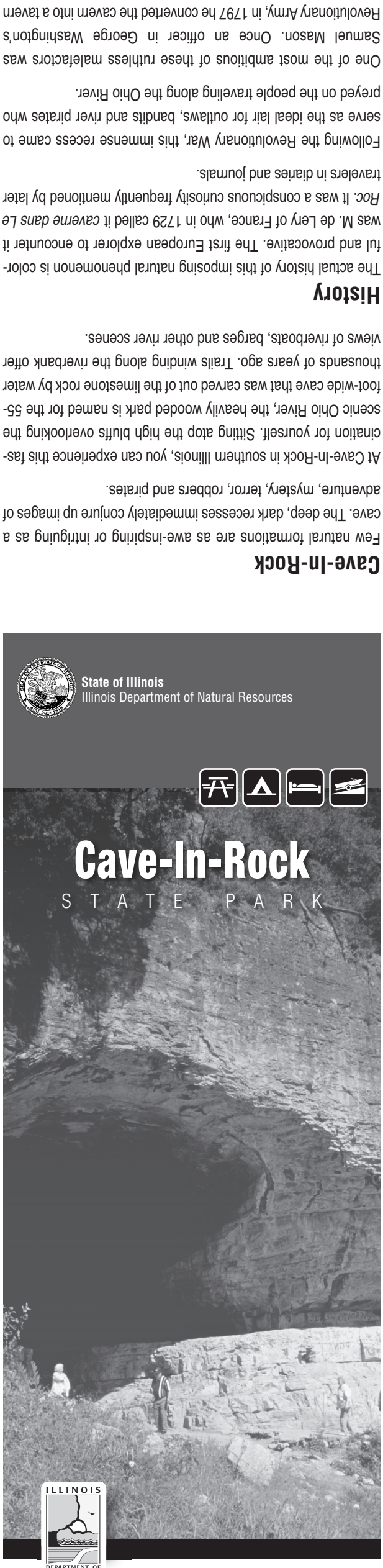


Cave-In-Rock

Few natural formations are as awe-inspiring or intriguing as a cave. The deep, dark recesses immediately conjure up images of adventure, mystery, terror, robbers and pirates.

At Cave-In-Rock in southern Illinois, you can experience this fascination for yourself. Sitting atop the high bluffs overlooking the scenic Ohio River, the heavily wooded park is named for the 55-foot-wide cave that was carved out of the limestone rock by water thousands of years ago. Trails winding along the riverbank offer views of riverboats, barges and other river scenes.

History

The actual history of this imposing natural phenomenon is colorful and provocative. The first European explorer to encounter it was M. de Lery of France, who in 1729 called it *caverne dans Le Roc*. It was a conspicuous curiosity frequently mentioned by later travelers in diaries and journals.

Following the Revolutionary War, this immense recess came to serve as the ideal lair for outlaws, bandits and river pirates who preyed on the people traveling along the Ohio River.

One of the most ambitious of these ruthless malefactors was Samuel Mason. Once an officer in George Washington's Revolutionary Army, in 1797 he converted the cavern into a tavern which he called the Cave-In-Rock.

From this apparently innocent and inviting position, Mason would dispatch his cohorts upriver to befriend unwary and bewildered travelers with offers of help and guidance. As they neared the cave, these henchmen would disable their boats or force them toward the yawning hollow, where the hapless pilgrims would be robbed, or worse. Few victims lived to tell their story.

By the early 1800s, following the demise of the Mason Gang, the cave sheltered the even more notorious Harpe Brothers, a pair of killers fleeing execution in Kentucky. They continued their personal reign of thievery and murder in Illinois, using the cave as hideout and headquarters until they too were killed.

It's interesting to note that the cave served as a backdrop for a scene in the movie "How The West Was Won." The scene was a near-accurate portrayal of how, in the 18th and 19th centuries,

ruthless bandits used the cave to lure unsuspecting travelers to an untimely end.

