

Starved Rock State Park

Common Questions and Answers

Most of this information can also be found on this page:

www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/StarvedRock.aspx.

All mentions of the Starved Rock/DNR Web Page refer to this web page.



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Basic Park Information

1 HOURS - WHEN IS THE PARK OPEN?

Park hours listed on kiosks throughout the park, online at www2.illinois.gov/dnr, and on the park's main phone message system at 815-667-4726. The park opens at 7 a.m. and trails close at sunset.

Visitors are not allowed on trails after dark due to health and safety reasons. **Fines start at \$195 per person.**

2 INJURIES - WHAT IF SOMEONE IS INJURED AND NEEDS HELP?

Call 911 and give the operator your location. For example, "Wildcat Canyon", or "Red trail at the bottom on Eagle Cliff Overlook". Maps at every trail intersection have a **red 911 sticker** with a grid code (for example, B-1-8). This is the code that all EMS responders in LaSalle County are aware of. This will aid rescue crews when responding to an incident.

Conservation Police Officer contact information can be found on the IDNR website at www2.illinois.gov/dnr, right hand side "I Want To..." → Click on "[Contact a local Conservation Police Officer](#)".

3 FEES - IS THERE A FEE TO ENTER THE PARK?

No. The wonderful thing about Illinois is that all state parks are free for everyone to enjoy.

4 PARKING - DOES THE PARK GET BUSY, AND IS IT HARD TO FIND A PARKING SPOT?

Yes. Starved Rock's busy season falls between mid-March and the first week of November.

Friday through Sunday from 11-3 is the busiest time. Trails can become congested, and parking lots will close when parking spaces fill to capacity.

As visitors begin to leave (usually after 3 p.m.), park staff will reopen parking lots or the park. Please follow Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks on Facebook for up-to-date information in regards to park closures and openings throughout the busy season.

5 GROUP REGISTRATION - DO I NEED TO REGISTER FOR A FIELD TRIP, FAMILY GATHERING, ETC ON THE TRAILS?

Yes. All groups of 20 or more people must complete an Activity Permit found on the IDNR website at www2.illinois.gov/dnr under the Campground tab. Visitors should submit completed permits to the park office, or by email to DNR.StarvedRock@illinois.gov at least 2 weeks in advance of their visit for site and IDNR approval.

6 PICNICKING - WHERE CAN I PICNIC AT THE PARK?

Picnic areas are located along the Illinois River or lower area by the boat ramp and main parking lot. Due to issues with litter, picnicking is not allowed along the trail system or within the canyons please. Picnic tables are not set out until mid-May, depending on flooding in the lower area. Sometimes the lower area is closed to parking and picnicking due to flooding from the Illinois River. Please look for closure signs or visit the IDNR website for park closure updates at www2.illinois.gov/dnr or follow the Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks page on Facebook.

7 FISHING - WHERE CAN I FISH AT THE PARK?

Great fishing spots can be found from the boat ramp west of the Starved Rock Visitor Center down along the sea wall of the Illinois River. Another great spot is at Lone Point Shelter off route 71, on the eastern edge of the park. Fishing is not allowed anywhere else. Valid fishing licenses are required for the state of Illinois.

8 BOATING - WHERE CAN I KAYAK AT THE PARK?

Kayak Starved Rock manages all kayak rentals and tours out of Lone Point Shelter, on the east end of the park, just off route 71. Please

view their website at www.kayakstarvedrock.com, and call them directly for reservations and hours.

Boat launch - The boat launch is located off the west entrance of the park from route 178. There are no docks, just a ramp and parking lot.

Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center (Concessionaire)

9 CABINS - HOW DO I MAKE A ROOM OR CABIN RESERVATION?

Room or cabin reservations can be made through the private concessionaire which operates the Starved Rock Lodge. Please visit www.starvedrocklodge.com or call 815-667-4211 to make your reservations today.

10 TOURS - WHERE CAN I FIND TROLLEY OR BOAT TOURS?

Trolley and boat tour tickets can be purchased through the Starved Rock Lodge. Please visit www.starvedrocklodge.com or call 815-667-4211.

