading out on the trail.

**FACILITIES**

For planning your hike, it's helpful to know what to expect at the trailhead or nearby in terms of restrooms, phones, water, picnic tables, and other niceties.

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS**

Paved sections or other areas where wheelchairs can safely be used are noted here.

**COMMENTS**

Here you'll find assorted nuggets of information, such as whether or not dogs are allowed on the trails.

**CONTACTS**

Listed here are phone numbers and websites for checking trail conditions and gleaning other day-to-day information.

**Overview, Route Details, Nearby Attractions, and Directions**

These four elements compose the heart of the hike. **Overview** gives you a quick summary of what to expect on that trail; **Route Details** guides you on the hike, from start to finish; and **Nearby Attractions** suggests appealing adjacent sites, such as restaurants, museums, and other trails (note that not every hike profile has these). **Directions** will get you to the trailhead from a well-known road or highway.

**Weather**

As a river city, Louisville can get quite hot and humid during the summer. For that reason alone, hiking during June, July, and August can be less than ideal. During this time of year, you may want to consider a shorter trail or one with a reprieve from the heat, such as a nature center. Fall and spring are by far the most popular times of the year for hiking. Colorful leaf and wildflower displays always draw crowds. During busy months, try to avoid hiking the more popular spots on holidays and beautiful weekends. If possible, hike during the week, after work when the days get longer, or on a less well-known trail.

For many hikers, wintertime presents an excellent opportunity to get out on the trails. Crowds (and bugs) disappear, cliffs and rocky outcrops are easier to

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see, and the contours of the earth become more apparent. Plus, if we get a good snow, animal tracks marking the trails, birds at their feeders, and ice formations on the waterways make for wonderful sights along the way.

The following chart provides a month-by-month snapshot of the weather in the Louisville area. For each month, “Hi Temp” shows the average daytime high, “Lo Temp” gives the average nighttime low, and “Rain or Snow” lists the average precipitation.

MONTH	HI TEMP	LO TEMP	RAIN OR SNOW
January	43°F	27°F	3.24"
February	48°F	30°F	3.18"
March	58°F	38°F	4.17"
April	69°F	47°F	4.01"
May	77°F	57°F	5.27"
June	85°F	66°F	3.79"
July	89°F	70°F	4.23"
August	88°F	69°F	3.33"
September	82°F	60°F	3.05"
October	70°F	49°F	3.22"
November	58°F	40°F	3.59"
December	46°F	30°F	3.83"

Source: [usclimatedata.com](http://usclimatedata.com)

Water

How much is enough? One simple physiological fact should convince you to err on the side of excess when deciding how much water to pack: you can sweat nearly 2 quarts of fluid each hour you walk in the heat, more if you hike uphill in direct sunlight and during the hottest time of the day. A good rule of thumb is to hydrate prior to your hike, carry (and drink) 16 ounces of water for every mile you plan to hike, and hydrate again after the hike. For most people, the pleasures of hiking make carrying water a relatively minor price to pay to remain safe and healthy. So pack more water than you anticipate needing, even for short hikes.

If you find yourself tempted to drink “found water,” proceed with extreme caution. Many ponds and lakes you’ll encounter are fairly stagnant, and the water tastes terrible. Drinking such water presents inherent risks for thirsty

trekkers. *Giardia* parasites contaminate many water sources and cause the dreaded intestinal ailment giardiasis, which can last for weeks after onset. For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: [cdc.gov/parasites/giardia](http://cdc.gov/parasites/giardia).

In any case, effective treatment is essential before you drink from any water source along the trail. Boiling water for 2–3 minutes is usually a safe measure for camping, but day hikers can consider iodine tablets, approved chemical mixes, filtration units rated for giardia, and ultraviolet purification. Some of these methods (for example, filtration with an added carbon filter) remove bad tastes typical in stagnant water, while others add their own taste. As a precaution, carry a means of water purification in case you've underestimated your consumption needs.

## Clothing

Weather, unexpected trail conditions, fatigue, extended hiking duration, and wrong turns can individually or collectively turn a great outing into a very uncomfortable one at best—or a life-threatening one at worst. Proper attire plays a key role in staying comfortable and, sometimes, staying alive. Here are some helpful guidelines:

- ★ *Choose quick-dry, wool, or synthetics* for maximum comfort in all of your hiking attire—from hats to socks and in between. Cotton is fine if the weather remains dry and stable, but you won't be happy if that material gets wet.
- ★ *Wear a hat*, or at least tuck one into your day pack or hitch it to your belt. Hats offer all-weather sun and wind protection as well as warmth if it turns cold.
- ★ *Be ready to layer up or down* as the day progresses and the mercury rises or falls. Today's outdoor wear makes layering easy, with such designs as jackets that convert to vests and pants with zip-off or button-up legs.
- ★ *Mosquitoes, ticks, poison ivy, and thorny bushes* found along many trails can generate short-term discomfort and long-term agony. A lightweight pair of pants and a long-sleeved shirt can go a long way toward protecting you from these pests.
- ★ *Wear hiking boots, trail shoes, or sturdy hiking sandals* with toe protection. Flip-flopping along a paved urban greenway is one thing, but you should never hike a trail in open sandals or casual sneakers. Your bones and arches need support, and your skin needs protection.
- ★ *Pair that footwear with good socks*. Again, wool is the preferred choice and comes in a variety of weights for all-year use. If you prefer not to sheathe your feet when wearing hiking sandals, tuck the socks into your day pack—you may need them if temperatures plummet or if you hit rocky turf and pebbles begin to irritate your feet. And if it's cold and you've lost your gloves, you can use the socks as mittens.



- ★ *Don't leave rainwear behind*, even if the day dawns clear and sunny. Tuck into your day pack, or tie around your waist, a jacket that's breathable and either water-resistant or waterproof. Investigate different choices at your local outdoor retailer. If you are a frequent hiker, ideally you'll have more than one rainwear weight, material, and style in your closet to protect you in all seasons in your regional climate and hiking microclimates.

## Essential Gear

You can neatly stow all of these items in your day pack or backpack, ready-to-go for your next adventure. The following list showcases never-hike-without-them items—in alphabetical order, as all are important:

- ★ *Extra clothes*: raingear, a change of socks, and, depending on the season, a warm hat and gloves
- ★ *Extra food*: trail mix, granola bars, or other high-energy snacks
- ★ *Flashlight or headlamp* with extra bulb and batteries
- ★ *Insect repellent*. For some areas and seasons, this is vital.
- ★ *Maps and a high-quality compass*. Even if you know the terrain from previous hikes, don't leave home without these tools. And, as previously noted, bring maps in addition to those in this guidebook, and consult your maps prior to the hike. If you're GPS-savvy, bring that device, too, but don't rely on it as your sole navigational tool—battery life is limited, after all—and be sure to check its accuracy against that of your maps and compass.
- ★ *Pocketknife and/or multitool*
- ★ *Sun protection*: sunglasses with UV tinting, a sunhat with a wide brim, and sun-screen. (Tip: Check the expiration date on the tube or bottle.)
- ★ *Water*. Bring more than you think you'll drink. Depending on your destination, you may want to bring a means of purifying water in case you run out.
- ★ *Whistle*. It could become your best friend in an emergency.
- ★ *Windproof matches and/or a lighter*, as well as a fire starter, for real emergencies. Please don't start a forest fire.
- ★ *Finally, don't forget your sense of adventure!*

## First Aid Kit

In addition to the preceding items, those that follow may seem daunting to carry along for a day hike. But any paramedic will tell you that the products listed here—again, in alphabetical order, because all are important—are just

the basics. The reality of hiking is that you can be out for a week of backpacking and acquire only a mosquito bite. Or you can hike for an hour, slip, and suffer a bleeding abrasion or broken bone. Fortunately, the items listed pack into a very small space. You may also purchase convenient prepackaged kits at your local outdoor retailer or pharmacy, or online.

- ★ Adhesive bandages (such as Band-Aids)
- ★ Antibiotic ointment (such as Neosporin)
- ★ Aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), or ibuprofen (Advil)
- ★ Athletic tape
- ★ Blister kit (moleskin or an adhesive variety such as Spenco 2nd Skin)
- ★ Butterfly-closure bandages
- ★ Diphenhydramine (Benadryl), in case of mild allergic reactions
- ★ Elastic bandages (such as Ace) or joint wraps (such as Spenco)
- ★ Epinephrine in a prefilled syringe (EpiPen), typically by prescription only, for people known to have severe allergic reactions
- ★ Gauze (one roll and a half dozen 4-by-4-inch pads)
- ★ Hydrogen peroxide or iodine

*Note:* Consider your intended terrain and the number of hikers in your party before you exclude any article listed above. A botanical-garden stroll may not inspire you to carry a complete kit, but anything beyond that warrants precaution. When hiking alone, you should always be prepared for a medical need. And if you're a twosome or with a group, one or more people in your party should be equipped with first aid supplies.

## General Safety

Here are a few tips to make your hike safer and easier:

- ★ *Always let someone know where you'll be hiking and how long you expect to be gone.* It's a good idea to give that person a copy of your route, particularly if you're headed into any isolated area. Let them know when you return.
- ★ *Always sign in and out of any trail registers provided.* Don't hesitate to comment on the trail condition if space is provided; that's your opportunity to alert others to any problems you encounter.
- ★ *Don't count on a smartphone for your safety.* Reception may be spotty or nonexistent on the trail, even on an urban walk—especially one embraced by towering trees or buildings.

## FIVE-STAR TRAILS

- ★ *Always carry food and water*, even for a short hike. And bring more water than you think you'll need.
- ★ *Ask questions*. Public-land employees are on hand to help. It's a lot easier to solicit advice before a problem occurs, and it will help you avoid a mishap away from civilization when it's too late to amend an error.
- ★ *Stay on designated trails*. Even on the most clearly marked trails, you usually reach a point where you have to stop and consider in which direction to head. If you become disoriented, don't panic. As soon as you think you may be off-track, stop, assess your current direction, and then retrace your steps to the point where you went astray. Using a map, a compass, a GPS device or smartphone, and this book, and keeping in mind what you've passed thus far, reorient yourself, and trust your judgment on which way to continue. If you become absolutely unsure of how to continue, return to your vehicle the way you came in. Should you become completely lost and have no idea how to find the trailhead, remaining in place along the trail and waiting for help is most often the best option for adults and always the best option for children.
- ★ *Always carry a whistle*. It may become a lifesaver if you get lost or hurt.
- ★ *Be especially careful when crossing streams*. Whether you're fording the stream or crossing on a log, make every step count. If you have any doubt about maintaining your balance on a log, ford the stream instead: use a trekking pole or stout stick for balance and *face upstream as you cross*. If a stream seems too deep to ford, turn back. Whatever is on the other side isn't worth the risk.
- ★ *Be careful at overlooks*. While these areas may provide spectacular views, they are potentially hazardous. Stay back from the edge of outcrops, and make absolutely sure of your footing—a misstep can mean a nasty and possibly fatal fall.
- ★ *Standing dead trees and storm-damaged living trees pose a significant hazard to hikers*. These trees may have loose or broken limbs that could fall at any time. While walking beneath trees, and when choosing a spot to rest or enjoy your snack, look up!
- ★ *Know the symptoms of subnormal body temperature, or hypothermia*. Shivering and forgetfulness are the two most common indicators of this stealthy killer. Hypothermia can occur at any elevation, even in the summer, especially if you're wearing lightweight cotton clothing. If symptoms develop, get to shelter, hot liquids, and dry clothes as soon as possible.
- ★ *Likewise, know the symptoms of heat exhaustion, or hyperthermia*. Here's how to recognize and handle three types of heat emergencies: Heat cramps are painful cramps in the legs and abdomen, accompanied by heavy sweating and feeling faint. Caused by excessive salt loss, heat cramps must be handled by getting to a cool place and sipping water or an electrolyte solution (such as Gatorade). Dizziness, headache, irregular pulse, disorientation, and nausea are all symptoms of heat exhaustion, which occurs as blood vessels dilate and attempt to move heat from the inner body to the skin. Find a cool place, drink cool water, and get someone to fan you, which can help cool you off more quickly. Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition that can cause

convulsions, unconsciousness, or even death. Symptoms include dilated pupils; dry, hot, flushed skin; a rapid pulse; high fever; and abnormal breathing. If you should be sweating and you're not, that's the signature warning sign. If you or a hiking partner is experiencing heatstroke, do whatever you can to cool down and find help.

