

Makanda: Gateway to Giant City and Outdoor Adventure, can easily fill a 3 or 4 day getaway!



With its breathtaking natural beauty and unlimited opportunities for outdoor recreation, a trip to [Giant City State Park and the Makanda](#) area offers loads of fun. From [camping](#) and horseback riding to fishing and rappelling, it's an outdoor lover's paradise. You will love the many hiking trails. Especially popular is the [Giant City Nature Trail](#), home of the "Giant City Streets" - huge bluffs of sandstone formed 12,000 years ago.

[GIANT CITY VISITOR CENTER:](#) Learn about the 'Giant Streets' that gave the park it's name and get maps and trail details. 8 – 3:30 daily.

Giant City State Park Visitor's Center contains an exhibit hall with displays of the natural, cultural, and geological features of the park. Don't miss the 10 minute film about the park in the audio/visual room. There is a Discovery Corner that kids love to explore. Ask about the scavenger hunt for kids. Get a prize upon returning it at the end of the hike all filled out, but watch your time, the center closes at 3:30 PM.



Rock climbing and rappeling

[Climbing and rappelling](#) are permitted at the park in two locations. The areas of Devil's Standtable cliff and Shelter #1 bluff at the Makanda entrance are accessible to climbers, and ropes are permitted on these cliffs. Climbers should bring their own equipment and go directly to the bluff, no check-in is necessary. No

permanent anchors allowed. All climbing activities at the park are conducted at your own risk. Cliffs are steep and sandstone can be slippery when wet. Venomous copperhead snakes, an Illinois protected species, are found on sunny ledges. Please use caution. Southern Illinois sandstone bluff plant communities are fragile, so tread lightly in these areas. Always carry out what you carry in!

Hiking

Exploration of the [picturesque natural wonders](#) of Giant City State Park's [8 trails](#), can be enjoyed along the Post Oak, Devil's Standtable, Giant City, Stonefort, Indian Creek, Trillium and Arrowwood trails. The Post Oak Trail has been designed for disabled visitors. The [12-mile Red Cedar Hiking Trail](#) provides an invigorating challenge to the truly dedicated backpacker, and offers an overnight campsite at the halfway point. In Spring, Summer & fall, be sure to use insect and tick repellent. [Trillium Trail](#) is a great place to see spring flowers.

Hiking is available year-round, and if you have visited in another season winter can offer a very different experience. The weather is generally mild, and you can pretty much have the trails all to yourself. Enjoy a peacefulness that only winter can provide. Winter is a great time to enjoy the slower, quieter side of Shawnee Forest Country in Southernmost Illinois. The cooler

temperatures mean no bugs and the trees are bare, allowing you to see much further into the forests. Bluffs hidden behind the summer foliage emerge dramatically into sight.

In [December through February](#), **Roam for Gnomes** along the seven trails of Giant City State Park (excluding the Red Cedar Backpacking Trail) there is one winter hiking gnome just waiting to be discovered! Each gnome is holding a different item recommended for a winter hike!

- Record all 7 gnomes by taking a photograph of you and the gnome, or by making a list of the items they are holding.
- Bring your proof into the Giant City Visitors Center for your super cool and FREE Giant City Gnome Roam patch!

These rosy-cheeked gnomes will be hanging out on the Giant City State Park Trails during the months of December and January.

Shawnee National Forest's, Panther Den Wilderness Hike: For those up for a more challenging hike, this nearby wilderness trail will take you to the rock formations and is a loop (4 to 6-miles) It is rugged and hilly. Hiking with Shawn offers a good [trail guide here](#).

Don't miss this rustic beauty of [Giant City Lodge](#), and a great place to refuel your body after an active day! **(Feb. to mid Dec)**

Amazing hand-hewn log built lodge always impresses, and is a fun place to dine. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, the spacious Lodge offers rustic beauty with multi-hued sandstone and white oak timber.

[The Lodge serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner](#) daily, (Feb. to mid Dec) with an excellent reputation for food and hospitality. You're sure to enjoy some of the best fried chicken ever if you choose the specialty of the Lodge, the all-you-can-eat Family Style Chicken Dinner. Be sure and save room for some warm fruit cobbler!



The Lodge also features a lounge and historic Clem & Arlies bar, gift shop, and guest cabins for a quiet getaway. Much of Giant City was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps or CCC. A statue dedicated to the CCC sits in the courtyard.

Be sure and climb the spiral staircase of the **Giant City water tower** for the scenic views.

[Giant City Stables:](#) Saddle up for trail rides with experienced wranglers through private trails **(Mid March to Mid Nov.)** Even if you don't want to ride, walk through the stables to see, and even pet the horses.