11 RESTAURANTS - ARE THERE ANY RESTAURANTS AT THE PARK?

Yes. The Starved Rock Lodge hosts a restaurant, bar and grill (with outdoor seating), and café. A concession stand is located inside of the Visitor Center. You may visit the Lodge's website to view hours and menu options at www.starvedrocklodge.com

Starved Rock State Park and Visitor Center - IDNR

12 VISITOR CENTER - WHERE IS THE VISITOR CENTER?

The Visitor Center and state park IDNR staff are located by the main parking lot along the Illinois River, off the west entrance of the park on route 178. The Visitor Center can be accessed from the Lodge by the metal staircase behind the east portion of the Lodge, from the main parking lot.

Visitors cannot walk the steep windy road from the Lodge to the lower area. The road is very busy with traffic and signs are posted.

13 VISITOR CENTER & LODGE - IS THE VISITOR CENTER AND THE LODGE THE SAME THING?

No. The Starved Rock Lodge is a separate entity operated and managed by a private concessionaire who leases the building from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The Starved Rock Visitor Center serves as headquarters for park operations, including the park office and interpretive center with programs, events, tours, exhibits, and information desk. It is operated and owned by the IDNR/State of Illinois. Park Maintenance is located across from the Visitor Center.

14 PROGRAMS - WHERE CAN I FIND PARK PROGRAMS, HIKES, AND EVENTS?

Park programs are FREE and some do require pre-registration. The Calendar of Events, registration links, and further program information can be found at the Visitor Center. Or go online to www2.illinois.gov/dnr or the Starved Rock Foundation website at www.starvedrock.org.

15 VISITOR CENTER HOURS - WHEN IS THE VISITOR CENTER OPEN?

The Visitor Center is open:

- Apr to Nov: Daily 9-4
- Dec to Mar:
 - Mon-Fri 9-4
 - 2nd Sat 10-4
 - 1st & 2nd Sun 10-4

Nov-Feb, it is closed on state and federal holidays. This information is posted on park kiosks and at www2.illinois.gov/dnr.

16 PARK HISTORY - HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT THE HISTORY/GEOLOGY/ECOLOGY OF THE PARK?

Educational information can be found onsite at the Visitor Center through displays, exhibits, and educational movies shown in the movie theater, or online at www2.illinois.gov/dnr on the Starved Rock page.

School field trips, programs, calendar of events, guided hike information, and more can all be found on the Starved Rock page of the IDNR website or the Starved Rock Foundation website www.starvedrock.org

17 MOVIES - ARE THERE MOVIES ABOUT THE PARK? [CLOSED]

[PLEASE NOTE: The movie theater is currently under repairs and unavailable as of March 2022].

Yes. The park offers several 8-15 minute shows on the park's history, geology, and ecology.

Movie titles and descriptions can be found on the IDNR website. Movies are upon request at the front desk inside of the Visitor Center. Movies close at 3:30 p.m.

Trails

18 TRAILHEADS - WHERE DO THE TRAILS START?

Trailheads from the lodge:

- **French Canyon** - The trailhead that leads to the eastern section of the park, such as the overlooks, Wildcat Canyon, and LaSalle Canyon is located just off the Lodge parking lot, by the cabins.
- **St. Louis Canyon** - Trailhead starts on the opposite end of the Lodge from the parking lot, or the west side by the Lodge's hotel section.

- **Other** - Visitor Center, Starved Rock, fishing sea wall, and main trailhead access is located off the metal stairs directly behind the Lodge.

Trailheads from outlying parking lots:

- **St. Louis Canyon** - Parking lot off route 178 across from Grand Bear Lodge, just south of the park's west entrance.
- **LaSalle Canyon** - Park off route 71 from the park's south entrance.
- **Hennepin Canyon** - Park off route 71 just east of the LaSalle Canyon parking lot, southeast of the main park.
- **Ottawa, Kaskaskia, and Illinois Canyon** - Parking on the eastern most edge of the park, off route 71.

Park maps with yellow "you are here" dots map legend to help describe the map's symbols and trail markings, as well as trail mileage from the visitor center, can be found at every parking lot, trail intersection, visitor center, and Lodge.

