Hocking Hills Hiking Guide
Featuring Hikes In and Around the Hocking Hills Region
**Hocking Hills State Park**

Hocking Hills State Park is comprised of six separate park areas: Old Man’s Cave, Cedar Falls, Ash Cave, Rock House, Cantwell Cliffs and Whispering Cave. Each area features unique and spectacular geology. You’ll find restrooms and picnic tables at each area and, of course, hiking trails. Old Man’s Cave also features a visitors center and dining lodge. Sadly, the dining lodge was lost to fire in December 2016, but the state has committed to rebuilding it. These six areas are located on state routes and easy to find using the enclosed map.

**Web Site:** [ODNR - Hocking Hills State Park](http://www.ohiodnr.com/hockinghills) (a link to a HHSP map can be found on this site)

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**Old Man’s Cave**

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Old Man’s Cave is the most well-known of the six park areas within HHSP and features a spectacular one-mile long gorge with waterfalls, recess caves and sandstone cliffs. Several trails traverse the gorge’s rim and floor, allowing for hikes of varying distance. The Buckeye Trail passes through the gorge and connects to Cedar Falls and Ash Cave. This six-mile stretch of the BT connecting these three sites is also known as the Grandma Gatewood Trail.

**Trail Miles:** 1+

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** If you only complete one hike in the Hocking Hills, hike from Old Man’s Cave to Cedar Falls and back. This is—in our opinion—the best hike in Ohio. The roundtrip distance is approximately 5.5 miles. We recommend hiking the Gorge Overlook Trail through the beautiful hemlock forests to Cedar Falls and bringing the Grandma Gatewood Trail in the gorge back to Old Man’s Cave. Old Man’s Cave and Cedar Falls are both wildly popular with tourists in summer and fair weather weekends throughout the year, but most people don’t venture too far from either attraction. You will find some solitude in the middle stretches of trail between the two sites.

**Web Site:** [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Ohio’s Best Hike](http://www.naturespointe.com/blog/ohios-best-hike)

**Trail Map:** [Old Man’s Cave Trail Map](http://www.ohiodnr.com/hockinghills)

**Trailhead Location:** Google Maps, 19852 State Route 664 South, Logan, OH 43138. Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.4378, -82.5393.

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**Cedar Falls**

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Cedar Falls forms the head of the Queer Creek Gorge. The gorge at Old Man’s Cave is actually a side gorge to the larger one created by Queer Creek. Queer Creek tumbles magnificently over sandstone cliffs to create Cedar Falls. The height of the falls is 50’. Early settlers to the region mistakenly identified hemlock trees in the gorge as cedar trees, hence the name Cedar Falls. The falls can dry up to a trickle in summer and fall.

**Trail Miles:** .5+

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Every visitor to Hocking Hills should see Cedar Falls. If you are a veteran visitor to the Hocking Hills and wish to explore some other trails near Cedar Falls, a few options exist. One option is to complete in reverse the 5.5-mile hike mentioned above in the Old Man’s Cave text. Two other options exist starting from the same point on a state forest access road found at the back of the farthest parking lot. This is a continuation of the Buckeye Trail (aka Grandma Gatewood Trail) also mentioned above in the Old Man’s Cave text. The first .3 mile are coincident but then separate with the Buckeye Trail heading south to Ash
Cave and the other route following the access road along a cliff line that forms the south rim of the Queer Creek Gorge. Both hikes are discussed in more detail following the links below.

**Web Site:** [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Cedar Falls to Ash Cave](#), [Nature’s Pointe Blog – A Hike Beyond Cedar Falls](#)

**Trail Map:** [Cedar Falls Trail Map](#)

**Trailhead Location:** [Google Maps](#), Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.4163, -82.5248

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**Ash Cave**

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Ash Cave is the southernmost attraction in Hocking Hills State Park, and it might just be the most spectacular. Ash Cave is an enormous horseshoe-shaped recess cave measuring 700’ from end to end, 100’ in depth and 90’ high. A small stream cascades over the rim and forms a small pool below. In winter, an ice cone forms and slowly grows upward toward the roof of the cave. Ash Cave is named after a huge pile of ashes found in the cave by early settlers. The source of the ash is believed to have been from generations of Indian campfires. Ash Cave is the easiest of the 5 attractions in Hocking Hills State Park to visit. A .25-mile paved trail leads from the parking lot to the cave.

**Trail Miles:** .5+

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Ash Cave is awe inspiring. The true scale of it is almost hard to grasp. Visiting Ash Cave never grows old. If you happen to be in the Hocking Hills during a period of heavy rain (as in the picture above), go visit Ash Cave. The waterfall here grows immensely and blasts over the rim of the cave’s roof. The natural acoustic properties of the cave magnify the waterfall’s sound. The collective scene is amazing. If you seek a more adventurous hike, take the steps to the top of the cave and continue on the Buckeye Trail (aka Grandma Gatewood Trail) all the way to Cedar Falls in approx. 2.3 miles or Old Man’s Cave in approx. 5 miles.

