

DINING UNION 50 PERFECTS THE GASTROPUB

A Stunning Home in Meridian Hills

Indianapolis

HIT THE MONTHLY

Hesitation Point,
Brown County

TRAIL!

» *Our Favorite Scenic Hiking
and Biking Paths*

FEATURING

SPECTACULAR VIEWS
VIBRANT FALL FOLIAGE
SOOTHING WATERFALLS
COUNTRY RAMBLES
HIDDEN COVES
BREATHTAKING CANYONS

OCTOBER 2014 // \$4.95

10>



The Marion County Jail Sex Scandal p. 52



HAPPY TRAILS

How now, Brown County? If you're jonesing for more ways to explore and relish this favorite fall destination, check out our archives for top shopping, dining, and more. *IndianapolisMonthly.com/Brown-County*

GET ACTIVE!

See a roundup of mobility-friendly trails for those who use wheelchairs or have stroller-age children. Plus, for mountain-biking newbies, an instructor's guide to the basics: *IndianapolisMonthly.com/Trails*.

The Reviews Are In Our new website debuted in August, and we asked readers to chime in with their thoughts. Here's a sampling:

"Clean look and easy to navigate."
—James Nimmer, via Facebook

"I'm a sucker for a good minimalist layout."
—Emily Taylor (@emrotayl), via Twitter

"Seriously, guys, the website looks amazing. Super slick."
—Jon Streetman (@DrIndianaJon), via Twitter



"Hey @IndyMonthly, your new site is looking shiny and slick. Great work!"
—Christopher Newgent (@the_newgent), via Twitter

"Streamlined and great to look at on my phone!"
—Annette Marino (@stockannette), via Instagram

"The #NewIMSite probably eats healthy and exercises regularly."
—Mary Bradley (@mrybrdly), via Twitter

"Redesigns are no picnic but you have some nice things going on."
—Luke Seemann (@bikesarefun), via Twitter



FOOD & DRINK

IndianapolisMonthly.com/Dining

Check out our latest reviews, chef profiles, and more, including the Guiding Bite, our always refreshing epicurean-events calendar. Plus, get a taste of **THE DISH** blog—delicious dine-and-drink news served hot each week. Join the conversation online and see what your fellow foodies are saying. Because we all know that restaurant talk is a dish best served *bold*.



LIFESTYLE & CULTURE

IndianapolisMonthly.com/TheRoundabout

Read stories that celebrate what sets this city and state apart. Our movers, shakers, and places—captured in photos and words—make Hoosiers proud. Proud and quirky. See **THE ROUNDABOUT** blog, where Indy lifestyle and culture come full circle each week.



JOIN OUR IM INSIDERS!

IndianapolisMonthly.com/Insiders

It's quick, simple, and free, with an array of benefits: special offers and event invitations, plus **THE DISH**, **THE THREAD**, **THE TICKET**, and **FIRST LOOK**, our e-newsletters with the latest news and views. You'll also get access to Insider-only contests, giveaways, and surveys—like our Best of Indy Readers' Choice call-out, coming soon.

FOLLOW US!



@IndyMonthly



Indianapolis Monthly

I

I SPOTTED THE SKUNK after a bend in the Glidewell Trail, a winding path that skirts Brookville Lake, in the hills rising toward Ohio. The little guy scampered happily between an oak and the underbrush not three feet away, until he, too, spotted me. We both froze. There was a stare-down. I had almost reached the 2,000-year-old tribal burial mounds the trail was known for, and I wasn't turning back now. I sprinted past him, his black-and-white tail springing alert, bristly as a chimney brush. He actually chased me for a few feet. He may have even shaken a tiny fist.

When I made it downwind enough to feel safe, I burst out laughing. Before this summer, the only hike I took regularly, I am sorry to report, was up the two flights of stairs between my office and the *IM* art department. I had therefore filled my backpack like I was prepping to ride out the apocalypse instead of spending a few hours in nature: three granola bars, a Clif bar, a tall bottled water, a lemon Vitaminwater, an extra pair of socks, bug spray, a folding knife, a pen, a notepad, my iPhone (for the compass app—no Internet connection required!), sunblock, a sandwich, a beach towel, **maps and tips printed out from the Hoosier Hikers Council site**, and pants, which I wasted no time donning over my shorts after spying poison oak. I was never a Scout, but my cautious, list-making mother taught me to “always be prepared” anyway. Back out along Glidewell, I realized the encounter with my furry foe was just part of hiking's appeal—braving (and, in my case, escaping) the unexpected.

