

## Garden of the God in Shawnee National Forest

The unique and diverse natural wonders of the Shawnee National Forest make it a popular destination vacation point for visitors and residents of Illinois. The forest extends over 270,000 acres of mountaintops and rugged rock formations between the borders of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The terrain of the Shawnee National Forest, which has five different ecological regions, is distinctly different than the typical flat Midwestern regions.

The maple, dogwood, oak and pine trees that are interspersed among the unique sandstone configurations characterize the Shawnee National Forest. As such, it is a popular rock-climbing destination. The forest also features a variety of lakes, 135 miles of hiking trails, and a number of campgrounds. Shawnee National Forest in Illinois is famous for the River-to-River Trail, which runs along the area between the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. This scenic path encompasses about 160 miles of moderate to difficult terrain. It usually takes about 14 days to complete. At the western end of the trail, the River-to-River connects with the American Discovery Trail.

Williams Hill, which is located in the western part of the Shawnee National Forest in Illinois, is a popular biking destination. The trail is rated between moderate and steep. It includes both packed-down fire trails as well as single-track dirt paths.

The origin of the Shawnee National Forest is closely linked to the economic calamity of the Great Depression. The southern Illinois economy was on the skids well before the stock market crash of 1929. Decades of timber exploitation, subsistence farming, and man-caused wildfires resulted in massive erosion, declining soil fertility and a downward spiral in crop production. Non-agricultural jobs were centered in the timber and mining industries, both of which experienced significant market downturns throughout the 1920s. Upstate newspapers, principally the Chicago Tribune, began campaigning for the establishment of a national forest in Illinois. By 1931, the Illinois Department of Conservation and the Illinois Natural History Survey had pushed consent language (required by Article 1, Section 8, Clause 17 of the U.S. Constitution) through the State Legislature. This provided broad authority to the United States to establish, consolidate, and extend national forests within the state without any limitation of acreage or approval by local or State agencies.

The prehistoric Native American occupation of southern Illinois began about 10,000 years ago. Many of the village sites have been preserved and interpreted at several forest locations. Learn about people of the Mississippian culture (ca. 900-1450 A.D.) by visiting Millstone Bluff National Register site and walking a one-mile trail leading past a stone fort, cemetery, petroglyphs (rock carvings) and the village area.

The historic period in Illinois began with the Joliet-Marquette exploration of the area in 1673. One tragic episode during the period was the forced march of the Cherokee Nation people to western reservations in Oklahoma during the winter of 1838-1839. The "Nunna-da-ul-tsun-yi" or "the place where they cried" became known as the Trail of Tears because many Cherokee people perished from cold, hunger, and exhaustion during the journey. It is now designated as a National Historic Trail and extends across the Shawnee National Forest from the Ohio River to the Mississippi River. American westward expansion during the 18th and 19th century brought pioneer farmers seeking homesteads and good, cheap land. Many farmed lands that were not suitable for the cultivation of row crops and erosion soon destroyed the natural fertility of the land. In 1933 the federal government began acquiring the old, worn-out land that would be designated as the Shawnee National Forest.

If you are visiting the Garden of the Gods in the Shawnee National Forest, you might want to stay at the Pharaoh Campgrounds. These unique sites are nestled in the Shawnee Hills and provide a great look at the unique topography of the Garden of the Gods Wilderness. The Pharaoh Campgrounds Shawnee National Forest also provides easy access to the Garden of Gods Observation Trail, as well as a variety of other attractions that include Camel Rock and Devil's Smokestack.

The Pine Ridge Campgrounds have four sections. They are convenient to Shawnee Hills on the Ohio Scenic Byway. There is also swimming beach, boating on the lake, good fishing, several hiking trails, interesting geology to explore, and hot showers. This campground is highly recommended for family vacations.

### Location:

Shawnee National Forest

50 Hwy. 145 South

Harrisburg, IL 62946

Phone: 618-253-7114 or 1-800-MY-WOODS (699-6637)

TTY: 618-253-1070

FAX: (618) 253-1060

For details information :Garden of the God in Shawnee National Forest