**Web Site:** [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Cedar Falls to Ash Cave](#)

**Trail Map:** [Ash Cave Trail Map](#)

**Trailhead Location:** [Google Maps](#), Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.3960, -82.5454

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**Rock House**

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Rock House is the only true cave in Hocking Hills State Park. It most certainly is a house of rock, complete with a 200’ main hallway (corridor) and seven windows poised between massive sandstone columns. Its uniqueness makes it a must see attraction when visiting the Hocking Hills. Rock House possesses quite a varied history of inhabitants going back to early Native Americans to more recently, if you believe local folklore, a hideout for robbers, bootleggers and murderers.

**Trail Miles:** .8

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Rock House is well worth the visit. Kids will love it. Photography buffs will have fun with the colors, contrasts and smooth contours of the sculpted rock columns. It can be a real challenge to shoot inside the Rock House because of the darkness, but then again we’ve never used expensive equipment. The trail system here is short and not connected to any other trails so the opportunity for longer hikes is not possible. The trails and steps carved into bedrock can be challenging in winter so hiking boot strap-on traction cleats, like YaxTrax, are very beneficial.
Web Site: Nature’s Pointe Blog – Winter Rock House
Trail Map: Rock House Trail Map
Trailhead Location: Google Maps, Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.4952, -82.6152

Cantwell Cliffs
County: Hocking
Description: Cantwell Cliffs is the northernmost of the five Hocking Hills State Park attractions and features a series of high cliffs formed by erosion at the headwaters of Buck Run. The highest cliffs stand over 150’ tall. Hiking trails take visitors along the cliff line and into the valley below. Cantwell Cliffs is the farthest removed from the cluster of attractions to the south and as a result doesn’t see quite so many visitors.
Trail Miles: 1.6
Nature’s Pointe Adds: This is a beautiful area of high cliff walls. During wet weather, waterfalls will form and plunge to the valley floor below. The up and down nature of the trails and many steps provide a good workout, so good shoes or boots are a must. If you can visit during the week in the off-season, there is a good chance you can have this site all to yourself.

Web Site: Nature’s Pointe Blog – Cantwell Cliffs
Trail Map: Cantwell Cliffs Trail Map
Trailhead Location: Google Maps, Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.5388, -82.5767

Whispering Cave
County: Hocking
Description: Whispering Cave is the second largest recess cave in the region, second only to Ash Cave. In 2017, ODNR opened old trails that hadn’t been used in decades in order to provide access to it. The trailhead is located at the Hocking Hills Dining Lodge (currently being rebuilt after a 2016 fire). The impressive cave and rock walls form part of the north wall of Queer Creek Gorge, not far downstream from where the rugged gorge (home of Old Man’s Cave) carved by Old Man’s Creek terminates into it. Trails from here connect to the Grandma Gatewood (Buckeye) Trail on the valley floor, providing access Old Man’s Cave and Cedar Falls, and points beyond.
Trail Miles: 1.2
Nature’s Pointe Adds: Whispering Cave and the sandstone walls adjacent to the trail leading up to the cave are just another fascinating example of why the geology of the Hocking Hills attracts so many visitors. For the hiker, it is nice to have another trailhead with trails connecting to those in the gorge, which offers the option for extended hikes to Old Man’s Cave or Cedar Falls from here. With the opening of this trailhead, it will—once the dining lodge is rebuilt—be possible for the first time to hike to the dining lodge staying strictly on trails from other trailheads in and around the gorge. How fun to start at Cedar Falls or Old Man’s Cave for an out-and-back hike to the dining lodge where lunch or beverages can be enjoyed before embarking on the return hike. Expect lots of steps and some steep sections en route to the cave.

Web Site: ODNR - Hocking Hills State Park
Trail Map: Whispering Cave Trail Map
Trailhead Location: Google Maps, 20160 State Route 664 South, Logan, OH 43138. Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.4258, -82.5518.
Hocking State Forest

Hocking State Forest encompasses over 9,600 acres of land. During daylight hours forest lands are open to the public for hiking, except in two permit-only nature preserves located within forest boundaries: Sheick Hollow and Little Rocky Hollow. The only established trails in the forest include 31 miles of bridle trails and several miles of the Buckeye Trail. Bridle trails are open to hikers but many of them are too rough and/or muddy for safe travel. A 99-acre rock climbing and rappelling area is located just east of Conkle’s Hollow and provides the only legal area in the forest to engage in these activities. Unlike the state parks, few developed facilities can be found in the forest.

Web Site: [ODNR Hocking State Forest](a link to a forest map can be found on this page)

Buckeye Trail through Rocky Hollow

County: Hocking

Description: Rocky Hollow is a beautiful, secluded 2.5-mile long north-south running hollow lying almost entirely within the state forest. The hollow is drained by the Rocky Branch of Big Pine Creek. Sandstone cliffs line both sides of the hollow for most of its length. Hemlock is the predominant tree found on the cooler lower slopes and bottom while hardwoods are found farther upslope. Several smaller side hollows drain into the bigger main hollow and contain waterfalls where their streams intersect the main hollow’s cliff line. The blue-blazed Buckeye Trail traverses the east side of the hollow for much of the way, staying at a mid-elevation that’s just atop the cliff line. Often, the main stream can be seen over 100’ below.

The Buckeye Trail can be accessed from two trailheads at either end of the hollow. From the north, a pullout can be found on Rocky Fork Road where the Buckeye Trail crosses the road. From the south, a small gravel parking area can be found on Kreashbaum Road, approximately .4 mile north of Big Pine Road.