Although other desperadoes continued to take advantage of the secrecy and seclusion afforded by Cave-In-Rock, by the mid-1830s the quickening westward expansion of civilization and the steady growth in the local population and commerce had destroyed or driven out the "river rats" and the cave began to serve as temporary shelter for other pioneers on their way west. Throughout the 19th century, this remarkable geological feature was an important landmark, prominently displayed on maps from the period.

In 1929, the State of Illinois acquired 64.5 acres for a park that since has increased to 204 acres. The well-wooded, 60-foot-high hills and the rugged bluffs along the river – commanding expansive views of the famous waterway– became Cave-In-Rock State Park.

In the words of Illinois historian John W. Allen, "Today only the natural beauty of the historic spot remains, clothed in mystery. In the hollow silence of the cave that echoes the peaceful cooing of doves, a visitor can let a vivid imagination run riot. But he can dream little that will be beyond what actually happened."

Picnicking

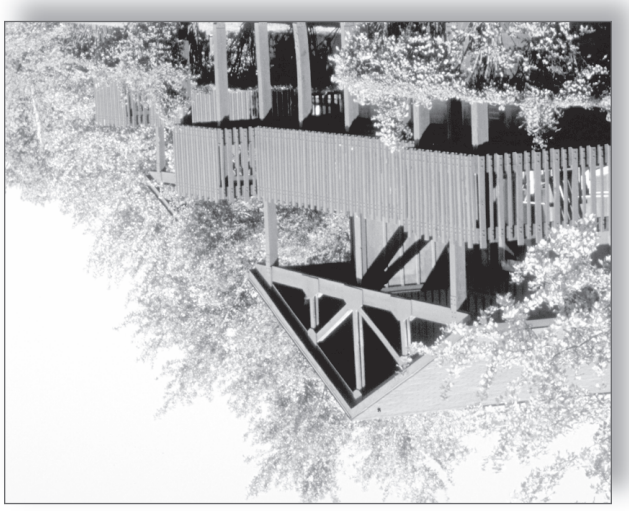
For the day visitor, ample parking is provided by five separate lots. There are three developed playground areas for children; and shaded picnic areas situated throughout the park provide tables and grills for your use. There are four large picnic shelters for group gatherings.

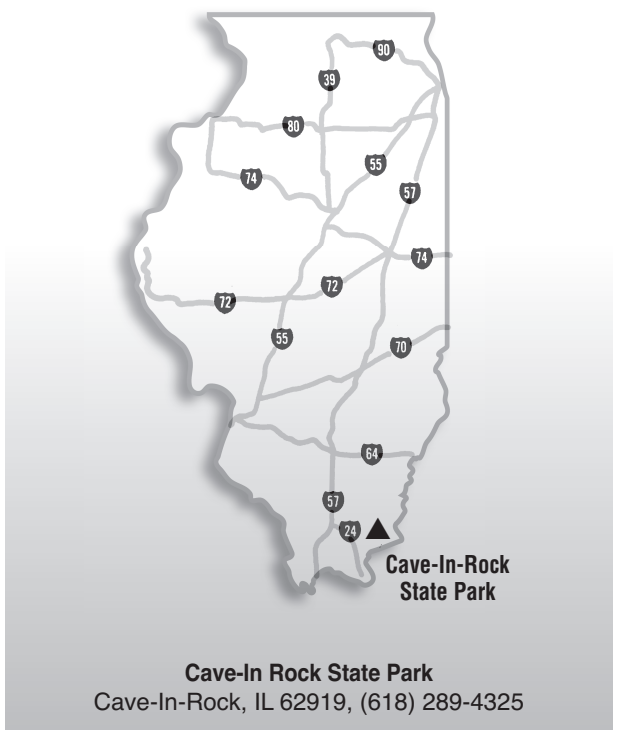
Dining

The restaurant is gaining a reputation for fine southern-style cooking and has plenty of homemade specialties on the menu. Sunday dinners feature roast beef with all the trimmings, southern fried catfish, marinated chicken, shrimp, steaks and homemade desserts. For more information, call (618) 289-4545 or write Cave-In-Rock Restaurant and Lodge, P.O. Box 338, 1 New State Park Road, Cave-In-Rock, IL 62919.

