Giant City State Park

With its breathtaking natural beauty and unlimited opportunities for outdoor recreation, a trip to Giant City State Park near Carbondale is sure to delight visitors of all ages. From camping and horseback riding to fishing and rappelling, it's an outdoor lover's paradise. Visitors will marvel at the many trails, and a sure treat awaits anyone hiking the Giant City Nature Trail, home of the "Giant City Streets" formed 12,000 years ago by huge bluffs of sandstone.

Nestled in the Shawnee National Forest, approximately 10 miles south of Carbondale, the area was named for the unique impressions made by its massive sandstone structures. Eons of geological faulting and folding have molded a landscape like none other, which is now clothed in lush garments of fern, moss, large flowering mints, hundreds of species of wild flowers and 75-plus varieties of towering trees.

The natural splendor of Giant City has made it a renowned retreat that attracts more than 1.2 million visitors annually.

History

Shelter bluffs, or rock shelters, worn into the sides of the cliffs have revealed evidence of human habitation in this region from as early as 10,000 years ago, and the blackened ceilings caused by their fires are still visible today. On an 80-foot sandstone cliff

near the main entrance, one can see the remains of a Native American stone wall that was erected between A.D. 600-800.

The first European settlers moved into the area from Kentucky and Tennessee in the early 1800s, and by 1850, settlers were using the land to cultivate fruit trees. During the Civil War, many of the cliffs and canyons were used as havens by soldiers of both the Union and Confederate armies.

By the early 1900s, many biologists, geologists and visitors had become intrigued with the region for study and relaxation. It provided ample opportunity for both.

In 1927, the State of Illinois acquired more than 1,100 acres of land in Union and Jackson counties and dedicated the area as Giant City State Park. In 1936, the Civilian Conservation Corps completed construction of a lodge and 12 overnight cabins on the highest point in the park. Today, the park has grown to encompass 4,000 acres of spectacular countryside and the 110-acre Fern Rocks Nature Preserve.

An 82-foot, 100,000 gallon water tower was constructed in 1970 to feature a 50-foot observation deck that provides panoramic views of large expanses of the area.

In 1999, a 4,725-square-foot Visitor Center was completed. The new facility houses exhibits on the natural and cultural history of the park, as well as a gift shop, audio-visual room, and a discovery corner for children.

Lodging

The rustic beauty of the Giant City Lodge creates an atmosphere that is unparalleled in southern Illinois. Although the lodge has been expanded and remodeled, great care has been taken to preserve the multi-hued sandstone and the white oak timber used in the initial construction in the 1930s. Many original furnishings and decorations have been restored and are still in use throughout the lodge.

Three types of cabins offering forest views are available to accommodate overnight guests. All have unique features and have been restored. Twelve historic cabins are one-room units; 18 prairie cabins are two-room units; and four bluff cabins, the largest and most scenic, can conveniently house a family of six.

The Bald Knob dining room, with seating for 170, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily and has a reputation for excellent food at a reasonable price. It is especially well known for its family-style, homefried chicken.

The lodge also features a gift shop, cocktail lounge and bar, an outdoor swimming pool and a children's pool.

For lodge reservations, write Giant City Lodge, 460 Giant City Lodge Road, Makanda, IL 62958, visit

our website at www.giantcitylodge.com or phone 618-457-4921. The Giant City Lodge is open the First Friday of February through Mid-December. Reservations accepted for the following season beginning December 1.