Trail Miles: 2.8 (one way between trailheads)

Nature’s Pointe Adds: We love this hike! The scenery is classic Hocking Hills: vibrant green moss covered sandstone cliffs, waterfalls and fern dotted rocky hillsides all cloaked by a wonderful hemlock forest. Other big pluses for us include very light usage and excellent trail construction and maintenance. This is one hike where you can put your feet into cruise control and enjoy the scenery without worrying about getting tripped up or losing the trail. The only stream crossing of Rocky Branch occurs approximately .5 from the southern trailhead. Although generally not problematic, during periods of wet weather and higher stream flow you will likely need to remove shoes and socks in order to make the crossing.

Web Site: n/a

Trail Map: [Hocking State Forest Map](


Rock Climbing and Rappelling Area

County: Hocking

Description: This area is located 1 mile east of Conkle’s Hollow on Big Pine Road. A gravel parking area is located on the north side of the road; the climbing area on the south. Numerous trails established by climbers crisscross the area, especially in the flatter areas leading up to the base of the cliffs. The Buckeye Trail travels through this area as well. A nearly one-mile unbroken wall of impressive cliffs weaving in and out of three hollows bisects the area to create the vertical challenges climbers and rappellers come here for. Big Spring Hollow is the most spectacular of the three hollows and features a 125’+ waterfall.

Trail Miles: 2+
Nature’s Pointe Adds: You don’t need to be a rock climber to enjoy this area. Non-climbers will really enjoy exploring the cliffs and nooks & crannies found within from above and below the cliff line. Our favorite hike is into Big Spring Hollow. Near the head of the hollow you’ll start heading steeply up the hillside to the left (east) of the stream. Toward the top, a couple minor rock scrambles are required. Once on top, you can peer over the edge of the waterfall, if you dare, before picking up the Buckeye Trail. Unfortunately, horses are allowed on this section of the BT. You’ll follow the blue-blazed BT along the top of the cliffs for a few tenths of a mile before dropping through the cliff line, past an interesting balanced rock feature, and eventually back to the valley floor. This area is typically not very busy and is a good choice if you wish to experience the rugged landscape the Hocking Hills are known for without crowds. The trails here are a little less improved than in the state parks, however.

Web Site: n/a
Trail Map: Rock Climbing & Rappelling Area Map
Trailhead Location: Google Maps, Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.4586, -82.5584

Long Hollow & Chapel Cave
County: Hocking
Description: Long Hollow is a nearly one-mile long beautiful hollow full of hemlock trees, cliffs and caves. It is accessed directly from the back (north side) of the gravel parking area used for the rock climbing and rappelling area discussed above. The head of the hollow is shaped by sheer cliff walls rising to 100’. A waterfall trickles over the cliff’s edge most of the year and falls onto the rocks below before flowing into the stream that drains the hollow. In a side hollow, approximately .7 mile into Long Hollow, resides a large recess cave named Chapel Cave, or 21 Horse Cave, depending on who you talk to. Bridle trails are the only established trails in Long Hollow and the surrounding state forest.
Trail Miles: 2+
Nature’s Pointe Adds: Long Hollow is another great out-of-the-way location to see classic Hocking Hills scenery without the crowds. Bridle trails (white blazes) are the only established trails in the hollow. They often can be muddy and rough in many spots so when we hike here we often end up walking beside them or in the creek bed if it is dry. The hollow is pretty free from low growth vegetation so finding your own way up the hollow is not difficult. For first timers, Chapel Cave can be a little difficult to find. It is located on a white-blazed side trail that forks right (second fork) and heads uphill toward a cliff line. You’ll likely notice first a wooden fence uphill to your right demarcating the side trail’s edge before reaching the side trail intersection. The side trail dead ends at the cave, for horses anyway. You can visit Long Hollow and Chapel Cave as an out-and-back hike or make it part of a longer 4.6-mile circuit hike that also visits Airplane Rock, which is discussed below. We’ve created a map of the circuit hike that you’ll find using the link below. Also find below a link to a detailed description of the hike posted on our blog.
Web Site: Nature’s Pointe Blog - Long Hollow/Chapel Cave/Airplane Rock Circuit Hike
Trail Map: Long Hollow/Chapel Cave/Airplane Rock Circuit Hike Map
Trailhead Location: Google Maps, Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.4586, -82.5584

Airplane Rock
County: Hocking
Description: Airplane Rock is an exposed rock face that, when standing atop it, offers a fantastic vista of
surrounding forested hillsides to the south. Looking north, a view up narrow Crane hollow is afforded. The name of this feature comes from the shape of the rock when viewed from the side—it is in the shape of an airplane’s nose. Bridle trails provide the only trail access to Airplane Rock. A horse corral, latrine and picnic tables are a few improvements found nearby. A wooden fence keeps horses from stepping out onto the rock and from disturbing a delicate clifftop plant community. Parking for a hike up to Airplane Rock is found at the rock climbing and rappelling area (discussed previously), or at a secondary parking area on Hockman Road.

**Trail Miles:** 2+

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** There is no signage directing you to Airplane Rock. It does appear on the Hocking State Forest bridle trail map. We’ve created a more detailed map of the bridle trails to Airplane Rock (link below) and included several trails beyond to create a 4.6-mile circuit hike incorporating Long Hollow and Chapel Cave. We’ve also posted a detailed description and pics of the circuit hike on our blog. You will find that link below as well. Included in the blog post are a couple different route options for reaching Airplane Rock. You do not have to hike the full circuit to visit this scenic feature as the post will outline.