The geographic features revealed on the Indiana trails highlighted in this issue (p. 58) were also, frankly, surprising—from the prehistoric bog by the dunes to a sandstone canyon—making hiking and biking them all the more entertaining. Still, I was nervous about my lack of experience. In *Wild*, Cheryl Strayed's memoir of trekking the Pacific Coast Trail, Strayed gears herself up by repeating “what is hiking but walking, after all.” And I found that walking to be therapeutic, as my ramble around the reservoir seesawed between soothing solitude and adrenaline rush. The trails became an antidote for my earthly concerns of sick grandparents and looming deadlines: the deer I ran across, the warblers in the trees—my problems meant nothing to them. For a moment, I found relief.



Amanda Heckert
Editor-in-Chief



EDITOR'S OBJECT OF DESIRE

I used a walking stick from the forest floor on my Adena Trace hike (p. 61), but I bet these REI trekking poles (\$89.50) wouldn't snap in two like my oak switch did.

CONTRIBUTORS



KATIE CLINE

Associate art director Katie Cline discovered Lily & Madeleine just a few months ago, but the local musical duo has inspired her at work ever since. “When I’m not on photo shoots, I listen to music while I design,” she says. “I have pretty eclectic taste, so L&M fit right in.” In creating the artwork for this month's feature on the ladies (“Almost Famous,” p. 76), Cline strived for a look that was as cultivated as the songs. “They’re young, but their sound is so mature,” she says. “I just wanted to do those harmonies justice.”



ROBERT ANNIS

Freelance writer Robert Annis has pedaled his bike throughout the U.S. and Europe, but he's rarely happier than when he's riding Hoosier dirt with friends. “For me, biking is a social activity,” says Annis, who researched this month's cover package (“Hit the Trail,” p. 58). “Whether you're trying to set a new personal best or discovering a beautiful piece of scenery, it's always better with pals.” The former *Indianapolis Star* reporter traded his mountain bike for a road-worthy model late this summer as he headed to Italy to navigate the steep, 6,000-foot Stelvio mountain pass. “My wife thinks I'm crazy,” he says. “She's probably right.” Annis has written for *National Geographic Traveler* and *Popular Mechanics*.



ASHLEY PETRY

The night before freelance writer Ashley Petry interviewed Father Vince Lampert, one of the nation's few Vatican-trained exorcists, half of the light switches in her house mysteriously stopped working. “I was joking when I suggested to him that my house might be possessed,” Petry says. “He wasn't joking when he agreed with me.” Did reporting the story (“Ask Me Anything,” p. 24) make her a believer? “We hired an electrician, not an exorcist,” she says. “But I try to keep an open mind about anything spiritual.” Petry's work has appeared in *Midwest Living* and *USA Today*.

KEY



STEADY
CELL-PHONE
SERVICE



FIDO
WELCOME—
AND CAN
MANAGE THE
TRAIL



BEWARE!
HUNTING
ALLOWED—
WEAR
ORANGE



PARK ENTRY
FEE (\$5,
TYPICALLY)



CAMPITES
NEARBY

Ogle Lake, near the Hesitation Point trailhead in Brown County State Park



HIT *the* TRAIL



Rocky cliffs. Shaded caves. Summits overlooking valleys ablaze with the crimsons and golds of fall. From leaf-peeping climbs on sandstone ridges in Hoosier National Forest to exhilarating downhill adventures in Brown County, the state's most scenic hiking and biking paths reveal all this and more. So grab your backpack and get going—the crisp call of autumn in Indiana awaits.

EDITED BY AMANDA HECKERT

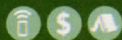
WRITTEN BY ROBERT ANNIS,
LINDSEY ERDODY, MEGAN FERNANDEZ,
LAURA KRUTY, JONATHAN SCOTT,
SAM STALL, JONATHAN STREETMAN,
EVAN WEST & ADAM WREN



SILENT PARTNER

— SHADES STATE PARK —

WITH DEEP GORGES, LUSH RAVINES, AND SANDSTONE CLIFFS, SHADES EVOKES THE SPLENDOR OF ITS MORE-POPULAR NEIGHBOR, TURKEY RUN—BUT WITHOUT THE CROWDS. **BY EVAN WEST**



WE ENDORSE
Trails 1, 4 & 5
2.1 miles
MODERATE



In some of my fondest memories of attending Wabash College, I'm scooting out to Shades State Park in my beat-up truck, windows down, to wander the narrow ravines in stress-relieving solitude, contemplating the philosophy, religion, or poetry I'd studied earlier that day. The park lies just upstream from the more-crowded Turkey Run State Park, on the banks of the same Sugar Creek—a broad, clear waterway whose course and tributaries

follow routes left by glacial melts that scoured deep, lush gorges and ravines into the park's sandstone bedrock, topography that comes pretty dang close to its country cousin.

