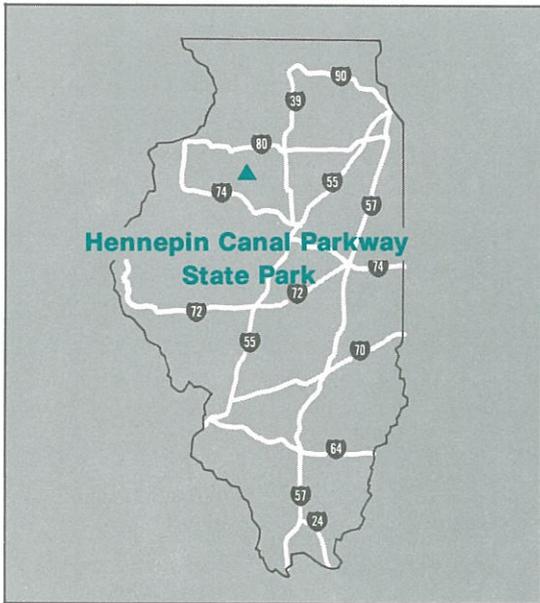


# Hennepin Canal Parkway S T A T E P A R K



## Hennepin Canal Parkway State Park

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R.R. 2, P.O. Box 201, Sheffield, IL 61361, 815-454-2328

- 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. Please call ahead to the park office before you make your trip.
- We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks write to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Public Services, 524 S. Second St., Springfield, Ill., 62701-1787, or call (217) 782-7454.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.

Telecommunication Device for Deaf and Hearing Impaired  
Natural Resources Information (217) 782-9175 for TDD only  
Relay Number 800-526-0844



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Illinois  
Department of  
Natural Resources



## Hennepin Canal Parkway State Park

Want a peaceful, relaxing day of picnicking, hiking, fishing and good old fashioned family fun? Hennepin Canal Parkway State Park is just the place you're looking for. Spend the day and bring a picnic lunch along. There are plenty of picnic tables at the 104.5-mile linear park which spans five counties (Rock Island, Bureau, Henry, Lee and Whiteside).

### History

The Hennepin Canal is more than just a fun place. It played a very important role in the history of the United States and to commerce and industry. In fact, the entire canal is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Thoughts of constructing a canal that connected the Illinois

and Mississippi Rivers date back to 1834. But financial problems in the state held back many public works projects. Pressure for a transportation shortcut that was cheaper than rail continued though, and Congress authorized preliminary surveys on the project in 1871. Construction finally got underway in 1890 and the canal was completed in 1907, reducing the distance from Chicago to Rock Island by 419 miles. There was a problem, however. By the time the canal was finished, the cost of shipping by rail had decreased and barge sizes and freight loads had increased making the canal nearly obsolete. By the 1930s it was used primarily for recreational traffic. The Hennepin and its sister canal, the I&M, tied the Illinois, DesPlaines and Mississippi river systems into a transportation network connecting Lake Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico. The I&M was completed nearly 60 years earlier and helped make Chicago one of the nation's greatest cities.