- ★ *Most important, take along your brain.* A cool, calculating mind is the single most important asset on the trail. Think before you act. Watch your step. Plan ahead. Avoiding accidents before they happen is the best way to ensure a rewarding and relaxing hike.

## Watchwords for Flora and Fauna

Hikers should remain aware of the following concerns regarding plant life and wildlife, described in alphabetical order.

**MOSQUITOES** Ward off these pests with insect repellent and/or repellent-impregnated clothing. Long pants and a long-sleeved shirt may offer your best protection. In general, mosquitoes are at their worst during spring and early summer. In warm weather, mosquitoes typically hatch four to six days after significant rainfall. However, recent mild winters in the Louisville area have extended the mosquito season to whenever nighttime temperatures don't dip below freezing for a prolonged period of time. When examining your hiking options, consider the presence of low-lying areas (including wetlands) and bodies of water such as lakes and ponds, which may provide a breeding ground for those little minions of evil. In some areas, mosquitoes are known to carry the West Nile virus, so take extra care to avoid their bites. Several cases of West Nile are reported in Jefferson and surrounding counties each year.

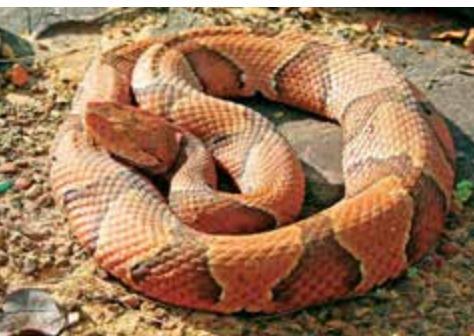
**POISON IVY** Recognizing and avoiding poison ivy are the most effective ways to prevent the painful, itchy rashes associated with this plant. Poison ivy occurs as a vine or ground cover, three leaflets to a leaf. Urushiol, the oil in the sap of this plant, is responsible for the rash. Within 14 hours of exposure, raised lines and/or blisters will appear on your skin, accompanied by a terrible itch. Try to refrain from scratching, though, because bacteria under your fingernails can cause an infection.



**POISON IVY** *Tom Watson*

Wash and dry the affected area thoroughly, applying a topical ointment to help dry out the rash. If the itching or blistering is severe, seek medical attention. To keep from spreading the misery to someone else, wash not only any exposed parts of your body but also any oil-contaminated clothes, hiking gear, and pets. Again, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt may offer the best protection.

**SNAKES** Rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, copperheads, and corals are among the most common venomous snakes in the United States, and their hibernation season is typically October–April. But despite their fearsome reputation, rattlesnakes like to bask in the sun and typically won’t strike unless threatened.



**COPPERHEAD**

*Creeping Things/Shutterstock*

Although unlikely, you may encounter a copperhead while hiking in the Louisville area. The snakes you’ll most likely see, however, are nonvenomous species and subspecies, particularly Eastern garter and rough green snakes. The best rule is to leave all snakes alone, give them a wide berth as you trek past, and make sure your hiking companions (including dogs) do the same.

When hiking, stick to well-used trails, and wear over-the-ankle boots and loose-fitting long pants. Don’t step or put your hands beyond your range of detailed visibility, and avoid wandering around in the dark. Step *onto* logs and rocks, never *over* them, and be especially careful when climbing rocks. Always avoid walking through dense brush or willow thickets.

**TICKS** These arachnids are often found on brush and tall grass, where they seem to be waiting to hitch a ride on warm-blooded passersby. Adult ticks are most active April–May and again October–November, but Louisville’s relatively mild winters have greatly extended the tick season to year-round. In addition, seed ticks (the larval stage of a tick) are particularly problematic since they are so prolific and their small size makes them difficult to spot. The black-legged (deer) tick is the primary carrier of Lyme disease. Although reported incidents of Lyme disease in Kentucky remain relatively rare, all hikers should be able to recognize the symptoms of this potentially debilitating disease. If you hike with a canine companion, be sure your pet is protected as well, since dogs can also get Lyme disease. A few precautions: Wear light-colored clothing, which will make it easier for

you to spot ticks before they migrate to your skin. After hiking, inspect your hair, the back of your neck, your armpits, and your socks. During your posthike shower, take a moment to do a more complete body check. To remove a tick that is already embedded, use tweezers made just for this purpose. Treat the bite with disinfectant solution.



**DEER TICK**

*Jim Gathany/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (public domain)*

## Hunting

A number of rules, regulations, and licenses govern the various hunting types and their related seasons. In Kentucky and Indiana, hunting seasons vary each year by animal, county, location, and type of weapon. Though no problems generally arise, hikers may wish to forgo their trips during these times, when the woods suddenly seem filled with orange and camouflage. For more information, visit the websites of the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources ([fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov)) and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources ([in.gov/dnr](http://in.gov/dnr)).

## Trail Etiquette

Always treat the trail, wildlife, and your fellow hikers with respect. Here are some reminders.

- ★ *Plan ahead in order to be self-sufficient at all times.* For example, carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. A well-planned trip brings satisfaction to you and to others.
- ★ *Hike on open trails only.*
- ★ *Respect trail and road closures.* Avoid trespassing on private land (ask if you're not sure), and obtain all permits and authorizations as required. Also, leave gates as you found them or as marked.
- ★ *Be courteous to other hikers, bikers, equestrians, and others you encounter on the trails.*
- ★ *Never spook wild animals or pets.* An unannounced approach, a sudden movement, or a loud noise startles most critters, and a surprised animal can be dangerous to you, to others, and to itself. Give animals plenty of space.
- ★ *Observe any yield signs you encounter.* Typically they advise hikers to yield to horses, and bikers to yield to both horses and hikers. Observing common courtesy on hills, hikers and bikers yield to any uphill traffic. When encountering mounted

## FIVE-STAR TRAILS

riders or horsepackers, hikers can courteously step off the trail, on the downhill side if possible. Calmly greet riders before they reach you, and do not dart behind trees. Also, don't pet a horse unless you are invited to do so.

- ★ *Leave only footprints.* Be sensitive to the ground beneath you. This also means staying on existing trails and not blazing any new trails.
- ★ *Pack out what you pack in.* No one likes to see the trash someone else has left behind. The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics is an excellent resource (visit [Int.org](http://Int.org) for more information).

## Tips for Enjoying Hiking in Greater Louisville

**THINK INSIDE THE CIRCLE.** Hiking opportunities abound inside both I-265 and I-264 (also known as the Gene Snyder Freeway and the Watterson Expressway, respectively). For quick lunchtime power walks, consider the Olmsted Parks, such as Cherokee and Iroquois, as well as the paved multiuse trails along the riverfront. The other urban trails listed in this book are within easy reach of most Louisville residents, so they're good for parents while the kids are in school or for family outings after school and on weekends.

**THINK OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE.** Just outside I-265 are a handful of trails perfect for after work, particularly when the days are a bit longer. Creasey Mahan Nature Preserve, Blackacre State Nature Preserve, Fairmount Falls, and all of the Jefferson Memorial Forest are just minutes outside the beltway. Even Mount St. Francis, in southern Indiana, is just 20 minutes from downtown Louisville.

**THINK SOCIAL.** Friends in town for the weekend? Family coming to visit? Not everyone wants to sit on the living-room couch all afternoon. Looking for an inventive (and cheap) date idea? A first-run movie and popcorn may set you back more than you care to spend. So head out to an urban trail or catch a cascading waterfall. Enjoy the natural beauty around you, pack a picnic or maybe a kite, and you've got instant fun.

**THINK INDOORS.** Weather too cold or wet to hit the trail? Are the kids driving you absolutely crazy? Check out one of the many free nature centers around Louisville. Blackacre State Nature Preserve and Creasey Mahan Nature Preserve are free to enter, although donations are always appreciated. Salato Wildlife Education Center, Spring Mill State Park, Bernheim Arboretum, and Falls of the Ohio State Park charge only nominal admission fees.



If you're feeling brave, bring boots and a raincoat and let the rug rats stomp every puddle from one end of the trail to the other. Tuck in a change of shoes and maybe some clothes for the ride home, and everyone will sleep well tonight.

**THINK WINTER.** During the cold months, bugs and crowds vanish and non-stop views take their place. Cliffs and waterfalls become a winter wonderland as icicles sparkle like stalactites in the sun. Even a light snowfall can turn a simple walk in the woods into a gorgeous adventure.

**THINK INTELLECTUAL.** If asked "Hey! Wanna trudge 3 miles, swat mosquitoes, and get blistered feet?," how many people would say "Heck yeah!?" Only the hardcore among us exercise purely for fun. But each trail on this hike can offer an exploration into history, geology, biology, photography, art, and more. Once you're mentally engaged, the miles can fly by.

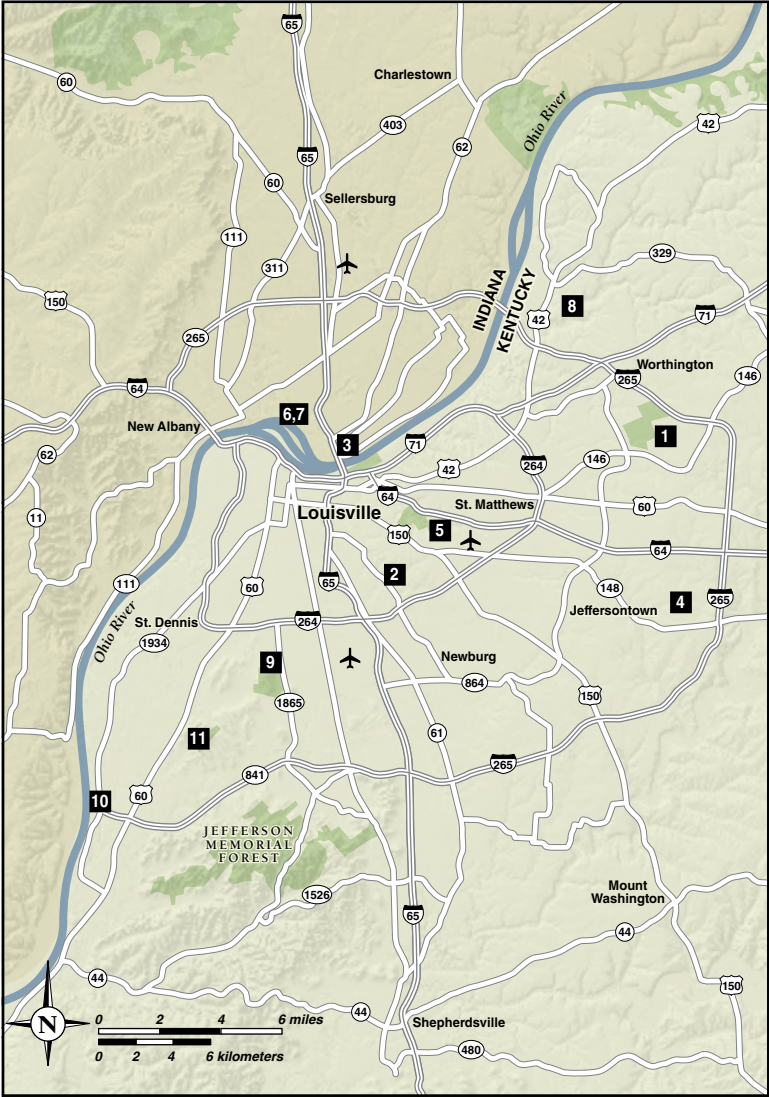
**THINK ADVENTURE.** To keep your hikes fresh, try new trails, new hiking partners, new seasons for discovering the natural world around you. Bring your maps, your raingear, even the entire contents of your favorite local outdoors store. But don't forget to bring your sense of adventure and your smile. You'll be sure to come back for more.

