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Kankakee River - State Park

Northeast Region

5314 West Rt. 102
 Bourbonnais, IL 60914
 815.933.1383
 GPS: 41.203491,
 -87.977928

[E-mail](#)



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UPDATE:

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY - The Department of Natural Resources is seeking an individual to invest in and operate the horse riding stable located in Kankakee River State Park, Bourbonnais, Illinois under a three year lease agreement. Interested parties should contact either Kathy Pangle at 815-933-1383 kathy.pangle@illinois.gov or Lisa Wright at 217-785-0759 lisa.wright@illinois.gov for further details

- North Loop is closed.
- Self-guided Nature Trail is closed 11/1-11/20 for Physically Challenged hunting program in the area.
- Park hours are 7am-6pm
- Equestrian campground & trail are closed for the season
- Chippewa Campground will close 11/3 for the season
- Controlled Pheasant Hunting & Physically CHallenged Hunt begin Nov 1st.
- The East entrance parking areas at the east end of the main park may be closed due to road resurfacing this fall.
- Boat launches may be closed due to weather.
- The park office does not accept reservations. please go to www.reserveamerica.com
- The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Quarantine is in effect for Kankakee County. **No firewood can be brought into or taken out of the park.** Alternate sources must be used.
- The Park office is open Monday - Friday 8 am - 3:30 pm except for major holidays.
- The Potawatomi Campground closed 9/22/14 for the season.

On land treasured for centuries - first by Native Americans, later by traders and farmers, and as early as the 1890s by recreation seekers - Kankakee River State Park offers visitors its proud heritage in an unspoiled setting. Anglers, canoeists, hunters, campers, hikers, bicyclers and other outdoor enthusiasts find the park's recreational opportunities unsurpassed. The naturally channeled Kankakee River, listed on the Federal Clean Streams Register, is the focus of the park's popularity.

Enveloping both sides of the Kankakee River for 11 miles, in an area 6 miles northwest of Kankakee, the park consists of approximately 4,000 acres. Illinois Routes 102 on the north and 113 on the south frame the park, with Interstates 55 and 57 both providing convenient access.

History

Several prehistoric sites are documented within Kankakee River State Park. The park is within a region used by Illini and Miami Indians at the time of the first European contact in the 1670s and 1680s. By 1685 the Miami were sufficiently numerous that the Kankakee River was called the River of the Miami. Kickapoo and Mascouten also were in the region from 1679 until the 1760s. Potawatomi Indians hunted along the Kankakee River in the 1760s, and by the 1770s the Potawatomi, Ottawa and Chippewa nations - "The Three Fires" - dominated the area. The most extensive village was "Rock Village" or "Little Rock Village" inside the present-day park near the mouth of Rock Creek. In 1830 it was the site of the last great Indian Council. Following the Black Hawk War in 1832, the Potawatomi ceded all of their land along the Kankakee and Illinois rivers to the United States. Most Potawatomi left the area by the end of the decade, except for Chief Shaw-waw-nas-see, whose grave is commemorated by a boulder along the nature trail at Rock Creek.

Noel Le Vasseur and other fur traders, including Hubbard Chabare and Bourbonnais, traded with the Potawatomi along the Kankakee and Iroquois rivers in the 1820s. When the Potawatomi left the area in 1838, Le Vasseur persuaded a number of his fellow French Canadians to emigrate from Quebec to the Bourbonnais Township area. Because of his settlement efforts, he is called "the father of Kankakee."

A marker on the west bank of Rock Creek Bridge commemorates the log cabin village of Rockville. Construction of the village began in 1840, nine years after William Baker and other Euro-Americans first began farming along the Kankakee River.

The Kankakee & Iroquois Navigation Company - later known as the Kankakee Company - was chartered in 1847 to provide water power and a navigable waterway from the Illinois & Michigan Canal to Warner's Landing, along the site of the present-day Warner Bridge Road. The company failed in the early 1880s, shortly after the Wabash Railroad came through. At the Chippewa Campground, hand-cut limestone pillars mark where a railway bridge was to have been built before financiers ran out of money.

Just inside the park's main entrance is Smith Cemetery, with the graves of several family members, most of whom died of yellow fever at the turn of the century.

A major industry in the area in the 1890s was the Custer Bowery Amusement Park, which frequently drew crowds from Chicago. The park was gone by the 1920s, but by then the river had become a popular spot for summer cottages. The area became more accessible to vacationers in 1928 when concrete roads were built along both sides of the river. In 1938, Chicago resident Ethel Sturges Dummer donated 35 acres of land for a state park. Commonwealth Edison turned over another 1,715 acres to the state in 1956. With the company's additional grants in 1989, the park now roughly totals 4,000 acres.

Hunting

The park's abundant wildlife makes it a popular spot for hunters. Only bow hunting is allowed for deer. Firearm hunting is permitted for duck, pheasant, turkey, dove, rabbit, squirrel, fox, coyote and raccoon. Before taking any game, contact the site office for opening dates, shooting times and areas open to hunting. For information about archery deer hunting for the physically challenged please call the park.

Hunter Fact Sheets: [General](#) | [Waterfowl](#) | [Furbearer](#) | [Momence Waterfowl](#) | [Momence Wetlands](#)

Fishing

The Kankakee is a clean river, great for landing smallmouth bass, channel catfish, Walleye and Northern pike. Rock Creek also is a good angling spot. The park has two boat ramps: a launch at the Warner Bridge Day Use Area and a launch at the Area 9 parking lot on the south side of the river. Both launches are for launching craft with motors of 10 horsepower or less. Boating can be hazardous because the river is shallow and rocky.