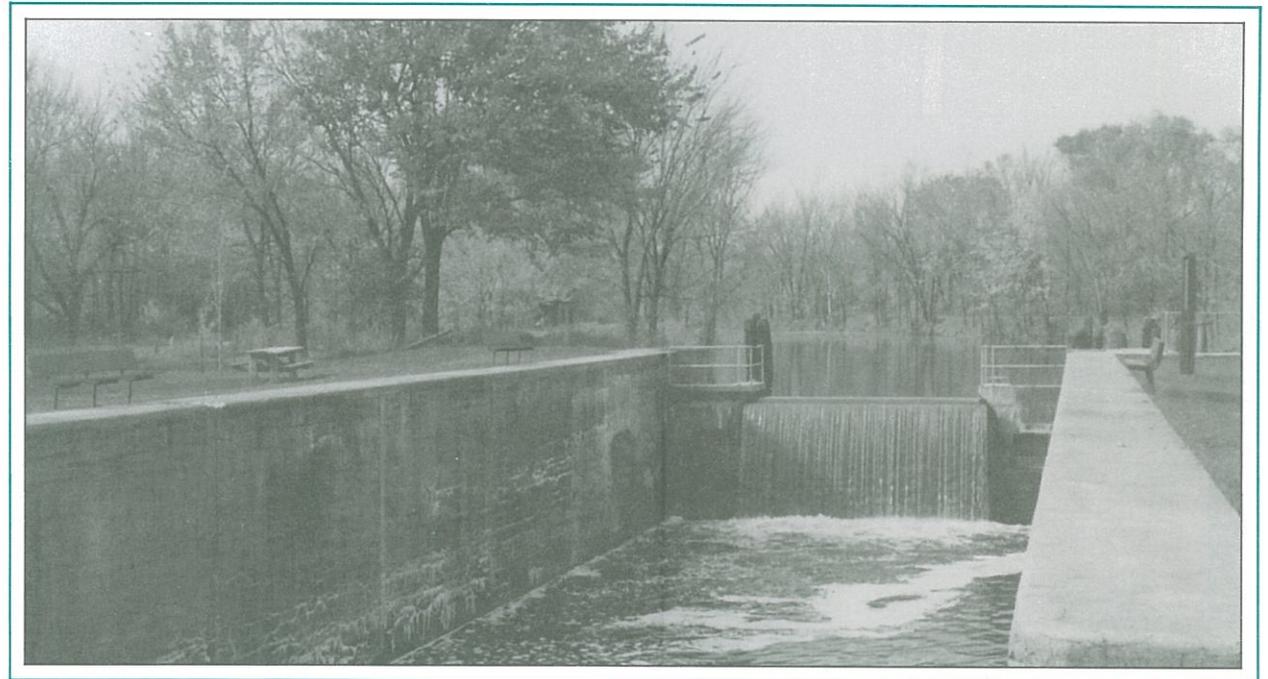
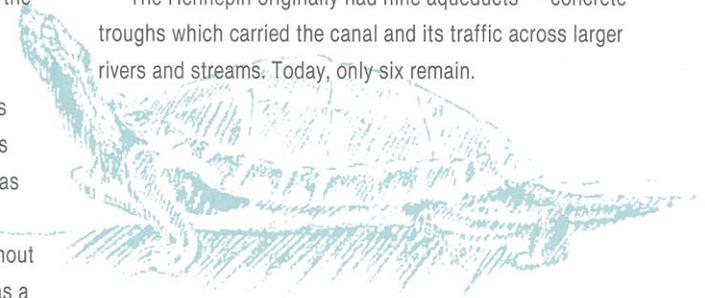
The Hennepin Canal, which at one time was known as the Illinois and Mississippi Canal, was open to boat traffic until 1951. There was no cost to use the canal. Ice made from the canal's frozen waters was sold during the winters to help pay the canal's maintenance costs.

The Hennepin was the first American canal built of concrete without stone cut facings. Although the Hennepin enjoyed limited success as a

waterway, engineering innovations used in its construction were a bonus to the construction industry. In fact, construction of the Panama Canal was based on some of the building techniques used for the Hennepin.

There are 33 locks on the canal. Thirty-two are still visible. Fourteen of the locks had Marshall gates, which are unique to the Hennepin, and are raised and lowered on a horizontal axis, much like a rural mailbox. Five of the locks have been restored to working condition, although they are not used. All of the gates from the remaining locks have been replaced with concrete walls, creating a series of waterfalls.

The Hennepin originally had nine aqueducts — concrete troughs which carried the canal and its traffic across larger rivers and streams. Today, only six remain.