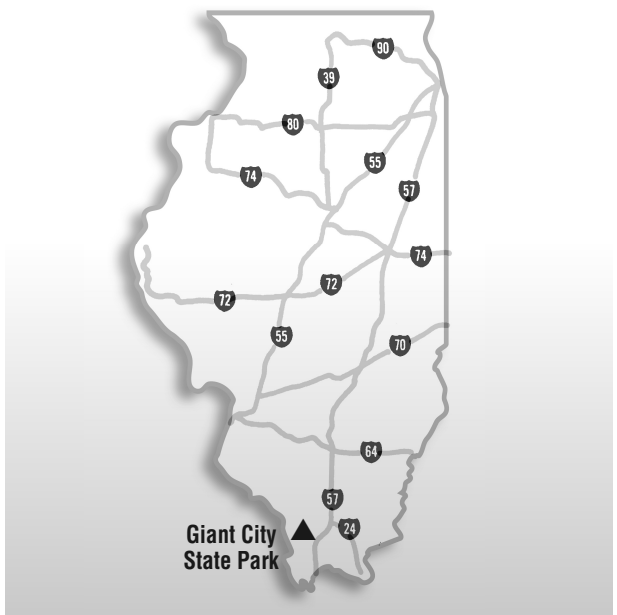
Picnicking

The park is filled with excellent picnic facilities and shelters. Tables, water, fire grills and children's playgrounds can be found throughout the facility.

Camping

Giant City is a popular weekend retreat because of its varied and well-kept campground facilities. Its Class A campgrounds provide water, electricity, showers and sanitary facilities for tent and trailer camping. There is a separate Class A equestrian campground located off the horse trail in the southwest corner of the park.

A Class C camping area with 14 walk-in sites at the south end of the family campground is available for those who prefer a more primitive setting. Water, outdoor privies, and access to showers are provided. A Group camping area is available on a first come, first served basis for organized groups with adult supervision. Please contact the Park Office,



Giant City State Park
235 Giant City Road
Makanda IL 62958, (618) 457-4836

- While groups of 25 or more are welcome and encouraged to use the park's facilities, they are required to register in advance with the site office to avoid crowding or scheduling conflicts.
- At least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors.
- Pets must be kept on leashes at all times.
- Actions by nature can result in closed roads and other facilities. We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Land Management, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 782-6302 or visit our website at http://dnr.state.il.us.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
- Hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and 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, One Natural Resource Way, Springfield, IL. 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