**BERNHEIM FOREST IS A GREAT PLACE TO PUT YOUR FEET UP AND RELAX IN THE SHADE.**

*(See Hike 20, page 122.)*



Louisville: Inside I-265





# Louisville: Inside I-265



**WAVERLY PARK IS ONE OF URBAN LOUISVILLE'S MANY WOODLAND RETREATS.**

*(See Hike 11, page 71.)*

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| <b>1 ANCHORAGE TRAIL</b> (p. 20)   | <b>6 FALLS OF THE OHIO LEVEE TRAIL</b> (p. 47)                     |
| <b>2 BEARGRASS CREEK STATE NATURE PRESERVE: WHITE OAK NATURE TRAIL</b> (p. 25) | <b>7 GOOSE CREEK LOOP AT TOM SAWYER STATE PARK</b> (p. 52)         |
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# Anchorage Trail

SCENERY: ★★★  
TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★  
CHILDREN: ★★★★★  
DIFFICULTY: ★  
SOLITUDE: ★★



**AUTUMN IS A LOVELY TIME TO HIKE THE ANCHORAGE TRAIL.**

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES:** N38° 15.987' W85° 32.426'

**DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION:** 2.0-mile balloon

**HIKING TIME:** 1 hour

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Herringbone brick and paved path, Willow Lake

**ELEVATION:** No appreciable change in elevation

**ACCESS:** Daily, sunrise–sunset; free admission

**MAPS:** [tinyurl.com/AnchorMap](https://tinyurl.com/AnchorMap)

**FACILITIES:** None

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** None

**COMMENTS:** Pets must be leashed.

**CONTACTS:** Evergreen Real Estate; [anchorageky.info](https://anchorageky.info) or [tinyurl.com/AnchorTrail](https://tinyurl.com/AnchorTrail)

## Overview

The Anchorage Trail starts in quaint downtown Anchorage and wanders for 2 miles through a parklike setting, along open farm fields, and past Willow Lake before ducking under a lightly forested canopy once again. The 10-foot-wide trail begins with a herringbone brick walk, which turns to pavement just before it crosses the second of two bridges. Mowed and dirt paths lightly crisscross the property, which is bordered by hidden homes and country estates.

## Route Details

What? Who can afford to lay brick, let alone in a herringbone pattern, on a public-access trail? The town of Anchorage, a suburb of eastern Louisville, is undoubtedly affluent, and many of the homes and businesses are on the National Register of Historic Places. But this kind of paved trail is expensive, so before we start walking, let's learn a little bit of the background story.

In 1773 Isaac Hite, one of the original surveyors of what later became Jefferson County and an officer in the Virginia militia, was gifted a land grant in exchange for his military service during the French and Indian War. A portion of his land grant included the property where the E. P. Tom Sawyer State Park and the Central State Hospital are now located. Another part of Hite's estate later became the town of Anchorage, which was named in honor of James W. Goslee, a riverboat captain, when the town was incorporated in 1878.

From there on, Anchorage has been home to many of the wealthy elite, including Virginia Pearson, the silent movie star, and Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, whose legacy has long been associated with bourbon and philanthropy. It was Bernheim who commissioned the Olmsted Brothers, sons of the "Father of Landscape Architecture," Frederick Law Olmsted, in 1914 to develop a plan for the future growth of the town of Anchorage, replete with stone bridges, triangular intersections, and tree-lined streets.

Since that time other notables have called Anchorage their home, such as singer-songwriter Joan Osborne; the CEO of Yum! Brands, David Novak; and John Schnatter, of Papa John's fame and fortune. After moving to Anchorage, Schnatter restored many of the historic buildings in the city center and in 2008 built the Anchorage Trail to be used freely by the public. The paved trail runs across private property and is managed by Evergreen Real Estate LLC, which is owned by Schnatter.

## Anchorage Trail



Now that you've read a little history of both Anchorage and the trail, it will give you something to mull over as you walk the 2.0-mile loop. Starting from the corner of Evergreen and Station Roads, the brickwork is beautiful, including the large compass that forms the starting point of the path, which immediately passes over a small stone bridge. For the first 0.2 mile, the Anchorage Trail gently parallels Evergreen Road, until the brick sidewalk ends and the trail turns to pavement, where it crosses another bridge over Goose Creek.

To walk the trail counterclockwise, bear right (north) at the first intersection. A horse trail crosses the paved trail, and occasionally you'll see a few other dirt and mowed paths taking off here and there. As the Anchorage Trail continues, the scenery becomes a mixture of lightly wooded areas and open fields surrounded by a four-plank fence. Supposedly, 150 different species of birds, as well as the local deer population, also have free access to the trail and its environs, and they seem to make good use of it.

At 1 mile into your walk, the trail curves back southeast at the halfway point. Willow Lake will become visible on your right, ringed with yellow iris (a beautiful yet invasive species) on the trail side of the modest lake and lucky homeowners on the far shore. There are several small wood decks, allowing walkers a better view of the water, including a longer walkway that traverses the wetlands where Little Goose Creek drains into the lake. Unfortunately, other invasive species, in particular bush honeysuckle and Bradford pear trees, have run amuck here, both of which are extremely difficult to contain.

Anchor Trail soon doubles back on itself, and you can simply return the way you came or bear right to finish the trail behind the Anchorage Presbyterian Church. As a means of thanks to the vision and generosity of those who came before us, some of you may wish to celebrate with a toast of good bourbon and a slice of brick-fire-oven pizza.

## Nearby Attractions

The town of **Anchorage** is quite walkable, including the lovely neighborhoods and the small downtown area. Several local establishments have well-earned reputations for excellent food and spirits. **Mouthwatering MozzaPi** ([mozzapi.com](http://mozzapi.com)) has long been a local favorite, but we'll discuss two other equally fine choices. Both restaurants have a strong fan base, especially on weekends, so you may want to consider reservations.

The **Village Anchor** is composed of the Village Anchor Restaurant and the Anchor Bar on the main floor and the Sea Hag Patio (which is enclosed during inclement weather) on the lower level. While the restaurant is a bit more upscale, the Sea Hag leans a little more on the casual side. See [villageanchor.com](http://villageanchor.com) for hours and menus. They are located at 11507 Park Road, just a stone's throw from the trailhead.

**Selena's at Willow Lake Tavern** describes its food as a fusion of Creole and Sicilian, with an emphasis on fresh seafood. Customers are welcome to dine



## FIVE-STAR TRAILS

inside by the fire or outdoors in the courtyard next to the small, artificial waterfall. Selena's is located at 10609 Lagrange Road, 0.7 mile from the trailhead. See [selenasrestaurant.com](http://selenasrestaurant.com) for more information.

Only 20 minutes from Anchorage is the fabulous **Yew Dell Botanical Gardens**. Plan on spending the better part of the day here, as there is so much to see, from the Kitchen and Sunken Rock Gardens, to the Holly Allee and the Greenhouse Terrace, to the Klein castle. And on Sundays, except for during the winter season, the gardens offers hounds on the grounds! Go to [yewdellgardens.org](http://yewdellgardens.org) for hours, admission prices, special events, class offerings, and an extensive online plant market. Yew Dell is located at 6220 Old Lagrange Road in Crestwood, Kentucky.

## Directions

From the intersection of I-264 and US 60 (near the Mall at St. Matthews), head northeast on New La Grange Road/KY 146E for 4.7 miles. Once you pass Selena's at Willow Lake Tavern, this becomes Park Road. Bear left (northeast) on Station Road. The US Post Office will be on your left and the Village Anchor Restaurant on your right. The city of Anchorage has provided a map of downtown public parking at [tinyurl.com/AnchorParkMap](http://tinyurl.com/AnchorParkMap).

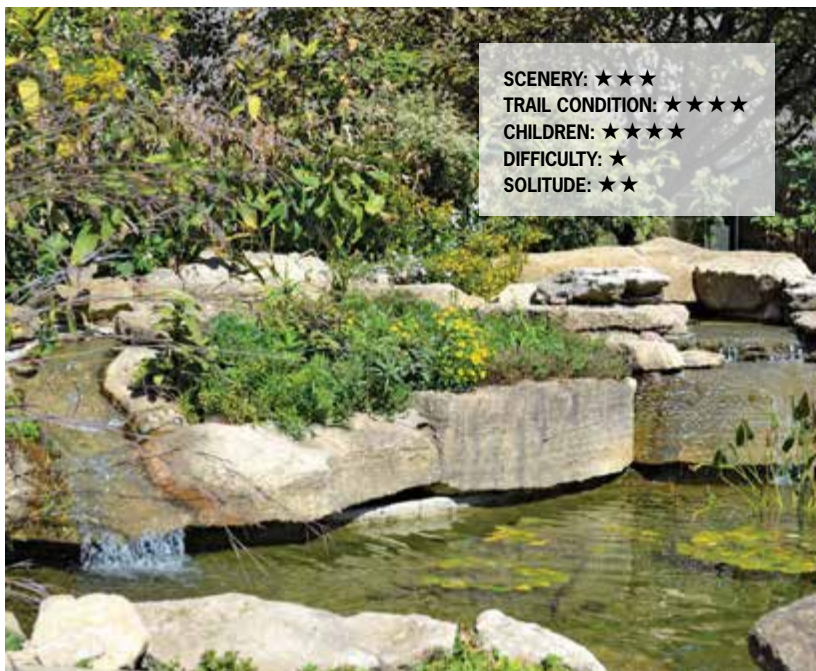
**DEER FREQUENTLY GRAZE IN THE OPEN FIELDS ADJACENT TO THE ANCHORAGE TRAIL.**





# Beargrass Creek State Nature Preserve:

## White Oak Nature Trail



SCENERY: ★★★  
TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★  
CHILDREN: ★★★★★  
DIFFICULTY: ★  
SOLITUDE: ★★

**THE WATER FEATURE AND NATIVE PLANTINGS AT THE EDUCATION CENTER OFFER VISITORS AN INVITING RECEPTION.**

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES:** N38° 12.594' W85° 42.669'

**DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION:** 1.5-mile loop

**HIKING TIME:** 1 hour, as measured by a kid's pace

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Nature playground, sensory garden, and bird blind

**ELEVATION:** 533' at trailhead, descending to 453' at low point

**ACCESS:** Trails are open daily, sunrise–sunset. The nature center is open Monday–Saturday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; closed Sundays and holidays. Free admission; donations welcome.

**MAPS:** Available on-site and at the first website below

**FACILITIES:** Nature center, restrooms, and picnic tables

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** Only at the nature center

**COMMENTS:** Pets are not permitted.

**CONTACTS:** Louisville Nature Center, 502-458-1328; [louisvillennaturecenter.org/beargrass-creek](http://louisvillennaturecenter.org/beargrass-creek) or [tinyurl.com/BGCSNP](http://tinyurl.com/BGCSNP)

**Beargrass Creek State Nature Preserve:  
White Oak Nature Trail**



**Overview**

Beargrass Creek State Nature Preserve lies near the heart of Louisville and within easy reach of every child in Jefferson County. Take your kids (or someone else's) to explore every nook and cranny of this 41-acre woodland wonder. Beargrass Creek is the only urban forest owned by the Kentucky State Nature Preserve Commission. Comanaged with the Louisville Nature Center, the preserve

provides four seasons of opportunity to tire those little rascals out and get them to bed early.