**Web Site:** [Nature’s Pointe Blog - Long Hollow/Chapel Cave/Airplane Rock Circuit Hike](#)

**Trail Map:** [Long Hollow/Chapel Cave/Airplane Rock Circuit Hike Map](#)


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**Conkle’s Hollow State Nature Preserve**

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Conkle’s Hollow is a spectacular narrow gorge with sandstone walls as high as 200’. It is one of the deepest—if not the deepest—gorges in Ohio. Numerous seasonal waterfalls spill over cliff edges. Well established trails allow visitors to explore the cool, lush interior of the gorge and the warmer, drier rim with its wonderful vistas, which are some of the best in the Hocking Hills. The Gorge Trail is paved for handicap accessibility most of the way. The change in climate from gorge floor to rim creates an interesting variety of habitats and plant communities. This preserve is the most developed state nature preserve in Hocking Hills. Most visitors don’t realize it is not part of Hocking Hills State Park. The preserve is located just off State Route 374 at Big Pine Road.

**Trail Miles:** 3.5

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** We love Conkle’s Hollow! The interior of the gorge is such a rugged and beautiful place you’ll feel like in the course of a half-mile you’ve walked out of Ohio and into another world. The interior’s mid-summer lushness is tropic-like with contrasts of rock and snow in winter simply beautiful. The gorge’s rim presents many wonderful vistas. We suggest hiking the Rim Trail clockwise to keep the better east side vistas in front of you at all times.

**Web Site:** [ODNR – Conkle’s Hollow](#), [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Conkle’s Hollow](#)

**Trail Map:** [Conkle’s Hollow Brochure with Trail Map](#)

**Trailhead Location:** Google Maps, Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.4525, -82.5714.
**Rockbridge State Nature Preserve**

County: Hocking

Description: Rockbridge Nature Preserve is home to Ohio’s largest natural bridge, measuring 100’ long, 10’ to 20’ wide and 50’ high. It was created when the middle roof section of a recess cave collapsed, leaving an arch of Blackhand sandstone spanning the head of a ravine. The preserve has frontage on the Hocking River and a short trail leads to the river from the bridge. By renting a canoe from one of the local liversies, it is possible to access the bridge from the river.

Trail Miles: 2.75

Nature’s Pointe Adds: The natural rock bridge found here is unlike any other geological feature found in the Hocking Hills. This in and of itself make this preserve worthy of a visit. Walking across the bridge creates an interesting sensation, but it’s probably not suitable for those with a fear of heights. The trail system consists of two looping trails. The Rock Shelter Trail doesn’t offer any noteworthy features but it is a nice walk if you wish to extend your hike here. If a zipping sound is heard while standing at the bridge or near the banks of the Hocking River, it is most likely originating from nearby Hocking Hills Canopy Tours.


Trail Map: Rockbridge SNP Trail Map

Trailhead Location: [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps), Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.5663, -82.4993

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**Saltpetre Cave State Nature Preserve**

County: Hocking

Description: This small 14-acre preserve features a spectacular cave complex unlike anywhere else in Ohio. The deepest recess caves in the state are found here, with two measuring well over 100’ deep. One cave features a natural rock-arched entrance. The caves are named for potassium nitrate (saltpetre) that forms on the ceiling of several recesses. Saltpetre is a principal ingredient of gunpowder, but it also possesses many medicinal properties. This preserve requires a permit to access. A request for a permit can be found on ODNR’s web site using the link below. Directions and a trail map are sent with the permit.

Trail Miles: .75

Nature’s Pointe Adds: Wow!...That about sums up this spectacular place. Who knew 14 acres could possess so many unique qualities, all cloaked by hemlocks and hidden from the view of unsuspecting passersby traveling a nearby road. The caves are so interesting to explore, but the property as a whole is amazing. We suggest taking a flashlight because the caves are pretty dark at the farthest points from entry. Plus, you can see what is crawling on the ceiling above your head. Cave crickets mostly. We will keep the location of the preserve a secret and let you go through the proper channels of obtaining a permit. We will tell you, though, for planning purposes, it’s near Conkle’s Hollow.

Web Site: [ODNR – Saltpetre Cave](https://www.ohiodnr.com), [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Saltpetre Cave](http://www.naturespointe.com)

Trail Map: received with permit

Trailhead Location: location revealed with permit

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**Little Rocky Hollow State Nature Preserve**

County: Hocking

Description: Little Rocky Hollow is another permit-only preserve that encompasses 259 acres of hemlocks,
hardwoods and sandstone cliffs in a lightly visited hollow east of Conkle’s Hollow. The only established trail is an old route of the Buckeye Trail that crosses the preserve from west to east. Trail access to the preserve starts at a roadside parking area and heads across state forest land before dropping into the hollow. Off trail exploring is permitted with a permit. A permit can be requested from ODNR using the link below.

**Trail Miles:** 1

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Little Rocky Hollow is one of those few places in the Hocking Hills that truly feels wild. You’ll see very little of the preserve if you only stick to the blue-blazed trail that crosses it, so we recommend off-trail exploring. The main hollow is approximately 1.5 miles in length north to south, but you can easily hike miles more than that and spend an entire day here if you include exploring the dozen or so side hollows. If you are seeking seclusion and respite from more crowded attractions in the state park, you have found the place.

