- Continue on and walk under the **balanced rock**. Weighing tons, this rock seems to have slid downhill getting stuck in its present spot. Since most of the rock movement occurred during the glacial melting, it has most likely been hanging here for thousands of years. Future earth movements may dislodge it or weather erosion will eventually reduce it to rubble.

- Have you noticed the many places on the trail that have chiseled steps or flagstone borders? It would seem that someone has put forth great effort to provide access to these areas. Modern wages would not permit such time-consuming work, but during the mid-1930s, three Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) companies were located in the park. The hundreds of young men who worked in them built the lodge, shelters, erosion walls, steps, and miles of nature trails.

- Looking out from the **benches**, notice this prairie-woods mixture. It is an area in transition. This was once a farm lane through a field that has been allowed to grow back into a woodland. Indian grass, broom sedge, and wild rye are slowly being overtaken and shaded out by sassafras, persimmon, winged elm, and sumac trees. These sun loving trees will eventually die off in the shade of slower growing, but more persistent, oak and hickory trees. This transitional woodland provides abundant food and shelter for deer, rabbit, quail, and many other wildlife species.

- As you head downhill alongside and under the huge **sandstone shelf**, remember that people before us used these woods and bluffs as their homes. Off and on for several thousand years from 10,000 B.C. to 1100 A.D., Native Americans used these shelter cave as protection from the weather. As you look out through the forest, you can imagine that food and water were not always readily accessible. These people were nomadic and moved with the seasons. Nuts, berries, and small animals comprised most of their diet. Their tools were fashioned from hard chert (flint) carried form miles away. The waste flakes from tool making are the shiny gray or rose-colored fragments you can see lying along the drip-line of the bluff. These tiny pieces of "trash" from the past indicate the certainty of pre-historic settlements. Remember, archaeological and historical sites on state land are protected. Please do not dig for artifacts or take pieces with you. If you find something on the surface of the ground that seems to be a tool, please turn it in at the Visitors Center so that other visitors may share in your good fortune.

Please carry out what you carry in.

Cigarette Butts are litter!
Plastic bottles and cans are litter!!

Thank you for visiting Giant City State Park.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and those funded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer IDNR, 524 S. Second, Springfield, IL 62701-1787; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the IDNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

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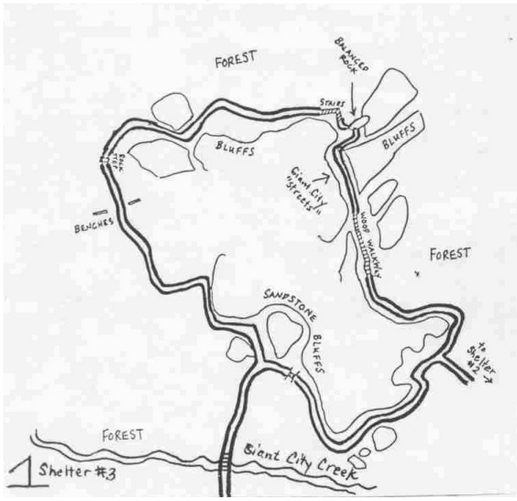
The Giant City Nature Trail

Photo compliments of Janet Sundberg

Length: 1mile
Difficulty: Moderate
Walking Time: 1 hour

Giant City State Park
235 Giant City Road
Makanda, IL 62958
618-457-4836
http://www.dnr.state.il.us

Giant City Nature Trail



Be careful-steep cliffs are dangerous and sandstone can be slippery.
Please stay on designated trails.
Poison ivy exists on this trail.
Copperhead snakes (venomous) hibernate in the sandstone bluffs.

Consider the impact that we have on our public lands. Hundreds of thousands of people hike this trail each year. The resources will only remain if we make efforts not to damage or remove them. Please do not pick wildflowers or ferns, and especially <u>do not carve or write on the sandstone</u>. Report any suspicious activity to the Giant City Visitors Center.

All dogs must be kept on a leash.