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

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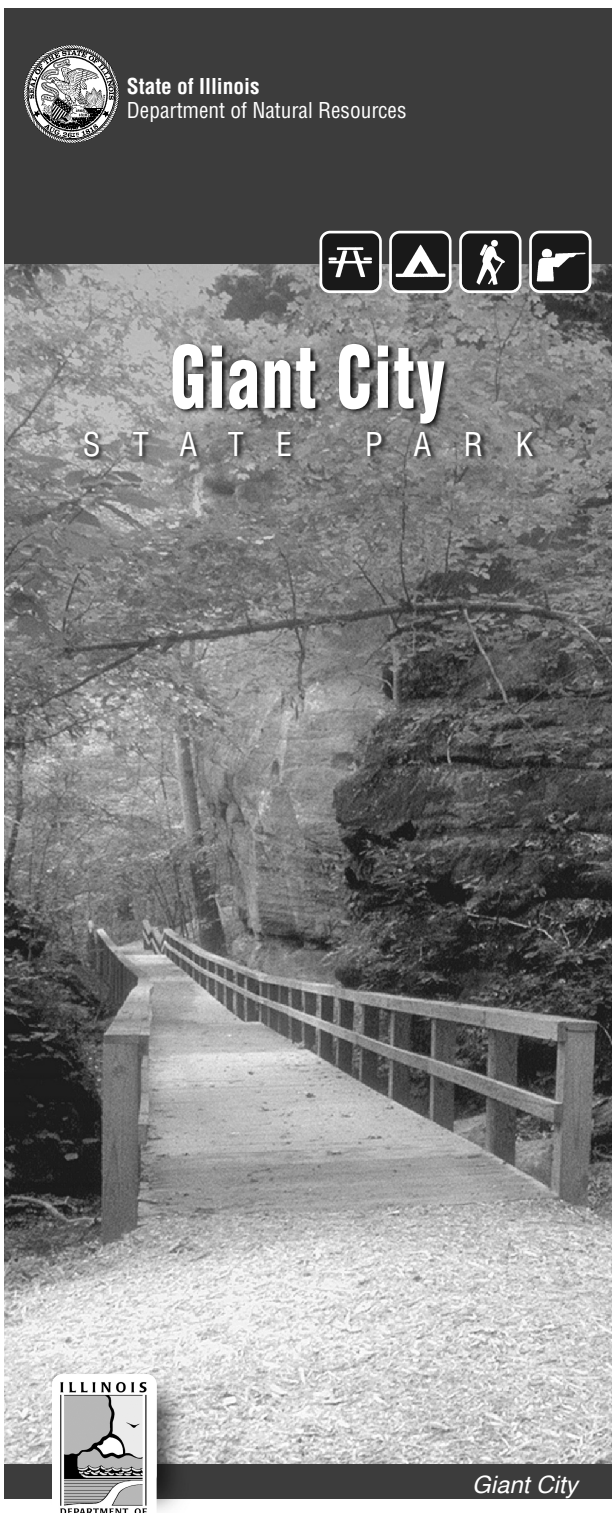
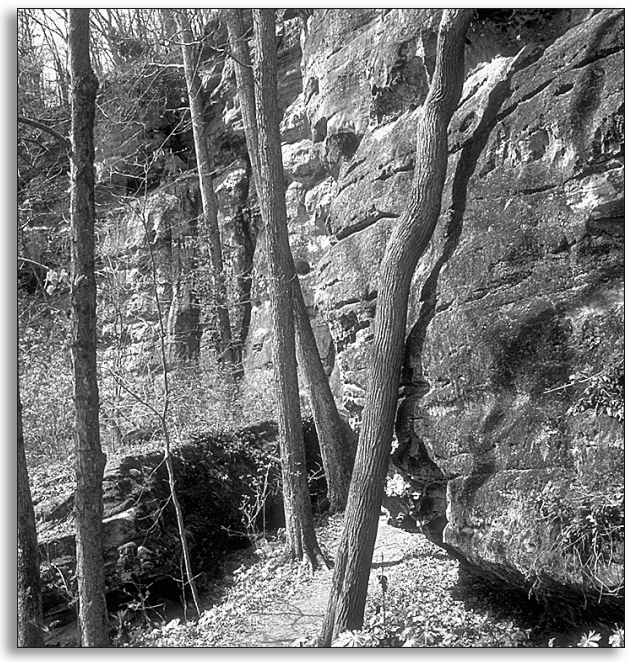




618-457-4836, prior to arrival to avoid scheduling conflicts and overcrowding.

Hiking

Exploration of the picturesque natural wonders of Giant City State Park can be enjoyed along the Post Oak, Devil's Standtable, Giant City, Stonefort, Indian Creek, Trillium and Arrowwood trails. The 12-mile Red Cedar Hiking Trail provides an invigorating challenge to the truly dedicated backpacker. Red Cedar Trail offers "hike-in" campsites at the half way point (6 miles) of the trail.

For the equestrian, the park is home to a 12-mile loop horse trails. Horse rental is available, and guided, group horseback rides depart daily. Minors must be accompanied by an adult.