**Web Site:** [ODNR – Little Rocky Hollow](#)

**Trail Map:** n/a

**Trailhead Location:** location revealed with permit

### Sheick Hollow State Nature Preserve

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Yet another permit-only preserve, the 151-acre Sheick Hollow preserve features a narrow, cool canyon composed of Blackhand sandstone walls. The cool environment creates a habitat suited for plants typically found in northern Canada, as well as a home for several rare nesting birds. Numerous waterfalls form during periods of wet weather.

**Trail Miles:** n/a

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** It’s been too long since we were last in Sheick Hollow to remember much other than that it is a beautiful place. Sheick Hollow is the next hollow west of Little Rocky Hollow discussed above and nothing but state lands lies between them, opening the possibility to explore both hollows in one trip using an old route of the Buckeye Trail as a connector. A really nice 100’ waterfall plunges into the hollow at its head.

**Web Site:** [ODNR – Sheick Hollow](#)

**Trail Map:** n/a

**Trailhead Location:** location revealed with permit

### Boch Hollow State Nature Preserve

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Boch Hollow is a large preserve encompassing 607 acres of wooded hills and hollows adjacent to the valley of Rush Creek in the northern reaches of the Hocking Hills. This preserve features less of the rugged, rocky landscape found in Hocking Hills State Park to the south but it does offer an opportunity to see a wide variety of habitat types, including: mature woodlands, ridgetop fields, wet bottomlands, pine plantations and rock outcroppings. Boch Hollow is a mission-centric preserve. That mission is to serve as a learning site for hands-on environmental education of Appalachian Ohio ecology. The preserve’s north trailhead, and most central to the trail system, is located 7.5 miles north of Logan on Beach Camp Road, .75 mile east of State Route 664. Two other trailheads are located on the preserve’s west and east sides.

**Trail Miles:** 7.2

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** The area in and around the preserve is very peaceful and scenic. The preserve doesn’t see big crowds so you’ll likely see few others on the trail during your hike. Most trails are wide and in excellent
condition. One of the more scenic spots in the preserve is near the beginning of a hike from the north trailhead. Approximately .7 mile from the trailhead, the trail arrives at a lovely pond with a gazebo standing near water’s edge. Another scenic spot is Robinson Falls, which you will not find on any trail. The falls are located in a narrow gorge that is accessible by first obtaining a free permit. Although we’ve only visited in the winter, spring wildflowers surely put on a good show across the preserve. For a change of scenery and pace, we recommend a visit to Boch Hollow.

**Web Site:** [ODNR – Boch Hollow](#), [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Boch Hollow State Nature Preserve](#)

**Trail Map:** [Boch Hollow Trail Map](#); map posted at trailhead kiosks


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**Clear Creek Metro Park**

**County:** Hocking and Fairfield

**Description:** Clear Creek Metro Park and the adjacent Clear Creek (Allen F. Beck) State Nature Preserve protect over 5.5 stream miles and 5,300 acres on the north and south sides of Clear Creek in southern Fairfield and northern Hocking counties. The topography is heavily dissected and interspersed with high cliffs and hemlock dense rocky ravines. The park is home to an amazing array of plant and animal species—over 2200 have been identified, including colonies of endangered rhododendron. A well-established trail network visits a variety of habitat and terrain types. Trail difficulty ranges from easy to strenuous depending on whether you are walking creekside or ascending a steep ridge. Other park improvements include picnic areas, plus one picnic shelter, and restrooms. Fishing is allowed in Clear Creek at several fishing access points and in 5-acre Lake Ramona. Park ranger led hikes and programs are offered throughout the year and allow participants to visit remote parts of the park not open to the public or to learn about the park’s plant and animal life.

**Trail Miles:** 12

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** We love this wild, rugged park and visit often to either hike or fly fish (Clear Creek is stocked annually with brown trout). If you are limited on time and can only drive through the park, we recommend it and don’t think you’ll be disappointed. The park is easily accessed off US-33 between Logan and Lancaster. For hikers, you really can’t go wrong with any trail you choose. Two of our favorites, however, are the Hemlock Trail and the Cemetery Ridge Trail. Both are strenuous through the ascent sections but once at ridge top level they flatten out and offer pleasant ridge walking. The Cemetery Ridge Trail offers an especially long and pleasant ridge walk, passing an 1800’s era barn along the way.

**Web Site:** [Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks – Clear Creek](#), [ODNR – Clear Creek (Allen F. Beck) State Nature Preserve](#), [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Clear Creek Metro Park Hike](#)

**Trail Map:** [Clear Creek Metro Park Map](#); maps also available at trailhead kiosks

**Trailhead Location:** [Google Maps](#), Lat/Long Coordinates (Valley View picnic area): 39.6002, -82.6316. There are multiple trailheads in the park.

