



Starved Rock State Park

Common Questions & Answers

This information and more can be found on the IDNR website at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/park.starvedrock.html

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Basic Park Information

Q: When does the park open and close?

A: Park hours are posted on kiosks throughout the park as well as online at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/park.starvedrock.html or the park's main phone message system 815-667-4726. The park opens at 7 a.m. and trails close at sunset which fluctuates throughout the year. Most smartphones will list the time of sunset on weather applications. Visitors are not allowed on trails after dark due to health and safety. Fines start at \$195 per person.

Q: What do I do if I get hurt on the trail or see someone else that is injured and in need of help?

A: Call 911 and give the operator your location: Wildcat Canyon, the red trail at the bottom on Eagle Cliff Overlook, etc. Each map at every trail intersection has a red 911 sticker with a grid code (example: B-1-8) this is a code that all EMS responders in La Salle County are aware of and will better aid rescue crews when responding to an incident. Conservation Police Officer contact information can be found on the IDNR website at dnr.illinois.gov under "I Want To....." in the left column, contact a Local Conservation Police Officer (click on the link).

Q: Is there a fee to enter the park or do I need a parking pass?

A: The wonderful thing about Illinois is that all state parks are free for everyone to enjoy.

Q: Does the park get busy, and is it hard to find a parking spot?

A: Starved Rock State Park's busy season falls between mid-March and the first week of November. Friday through Sunday from 11-3, is the busiest time of the day at the park. Trails can become congested, and parking lots will close when parking spaces fill to capacity.

Park staff will reopen parking lots or the park after 3 p.m. when most visitors begin to leave for the day. Please follow Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks on Facebook for up-to-date information in regard to park closures and openings through the busy season.

Q: Do I need to register my group for a field trip, family gathering, group outing on the trails, etc.?

A: Yes, all groups of 20 or more people must complete an Activity Permit found on the IDNR website at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/activity/park.starvedrock.html. Visitors should submit their completed permit to the park office or by email to DNR.StarvedRock@illinois.gov at least 2 weeks in advance of the visit for the site and IDNR approval.

Q: Where is the campground located?

A: The Starved Rock Campground is located just outside of the park off of route 71 to the south. Visitors may view further campground information and reservation procedures on the IDNR website at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/camp/park.starvedrock.html.

Q: How do I make campground reservations?

A: Camping reservations can only be made online through Explore More Illinois at camp.exploremoreil.com.

Youth Group and Disabled Illinois Citizens are required to call the park office M-F from 9-4 to make a reservation through park staff at 815-667-4726.

Visitors may view further campground information and reservation procedures on the IDNR website at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/camp/park.starvedrock.html.

Q: Does the campground stay open all year round?

A: Yes, the campground is open all year round, but the east loop and youth group area are closed until April 1st. Reservations are highly encouraged and are done online at camp.exploremoreil.com. Further camping information can be found at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/camp/park.starvedrock.html.

Q: Where can I picnic at the park?

A: 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. 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 dnr.illinois.gov/parks/park.starvedrock.html or follow the Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks page on Facebook.

Q: Where can I fish at the park?

A: 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 and Lone Point Shelter off of route 71 on the eastern edge of the park. Fishing is not allowed anywhere else in the park, including areas off of the trail system. Valid fishing licenses are required for the state of Illinois.

Q: Where can I kayak at the park?

A: 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 [starved rock / kayak rental near me \(kayakmorris.com\)](http://starvedrock.com/kayak-rental-near-me) and call Kayak Starved Rock directly for hours of operation and to make reservations.

Q: Does the park have a boat launch?

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

Q: How do I make a room or cabin reservation?

A: 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.

Q: Where can I find trolleys or boat tours?

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

Q: Are there any restaurants at the park?

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

Starved Rock State Park and Visitor Center-IDNR

Q: Where is the Visitor Center?

A: The Starved Rock Visitor Center and state park IDNR staff are located by the main parking lot along the Illinois River off of the west entrance of the park or 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 park hill/road from the Lodge to the lower area. The road is busy with traffic and signs are posted.

Q: Is the Visitor Center and the Lodge the same thing?

A: 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/State of Illinois.

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

Q: Where can I find park programs, hikes, and events?