At the heart of the park, a cluster of short but variety-packed trails form loops around a central parking lot and picnic area in a sort of cloverleaf. Collectively, they showcase many of Shades's most distinctive features, the most famous being Devil's Punch Bowl (Trail 1), a

dim, moss-covered chasm at the bottom of a set of breakneck wooden stairs. Convex waterfalls, such as the Silver Cascade Falls, shimmer over smooth rock faces. Between these highlights, the trail follows a craggy creekbed where verdant ferns grow at the base of steep, coppery cliffs—a still, dark, primeval setting that, I like to imagine, remains little changed from the days when the melting Wisconsin Glacier gave it shape. Trails 4 and 5 follow forested hillsides

down to plunging gorges that cut narrow rock passages to Sugar Creek: At three points, the drops are so sudden that sturdy wooden ladders—about the same height as what you'd use to clear a one-story gutter—are provided to navigate the vertical climb into cave-like recesses.

But Shades is not all dank gullies: At the top of Trail 1, Inspiration and Prospect points offer high, blazing views of the Sugar Creek valley, and near the end of trails 4 and 5, you can wade out into the broad expanse you spied from above to cool your feet, and then pick up a few of the perfectly flat stones on the bank. Even if the pressures have changed from school to work these days, skipping those flat stones across the creek's placid surface is still as good for decompressing as it ever was.

➔ **ALTERNATE ROUTE** A few years ago, Shades incorporated an adjoining 480-acre tract known as **Pine Hills**, Indiana's oldest state nature preserve. To reach it, hike Shades's Trail 10, a 1.5-mile jaunt that crosses S.R. 234 and descends into one of the neatest enclaves in the state. Look for stands of rare trees like Canada yew and hemlock, and striking formations like **Devil's Backbone**, a narrow ridge of sheer rock that rises 100 feet off the ground—the DNR calls it "one of the most remarkable examples of incised meanders in the eastern United States."

➔ **LOCAL LEGEND** Historians debate how the area, known as **The Shades of Death** before it became a park in 1947, got its name. But rumors abound, mostly fueled by the preternaturally cool crevasses that contrast so markedly from the surrounding forests and rolling fields.

GETTING THERE Take I-74 W to Jamestown, pick up S.R. 234 W, and look for signs to the park after about 20 miles. in.gov/dnr/parklake/2970.htm

EXPERT PICK



PETE BANTA

PRESIDENT, HOOSIER HIKERS COUNCIL

"I especially like a trail the Council built a couple of years ago, near Bean Blossom, the HITZ-RHODEHAMEL NATURE PRESERVE. It's about three miles long and has ridges, ravines, nice views, and creeks—pleasant to walk, with all the scenery of Brown County without all the crowds. My girlfriend and I go out there and do maintenance, cutting logs, to try to keep it looking good." 812-837-9445, nature.org/indiana

Rhonda, a kindly Brookville Lake clerk in DNR khakis, assured me any span along the Adena Trace Loop—a 25-mile ring of trails around the reservoir, just west of the Ohio border—would be gorgeous come October, when the leaves would ignite with crimson and ochre. But—she tapped the map where the offshoot Midway Trail bisected the untamed Wolf Creek Trail at a series of tiny finger coves—this was her favorite spot. So I drove around the dam to Brookville's western shore, through a residential neighborhood with tidy

lawns that belied the wild I was about to enter at the road's dead end.

A narrow lane no wider than a smile wound through the forest, a route originally cut by Rhonda's husband, in fact; she had helped him paint white diamonds on the trees to mark the way. The trail proved more of a ramble than a hike, past thickets of wildflowers, along ridges that sloped into shallow ravines, under mature oaks and maples reaching for the sky. Little broke up the serenity until, around a bend, a tawny doe loomed on the path; startled, I yelped, and she

bounded away in a blink.

Thirty minutes in, I reached a clearing, and the overlook Rhonda promised delivered: A gorgeous panorama of the eastern shore opened before me, which I drank in from a wide bench Rhonda's husband had hauled here for resting—"Alvey's Point," bearing their last name, wood-burned into its side.