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**Rock Stalls Natural Sanctuary**

**County:** Hocking

**Description:** Rock Stalls is privately owned nature preserve and is just a small part of the much larger 1200-acre
Camp Akita, a summer camp owned by First Community Church of Columbus. The 70-acre Rock Stalls property has been made available for the general public to visit and enjoy. The main feature of the preserve is a sandstone gorge very characteristic in nature to Old Man’s Cave and other Hocking Hills attractions but at a noticeably smaller scale. Waterfalls can be found at the head of the gorge. The preserve is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Other than trails, no improvements are found here. Rock Stalls is located in northern Hocking Hills not far from Boch Hollow preserve discussed previously.

**Trail Miles:** approx. 1.5

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Rock Stalls is a lovely preserve and a fine place to experience notable Hocking Hills scenery without large crowds. The trail system is basically laid out in a loop with a short section of two-way trail from the trailhead to the loop. We like to hike the loop clockwise, keeping straight at the first trail intersection and taking the north side of the loop down into the gorge. In the gorge, it’s a fairly short but beautiful walk upstream to where a couple waterfalls spill over the cliff walls. For first-timers, finding your way out of the bottom using the south side of the loop can be a little tricky. Tip: follow the gorge headwall around to the right of the waterfalls and up an earthen mound. The trail will give way to narrow steps carved into bedrock very near cliff’s edge—scary for those with a fear of heights—and then wooden steps farther up. It’s uphill back to the trailhead.

**Web Site:** n/a

**Trail Map:** n/a

**Trailhead Location:** Google Maps, Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.6264, -82.4623. The trailhead can be hard to find so here are specific directions: take State Route 664 North out of Logan to a left turn onto Logan-Hornsmill Road. At a three-way fork, turn right onto Rock Stull Road and then turn right into the trailhead parking area after 0.4 mile.

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**Rhododendron Cove State Nature Preserve**

**County:** Fairfield

**Description:** This small but magnificent preserve—only 75 acres—is home to likely the largest colony of native rhododendron in the state. Sandstone cliffs near ridgetop level bisect the entire property. Cooler north facing slopes below the cliffs create a favorable environment for rhododendron. Rhododendron bloom in late June to early July, making this a spectacular time to visit. Other members in the heath family of plants found here on the dry ridges include: mountain laurel, blueberry, deer berry and azalea. Rhododendron cove is located just off US-33. Following signs to the adjacent Wahkeena Nature Preserve will take you to the parking area. Trails are the only improvements in the preserve. Brochures with a trail map are available at a trailhead kiosk.

**Trail Miles:** 2.5

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Walking the trail from the trailhead to the top of the ridge where the colonies of rhododendron are found is like walking out of Ohio and into the Appalachian Mountains. These plants really add a mountain feel to the landscape. A word about the trail: it gains most of the elevation in short, but very steep section. If you can make it to the top, you will be fine. This preserve is within earshot of US-33 and a large Columbia Gas pumping facility so the noise can be a little bit of a distraction from the secluded feel this preserve projects. Don’t let this discourage you from visiting here.

**Web Site:** ODNR – Rhododendron Cove, Nature’s Pointe Blog – Rhododendron Cove

**Trail Map:** at trailhead

**Trailhead Location:** Google Maps, 2730 Pump Station Rd SE, Sugar Grove, OH 43155. Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.6315, -82.5586.
**Wahkeena Nature Preserve**

**County:** Fairfield  

**Description:** Wahkeena is a Yakima Indian word meaning “most beautiful”, and it is a most appropriate name for this 150-acre preserve located near the northern extent of the Hocking Hills. Encompassing wetlands to dry ridgetops, the varied topography is home to an impressive number of plant and animal species, including: 30 species of ferns, several species of native orchids, 100 species of birds and 25 species of animals. Rhododendron and azalea are plants of special note. Wahkeena is one of the few places in Hocking Hills to view beaver. A nature center features displays on wildlife, plants life, geology and local history. A gift shop is located in the nature center as well. Wahkeena is open seasonally from late March to early November, Wednesday through Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. There is no cost to visit. Wahkeena is administered by the nonprofit organization Ohio History Connection and managed by Fairfield County Historical Parks. The preserve is easily accessed from US-33 south of Lancaster, OH.  

**Trail Miles:** 1.5  

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Wahkeena is a very family-friendly preserve. The nature center has many informative displays both children and adults will find interesting. Before hitting the trail, be sure to pick up a self-guided map in the nature center to begin an interpretive hike of the 1.5-mile trail system. The map points out and describes mainly seasonal plants and trees passed along the way, plus a few non-plant related points of interest are featured as well. Wahkeena is located adjacent to Rhododendron Cove State Nature Preserve and not far from Clear Creek Metro Park (both discussed previously) providing for an opportunity to spend a day visiting several beautiful areas.  


**Trail Map:** provided at nature center  

**Trailhead Location:** [Google Maps](#), 2200 Pump Station Road, Sugar Grove, OH 43155. Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.6292, -82.5694.  

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**Christmas Rocks State Nature Preserve**

**County:** Fairfield  

**Description:** Christmas Rocks is another wonderful preserve in the northern Hocking Hills. At the center of this 533-acre preserve is a prominent rock outcropping named Jacobs Ladder. From atop the Ladder, nearly 300’ feet above Arney Run below, southerly & easterly vistas sweep across the Clear Creek Valley to wooded hills beyond. Well established trails in two loops allow for shorter or longer hike options. Trails are the only improvements in the preserve.  