Interpretive Features

Look under the bridge at the beginning of the trail. Makanda sandstone fragments are scattered on the floor of the stream, Giant City Creek. However unless it has rained recently, you may be disappointed by the lack of flowing water in the park. Few springs are found in the insoluble sandstone, but Park streams serve to carry flood waters after a rain. A few deeper pools along the stream endure dry spells and provide a cool drink for wildlife.

As you walk through the rich Oak-Hickory woodland, try to imagine the daunting task that the pioneers had to make the massive timber disappear. Some of the larger trees that once stood here had girths of up to eight feet and stood to heights of 150 feet. Clearing the land to till the soil was hard work, especially because only a few of the smaller trees were needed to build the log cabins and split rail fences. Most of the smaller trees were piled up and burned because of this. The trees around you are less than 150 years old, and mere saplings when compared to the older virgin trees of an uncut forest.

Pileated woodpecker
Drycopus pileatus

- The bluffs of the Shawnee Hills often jut above ground like giant stone walls with flat surfaces. This sandstone was formed more than 250 million years ago as sandbars and dunes in a great river delta that drained the Pennsylvanian swamps of Illinois. This delta emptied freshwater into a shallow ocean just a few miles to the south. These sand sediments were compacted and cemented together over millions of years to form sandstone. Earthquakes have uplifted, cracked , and crumpled the earth in this area to form hills, bluffs, and the giant cracks or fissures in the rock. Over millions of years the erosion by wind and water have etched the bluffs by removing softer areas of stone. Look around for areas with pocket-like depressions called honeycombs. Also notice the thick ridges of dark brown material. These iron oxide deposits were created by dissolved iron compounds in groundwater precipitating out into solid form within the sandstone. Adding to the slow change of the bluff walls are the lichens and mosses that slowly cover rock surfaces and then die to become soil for ferns, herbaceous plants, and trees. Only the sheerest walls have not been covered over by the soil and vegetation, and they maintain the cloak of green mosses or gray-green lichens.

- At the end of the **<u>long wooden walkway</u>** you will catch your first glimpse of the park's namesake. You have reached the "giant city streets." Notice how the height of the bluff walls and trees on top force the trees in the valley to grow above them to reach sunlight and branch out. Also, notice the temperature changes in the deeper narrow "streets." This huge hill of sandstone rests on Drury shale, which breaks easily and is slippery. Past earth movements and the melt water of glaciers some 12,000 years ago have aided the sliding of sandstone on the slippery shale to leave narrow canyons between the bluffs. Some geologists also suggest that slightly acidic rainwater is eroding the sandstone walls and is the cause of these passageways. A Visitor's Center display explores these theories in more depth.

- Pioneers had not seen skyscrapers, so these sheer bluffs seemed like the "streets of a giant city" to them. Imagine a walk through here when black bears and mountain lions hunted these hillsides (black bears disappeared from Illinois in 1822 and mountain lions disappeared later in the century). Many weary travelers must have enjoyed the protection of these walls from the wind and weather.

- As you **<u>stand in the streets</u>,** observe the wall in front of you. Graffiti carvers of the past went to much greater trouble to leave their names behind than our paint can vandals of the present day. Many of the carved names reveal the pioneer family history of the area. Find the names of Albert S. Thompson, 22 February 1862, and T.W. Thompson, his brother. These young men were home from the respective units during the Civil War and stopped to visit a boyhood haunt and carve their names. The Union Army had just won two decisive victories in Tennessee that placed Kentucky under a military governor, and T.W. (Theodore) Thompson was serving as a captain under Colonel John A. Logan's command whose infantry fought in those battles. Theodore and Albert Thompson were also part of a group of boys who erected a huge American flag in a tulip tree south of Giant City at the beginning of the war. The flag was reputed to be visible as far away as DuQuoin and Jonesboro. After the war, T.W. settled in Carbondale and in his will he left land to Southern Illinois University Carbondale with the stipulating that no permanent structures could be built on it and that all trees be left uncut. Thompson Woods once stood as a beautiful black oak forest in the midst of the scenic college campus and recently is being restored.