Brown park signs are posted along both route 178 and route 71 labeling park parking lots and trailheads. Brown park signs are also listed at every trail intersection, including the main sidewalk leading from the main parking lot to the visitor center, detailing feature locations with directional arrows.



West & East maps of the canyons.

19 FLAT TRAILS - ARE THERE ANY FLAT TRAILS W/O STAIRS AT THE PARK?

Mostly no. Due to the topography (lay of the land) of the park, trails are uneven and contain major and minor staircases of 5-200 steps each. This allows visitors to gain access to the sandstone canyons and bluffs that the park is known for.

Illinois Canyon has the flattest trail without any staircases. But there are a few creek crossings where feet may get muddy or wet in the spring and summer seasons.

Ottawa Canyon and **Kaskaskia Canyon** also have creek crossings along with quite a few exposed tree roots to navigate.

20 ADA TRAILS - ARE THERE ANY ADA COMPLIANT TRAILS FOR THOSE WITH IMPAIRED MOBILITY?

No. Due to the topography of the park's canyons and bluffs, there are no ADA compliant trails.

There are ADA compliant sidewalks approaching and surrounding the Starved Rock Lodge where visitors can view the Art in the Park wooden tree carvings. The area surrounding the Visitor Center provides views of the bird feeders and prairie garden. And exhibits within the visitor center depict the parks history, geology, and ecology.

21 TRAIL CONDITIONS - WHAT ARE THE TRAILS LIKE? ARE THEY PAVED, MUDDY, ICY, OR HARD TO CLIMB?

Trails are natural dirt and sand paths. Several wooden or metal staircases and decking are used at overlooks such as Starved Rock, Eagle Cliff, and Lovers Leap.

Trail conditions vary by the season:

Winter: Trails will be icy and snow packed. Traction devices such as micro cleats or Yaktrax on hiking boots are highly recommended.

Spring: Trails will be very muddy with standing water in a few areas. Waterproof hiking shoes are highly recommended, as well as a pair of dry socks and clean shoes for the ride home. Please do not wash shoes in the park's sinks.

Summer: Trails will be dry and waterfalls will dry out in the months of July through early October. Visitors are asked to pack plenty of water for themselves and their pets in order to stay hydrated and cool on the trails in the heat of the day. Too many hikers suffer from heat exhaustion and even heat stroke during the hot summer months hiking at either park.

Overlooks such as **Starved Rock, Eagle Cliff, and Lovers Leap** will have the most exposure to the sun.

Fall: Trails can be either dry or muddy depending on rainfall within the areas of Utica, Ottawa, and Oglesby, Illinois. Fall colors typically peak the 3rd week of October depending on the previous summer's weather. Fall colors can be seen throughout the park with the best views from the overlooks at **Starved Rock, Lovers Leap, and Eagle Cliff**.

Are there any trails or areas that are closed?

These types of questions are for the visitor center. No calls on the weekends please, but stop in at the visitor center or view the IDNR website online at www2.illinois.gov/dnr for park closures.

Currently **Tonti Canyon, Beehive Overlook, and Owl Canyon Overlook** are closed to all visitors.

22 BEST TRAILS - WHAT IS THE BEST TRAIL?

Every trail is the "best" at the park! The best part of Starved Rock is that the topography of the sandstone canyons and bluffs can be seen throughout the park's 13 miles of trails. The best trail is whatever trail you choose to take and the miles you are willing to hike. Visitors can view trail suggestions and trail suggestion videos online through the IDNR Starved Rock page at www2.illinois.gov/dnr.

23 TRAIL MAPS - WHERE CAN I FIND TRAIL MAPS?

Maps can be downloaded from home through the IDNR Starved Rock webpage at www2.illinois.gov/dnr. QR codes are located on stationary trail maps throughout the park that allow you to view specific maps directly on your cell phone. Maps are also located at the Lodge, Visitor Center, every parking lot, and trail intersections throughout the park. The park will be going paperless (maps) by 2023.