The Stable maintains approximately 30 horses of different types and breeds for your enjoyment. There are horses of all different levels and will match you with a horse that meets your needs. The trail rides are guided by experienced wranglers, who lead you through 3 plus miles of private trails in the heart of Giant City State Park.

Pony Rides: (Mid March to Mid Nov.) Hand led pony rides are available for children. These rides are hand led by one of our wranglers on a short trail.

Mountain Bike Trails: The nearby [Touch of Nature Trails system offers over 10 miles](#) of multi-use trails for bikers, hikers, and runners only. The Kid's Terrain Park includes a pump track, a push bike track, and .25 mile fun loop to introduce kids to riding on trails. The trail system offers a variety of difficulty levels for users and can be accessed just off of Giant City Road after entering Touch of Nature.

[Shawnee Bluffs Canopy Tour:](#) Enjoy the breeze zipping through the trees!

Safety is always number one here, so don't be afraid. This is the place to check zip lining off your bucket list! You will start off with 'flight school' before you ever get out in the canopy.



Allow approximately 3 hours for an exciting, fully guided canopy tour. Along with way, guides educate guests about the local flora, fauna, geology and history while safely traversing an established route of ziplines and aerial suspension bridges between platforms built high in the trees. Guests must leave phones and cameras behind during the tour, but guides capture complimentary photos throughout the experience for you to enjoy afterward.

The tour includes 8 ziplines — the longest over 1,110 ft. — 11 elevated tree platforms, 3 aerial suspension bridges, and 3 short scenic hikes. www.shawneezip.com

[Little Grassy Fish Hatchery:](#) One fish, two fish, red fish blue fish! Well, Bluegill and Redear Sunfish anyway. Little Grassy produces about a million fish per year, on average, including channel catfish, blue catfish, largemouth bass, bluegills and redear sunfish. Most of the channel catfish produced by the state come from Little Grassy.

Great place to take your children for a lesson on how our fisheries help stock our ponds and other needs to our Eco system. The kids and adults alike can enjoy it.

The main event at Little Grassy is the catfish production. The production process of the channel catfish provides a great viewing experience for visitors. 'Prime time' for viewing the production

process is in June. Yearling catfish in outdoor raceways are available for feeding by visitors from Memorial Day through July. While prime viewing is in the summer months, tours are available year round between 8:30 and 3:30. Be sure and ask about the record channel cat!



[Rolling Oak Alpaca Ranch:](#) A family owned and operated farm. [Schedule a visit](#) to the ranch and you will get to know the alpacas that call Rolling Oak their home. While you are there you can shop locally produced products that include alpaca fiber scarfs, socks, hats and even soaps.

Swimming, Fishing, [hiking](#) and kayak rental: [Cedar Lake](#) offers kayaks rentals, [fishing and swimming](#).

[Boo Castle Park:](#) Located along Giant City Road, this free park has a Dungeons and Dragons theme and there are over 30 sculptures to encourage the imagination of magic. The

centerpiece is a very large wood and stone castle that has an elaborate jungle gym of tunnels, stairs, and bridges. Hidden doors and passageways invite the small and flexible; most adults are content to walk the battlements. Gargoyles and knights guard the ramparts. An ogre with a spiked club stands atop the portcullis, and an extensive sword collection is bolted to the lofty inner ceiling of one of the towers. Small treasures are scattered throughout the maze of towers for the eye to discover.

Makanda: The Most Hippie Town In Illinois. Visit the [unique shops on the Makanda boardwalk.](#) X doesn't mark the spot, the Smiley Face water tower does!

When you're not wandering through the woods, a good place to go is the Makanda Trading Co. This amazing general store opened in 2001 in rustic downtown. You'll find a wealth of treasures to shop like stones, toys, incense, art, and much, much more to fill your new age home. Visions Art Gallery features local artists and their works, from paintings, stained glass, to ceramics. Rain Maker studios display impressive metal work jewelry, sculptures, and fountains.

Makanda Country Store Located on the historic Makanda Boardwalk features gourmet coffee, sandwiches, and hand-dipped ice cream. The store also has an array of hot sauces for purchase.

Each fall, vultures fly over Makanda and the surrounding areas and signal the beginning of fall and the arrival of the incredible fall colors of Makanda and southern Illinois. The 3rd weekend of October each year, Vulture Fest features live music, food, shopping, and art by local artists for purchase; all under the watchful eyes of Black and Turkey Vultures roosting in the trees overlooking the village.

Many attractions in this hippie town give it that feeling of being free-spirited. Don't miss the Rainmaker Garden, and it will certainly put you in that Earth child, flower power vibe.

Learn more at www.southernmostillinois.com or call 1-618-833-9928