**Trail Miles:** 4.7  

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Christmas Rocks is yet another gem of a preserve to add to your tour of parks and preserves in the northern Hocking Hills. Trails start in the valley of Arney Run and become steep in places as you gain elevation to reach adjacent ridgetops. On the southern loop, views from the top of Jacobs Ladder are great any time of year. The northern loop offers nice ridge walking through pines and mountain laurel. Park at the gravel trailhead parking lot next to Arney Run Park, a
small county park featuring a preserved covered bridge. Walk north a short distance to a gravel road named Oil Mill Hollow Road to enter the preserve.

**Web Site:** [ODNR – Christmas Rocks](http://odnr.org), [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Christmas Rocks](http://naturespointe.org)

**Trail Map:** at trailhead kiosk

**Trailhead Location:** Google Maps, 2340 Meister Rd SW, Lancaster, OH 43130. Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.6391, -82.6501. The preserve’s location falls outside the limits of the enclosed regional map.

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**Tar Hollow State Park and Forest**

**County:** Hocking, Ross and Vinton

**Description:** Tar Hollow State Park consists of 600 acres within a 16,000-acre heavily wooded surrounding state forest. The park and forest lie in the rugged foothills of the Appalachian Plateau just west of the Hocking Hills. The elevation relief here is noticeably greater than in the Hocking Hills, but the Tar Hollow area, in contrast, does not feature any magnificent caves, waterfalls or cliffs found just ten miles to the east. A lake, trails, campground, general store, to name a few, are facilities found in the state park. The state forest is less developed, containing mostly bridle and hiking trails, plus primitive camps for hikers and horseback riders. For hikers, the remote 17-mile red-blazed Logan Trail travels through the northern half of the forest in two loops. The loops are approximately equal in distance and join at the restored Brush Ridge Fire Tower. Either loop can be completed as a longer day hike. The main trailhead is located below the dam at Pine Lake in the state park.

**Trail Miles:** 24.5

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Tar Hollow is a lightly used park and forest and finding a sense of solitude here is pretty easy most of the time. If you cannot get out for a hike, driving the many miles of forest roads is an enjoyable alternative. The sense of remoteness might be a little unnerving to you if visiting from an urban area. Tar Hollow is a working forest. Sadly, this means timber harvesting is active here. The Logan Trail is one trail that has seen negative impacts over the past several years from clear-cuts and burns. If you plan to hike either loop of the Logan Trail, be warned: re-routes can be put into place at any time due to harvesting activities. The result could be a much longer hike than anticipated. Checking on trail status with the Division of Forestry is something to consider before planning a hike.

**Web Site:** [ODNR – Tar Hollow State Forest](http://odnr.org), [ODNR – Tar Hollow State Park](http://odnr.org), [BackpackOhio.com - Tar Hollow State Forest Logan Trail](http://backpackohio.com)

**Trail Map:** [Tar Hollow State Park & Forest Trail Map](http://trailmap.com)

**Trailhead Location:** Google Maps, 16396 Tar Hollow Road, Laurelville, OH 43135. Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.3839, -82.7474.

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**Lake Hope State Park**

**County:** Vinton

**Description:** Lake Hope State Park—2,983 acres in size—and its 120-acre lake lie in the middle of the nearly 27,000-acre Zaleski State Forest. The entire region is sparsely populated and densely wooded with deep ravines and no shortage of rocky outcroppings. Remnants of historical periods of iron ore extraction/smelting and then coal extraction in the form of old roads, building foundations, mine entrances, spoils and more are still visible under the forest canopy. The chimney and foundation of the Hope Furnace on the north side of the lake in the state park is the most prominent and visited of these historical remains. Combined, the park and forest provide ample opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to engage in a wide range of activities from hiking, backpacking,
mountain biking, horseback riding, boating, fishing and more. In the park, 10 miles of hiking trails traverse the hills and hollows, with many miles paralleling the shoreline of the scenic lake. The Lake Hope Lodge features a restaurant specializing in made from scratch cuisine using Ohio based products.

**Trail Miles:** 10.5

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** Lake Hope and Zaleski State Forest are technically outside the Hocking Hills region—this area could be considered its own region—but the proximity to Hocking Hills along with the area’s natural and historical qualities make this region worthy of exploration. We come to this area when possible to hike and then reward our efforts with a meal at the always delicious dining lodge. The vista from the dining lodge looking out over the lake to the hills beyond is beautiful and worth the drive up to the lodge even if not dining. Our favorite hike is a loop starting on the Hope Furnace Trail using the trailhead at Hope Furnace on State Route 278. Even though the trail map (link below) shows the trail ending at a picnic area on the west side of the lake, you can make this a loop hike by walking roads through the picnic area, by the beach area and then across the lake’s dam to SR 278 where you’ll go left to pick-up the Peninsula Trail back to Hope Furnace. For a shorter hike, the 1.5-mile Olds Hollow Trail is nice. It visits a pioneer cemetery and small cave named Olds Hollow Cave. This trail shares a short segment with the Zaleski Backpack Trail.

**Web Site:** ODNR – Lake Hope State Park

**Trail Map:** Lake Hope State Park & Forest Trail Map

**Trailhead Location:** Google Maps, 27331 State Route 278, McArthur, OH 45651. Lat/Long Coordinates (Hope Furnace): 39.3315, -82.3402. There are multiple trailheads in the park. Lake Hope’s location falls outside the limits of the enclosed regional map.