Hiking

In addition to the natural splendor of the cave itself, the park contains two established hiking trails of moderate difficulty, plus numerous unmarked trails for exploration and appreciation of tranquil forests and inspiring views.





Cave-In Rock State Park
Cave-In-Rock, IL 62919, (618) 289-4325

- 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 visit our website at www.dnr.state.il.us.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's 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 nonmerit 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 Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; (217) 785-0067; TTY (217) 782-9175.

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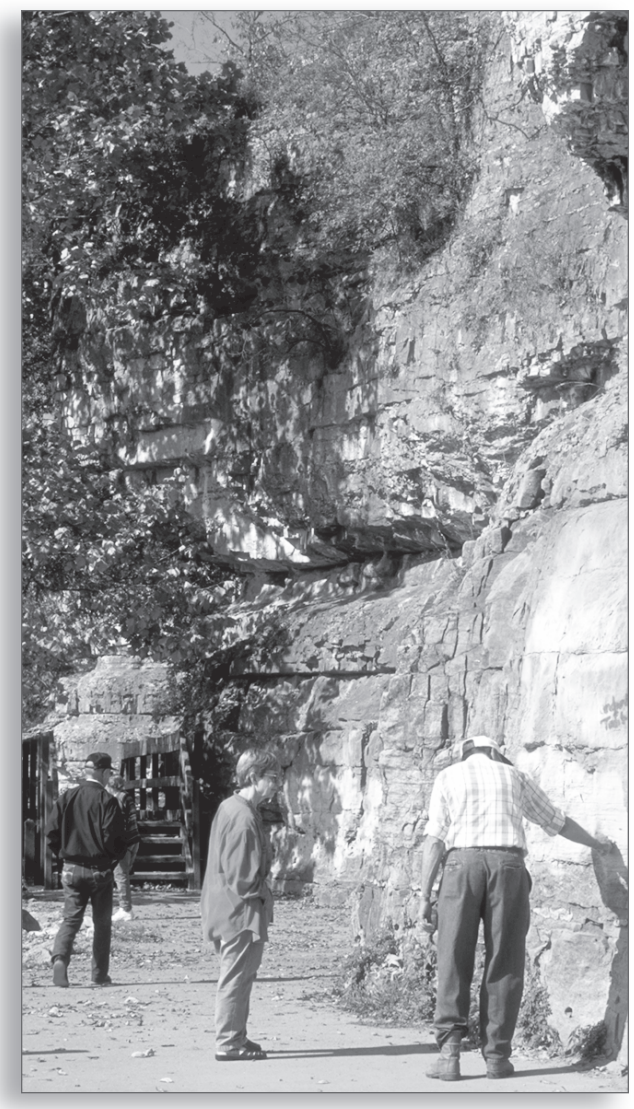


Exotic Species

Plants and animals not native to Illinois are exotic species. Most of them are harmless to our state; however, some can be very invasive to native plant communities and can overwhelm or wipe out native species. Prevention and control of exotic, invasive species requires tremendous cooperation between managers and all users of parks, natural areas, and privately owned land. To learn more about exotic and invasive species and how you can help prevent their spread, visit the IDNR Exotic Species Website at: **http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/ExoticSpecies/exoticspintro.htm**.