Just a few minutes south along Wolf Creek—at 16.5 miles, Adena's longest, most rugged stretch—I reached the first hideaway cove, a lovely, hushed crook in the lake skirted by a clearing, perfect for a picnic. A stone pit with a teepee of firewood awaited,

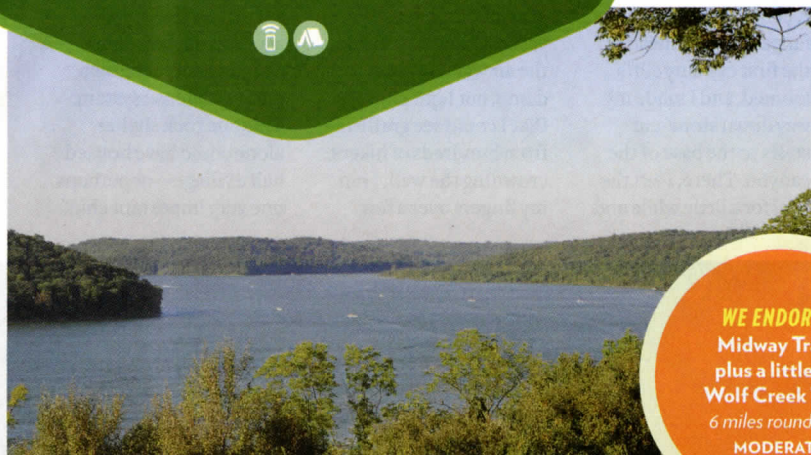
only needing a struck match. Camping isn't technically legal on this side of the lake, but the thought of falling asleep to the water lapping against the rocks tempts anyway.



HIDEAWAY COVE

— ADENA TRACE —

AS THE HILLS RISE TOWARD OHIO, THE ADENA TRACE LOOP OF TRAILS AT BROOKVILLE LAKE PROVES ITS SECLUDED TREASURES ARE WORTH THE HUNT. BY AMANDA HECKERT



WE ENDORSE
Midway Trail,
plus a little on
Wolf Creek Trail
6 miles round-trip
MODERATE

GETTING THERE Take I-74 E to S.R. 244 E, right on U.S. 52 E, left on Main St. in Brookville, a quick left on Reservoir Rd., and then right on Keeler Rd. until it dead-ends. in.gov/dnr/parklake/2961.htm

THE HOOSIERIST KNOWS



Q: What's legal to forage on a hike and what isn't?

A: The answer is as murky as a stagnant creek. "Our property rulebook is 43 pages long," says Dale Brier, streams and trails chief at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. "I have an entire section dedicated to definitions of what is a fruit, what is a leaf, what is a berry, what is a nut, and a section with what you can and can't collect. We spent a year going over the definition of a mushroom." To avoid any misunderstandings, he advises inquiring at the gatehouse.



GIMME SHELTER (WITH A PAST)

— HOOSIER NATIONAL FOREST —

HIDDEN IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST,
ROCKY OUTCROPS AND A VERDANT
CANYON HAVE STUNNED FOR GENERATIONS.

BY JONATHAN STREETMAN



WE ENDORSE
Hemlock Cliffs
1.2 miles
MODERATE

The term “middle of nowhere” might have been coined for spots like Hemlock Cliffs, a trail leading through an oasis of sandstone bluffs designated a “special place” by Hoosier National Forest officials for its striking and rare features.

The path forms a simple loop around the cliffs, delving into the canyon on one side and exiting the other, so either trailhead works. My neighbor in Jasper suggested I go right, where a waterfall, flush from a recent rain, awaited. Not far past the trailhead, the first of many cliffs loomed, and I made my way down stone-cut stairs to the base of the canyon. There, I left the trail for a little while and

headed to the nearby creekbed. The temperature dropped suddenly as I stepped into the shade of the sandstone, its unique honeycomb pattern caused by the weathering of iron ores. I snuck under one of the stratified crags and listened to the chirping of the birds bounce off the walls around me.

Halfway into the loop, I reached the highlight. A detour sign warning “Danger: Cliff Area” directed me to a massive overhang and—up a perilous, nearly invisible trail of crumbling stone—a vast rock shelter. Inside, the air was cool and damp, but light enough that I could see graffiti from hundreds of hikers crowding the wall. I ran my fingers over a few

names, wondering if Evan and Lindsey were still Together 4ever.