## Route Details

If this is your first visit, you should begin at the Louisville Nature Center. As you approach, you'll notice small signs identifying many of the trees and native plantings that dot the landscape. A sensory garden is located in front of a small pond, with a raised "table" for planting flowers and vegetables. Rain chains dangle as downspouts on both sides of the front entrance to the center, designed to catch both your eye and the surplus water that runs off the gutters. Operated as a nonprofit, the nature center gratefully accepts donations for the upkeep of its facilities and sells rain barrels as one of its fundraisers.

Inside the center you'll find several hands-on exhibits for the kids to investigate and a room that serves as both a library and a gift shop. Be sure to say hello to Amie the stuffed armadillo, who's visiting from Texas.

The nature center also has an informative display on the Beargrass Creek watershed, which drains 61 square miles of Jefferson County. Every drop of metro-Louisville runoff ends up in this watershed—encompassing Muddy, Middle, and South Forks—on its way to the Ohio River. Think about that impact while you try to keep your lawn and garden chemical-free.

The Louisville Nature Center takes its educational outreach programs seriously, offering a preschool program for the little tykes, hosting school groups throughout the year, and operating youth camps in the summer. Scout troops frequently roam the area dressed in those easily identifiable blue and brown outfits, complete with neckerchiefs. The facility is also available for rent (think birthday parties), and the Jefferson County Master Gardener Association uses it for luncheons and meeting space.

A large bird blind lies just out the back door of the nature center, overlooking several feeders. Frequent avian visitors include dark-eyed (or slate-colored) juncos, cardinals, white-breasted nuthatches, tufted titmice, and downy woodpeckers. Walk about the blind slowly and quietly—although the exterior wall has tinted one-way glass, the birds are very aware of shadows and noise as you move about the room.

A good hike for anyone is the White Oak Nature Trail, which starts just to the left of the bird blind and offers 20 information markers posted along the way. To follow the guided trail sequentially, start your hike here, looping clockwise

to return to the parking lot on the front side of the nature center. Highlights include several small wooden bridges and walkways, the sycamore “hugging tree,” and some of the largest poison ivy vines you’ve ever seen. Known in scientific circles as *Toxicodendron radicans*, poison ivy produces an irritating oil called urushiol. Curiously, wildlife is immune to this irritant: a variety of birds, deer, rabbits, and other small mammals eat the grayish-white berries throughout the fall and winter. Adhere to the old adage “leaves of three, let it be,” and maybe you won’t wake up itching. (For more on the subject, see page 13.)

If you want to limit your hike to less than 0.5 mile, take the shortcut across Red Maple Trail to the other side of White Oak Nature Trail. But if one of your objectives is to wear out the kids, don’t even mention that as an option.

Shortly after you pass the Red Maple Trail, about 0.3 mile into the hike, you’ll notice an increasing number of old bricks embedded within the dirt path. This section of the White Oak Nature Trail was an old paved roadbed that led to Basil Prather’s homestead. Prather, a Revolutionary War captain, bought this property in 1789.

At the far northeastern end of the trail, about 0.7 mile from the trailhead, the path traverses a wooden walkway before ascending gently and eventually returning to the nature center. Along the second half of the trail, you may see two or three paths veering left (southeast); these lead to Joe Creason Park, just south and east of the preserve.

To keep kids interested as they walk along the trail, try a photo scavenger hunt. Provide an inexpensive digital camera or phone and a list of sights to find and record photographically. Hunt items could include a left- or right-hand mitten hidden in one of the many old sassafras trees that line the trail; white blooms or red berries on an invasive honeysuckle; sightings of snakeroot, witch hazel, or poplar (Kentucky’s state tree); a photo op with the creek. . . . You get the idea.

And don’t forget about Beargrass Creek on inclement-weather days. Load up with raincoats and boots or a warm winter coat with hat and mittens, and look for animal tracks. It’s always surprising how many mammals frequent our urban backyard. And on cold days, the bird blind will be chattering with activity.

## Nearby Attractions

Both **Joe Creason Park** and the **Louisville Zoo** are just south of the preserve. All three parks share adjacent borders, with Creason in the middle and Beargrass and the zoo serving as bookends. A 1.5-mile multiuse trail encircles Joe Creason



Park; the 3.1- and 6.2-mile loops are popular with cross-country runners. Ambitious hikers can use one of the connector paths between Beargrass Creek and Creason Park to hike both trail systems. Joe Creason Park also has nine clay tennis courts, soccer fields, and two pedestrian bridges that cross Beargrass Creek. In winter, the large hill in front of the Metro Parks Administrative Office is great for snow sledding.

## Directions

From I-264 (Watterson Expressway), take Exit 14 (Poplar Level Road/KY 864), head north on Poplar Level Road, and drive 0.7 mile. Turn right (east) at Trevilian Way, and in 0.1 mile turn left (north) on Illinois Avenue. The Louisville Nature Center is 0.2 mile ahead, on your right. Park in this lot for access to the nature preserve.

### I WONDER WHAT'S AROUND THAT NEXT BEND IN THE TRAIL?





# Big Four Bridge and Waterfront Park

SCENERY: ★★★★★  
TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★  
CHILDREN: ★★★★★  
DIFFICULTY: ★  
SOLITUDE: ★



**WALK THE BIG FOUR BRIDGE IN ALL SEASONS, DAY OR NIGHT, FOR FABULOUS VIEWS.**

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES:** N38° 16.258' W85° 44.491'

**DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION:** 4.2-mile balloon loop

**HIKING TIME:** 2 hours

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Panoramic views of the Ohio River and downtown Louisville and Jeffersonville, water features, sculptures

**ELEVATION:** 448' at trailhead, with no significant elevation change

**ACCESS:** Daily, 6 a.m.–11 p.m.; free admission

**MAPS:** Available at the website below

**FACILITIES:** Restrooms, picnic tables, drinking fountains (in season), playgrounds, splash park

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** Yes

**COMMENTS:** Parking is free and plentiful. Pets are permitted on leash on the paved trails but NOT on the Big Four Bridge.

**CONTACTS:** Waterfront Park, 502-574-3768; [ourwaterfront.org](http://ourwaterfront.org)

## Overview

Bring the family. Bring a date. Bring your walking shoes and head to the riverfronts of both downtown Jeffersonville and Louisville. The Big Four Bridge links these two urban venues and provides access to the River City's Waterfront Park, an 85-acre linear green space on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River. The paved path offers stunning views of the river and both cities as it passes multiple sculptures and water features, urban gardens, the Lincoln Memorial, and more.

## Route Details

The Big Four Bridge and Waterfront Park is such a prominent feature that it's hard to imagine what downtown Louisville was like before. Groundbreaking for Phase I of the park started in 1994, and the conceptual master plan for Phase IV is complete. The city continues to dream big with its efforts to transform this former industrial riverfront into an integral spoke of the social hub of downtown Louisville. And on the Indiana side of the river, the Big Four Bridge leads you to Jeffersonville, which is undergoing an exciting urban renewal of its own.

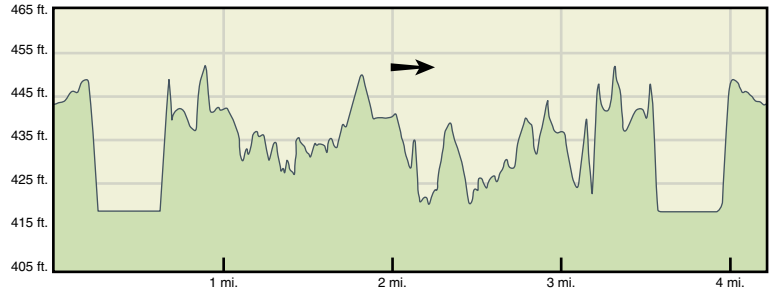
The Falls of the Ohio, just downstream of the park, is the only natural obstruction along the nearly 1,000-mile Ohio River as it flows from Pennsylvania before joining the Mississippi River in Cairo, Illinois. For thousands of years, migrating buffalo crossed the Ohio here to reach the salt licks and cane that grew along the riverbanks. Various indigenous tribes followed these migrations, and the crossing soon became a point of commerce. As development occurred on both sides of the river, Louisville quickly grew as a point of warehousing and support for the shipping industries. Eventually, the Louisville and Portland Canal was built to move boat traffic through the locks and avoid the portaging that was necessary to bypass the falls.

The construction of the six-span, railroad-truss "Big Four Bridge" (named for the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railway), began in 1888 and ultimately claimed the lives of 37 workers. Twelve men drowned after the collapse of a caisson that was supposed to hold the water back when they were building the pier foundation, and another four men died when a wooden beam broke while they were working on another caisson. The worst disaster occurred in December 1893, when heavy winds knocked over a crane, which in turn caused a truss to fall into the river, bringing with it 41 men and killing 21 of them.

In 1928–29, the bridge was rebuilt using much of the original structure. But in the 1960s, the bridge again fell into disuse and was abandoned in 1969.



# Big Four Bridge and Waterfront Park



The original rail approaches on both ends of the bridge were removed in 1974–75 and sold for scrap, resulting in the epithet “the Bridge That Goes Nowhere.” During this same time period, the continued transformation of the transportation industry led to a significant decline in commercial boat traffic along the Ohio. Louisville’s waterfront fell into deep neglect until a revitalization project was launched in the late 1980s.

Whereas Louisville’s waterfront had become an eyesore, it is now eye candy for those wanting to enjoy the amenities a park can bring: paved walkways, water features, gardens, benches, and artwork—all in an outdoor urban environment. Likewise, the city of Jeffersonville has conducted its own waterfront redevelopment initiative with paved walking paths, restaurants, and historic homes. Carrying more than 1.5 million pedestrians and cyclists a year, the mile-long Big Four Bridge allows casual walkers and commuters to cross these political boundaries with ease, while providing seamless access to miles and miles of paved trails on both sides of the river.

There is ample and free parking at the base of the Big Four Bridge on both sides of the river, and walkers can hike either way over the bridge, but let’s start in Jeffersonville. After parking (see detailed directions on page 34), head up the entrance ramp on the Indiana side of the bridge. The views quickly become prodigious, from renovated cottages to historic homes, the flood wall along the levee, and the dazzling skyline of Louisville more than a mile away. Downstream (west) of the bridge, are the Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, and George Rogers Clark memorial bridges.

At the Kentucky side of the Big Four Bridge, descend the spiraling ramp until you reach ground level and the parking lots on either side. The 2.7-mile Waterfront Park loop trail begins at the far side of the west parking lot adjacent to the ramp of the Big Four Bridge, near the river. Our route runs along the riverfront and circles back around, before completing the loop back along the river.

From the parking lot, walk north toward the riverfront. Turn left (west) and head downstream along the promenade toward the I-65 bridge over the Ohio. The first thing you’ll pass on your left is the Swing Garden, a wide, grassy knoll scattered with bench-style swings facing the water. The Lincoln Memorial is just past the swings. The paved path continues along the waterfront, past the Fred Wiche Grove (named after the beloved local gardening expert who had his own radio show) and then past the Upland Meadows. Feel free to wander off the path at any point to explore the inner workings of this linear park.

Past the meadows, the trail takes a left turn away from the river as it bears south along the Harbor (aka the Great Lawn Docks). Continue straight to see *Flock of Finns*, a group of sculptures created by the late folk artist Marvin Finn, which sits at the corner of Witherspoon Street and River Road. Loop back north again toward the river and the Great Lawn, the Cascades, and *Gracehoper*, a black painted-steel abstract sculpture designed by the late Tony Smith.