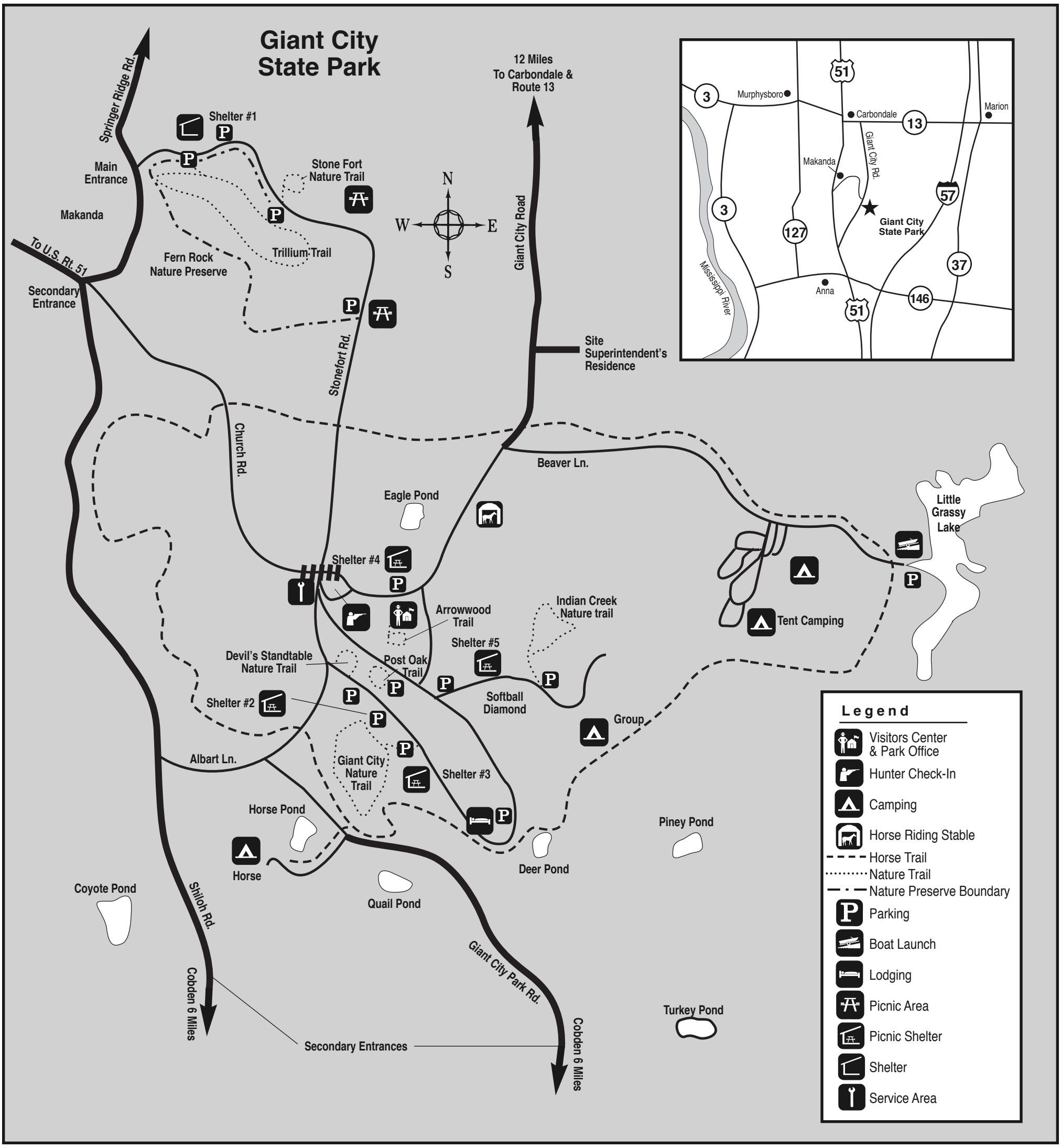
Giant City Stables provides guided trail rides, pony rides, group events, Equine facilitated learning & therapy. Call 618-529-4110, email us at gcs horse@gmail.com, or visit our website at www.giant citystables.com.

Detailed, self-guided interpretive trail brochures are available at the Visitors Center. A 1/4 mile Forest Management Demonstration Trail has been added near the Visitor's Center, to demonstrate the impact of invasive species in the forest.

Fishing and Boating

Ponds are located throughout the park for bank fishing. Little Grassy Lake on the east side of the park, owned by the Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge, has a "shallow water" boat launching ramp and provides anglers with opportunities to land largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie. Boats are limited to 10 horsepower motors. The lake also is ideal for canoeing. For further information, contact Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, at (618) 997-3344.

Hunting

Hunting is allowed at Giant City on a controlled basis. Contact the site superintendent for details on season times and area rules. Proper registration rules are strictly enforced.

For more information, contact Giant City State Park, Visitor Center, 235 Giant City Road, Makanda, IL 62958. Phone (618) 457-4836.