Teetering several stories above the basin on the lip of the shelter, I lingered to take in the breathtaking view of the lush vegetation below: Wintergreen, wild geranium, and the pine-like hemlock for which the trail receives its name—all call this canyon home. Archeologists believe we modern visitors weren’t the first to seek shelter here, in this slightly mystical place; Native Americans inhabited the area as early as 10,000 years ago, and the box-shaped canyon likely acted as a natural defense system. This one rock shelter alone could have housed half a village—or perhaps one very important chief.

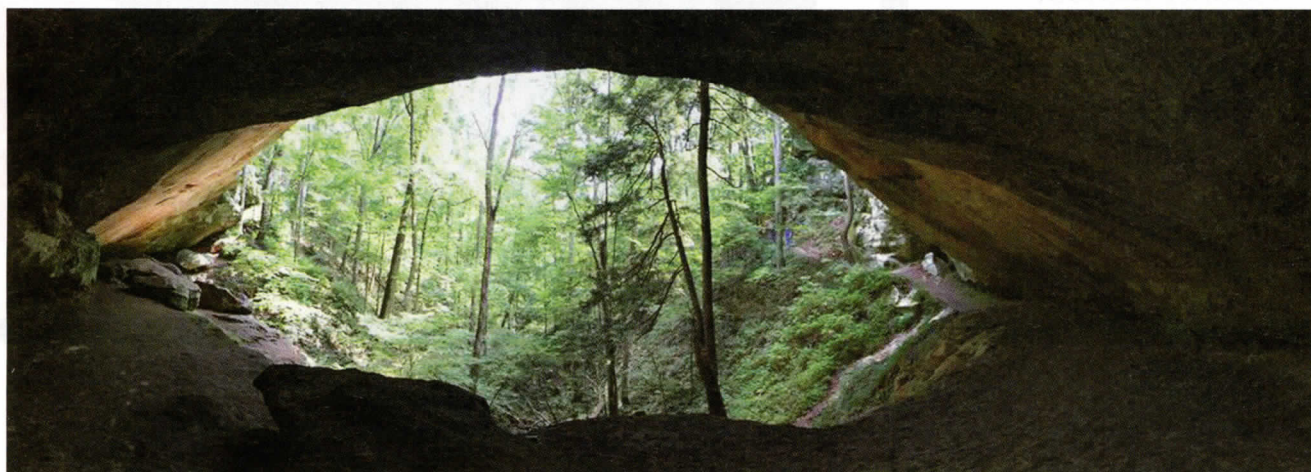


EXPERT PICK

GLEE CROWDER

RECOGNIZED BY THE INDIANAPOLIS
HIKING CLUB IN 2013 FOR
THE MOST MILES HIKED (3,019)

“THE GRIZZLY PARK trail behind Franklin College in Johnson County is just so beautiful. It’s one-and-a-half miles and picks up in the country—you can see horses, a really big farm, and lots of lovely trees.”
franklingrizzlies.com/facilities

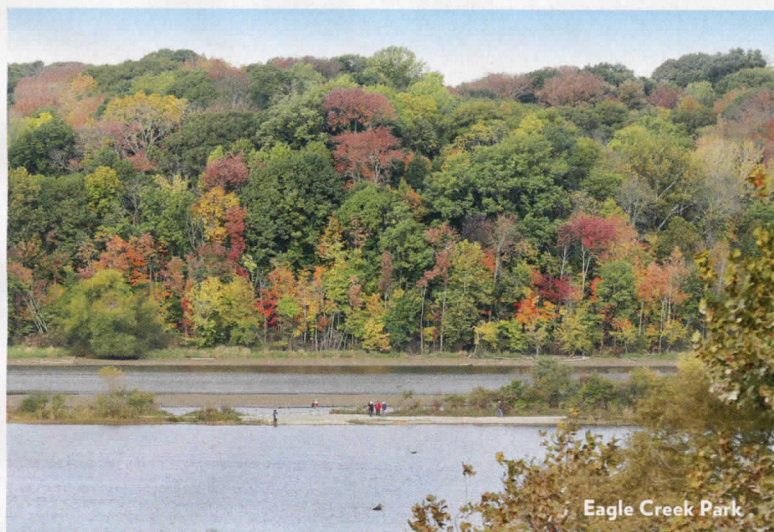


GETTING THERE Take S.R. 37 S to S.R. 237 S, right on N. Union Chapel Rd., right on S. Hatfield Rd., right on National Forest Rd. fs.usda.gov/detail/hoosier/specialplaces/

WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS

Stretch your legs before a longer trek at these pretty places around town.