From the base of the Big Four Bridge in Jeffersonville where you started, you are now a little more than 2 miles into your walk. Bear east and work your way back along the waterfront to the base of the Big Four Bridge on the Kentucky side. Ascend the spiral entrance ramp to the Big Four and head back across the river to Jeffersonville.

## Nearby Attractions

If all this water has you waxing nostalgic, make time for the **Howard Steamboat Museum**. Located just 1.1 miles from Big Four Station in Jeffersonville, the museum is housed in a beautiful Victorian mansion built by the Howard family in 1894. The Howards were among the major steamboat builders of their time, and the master craftsmen who worked for the shipyard helped construct the house. The museum is located at 1101 East Market Street in Jeffersonville, Indiana; hours are Tuesday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., and Sunday, 1–3 p.m. Discounted ticket prices are offered for children and seniors. For more information, call 812-283-3728 or visit [howardsteamboatmuseum.org](http://howardsteamboatmuseum.org).

**Jeffersonville** is filled with a tantalizing array of restaurants, ice-cream shops, and tap houses, including more than a dozen located just a few minutes' walk from Big Four Station. For those trying to strike a balance between calories in and calories out, you'll find several worthy competitors for your wallet just within striking distance. Signature events for the city of Jeff range from the Chili & Brew Bonanza to the Holiday Open House and the Chocolate Stroll, all located in the historic downtown area. See [jeffmainstreet.org](http://jeffmainstreet.org) for more information.

## Directions

For access to the Big Four Bridge in Jeffersonville, Indiana: From Louisville, head north on I-65, then take Exit 0. Turn right (east) on West Court Avenue. Drive 0.2 miles. Turn right (south) on Pearl Street and drive another 0.2 miles.

## BIG FOUR BRIDGE AND WATERFRONT PARK

Big Four Station and the entrance ramps to the bridge will be on your right. Free street parking and public lots are typically available, unless special events are going on, including activities at the KFC Yum! Center.

Waterfront Park is located between River Road and the Ohio River, just north of the spaghetti junction where I-64, I-65, and I-71 intersect in downtown Louisville; see [ourwaterfront.org](http://ourwaterfront.org) for detailed directions and the location of multiple (and free) parking lots.

**THE BIG FOUR BRIDGE WAS NAMED FOR THE CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO, AND ST. LOUIS RAILWAY.**





## Blackacre State Nature Preserve



SCENERY: ★★★★★  
TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★  
CHILDREN: ★★★★★  
DIFFICULTY: ★★  
SOLITUDE: ★★★

**THE SPRINGHOUSE HERE CAPTURED WATER FOR ONE OF THE FIRST LICENSED DISTILLERIES IN KENTUCKY.**

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES:** N38° 11.727' W85° 32.015'

**DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION:** 3.2-mile loop with less mileage readily available

**HIKING TIME:** 1.5 hours

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Historic home, working farm

**ELEVATION:** 721' at trailhead, descending to 648' at low point

**ACCESS:** Open daily sunrise–sunset. The Presley Tyler House is open on a seasonal basis on the second and fourth Sunday of each month, 1–4 p.m. Free admission; donations welcome (some special events incur a small fee).

**MAPS:** Blackacre State Nature Preserve, USGS *Jeffersontown*

**FACILITIES:** Nature center, house and farm tours, picnic tables, restrooms

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** None on trails; first floor of house during tour is accessible.

**COMMENTS:** No dogs or smoking permitted on the grounds

**CONTACTS:** Blackacre State Nature Preserve and Historic Homestead, 502-266-9802; [visitblackacre.org](http://visitblackacre.org)

## Overview

Are your little ones restless? Or perhaps the grandparents are in town and you're looking for a way to entertain them for a few hours? Then consider Blackacre State Nature Preserve and Historic Homestead. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Blackacre offers a fine example of farm life in the 1800s among the landed gentry. Docent tours and several miles of trails provide an interesting and relaxing visit for all. The loop trail described here is an easy walk along the Waterfall Trail, out old Mann's Lick Road to the cattail pond, then back to the springhouse and double-crib barn.

## Route Details

Comprising almost 300 acres of historic buildings, open pasture, and wooded trails, Blackacre Nature Preserve was created in 1979 by Judge Macauley Smith and his wife, Emilie Strong Smith, who sought to preserve the working farm and homestead. Phoebe and Moses Tyler first settled the land in 1789 and built a one-room stone cottage mortared with limestone and horsehair. With 10 children, the Tylers had plenty of mouths to feed and a built-in labor force to work the fields. Moses later built an addition to the cottage to accommodate—no . . . not his growing family, but one of the first licensed distilleries in the state. At the time, a distiller's license was difficult to obtain and allowed the licensee to keep a portion of the customer's corn in exchange for the distillation of the grain.

Years later, the Tylers' son, Presley, and his wife, Jane, built their home here in 1844. Designed in the Federal style, the house is open seasonally for docent-led tours. Historic Mann's Lick Road traverses the property and at one time led to other farms owned by the Tylers. But be forewarned—with all the roughness of a working farm, Blackacre Preserve is not My Old Kentucky Home.

This hike was awarded five stars for the diversity of views and experiences found at the preserve, in particular the historic home, barn, and other outbuildings. Six trails are available for hiking anytime the preserve is open. If you're looking for an open-meadow hike, consider the Sunrise Meadow Trail or the Lower or Upper Sunset Trail. For a more wooded experience, Tyler's Trace Trail and Mann's Lick Road are good choices. But if water attracts you like a divining rod, consider the Waterfall Trail, which follows a creekside, meanders through lightly wooded areas before reaching Jackson's Pond, and returns to the homestead via historic Mann's Lick Road. In order to add a bit more mileage, let's include the spur to the cattail pond as well. To reach the trailhead,



# Blackacre State Nature Preserve





begin at the large kiosk at the far northeastern edge of the primary parking lot. Head north toward the Tyler House, then bear right (east) to get to the Schick Nature Center.

Before you start your hike, it's worth spending a little time at Schick. To the left of the nature center's front door hangs an unusual map of the homestead, fashioned from metal and stamped with Braille lettering. To the right of the front door hangs an old farm gate painted with a picture of the homestead in *American Gothic* style.

Feel free to go inside and explore the nature center. Despite several preserve signs admonishing NO STICKS, RUNNING, OR SHOUTING. QUIET VOICES ONLY, the nature center is all about kids. The exterior of the quaint yet rustic wooden building has a 1970s contemporary look, yet the inside is set up like an old one-room schoolhouse. From the plastic snake dangling below the deer antlers to the extensive collection of children's nature books, the atmosphere will make kids feel immediately at home.

The nature center hosts many programs throughout the year, with topics ranging from owls and tree frogs, to planets and stars, to heirloom tomatoes and canning. Special summer programs include Pioneer Day and camps for the kids. More information, including farm-animal feeding schedules, is available on the center's website. Out the back door of the Schick Nature Center stands a separate building housing the bathrooms, fully outfitted with Clivus Multrum composting toilets long before such facilities were fashionable. The preserve notes that the compost is indeed used on the farm to fertilize the crops. It's nice to know that what we give will keep on giving.

Behind the nature center and next to the bathrooms you'll see the sign for the Waterfall Trail. Several small waterfalls form where various drainages tumble down the hillsides. About 0.3 mile from the trailhead, a small footbridge takes hikers from one side of the creek to the other. Cedar, redbud, and dogwood trees provide plenty of seasonal interest along the way.

Approximately 0.5 mile from the trailhead, the path splits into a Y. The left branch heads southwest toward Mann's Lick Road, while the right branch heads northwest toward Jackson's Pond. Take a right here and walk about 0.4 mile to reach the pond. An old beaver lodge is embedded within the earthen berm containing the pond, close to the outtake pipe. Other evidence of beaver activity includes nibbled tree branches and stumps lining the pond.

The trail loops left (south) before rejoining Mann's Lick Road. Just don't expect a paved thoroughfare with yellow painted lines and rumble strips. This road was built long before Henry Ford was knee-high to a grasshopper, and it's easy to see why wagon wheels broke down so often.

Turn right (north) on Mann's Lick and cross a small bridge, just below Jackson's Pond. Mann's Lick Road ascends a small hill until you reach one of the oldest trees in the preserve, a white oak measuring 17 feet in circumference, just to the right or east of the trail. If you look to your left, west of the road, a spur trail heads to a small pond. Honestly, the pond is not much to look out, but this spur goes through some of the loveliest parts of the preserve. Invasives, including honeysuckle and privet, are a serious problem at Blackacre, but this stretch of woods remains considerably more pristine.

After hiking the spur, return to Mann's Lick, turn right, and follow the old road south to the back side of the circa-1795 springhouse. A small spring in front of the stone building flows under the structure and enters a small pond. Food was kept cool in the springhouse during warm summer days, and the pond provided swimmers a welcome relief from the heat.

The trail continues behind the springhouse, between the smokehouse and the weaving shed. Bear right (west) down the gravel road 20 yards or so until you reach the Appalachian-style barn, also built in 1795. The barn is a rare double-crib style, with an enclosed dogtrot down the middle. Here the rough-hewn walls are hung with old farm equipment, including harnesses, yokes, pitchforks, scythes, cross draw saws, plows, barrel hoops, reaping hooks, hay crooks, corn knives, and the like. A corn sheller and cider press sit opposite the wall, where several old horseshoes hang open-side up to catch all the luck before it falls out. Note the magnet used by veterinarians to remove wire from cows' stomachs. Stored on the other side of the barn are several old horse-drawn vehicles, including buggies, farm wagons, and an old sleigh. If heaven has a fragrance, it must include the smell of fresh hay in an open-air barn.

Just outside the barn, several fields house the resident horses, sheep, goats, and donkeys. The goats and donkeys will love your attention, while the horses happily reach for your open palm, sniffing for treats. The parking lot and your horseless carriage will be sitting just north of the pasture.



## Nearby Attractions

Blackacre also offers community garden plots, starting at \$15 for the season. For more information, including a complete calendar of events, see the website.

If you enjoy old homes, public gardens, and early-American history, historic **Locust Grove** is another great place to spend the day. The restored Georgian house was home to Revolutionary War hero General George Rogers Clark during his later years. Locust Grove sits on 55 acres of woods and meadows, sprinkled with period-style gardens featuring rare and historic plants. Admission fees apply. For more information, call 502-897-9845 or go to [locustgrove.org](http://locustgrove.org).