A: Park programs are FREE and some do require pre-registration. The Calendar of Events, registration links, and further program information can be found on the IDNR Starved Rock page at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/event/park.starvedrock.html , Starved Rock Foundation website at starvedrock.org or onsite at the Starved Rock Visitor Center.

Q: How can I become a park volunteer?

A: Those who would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities at the state park can contact the park office at 815-667-4726, email DNR.StarvedRock@illinois.gov or visit the Starved Rock Foundation website at www.starvedrock.org

Q: When does the Starved Rock Visitor Center open and close?

*A: The Visitor Center is open daily from 9-4.
Closed on winter state and federal holidays November-February.*

Posted on IDNR website at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/visitorcenter/park.starvedrock.html and park kiosks.

Q: How do I find out about the history/geology/ecology of the park?

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

A: School field trip, programs, calendar of events, guided hike information, and more can all be found on the Starved Rock page of the IDNR website dnr.illinois.gov/parks/interpret/park.starvedrock.html or the Starved Rock Foundation website <https://starvedrock.org/>

Q: Are there movies about the park?

A: 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 dnr.illinois.gov/parks/visitorcenter/park.starvedrock.html . Movies are available upon request at the front desk inside of the Visitor Center. Movies close at 3:30 p.m.

Trails

Q: Where do the trails start?

A: From the Lodge: French Canyon trailhead, which leads to the eastern section of the park such as the overlooks, Wildcat Canyon, and La Salle Canyon, is located just off of the Lodge parking lot by the cabins.

From the Lodge: St. Louis Canyon trailhead starts on the opposite end of the Lodge from the hotel guest parking lot to the west.

From the Lodge: The Starved Rock Visitor Center, fishing sea wall, Starved Rock, and main trailhead access are located off the metal stairs directly behind the Lodge from the sidewalk off of the Lodge parking lot.

From the Starved Rock Visitor Center: Starved Rock, French Canyon trailhead, and the river trailhead are located directly behind the Visitor Center following the sidewalk.

From the Starved Rock Visitor Center: St. Louis Canyon trailhead starts behind the Lodge. Follow the sidewalk past the visitor center, turn right, and take the metal stairs up to the Lodge then take a right and follow the sidewalk and signs to the wooden walking bridge and onto the trail.

Outlying Parking Lots: St. Louis Canyon trailhead can be found at the St. Louis Canyon parking lot off Route 178 across from Grand Bear Lodge just south of the park’s west entrance.

Outlying: *La Salle Canyon trailhead can be found off route 71 on the east end of the park at Parkman's Plain/LaSalle Canyon parking lot.*

Outlying: *Hennepin Canyon trailhead can be found off Route 71 just past the La Salle Canyon parking on the east end of the park.*

Outlying: *Ottawa, Kaskaskia, and Illinois Canyon parking and trailhead access can be found on the easternmost edge of the park off of Route 71 along the Illinois River.*

Park maps with yellow “you are here” dots, map legend to help describe the map’s symbols and trail markings, as well as one-way 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.

Q: Are there any flat trails without stairs at the park?

A: 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, in order for visitors to gain access to the sandstone canyons and bluffs at the park.

Illinois, Ottawa, and Kaskaskia Canyons trails do not contain staircases but there are a few creek crossings where feet may get muddy or wet in the winter and spring and the trail surface is not paved and will be uneven in areas.

Q: Are there any ADA compliant trails for those with impaired mobility?

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

The only ADA compliant trails are the sidewalks approaching and surrounding the Starved Rock Lodge where visitors can view the Art in the Park wooden tree carvings, and the area surrounding the Starved Rock Visitor Center where you can view the bird feeders, prairie garden, and exhibits within the visitor center depicting the parks history, geology, and ecology. Movies in the park are also available inside of the visitor center by request from 9 to 3:30 daily.

Q: What are the trails like? Are they paved, muddy, icy, or hard to climb?

A: Trails are natural dirt and sand paths with several wooden or metal staircases and decking which cover the 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, and a change of dry socks and clean shoes for the ride home. Please do not wash your shoes off in the park's sinks.