Canoeing

The river's shallow water and rocks are no problem for canoeists. Bring your canoe or rent locally and enjoy the beautiful scenery.

Camping

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Quarantine is in effect for Kankakee County. **No firewood can be brought into or taken out of the park.** Alternate sources must be used.

Pleasant sites, at reasonable prices, make Kankakee River State Park a great place to pitch-camp. Potawatomi Campground, classified as Class A (showers and electricity) and **open only through camping season**, has 110 sites and two [Rent-a-Cabins](#) in a wooded setting. More than 150 sites are offered at Chippewa Campground, sites are Class BE (electricity only, no showers) and Class C (no electricity, no showers). [Reservations](#) are taken for Kankakee River Class A, BE, and C campgrounds. The campgrounds close at 10 p.m. and all campgrounds observe quiet hours from 10 p.m. - 7 a.m.. No vehicular traffic is allowed during this time. You must be 18 years old to rent a campsite and must be able to establish your camp at the time you obtain a permit. All campsites have a picnic table and a campgrill. Camping is only allowed in the campgrounds. Credit cards are not accepted. No alcohol is allowed.

[Potawatomi Campground Map](#) | [Chippewa Campground Map](#) | [Cabin Information Sheet](#)

The Equestrian Campground off Illinois Route 113 is open from April 1 through October 31. Equestrian trails operate on a seasonal basis, see chart for dates and hours of operation under the trails section. There is no water available in the Equestrian Campground.

[Equestrian Campground Map](#)

Davis Creek Campground is available by reservation for chaperoned youth and church groups. All areas require camping permits, available at the park office or from park personnel in state vehicles. Groups of 25 or more are required to obtain a free activity permit from the park office. All correspondence should be mailed to 5314 W. State Rt. 102

[Davis Creek Campground Map](#)

Picnicking

For a light lunch or a large get-together, check out the park's picnic areas. Shelters and tables are placed in pleasant settings throughout the park, and you'll also find playgrounds in several locations. Shelters are available on a first-come first-serve basis. All shelters have campgrills. Three shelters may be reserved at www.reserveamerica.com. Groups of 25 or more are asked to obtain a free permit from the park office at least two weeks before the park visit.

[Shelter Maps and Information Sheet](#)

Trails



The park's trail system stretches for miles along both sides of the river. Hiking, biking and cross-country ski trails are on the river's north side, while horse and snowmobile trails can be found on the south. A 3-mile route along Rock Creek lets hikers take in the beauty of limestone canyons and a frothy waterfall. A bicycle trail begins at Davis Creek Area and travels 10.5 miles along the river and loops in the west end of the park.

A 12-mile equestrian trail is located in the wildlife management area along Route 113 and is open April 1 through October 31. After January 18, 2015 and when there's snow cover of 4 inches or more, the park is open from sunrise to sunset for snowmobiling. Directional signs for trails are posted at Area 4 and maps are available at the park office.

Kankakee River Equestrian Trails Schedule	
April 1 - mid May	1 p.m. to Sunset (hunters may be present in this area)
mid May - August 31	Sunrise to Sunset
September	Sunrise to 11 a.m. (hunters may be present in this area)
	Sunrise to Sunset (hunters may be present in this area)

October	- it is recommended that equestrians wear blaze orange clothing)
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Riding Stables

The Riding Stable is currently CLOSED.

Park Restrictions

Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the park and campgrounds at all times.

Because the Kankakee River is unpredictable with fast currents, drop offs and a rocky bottom, no swimming is allowed in any area, including Rock Creek.

All motorized vehicles are prohibited on all of the Kankakee River State Park trails. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on the bicycle trail.

Quiet hours are 10 p.m. - 7 a.m. **Vehicle traffic is not allowed during quiet hours.**

Directions

From North or South on Interstate 57, Take I 57 to Exit 315 (Bradley-Bourbonnais) Take Rte. 50 south to the first stop light which is Armour Rd. Turn right on Armour Rd. and go to the 5th stop light which is Rte. 102. Turn right (west) on Rte.102. The park is located 7 miles west on Rte. 102.

From the North on Interstate 55, Take I 55 to exit 238 (Braidwood). Take Rte. 129 south until coming to Strip Mine Rd. Turn left (east) on Strip Mine Rd. Follow this road until coming to a small town called Wilmington. In Wilmington, turn right on Water Street. Water Street becomes Rte 102. The park is located 10 miles east of Wilmington on Rte. 102.

From the South on Interstate 55, Take I-55 north to Dwight Exit (Rte.17). Take Rte. 17 east. Go approximately 20 miles to Warner Bridge Rd. Turn left (north) on Warner Bridge Rd. Follow this road approximately 10 miles until coming to Rte. 102. Turn right (east) on Rte. 102. The park office is located 1 1/2 miles east of Warner Bridge Rd.

- 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 and clean up after them.
- Actions by nature can result in closed roads and other facilities. Please call ahead to the park office before you make your trip.
- We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2Connect.
- Telecommunication Device for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Natural Resources Information **(217) 782-9175 for TDD only** Relay Number **800-526-0844**.