## Directions

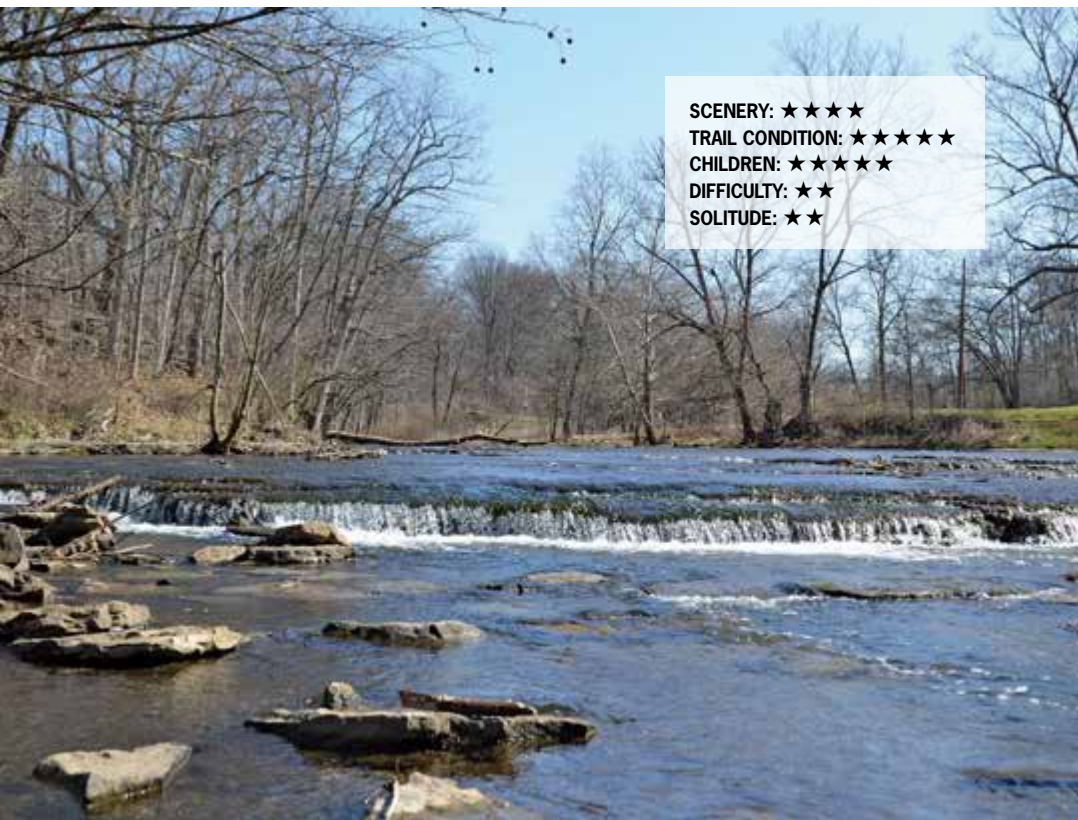
From I-265 (KY 841/Gene Snyder Freeway), head west off Exit 23 (Taylorsville Road) and drive 0.8 mile. Turn right (north) on Tucker Station Road, drive 0.3 mile, and turn left (west) at the sign for Blackacre State Nature Preserve. Pass through the old green metal farm gate, and follow the gravel road around to the Tyler House. Park in the large lot to your left. Parking for the disabled is available near the house.

**TOURS OF THE PRESLEY TYLER HOUSE ARE FREE WITH YOUR CULTURAL PASS, AVAILABLE FROM ANY OF THE LOUISVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARIES.**





# Cherokee Park Scenic Loop



SCENERY: ★★★★★  
TRAIL CONDITION: ★★★★★  
CHILDREN: ★★★★★  
DIFFICULTY: ★★  
SOLITUDE: ★★

**THE MIDDLE FORK OF BEARGRASS CREEK RUNS THROUGH MUCH OF CHEROKEE PARK.**

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES:** N38° 14.363' W85° 41.786'

**DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION:** 2.3-mile paved loop

**HIKING TIME:** 1.5 hours

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Hogan's Fountain, Christensen Memorial Fountain, Baringer Hill

**ELEVATION:** 540' at trailhead, descending to 437' at low point

**ACCESS:** Daily, sunrise-sunset; free admission

**MAPS:** Louisville Metro Parks, [tinyurl.com/CherokeeParkMap](http://tinyurl.com/CherokeeParkMap), USGS Louisville

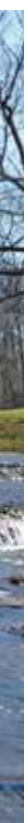
**FACILITIES:** Picnic tables and shelters, restrooms, playground

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** The entire trail is paved but includes several moderate hills.

**COMMENTS:** Pets must be leashed.

**CONTACTS:** Louisville Metro Parks, 502-456-8100; [tinyurl.com/CherPark](http://tinyurl.com/CherPark) or [olmstedparks.org](http://olmstedparks.org)

## Overview



Cherokee Park—part of one of only four city-park systems in the United States created by Frederick Law Olmsted—has long served as a gift to all urbanites. Designed by Olmsted and his firm in 1891, it's among Louisville's 18 parks and six interconnecting parkways attributed to the father of American landscape architecture. Cherokee Park is undergoing a lengthy revitalization process to reclaim its former glory as a sanctuary for outdoor recreation. The paved Cherokee Park Scenic Loop takes hikers through much of the heart of this 389-acre park.

## Route Details

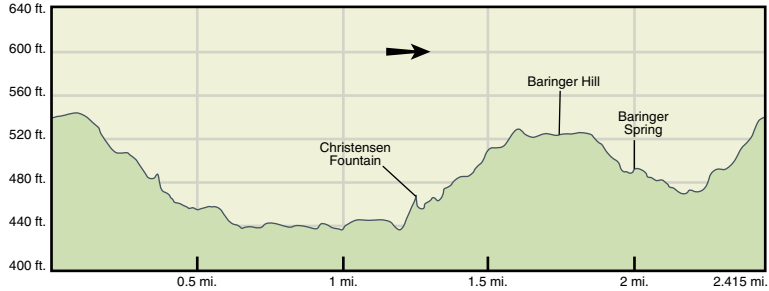
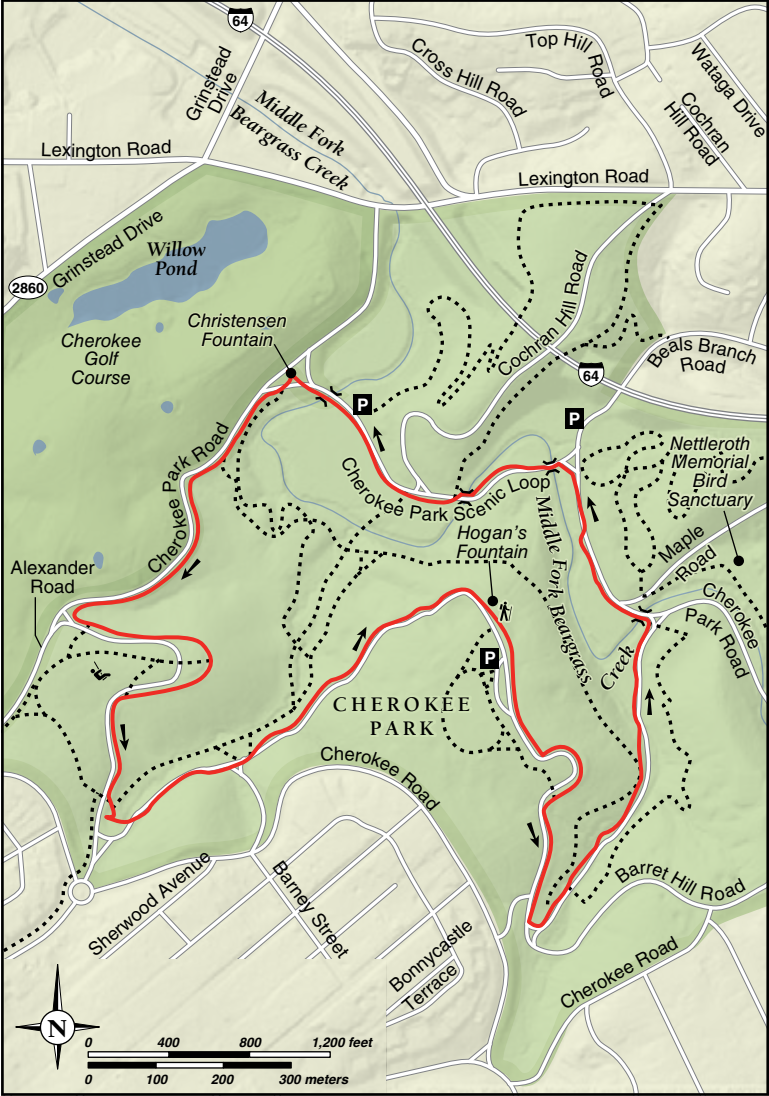
Frederick Law Olmsted, who also designed Central Park in New York City; the Biltmore Estate outside of Asheville, North Carolina; and the grounds of the US Capitol, believed that city parks were an essential element of healthy urban communities. His design philosophy encompassed three elements: recreative use (such as walking or relaxing), gregarious use (picnicking and other social activities), and exertive use (including ball fields and courts).

Originally Cherokee Park was surrounded by beautiful homes to the north and south, and Seneca Park (another Olmsted park) to the west. Today the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary lies to the east, I-64 crosses the northern tip of Cherokee Park, and a golf course lies to the west. Consequently, Cherokee Park has suffered from the growing pains of overuse due to increased urban density. In addition, a 1974 tornado destroyed many of the large, mature trees that dominated the landscape. The loss of canopy has resulted in less-desirable and more-invasive plant species taking root in the park. Nevertheless, the “bones” of Cherokee Park remain sound, and Louisvillians continue to be drawn to its natural beauty. The last several years have seen a tremendous push to revitalize all the Olmsted parks. Several nonprofits and foundations are working together with the city to bring the Louisville park system back to its glory days.

The main artery for travel in Cherokee Park is the 2.4-mile Scenic Loop, a one-way paved road divided evenly between vehicular and pedestrian use. On almost any day of the week, and on most evenings as well, the pedestrian lane is filled with walkers, joggers, cyclists, and parents pushing strollers. The Scenic Loop combines historic features within a pastoral backdrop of natural forests and tumbling creeks. Multiple stone bridges and two large fountains provide the hardscape that completes the look. Notably, Cherokee Park contains an



# Cherokee Park Scenic Loop



incredible maze of trails, including paved, multiuse, mixed-use, and just-plain-rogue paths that can confuse the first-time or casual hiker. The trail described here, in contrast, prepares you for repeat visits by sharpening your sense of bearing and navigational skills.

The Scenic Loop can be accessed at a multitude of locations, but let's start at Hogan's Fountain, a gift from Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Hogan to the city in 1904. The fountain features the Greek nature god Pan and served as a watering spot for horses and dogs. We'll walk the loop counterclockwise to minimize any distraction from the slow-moving traffic. So, walk in the left lane, with the one-way lane for motorized vehicles on your right.

From Hogan's Fountain you'll have a nice long downhill until you pass both Dingle and Barrett Hill Roads on your right. At the intersection bear left (north) along the clearly marked Scenic Loop.

Your next turn will be another left (north) where Beargrass Road comes in on your right. Although you'll see a sign for the Nettletooth Bird Sanctuary, it has been fenced off to protect reforestation efforts. Woodcocks, colloquially known as timberdoodles, have been known to frequent this area. With long, slender bills and 360-degree vision, these birds tend to feed in the early evening by probing the soil for invertebrates. Woodcocks are also known for their elaborate mating rituals. Given that the females are much larger than the males, we can only guess who wins.

Stay on the Scenic Loop as it crosses Beargrass Creek several times, indicating you are nearing the halfway mark of your walk. At Ledge Road, bear left (southwest) at the Christensen Fountain, built in 1901 into the side of the hill. Even though the fountain was refurbished in 2002, the water is but a trickle and the stone Viking warship and its watering vessel (for riding and carriage horses) no longer serve their original purpose.

From here the Scenic Loop heads up to Baringer Hill, one of several hill-sides the Louisville Metro Parks opens for sledding when snows are sufficient and proper equipment (that is, no old-car hoods or garbage-can lids) is used. Park staff will even light and maintain bonfires, supply first aid kits, and call emergency services if necessary. What more could you ask for your tax dollar? Grab a thermos of hot chocolate, and you're ready for some wintertime fun.

Your paved path then descends to Baringer Spring—although the water has nearly dried up, the surrounding stonework is worth the brief detour. From here you have only 0.4 mile of walking back to Hogan's Fountain.



## Nearby Attractions

Now that you've hiked the Scenic Loop and have a better idea of the layout of Cherokee Park, be a little more adventurous and take one of the other shorter paved trails that run through the park or one of the many dirt paths that roam the woods. Unfortunately, it is difficult to turn any of these into meaningful loop trails without a good map, such as the Scenic Loop. But there is a very nice out-and-back paved trail that runs from Baringer Spring north to the Cochran Hill area. And the Big Rock area where Seneca Park Road enters the far east side of the park offers beautiful views of Beargrass Creek and several wooded walking paths. This is also a great section of the park for wildflower hunting in the springtime.