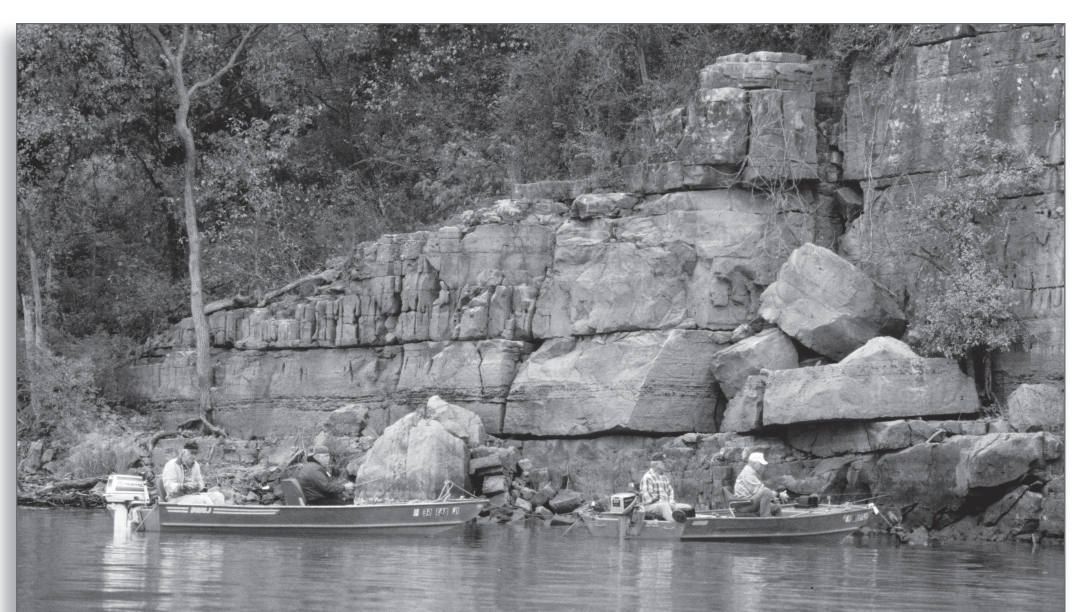
Cave-In-Rock State Park

Fishing Pond
Class A
Campground Host
Camping Check-In
Class B/S
Pirates' Bluff Nature Trail
Hickory Ridge Trail
Deep Hollow Picnic Area
Restaurant
Cabins
Cave Parking
Buzzard's Roost Scenic View
To Cave Trail
Stairs
Flagpole Hill
Park Entrance
To Boat Launch
Riverfront Picnic Area
Lower Cave Trail
Cave-In-Rock Cave
OHIO RIVER
N
W
E
S

Legend

- Park Office
- Restaurant & Concession
- Trail
- Restrooms
- Parking
- Shelter
- Picnic Area
- Boat Launch
- Picnic Shelter
- Playground
- Cabins/Lodging
- Showers
- Campground
- Sanitary Dumping Station

Shawnee National Forest
34
1
146
Cave-In-Rock State Park
Golconda Marina
OHIO RIVER



Fishing and Boating

A trout pond is available during season, and the Ohio River provides excellent fishing, boating and water sport opportunities. The river can be accessed directly from two launching ramps with adjacent parking on the western edge of the park. The site superintendent and park rangers can provide details on fishing licenses and the rules and regulations for fishing and boating on the river. For more information, contact Cave-In-Rock State Park, Cave-In-Rock, IL 62919, (618) 289-4325.

Camping

On the scenic north side of the park there are camping accommodations with 34 Class A sites. They are equipped with electricity and can accommodate units up to 60-feet long. Twenty-five Class B tent sites are also available, and showers, restrooms and dumping stations are present in both camping areas. Contact the site superintendent or campground attendant for camping permits and information. Handicapped sites also are available.

Lodging

Cave-In-Rock Restaurant and Lodging features four duplex guest houses with eight suites, each accommodating up to four people comfortably. The suites contain deluxe baths, a dining area and wetbar, a large bedroom/living room, and a private patio deck overlooking the Ohio River. One suite is handicapped accessible.

Marina

For a different view of Cave-In-Rock, consider a boat ride down the Ohio River. Be sure to visit the Golconda Marina located on the river near Golconda at Lusk Creek. A full-service marina, Golconda offers overnight moorage with 100 slips available, both covered and open. Slips have electric and water hookups. There is a marina service and repair, boat lifts, fuel, sanitary pump outs and dry storage. Multiple free launch ramps are available, along with parking for trailers and cars, a snack shop, gift shop, and bait and tackle shop.