Summer: Trails will be dry, and waterfalls will dry out in the months of June 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 and pets become exposed to heat exhaustion and even heat stroke during the hot summer months of hiking at either park.

Overlooks such as Starved Rock, Eagle Cliff, and Lovers Leap will have the most exposure to the sun. Canyons will stay shaded and cool in the summer.

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 2nd to 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.

Q: What is the best trail?

A: Every trail and feature 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.

Q: Where can I find trail suggestions?

A: Visitors can view trail suggestions and trail suggestion videos online through the IDNR Starved Rock page at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/activity/park.starvedrock.html .

Q: Where can I find trail maps?

A: Maps can be downloaded through the IDNR Starved Rock page at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/park.starvedrock.html or QR codes located on stationary trail maps throughout the park can be downloaded directly to visitor cellphones. Trail maps are also located at every parking lot, Lodge, Visitor Center, and trail intersection throughout the park. The park is going paperless (maps) in 2023.

Q: Are there bathrooms or water fountains on the trails?

A: 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, Starved Rock Visitor Center, Lone Point Shelter, La Salle Canyon parking lot, Overflow parking, and the main parking lot in front of the Starved Rock Visitor Center.

Trash cans are located at trailheads, parking lots, and picnic areas only. Visitors are asked to leave no trace and pack out anything they pack into the trails. This helps the park stay green and clean.

Q: Are there any trails or areas that are closed?

A: Always refer these types of questions to the visitor center. Not a phone call on weekends, please. We ask that visitors stop in at the visitor center or view the IDNR website online at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/park.starvedrock.html for park closures.

Currently, the Brown Bluff trail above French Canyon, Tonti Canyon, and Owl Canyon Overlook is closed to all visitors. Other closures that will happen periodically are due to flooding or trail repairs and will be posted on the park's phone message as well as the IDNR website.

Q: Where are the waterfalls?

A: 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 late June through October. Heavy rains, snowfall, and snow melt in the months of November through March 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 canyon waterfalls that are accessible to visitors: French, Wildcat, La Salle, Ottawa, Kaskaskia, Illinois, St. Louis, and Aurora.

Q: When and where can I see icefalls?

A: Icefalls can be found in the sandstone canyons along green-marked trails at the park in the month of January. There are 8: French (not suitable in winter for those without micro cleats or Yaktrax), Wildcat, La Salle (not suitable in winter for those without micro cleats or Yaktrax), Ottawa, Kaskaskia, Illinois, St. Louis, and Aurora. Tonti is closed to hikers.

Ice climbers can view further information on the Starved Rock page through the IDNR website at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/activity/park.starvedrock.html and follow Ice Climbing Starved Rock on Facebook for updates given by local ice climbers during the season.

Q: Where and when can I see bald eagles?

A: 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 the month of January depending on the temperatures that season.

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

Q: When will leaves start to change color in the Fall? When is the peak color in the Fall?

A: Leaves typically begin changing to yellows, browns, oranges, reds, and purples during the 2nd and 3rd weeks of October. Peak season is never the same time of year. It fluctuates based on the weather seen during the growing season the previous summer.

Q: Are dogs allowed?

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

Q: Does the park allow rock climbing?

A: Rock climbing is not allowed anywhere within the park due to the fragile sandstone geology that composes each of the park's canyons, trail system, and bluffs. Fines for climbing or going off-trail start at \$195 per person.

Q: Can I fly my drone at the park?

A: Drones are not allowed at Starved Rock State Park due to the number of visitors on the trails, picnic area, and overlooks, and the disturbance to wildlife such as the park's nesting bald eagle population.

Q: Can I bike along the trails at Starved Rock State Park?

A: Bikes are not allowed on the trails at Starved Rock due to the fragile sandstone geology, but you can travel just 2 miles south of the park to the Matthiessen Vermillion River Area (NOT allowed at the Dells area of Matthiessen) at Matthiessen State Park where there are biking trails to enjoy!

Q: Is camping allowed along the trails at the park?

A: Camping is only allowed at designated campsites at the Starved Rock State Park Campground located south of the park off Route 71 and E 950th Road. Reservations and further campground information can be found online through the IDNR Starved Rock page at dnr.illinois.gov/parks/camp/park.starvedrock.html