## Directions

From Exit 8 off I-64, head southwest on Grinstead Drive. In 0.3 mile, bear left onto Cherokee Parkway and drive 0.5 mile. Turn left on Willow Avenue and then take an almost immediate left again on Cherokee Road for 0.4 mile; at the Daniel Boone monument traffic circle, take the third exit for Cherokee Park Road, which becomes the Scenic Loop. In 0.5 mile Hogan's Fountain will be on your left and several parking lots will be on your right.

**THE CHRISTENSEN FOUNTAIN, BUILT IN 1901, WAS FASHIONED AS A STONE VIKING WARSHIP, AND ITS WATERING VESSEL SERVED RIDING AND CARRIAGE HORSES.**





# Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail

**SCENERY:** ★★★

**TRAIL CONDITION:** ★★★★★

**CHILDREN:** ★★★★★

**DIFFICULTY:** ★★★

**SOLITUDE:** ★★

**THE DOWNTOWN LOUISVILLE SKYLINE, IMPRESSIVE DURING THE DAY, ONLY GETS BETTER AT NIGHT.**

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES:** N38° 17.268' W85° 46.535'

**DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION:** 4-mile out-and-back

**HIKING TIME:** 1.5 hours

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Ohio River, Louisville skyline, historic-home site

**ELEVATION:** 451' at trailhead, with no significant elevation change

**ACCESS:** Trails are open (no charge) daily, 7 a.m.–11 p.m. Falls of the Ohio Interpretive Center open Monday–Sunday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. (closed major holidays); see Directions for fees to enter the interpretive center.

**MAPS:** Available at the first website below and at the interpretive center

**FACILITIES:** Nature center, restrooms, playground

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** Yes

**COMMENTS:** The paved trail is for pedestrians and bikers only. Dogs are permitted on leash. Swimming and wading are prohibited.

**CONTACTS:** Falls of the Ohio State Park, 812-280-9970; [falls-of-the-ohio.org](http://falls-of-the-ohio.org)

# Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail



## Overview

The paved Levee Trail is perfect for an after-work power walk, a sprint with the jogging stroller, or a leisurely saunter on a Sunday afternoon. The 2-mile (one-way) trail connects East Riverside Drive with Falls of the Ohio State Park and Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Park. Located just across the river from downtown Louisville, in southern Indiana, most of the levee trail runs atop the earthen-berm floodwall that protects the city of Clarksville from the mighty Ohio River.

## Route Details

First things first: What's in a name? Both Louisville and southern Indiana are working like crazy to meet the growing demand for paved, multiuse trails. So now we have the Ohio Greenway Trail, the Ohio River Levee Trail, the Clarksville Heritage Trail, the Clarksville Discovery Trail, the Louisville Loop, and more! All this is good. But it's also confusing. To keep things simple, we're calling this hike the Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail because, well, it centers around the Falls of the Ohio State Park. But technically, we're talking about the Ohio River Greenway Trail that runs 7.5 miles (one-way) from Jeffersonville to New Albany, Indiana.

The Falls of the Ohio Levee Trail can be accessed from either end and at a variety of points along the way. Following the driving directions provided below, the route assumes you've left your car at the Ashland Park lot along East Riverside Drive. Regardless, your chances of getting lost in the Mall St. Matthews are much greater than getting lost here. There are lots of great trail signs, including mileage markers, placed right where you need them.

Beginning from the Ashland Park lot and walking north toward Falls of the Ohio State Park, the paved trail threads a line between the northern bank of the Ohio River and a popular playground area. The downtown Louisville skyline is clearly in view across the river. Ten minutes of walking will bring you to the underpass of the Contrail Railroad Bridge and a small overlook of the lowhead dam (also known as a fixed-weir dam) that forms the large pool of water just above the Falls of the Ohio. They're difficult to see from the overlook, but the shipping locks are behind the far island, on the Kentucky side of the river.

At this point, two islands divide the Ohio River into three distinct chutes of water. Nearest you, on the Indiana side of the river, is the Indian Chute (the "hero" route for early canoeists); on the far side, the Kentucky Chute holds the locks; and between the two is the Middle Chute. Goose Island, between the Indian and Middle Chutes, is protected as part of Falls of the Ohio State Park. The island contains several fossil beds and plays host to various habitats dominated by willow and cottonwood trees, and prairie grass. Access to the island is by private boat only.

Another 10 minutes (a total of 0.4 mile from the Ashland Park lot) of walking brings you to the Falls of the Ohio Interpretive Center and better views of the river below the dam. The pool of water formed by the dam obscures the falls, but the water spewing from the release valves provides for plenty of action as the river races along the bumpy riverbed. Occasionally you might see whitewater

kayakers working on their eddy turns and peel outs in the swift current, or oar rigs practicing for a trip down the Colorado River. But be forewarned—this place is not safe for swimming, for man nor beast. Keep Fido on a short leash, and restrain yourself from lobbing that limb into the strong current.

Continue walking downstream along the paved Levee Trail, which now moves northwest and slightly away from the river. The sounds of the falls begin to fade as the wooded area insulates you from the riverbank. The trail takes on a comfortable pace as the trees continue to block the river views. Your eye may become slightly more voyeuristic as tidy backyards on the opposite side of the trail come into view.

Traffic on the paved trail follows the normal rules of the road: stay right, except when you want to pass, and watch for oncoming traffic, which could include cyclists, inline skaters, and runners pushing jogging strollers. Local neighborhood kids love to race their Big Wheels along the levee, and many a child has learned to ride a two-wheeler on the smooth paved surface.

As the paved trail begins to parallel Harrison Avenue (about 1.8 miles from the trailhead), views of the river appear once more. The hike officially ends at the old road that leads to the George Rogers Clark home site, near the entrance to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Park, and where Bailey Avenue dead-ends into Harrison. Known as Clarks Point, this land was given to George Rogers Clark (an older brother of William Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame) as part of a Revolutionary War land grant. In 1803 Clark built a small cabin here, which was later torn down; a replica was built in 2001. Call 812-280-9970 for a schedule of free cabin tours.

From the porch of the cabin, take in the skyline of downtown Louisville and try to imagine what Clark saw from this vantage point. And as you walk the 2 miles back to your vehicle, imagine running the falls in a dugout canoe while trying to keep your moccasins dry.

## Nearby Attractions

From Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Park, you can walk another 1.25 miles (one way) to the **Loop Islands Wetlands**. But quite honestly, you may have better uses for your time and the soles of your shoes.

If hiking with younger kids, you might want to check out the short 0.7-mile **Woodland Loop Trail** that leaves from the Falls of the Ohio State Park's interpretive center. If you have time, head down the stairs behind the interpretive

center to the fossil beds that adorn this side of the river. More than 650 fossil species have been found here, dating from the Devonian age 400 million years ago. It's hard to wrap your head around this, but these fossil beds at one time were located about 20 degrees south of the equator, lying lazily beneath a warm tropical sea, until continental drift brought them our way.

Falls of the Oho State Park also offers several special programs each month, such as fossil bed discovery hikes, a family nature club, and winter birds of Kentucky and Indiana. See their website for a complete list of offerings and an event calendar for dates and times.

## Directions

From downtown Louisville, drive north on I-65 across the Ohio River and take Exit 0 toward Jeffersonville and Falls of the Ohio State Park. At the bottom of the exit ramp, turn left (west) on West Court Avenue. West Court will take you back under I-65; immediately turn left (south) on Missouri Avenue. Drive 0.2 mile and then turn right (west) onto West Market Street, which continues right onto East Riverside Street. Drive 0.3 mile; the Ashland Park lot will be on your left, just above the riverbank. Additional free parking is plentiful in the lots across from Widow's Walk Ice Creamery, at 415 East Riverside Drive.

Parking is also free and plentiful at the opposite (far western) end of the trail at Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Park, near the end of Harrison Avenue. To reach this lot from downtown Louisville, take I-65 North across the Ohio River into Indiana. Take Exit 1 north toward Jeffersonville/Clarksville. Turn left (west) on Stansifer Avenue and drive 0.4 mile. Turn right (north) on South Clark Road and drive 0.2 mile. Finally, turn left (west) on Harrison Avenue and drive 0.8 mile to the parking lot for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Park.

Parking at the Falls of the Ohio Interpretive Center costs \$2 if you don't pay the entrance fee for the center (\$9 for age 19 and older, with discounts for children.) This parking lot is about one-third of the distance from the Ashland Park trailhead to the far western trailhead at Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Park (see [fallsoftheohio.org](http://fallsoftheohio.org) for detailed directions).





## Goose Creek Loop at Tom Sawyer State Park



SCENERY: ★ ★ ★  
TRAIL CONDITION: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
CHILDREN: ★ ★ ★  
DIFFICULTY: ★ ★  
SOLITUDE: ★ ★

**GOOSE CREEK MAY HAVE BEEN NAMED AFTER WILLIAM GOOSE, AN 18TH-CENTURY WAGON-MAKER WHO LIVED IN THE AREA.**

**GPS TRAILHEAD COORDINATES:** N38° 17.268' W85° 46.535'

**DISTANCE & CONFIGURATION:** 2.2-mile loop

**HIKING TIME:** 1 hour

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Diverse scenery, many special events

**ELEVATION:** 690' at trailhead, with no significant change in elevation

**ACCESS:** Daily, sunrise–sunset; free admission

**MAPS:** Online at [tinyurl.com/GooseCreekLoop](https://tinyurl.com/GooseCreekLoop) and displayed at the trailhead kiosk

**FACILITIES:** Restrooms, picnic tables, soccer fields, archery range, outdoor swimming pool, tennis and basketball courts, BMX track, and softball fields

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** None on trail

**COMMENTS:** Pets must be leashed.

**CONTACTS:** E. P. “Tom” Sawyer State Park, 502-429-7270; [tinyurl.com/sawyerpark](https://tinyurl.com/sawyerpark)

## Overview

The Goose Creek Loop lies within the well-loved E. P. “Tom” Sawyer State Park, in northeastern Jefferson County. The trail winds around much of the 554-acre park, across open fields, and through lightly wooded areas along Goose Creek. Other trails traverse the park and are frequently utilized for cross-country practice and meets. The suburban park is extremely popular after work and on weekends and offers an excellent array of educational programs focusing on the great outdoors.