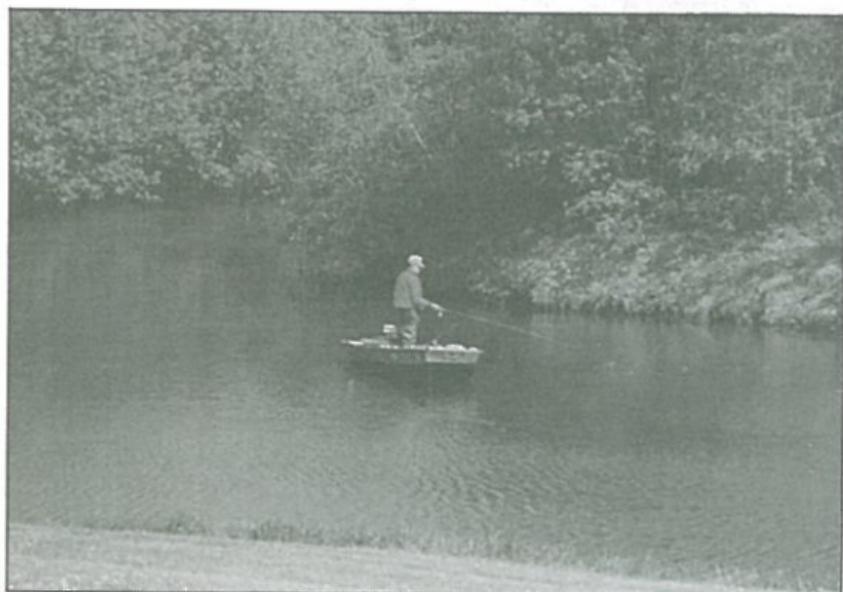


## Visitor Center

Before exploring the wonders at the park, stop in at the Visitor Center near Sheffield. There are several displays that help illustrate the canal's past — including tools used to build and operate it. At the time the canal was built workers often made their own tools by hand. There's also a model of a lock with a boat going through it. Get a peek at the plant and animal life at the park through other displays at the center.

Just outside the center is a beautiful half-acre patch of wildflower prairie. Among the plantings are little bluestem and big bluestem — the official state prairie grass.

Don't miss the marsh observation area and duck blind located near the Visitor Center. There you will see a variety of marsh type plants and animals, including ducks, geese, red-wing blackbirds, muskrat and cattails.



## Picnicking

Picnic tables are situated throughout the day use areas and main complex for your relaxation and enjoyment. Three shelters in the park's main complex near Sheffield provide areas for group gatherings — the largest one can be reserved, so call ahead. Playground equipment will keep the kids busy while the grownups have a chance to chat. Drinking water is available at Locks 21 and 22, as well as the Visitor Center. Toilets are located at Locks 11, 17, 21, 22, 23, and 24; Bridges 14, 15, and 23, as well as the Visitor Center.

## Hiking

An old towpath, originally intended but never used by animals for towing boats along the canal's main line and feeder routes, provides 155 miles of

one-foot-after-the-other fun. Because you're right next to the canal, you'll get a great view of its locks and aqueducts, not to mention the animal life. The going is level and easy at the Hennepin.

If you're up to something more challenging, try the 4.5-mile trek in the main complex which is moderately difficult and gives you a broad taste of landscape from tall timber to grasslands to marsh.

Hiking here is particularly satisfying in the fall, when nature works its wonders on the leaves.

## Bicycling

Mountain bikes are recommended on the majority of the towpath, as most of it is grass. There is a 17-mile agricultural lime trail along the Feeder from Rock Falls to Bridge 56, which is an easy ride for any type of bicycle.

## Fishing

It's a well-kept secret, but fishing along the Hennepin is well worth the trip. Whether you're angling for bluegill, crappie, walleye or bass, 70 bridge or lock locations are available and the pools are stocked regularly.

## Boating

There's unlimited horsepower for boats (between bridge 37 and Lock 24) at the Hennepin, elsewhere it's 10 horsepower. Take off on the launching ramp at the Visitor Center complex, Locks 21, 22 & 24, Route 82 north of Geneseo, Route 92, Route 78 north of Annawan, bridge 39, bridge 28 and bridge 45.

## Canoeing

If canoeing is your sport, come ready for a workout! The waters are calm so back and arm power are required. The many locks are no longer operational and must be portaged (from Lock 21 east is particularly tough). For a great 1-2 day trip, begin at Rock Falls and continue to the Visitor Center.

## Horseback Riding

Bring your own horse — there aren't any stables in the area. Gallop to your heart's delight along the corridor. Please stay out of the picnic areas and off the tow path between bridges 43 to 56 and Lock 30 to 32 in Milan.

## Hunting

Take a shot at dove hunting during season at the park's main complex. Or enjoy waterfowl hunting on Lake Sinnissippi near the Rock River. More than 30 blind sites are awarded in an annual draw.

## Winter Sports

When the snowflakes fall, break out the skis and go cross country on 4.5 miles of moderately difficult trail in the main complex or venture out onto the canal, but keep an eye out for the snowmobilers.

Hey, snowmobilers — the Hennepin boasts the longest snowmobile trail in the state — 78 miles on the towpath. You can use the ice at your own risk,

but pay heed to the locks, bridges and culverts where the ice is likely thinner than the rest of the canal.

If grace under your own power is more your style, bring your blades. There's skating along the entire canal.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** No motorized vehicles, except for snowmobiles during designated times, are allowed on the towpath.

## For The Disabled

The Visitor Center is accessible to the disabled, as is the largest picnic shelter at the park.