**Zaleski State Forest**

Zaleski is Ohio’s second largest state forest. A general description of the area in and around the forest was provided in the text for Lake Hope State Park above. Hikers can spend countless days wandering remote hollow bottoms and lonely ridgetops here, which can lead to unexpected finds. We’ve spent many days exploring off-trail areas and have found forgotten mines, fascinating caves and rock formations, and remote valleys filled with beaver ponds. If you prefer to stay on established trails, the 24-mile backpack offers many day hike options.

**Web Site:** ODNR - Zaleski State Forest (a link to a forest map can be found on this page)

**Moonville Tunnel / Moonville Rail Trail**

**County:** Vinton

**Description:** The Moonville Tunnel is not so much a hiking destination as it is a visit to a fascinating and significant icon of the regions past mining history. The abandoned brick-lined railroad tunnel sits deep in the forest along an abandoned stretch of railroad that was once called the loneliest in Ohio. The tunnel was named for a nearby mining town that sprang up along the Marietta and Cincinnati (M&C) Railroad, which was routed through southeastern Ohio in the mid-1850s. Little evidence of the town can be found today. The tunnel is rumored to be haunted and this is what piques visitors’ interest in the tunnel more than anything else. There is no shortage of tales and legends on the Internet of who haunts the tunnel. When the railroad was abandoned in the 1980s, so
went the bridge across Raccoon Creek in front of the tunnel, and many others, too. In the fall of 2016, The Moonville Rail Trail Association (MRTA) finally had raised enough funds to replace the bridge, eliminating the need to reach the tunnel by an unimproved trail adjacent to Raccoon Creek. On either side of the tunnel, several miles of the old railroad grade have been converted to trail and are open for travel; however, many bridges are still in need of replacement. Closer to the village of Zaleski, the rail trail is more complete. A second tunnel with less associated lore and wooden construction, named the King Switch Tunnel, resides on the same abandoned rail line 2.5 miles east of Moonville.

**Trail Miles:** .5+

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** We’ve been to Moonville numerous times and never tire of visiting this interesting place. The uniqueness, the name, the remoteness, the legends of hauntings and perhaps even the colorful graffiti all come together to create a memory of a visit you will unlikely ever forget. If you desire to hike farther during your visit, you can walk east through the tunnel and continue on the railroad grade for .3 mile until you reach another stream crossing. The bridge here has been removed, too. You can either turn around and go back or look for an unofficial trail that leaves the railroad grade to the left and parallels a sweeping curve in the stream for .3 mile before intersecting with the railroad grade again. Once back on the railroad grade, you can then walk another mile east before the next stream crossing, which is not so easy to circumvent, so turning back is advised. The valley east of the tunnel is an especially wild and peaceful place.

**Web Site:** [Nature’s Pointe Blog – Visit the Moonville Tunnel...](#), [MRTA Web Site](#), [MRTA Facebook Page](#)

**Trail Map:** [Moonville Rail Trail Association Map](#), [ODNR - Zaleski State Forest Map](#)

**Trailhead Location:** [Google Maps](#), Lat/Long Coordinates: 39.3083, -82.3245. Moonville’s location falls outside the limits of the enclosed regional map.

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**Zaleski Backpack Trail**

**County:** Vinton

**Description:** The Zaleski Backpack Trail is Ohio’s most popular overnight hiking destination. This scenic trail passes by many points of biological, geological and historical interest, several of which are highlighted in text and marked in the field by numbered Carsonite signs, making this the only self-guided interpretive backpack trail in the state. Descriptions for each numbered sign can be found in the backpack trail’s brochure/map available at the trailhead and online. The main trail’s 24.9 miles are laid out in a long contorted loop, with a cutoff side trail at the southern end and a one-mile section of two-way trail connecting a smaller northern loop. Most hikers refer to the sections of the trail in terms of its *south loop*, *middle loop* and *north loop*. The configuration of the trail offers many trip options to day hikers. The day hike trailhead is located across from the Hope Furnace on State Route 278 while a backpack trailhead is located on Wheelabout Road at Hope Schoolhouse.

**Trail Miles:** 24.9

**Nature’s Pointe Adds:** We’ve competed all loops of the orange-blazed backpack trail several times either as day hikes or overnight backpack trips. The south loop at 10.5 miles, in our opinion, is the most scenic of the three loops. As a day hike, it is an attainable goal for fit hikers. Water and pit latrines can be found at two backpack camps, one near the 2-mile mark and the other at 6.5 miles starting from the day hike trailhead on SR 278. At the 3.9-mile mark, hiking counterclockwise, the trail arrives at a scenic overlook offering nice views across the valley of Hewett Fork. The Moonville Tunnel discussed previously is located in the valley seen from the overlook. This exposed rock face is a great place to sit and enjoy the solitude of the forest and to re-energize with a snack or beverage before continuing on or heading back to the trailhead. As a day hike, to the overlook and back requires
nearly 8 miles of hiking. For any hike, be sure to check the trailhead kiosk for any trail closure or re-route information due to timber harvesting or other activities.

Web Site: BackpackOhio.com – Zaleski Backpack Trail
Trail Map: ODNR - Zaleski State Forest Backpack Trail Map; map also available at a trailhead kiosk

Happy Hiking!