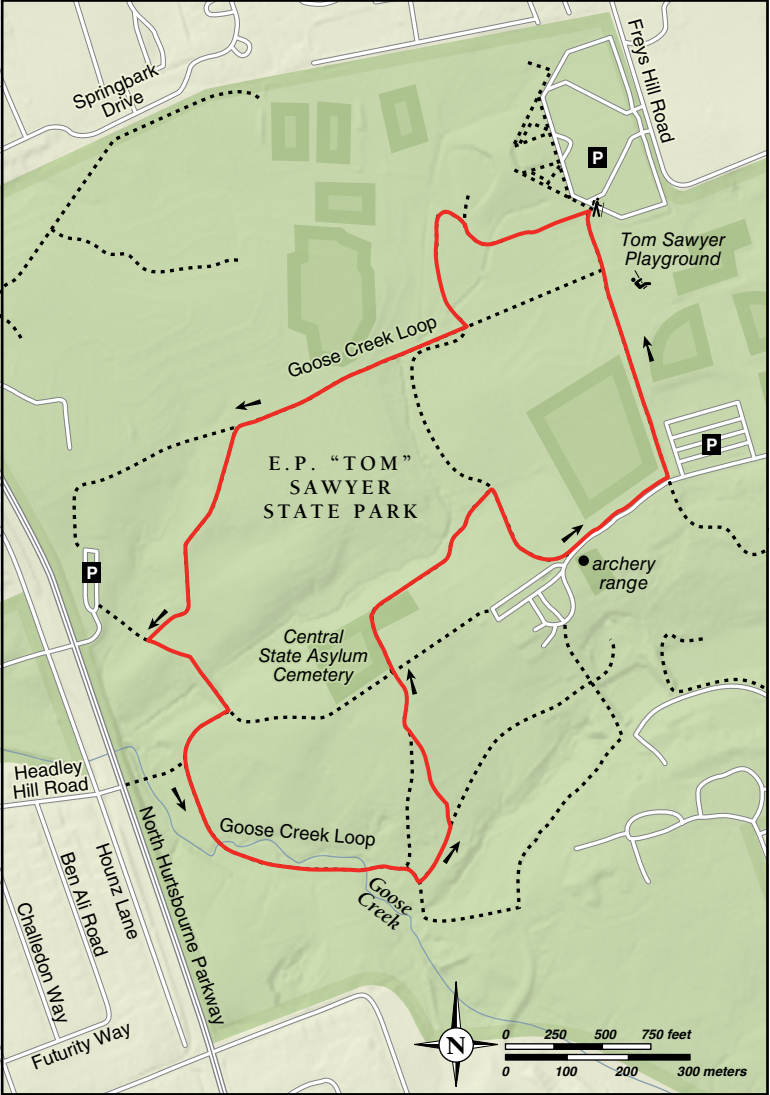
The park was named after Erbon Powers Sawyer (1915–69), a well-respected Jefferson County judge and the father of newscaster Diane Sawyer. The state bought the land from the Kentucky Department of Mental Health in 1969. Much of the property had been used as a farming operation for the mental hospital on the premises. Consequently, several outbuildings still stand on the property and many old farm roads crisscross the park.

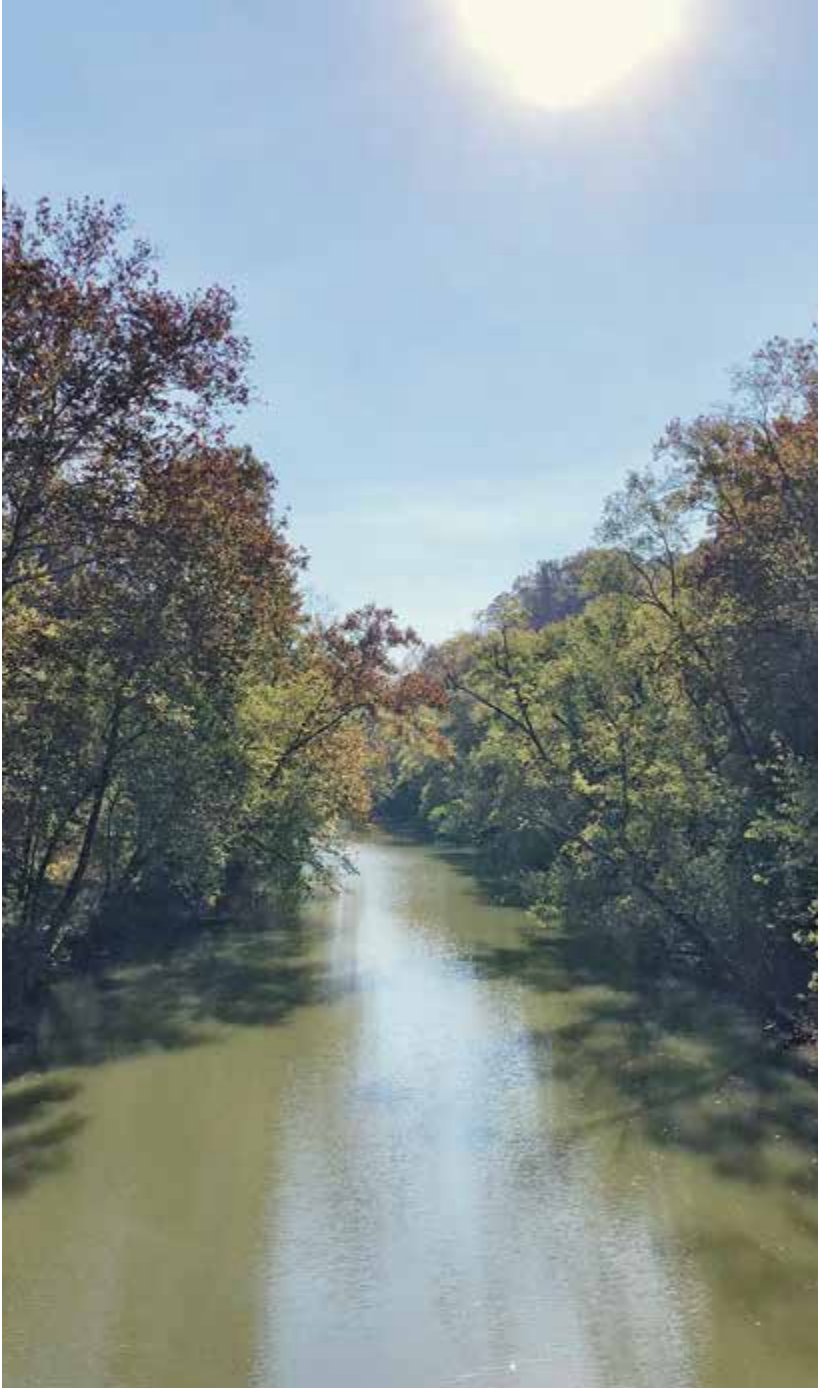
## Route Details

The Goose Creek Loop takes advantage of the small amount of wooded area within the park. The trailhead is just south of the large brown Activities Building, near the southwestern edge of the parking lot. This route combines portions of the 1.0-mile finely graveled Fitness Trail with the 1.25-mile Goose Creek Trail to create a 2.2-mile loop. The map displayed at the trailhead kiosk gives you a general feel for the layout of the park. You’ll quickly notice that the multitude of cross-country trails, the Fitness Trail, and the profusion of gravel and paved farm roads create a spaghetti junction rivaling that found in downtown Louisville.

From the trailhead, walk almost due southwest from the kiosk to follow the 1.0-mile Fitness Trail counterclockwise. This portion of the trail follows the edge of several large open fields, with a pleasant array of trees and picnic tables providing some visual interest. The trail eventually veers left (south), and you’ll come to an intersection with a gravel road, which leads to the model-airplane field. Leave the Fitness Trail by turning right (southwest) on the gravel road, and walk a short distance until you see a small dirt path on your left with a large sign indicating Goose Creek Trail. The trail then turns left (southwest) and approaches the far western edge of the park boundary. You may hear some road noise from Hurstbourne Parkway. A few smaller trails will come in on your right, leading to a small parking lot just off Hurstbourne and another trail called Goose Creek Walk. You can ignore all of these distractions.

# Goose Creek Loop at Tom Sawyer State Park





**A 25¢ TOLL IS NO LONGER REQUIRED TO CROSS THE BRIDGE AT FOURTEENMILE CREEK.**



# Appendix A:

## Outdoor Retailers

### **ACADEMY SPORTS + OUTDOORS**

academy.com

### **JEFFERSON MALL**

4901 Outer Loop #144  
Louisville, KY 40219  
502-966-1650

### **BASS PRO SHOPS**

basspro.com

### **RIVER FALLS MALL**

951 E. Lewis and Clark Pkwy.  
Clarksville, IN 47129  
812-218-5500

### **CABELA'S**

cabelas.com  
5100 Norton Healthcare Blvd.  
Louisville, KY 40241  
502-365-9020

### **DICK'S SPORTING GOODS**

dickssportinggoods.com

### **OXMOOR CENTER**

7900 Shelbyville Road  
Louisville, KY 40222  
502-420-6400

### **RIVER FALLS MALL**

951 E. Lewis and Clark Pkwy.  
Clarksville, IN 47129  
812-288-2194

### **SPRINGHURST TOWN CENTER**

3555 Springhurst Blvd.  
Louisville, KY 40241  
502-429-0776

### **STONEBROOK SHOPPING CENTER**

3500 S. Hurstbourne Pkwy.  
Louisville, KY 40299  
502-499-9029

### **ORVIS**

orvis.com  
4288 Summit Plaza Dr.  
Louisville, KY 40241  
502-425-0198

### **QUEST OUTDOORS**

questoutdoors.com

### **ST. MATTHEWS**

4600 Shelbyville Road  
Louisville, KY 40207  
502-290-4589



## Appendix B: Hiking Clubs

### **KENTUCKY AND INDIANA HIKERS AND WALKERS**

[tinyurl.com/kishaw](http://tinyurl.com/kishaw)

### **LOUISVILLE HIKING MEETUP**

[meetup.com/louisvillehiking](http://meetup.com/louisvillehiking)

### **LOUISVILLE HIKING CLUB**

[meetup.com/louisvillehikingclub](http://meetup.com/louisvillehikingclub)

[facebook.com/louisvillehiking](http://facebook.com/louisvillehiking)

### **ORIENTEERING LOUISVILLE**

[orienteeringlouisville.org](http://orienteeringlouisville.org)

### **LOUISVILLE RUNNING AND WALKING CLUBS**

[louisvillerunningcompany.com  
/groups](http://louisvillerunningcompany.com/groups)

### **SIERRA CLUB, GREATER LOUISVILLE GROUP**

[louisville.sierraclub.org](http://louisville.sierraclub.org)

P.O. Box 20606

Louisville, KY 40250

502-649-0139



## Appendix C: Public and Private Agencies

### **INDIANA DIVISION OF NATURE PRESERVES**

[in.gov/dnr/nature-preserves](http://in.gov/dnr/nature-preserves)

800-457-8283

### **INDIANA DIVISION OF STATE PARKS AND RESERVOIRS**

[in.gov/dnr/state-parks](http://in.gov/dnr/state-parks)

800-457-8283

### **JEFFERSON MEMORIAL FOREST (WILDERNESS LOUISVILLE)**

[louisvilleky.gov/government](http://louisvilleky.gov/government)

[/jefferson-memorial-forest](http://jefferson-memorial-forest)

502-368-5404

### **KENTUCKY STATE NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION**

[eec.ky.gov/Nature-Preserves](http://eec.ky.gov/Nature-Preserves)

502-573-2886

### **KENTUCKY STATE PARKS**

[parks.ky.gov](http://parks.ky.gov)

502-564-2172

### **LOUISVILLE PARKS**

[louisvilleky.gov/government/parks](http://louisvilleky.gov/government/parks)

502-574-7275

### **THE NATURE CONSERVANCY**

[nature.org](http://nature.org)

859-259-9655

### **OLMSTED PARKS CONSERVANCY**

[olmstedparks.org](http://olmstedparks.org)

502-456-8125

### **THE PARKLANDS OF FLOYDS FORK**

[theparklands.org](http://theparklands.org)

502-584-0350





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## About the Author

**After having spent more than 20 years** as a university researcher and professor, **Valerie Askren** traded the ivory towers of academia for the hardwood forests and sandstone arches of Kentucky. The proverbial outdoorswoman, she has swum in Africa's Lake Malawi, climbed China's Mount Tai, sailed the coast of southern France, biked Nova Scotia, backpacked across Canada, and survived the biting cold of farm life in Ukraine. She spent her honeymoon kayaking the Grand Canyon with her husband, Ben.



Photo: Emma Askren

Valerie's background in natural-resource economics and her love of the wilderness translated into a second career writing guides to the outdoors, including *Hike the Bluegrass and Beyond*, *Fly Fishing Kentucky*, *Backpacking Kentucky*, and *Backcountry Cuisine*.

Valerie lives in Lexington, Kentucky, where a peaceful wooded path, beautiful public garden, or historical walking trail is always close at hand.

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