24 BATHROOMS - ARE THERE BATHROOMS OR WATER FOUNTAINS ON THE TRAILS?

No. Due to the topography of the park's canyons there are no bathrooms, trash cans, or water fountains located on the trail system.

Bathrooms are located at the Starved Rock Lodge, Visitor Center, Lone Point Shelter, LaSalle Canyon parking lot, overflow parking, and the main parking lot in front of the Visitor Center.

Trash cans are located at trailheads, parking lots, and picnic areas only. Visitors are asked to pack out anything they pack in to the trails. This helps the park stay green and clean.

Sites to See (Waterfalls, Canyons, and Icefalls)

25 WATERFALLS - WHERE ARE THE WATERFALLS?

Waterfalls are located in canyons along green marked trails. Waterfalls are generated by snowmelt and rainfall. They occur March through June but, may dry out July through September. Heavy rains in the months of October through December may replenish the canyon waterfalls.

Wading and swimming or using the canyons as waterslides are prohibited and dangerous activities. **Fines start at \$195 per person.**

There are 8 waterfalls that are accessible to visitors: **French, Wildcat, LaSalle, Ottawa, Kaskaskia, Illinois, St. Louis, and Aurora.**

26 ICEFALLS - WHEN AND WHERE CAN I SEE ICEFALLS?

Icefalls can be found in the sandstone canyons along green marked trails in January. There are 8: **Wildcat, Ottawa, Kaskaskia, Illinois, St. Louis, and Aurora; French and LaSalle** have icefalls, but are only suitable for those with micro cleats or Yaktrax. **Tonti** is closed to hikers.

Ice climbers can view further information on the Starved Rock page through the IDNR website at www2.illinois.gov/dnr. Also follow *Ice Climbing Starved Rock* on Facebook for updates given by local ice climbers during the season.

27 EAGLES - WHERE AND WHEN CAN I SEE BALD EAGLES?

Bald eagles can be seen throughout the year fishing along the Illinois River. Greater concentrations of eagles can be seen perched on Leopold or Plum Island in front of the Starved Rock Lock and Dam when the Illinois River freezes over in January, depending on the temperatures that season.

The best viewing locations in January are from the sandstone butte known as Starved Rock, the sea wall along the Illinois River across from the visitor center, or at the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center located just across from the park, off Dee Bennett road.

28 FALL COLOR - WHEN IS PEAK COLOR IN THE FALL?

Leaves typically begin changing to yellows, browns, oranges, reds, and purples from the 2nd to 4th week of October. Peak season fluctuates based on the weather in the months leading up to the fall.

Allowed or Not Allowed

29 DOGS - ARE DOGS ALLOWED?

Yes. Dogs are allowed at the park, but not inside the buildings, unless they are a certified service animal with a vest or collar. Dogs must always be kept on a leash, provided water, and never left unattended or left alone inside a parked vehicle.

30 ROCK CLIMBING - DOES THE PARK ALLOW ROCK CLIMBING?

No. Rock climbing is not allowed anywhere within the park due to the fragile sandstone geology that composes each of the park's canyons, trails, and bluffs. **Fines for climbing or going off trail start at \$195 per person.**

31 DRONES - CAN I FLY MY DRONE AT THE PARK?

No. Drones are not allowed at Starved Rock due to the number of visitors on the trails, picnic area, and overlooks. And they can disturb wildlife such as the park's nesting bald eagle population.

32 BIKING - CAN I BIKE ALONG THE TRAILS AT STARVED ROCK?

Bikes are not allowed on the trails at Starved Rock due to the fragile sandstone geology. But there are bike trails just 2 miles south of

the park at Matthiessen State Park. Biking is in the Vermillion River Area, not the Dells area.

Campground Information

33 CAMPING - IS THERE CAMPING AT STARVED ROCK?

Yes. The Starved Rock Campground is located just outside the park, off route 71 to the south. It is open year round, but the west loop area and youth group area are closed until April 1. Reservations are highly encouraged and are done online at www.campexploremore.il. Further camping information can be found at www2.illinois.gov/dnr .

Youth groups and disabled Illinois citizens must call the park office Mon-Fri from 9-4 to make reservations through the park staff at 815-667-4726.