

Spring in Southern Illinois

April 15-19, 2019

Enjoy an early spring getaway with Sarett Nature Center as we explore the southern counties of Illinois. Highlights of this region include many unique natural areas located within Shawnee National Forest, such as Garden of the Gods. State parks, scenic driving byways, interesting rock formations, great wildflower viewing, migrating songbirds, impressive overlooks, and ancient bald cypress swampland are some of the many things we will enjoy. Lodging will be at two different state parks.

Monday, April 15..... **Drive to Cave-In-Rock State Park**

Departure from the nature center will be at 8 a.m. Our destination for the day is Cave-In-Rock State Park located only 6.5 driving hours away. This scenic place is located on high limestone bluffs above the Ohio River. The name of the park is derived from the 55-foot-wide recess in the rock face carved out long ago by erosion. After check-in at the cabins we will walk one of their nature trails. Everyone will dine at the onsite restaurant in the evening.

Tuesday, April 16..... **Garden of the Gods and Rim Rock Trail**

We will journey a short distance north through the Shawnee National Forest and explore a portion of the Garden of the Gods Recreation Area. A quarter mile long trail takes the visitor through some very impressive pillar-like sandstone formations. This trail has steep stair sections and therefore we will take our time here with a very gentle pace. After a picnic lunch we will move on to the nearby Rim Rock wildflower trail. This moderate, half mile trail features sandstone formations, a spring, creek, and many species of wildflowers. This site is considered by many nature enthusiasts to be a natural gem. Our overnight lodging is back at Cave-in-Rock State Park.

Wednesday, April 17..... **Cache River State Natural Area and Ferne Clyffe State Park**

This morning after breakfast and checkout we will drive one hour over to the Cache River State Natural Area. This special habitat has been designated a Wetland of International Importance because of its value to migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Many of the cypress trees here are over 1,000 years old. The group will do an easy walk on the 1.5-mile Heron Pond Trail. This trail features some good wildflower viewing, a bridge over the Cache River, and a boardwalk through a cypress swamp. A short drive north of here will bring us to Ferne Clyffe State Park. After lunch at the park we will walk the 1 mile, moderately rated, Round Bluff Trail. The second half of the trail allows the visitor to see some of the best displays of spring wildflowers in the state. We will also want to do the short, easy, Ferne Clyffe waterfall walk. Later in the afternoon there will be a half hour drive over to Giant City State Park where we are staying in cabins. Dinner will be eaten at the lodge.

Thursday, April 18..... **Giant City State Park**

Our first activity of the day will be a tour of the expansive visitor center to learn about the features of this unique park. Next, we will walk the Giant City Nature Trail. This moderately rated trail meanders amongst large blocks of sandstone bedrock. Lunch will be eaten at the lodge. In the afternoon we will explore the moderate Trillium Trail. This trail features many wildflower species. If there is time left in the day, we will explore another trail. We will stay another night at the state park cabins and eat dinner again at the lodge.

Friday, April 19..... **Journey Back to the Nature Center**

At approximately 9 a.m. we will depart for our return trip to Sarett Nature Center. It is a 6 hour straight through drive. As usual the trip takes longer with restroom breaks and a lunch stop.

Accommodations:

Cave-In-Rock State Park Duplex Cabins: These rooms all have decks overlooking the Ohio River from atop a high bluff. Each room features two queen beds, a futon couch, refrigerator, microwave, coffee maker, shower, and satellite television. All linens and towels are provided.

Giant City Historic Cabins: These quaint one room cabins feature two double beds, full bathrooms, television, and hairdryers. Linens and towels are provided. Unfortunately, there are no coffee makers. You may bring your own and store it in the van if you need that early first cup in the morning.

Historic Giant City Lodge: This cavernous building was built by the Civilian Conservation Core in the 1930's. It was constructed of local sandstone and white oak timbers. It has a rustic beauty all its own.

Wildflower Varieties: The presence of certain species will depend upon temperatures in the area during the time prior to our arrival. Many varieties make an appearance each spring including blue-eyed Mary, which grows in profusion at a location in Giant City State Park.

Trip Cost: \$ 700.00 /person based on double occupancy. This includes:

- Round trip transportation in Sarett Nature Center vans
- Four nights lodging
- Two picnic lunches
- Park entry fees
- Services of nature center naturalists

Deposit: You must pay a \$ 50.00 non-refundable deposit to sign up for this trip.

Membership: You must be a current member of the nature center. (\$50.00/family and \$40.00/individual)

Final Payment: You must have your final payment to us by April 1, 2019.

Cancellation Policy: Every attempt will be made to refund any recoverable costs if you must cancel.

Responsibility: Sarett Nature Center reserves the right, at their sole discretion, to make changes in the itinerary should that become necessary, and is not responsible to any person for expenses, loss of time, money, or happenings resulting from a change of tour scheduling. Sarett Nature Center reserves the right to accept, decline, or retain any person as a member of the tour and is not responsible for any losses or damages of personal property, injuries, expenses, or damages incurred or claimed by any tour member.