BY ROBERT ANNIS & LAURA KRUTY



Eagle Creek Park

BIKING

SOUTHWESTWAY PARK

This southwesterly park overlooking White River features several miles of mountain-biking trails, including a tight, white-knuckle downhill. The curved, banked turns and jumps on Big Fire also thrill. 8400 S. Mann Rd., 888-0070

TOWN RUN TRAIL PARK

The granddaddy of Indy trails, Town Run features nearly seven miles of twisty singletrack near The Fashion Mall. Most consider this wide-open trail, with its mostly gentle grades, to be an easier path—a great way to build skills for more technical Hoosier trails. Keep an eye out for the frequent (but very well-marked) jumps and

drops. The middle third of the trail takes you through a flat meadow, allowing you time to recover. 5325 E. 96th St., 964-9184

HIKING

STARKEY NATURE PARK

Nestled within a Zionsville neighborhood, quiet and serene Starkey Nature Park practically defines “hidden gem.” Steep, packed-earth trails lead you to the flowing waters of Eagle Creek, and grassy paths traverse hip-high wildflowers. A set of wooden ramps connects hikers to the three-and-a-half mile Zionsville Rail Trail. 667 Sugarbush Dr., Zionsville, 733-2273

EAGLE CREEK PARK

Deer sightings are almost a given at Indy’s largest city

park. The northwestside enclave’s miles of color-coded trails wind through woods and meadows (follow the signs of your chosen color to avoid any confusion). Or detour down the Edessess Trail near the Ornithology Center for picturesque water and bird views high above the reservoir. \$5 per car for Marion County residents; \$6 for out-of-county visitors. 7840 W. 56th St., 327-7110

SOUTHEASTWAY PARK

Stick to the winding, paved walking trail that leads you beside woods and a pond, and you’ll have logged more than two miles in this peaceful retreat. Veer off into the forest to enjoy a maze of connected trails, a portion of which parallels Buck Creek. 5624 S. Carroll Rd., New Palestine, 327-4834

FORT BEN TWO WAYS

Fort Harrison State Park proves fun for those on foot or wheel. \$5. 6000 N. Post Rd., 591-0904

BIKING

The affectionately nicknamed Fort Ben features a beginner trail and two pieces of more-advanced singletrack. Schoen Creek Trail travels along a wetland before heading upward, hugging the hillside and giving riders a precipitous view of the dogwood-filled ravine below. Morning rides are ideal for catching a glimpse of deer or the occasional owl.

HIKING

With 1,700 acres, there’s a lot of ground to cover here. We recommend Fall Creek Trail, a path that snakes alongside its namesake waterway and uphill to an observation deck, or the paved—but not flat!—Harrison Trace Trail, a 2.75-mile route lined with woods, wildflowers, and scenic views of Delaware Lake.

JOIN THE PACK

Sprained ankles. Snake bites. Spotty cell reception. For these reasons and more, it’s always best to pick or wheel your way through the wild with a buddy. Here are a few local groups to consider.



The Indianapolis Hiking Club

Founded in 1957, this 580-member group organizes more than 2,000 hikes annually around the state and beyond (including a 2015 weeklong trip to the Rio Grande). \$10 new-member fee; \$20 annual dues. indyhike.org

Hoosier Backpackers

Hikes with this more-informal crowd include Deam Wilderness this month and Big South Fork, along the Tennessee-Kentucky border, in November. Free. To join the mailing list, contact David Culp, 253-3498.

The Indianapolis Hiking Meetup Group

A loosely organized collection of about 1,800 hikers have the opportunity to commune with nature and each other at spots such as Shades State Park and Red River Gorge. \$5 annual dues. meetup.com/hiking-223/

Hoosier Hikers Council

Volunteers and members build, maintain, and promote trails across the state, and the HHC website includes for-sale maps and invaluable tips for stretches like the popular Monroe-to-Brown County Tecumseh Trail and their newly built Eagle’s Crest Nature Preserve, which overlooks Eagle Creek reservoir. \$25 annual dues. 855-812-4453, hoosierhikerscouncil.org



Hoosier Mountain Bike Association

HMBA maintains more than 120 miles of the state’s narrow singletrack trails, and it’s also a great place to meet other fanatics at events like the Hoosier Outdoor Experience. \$30 annual dues. hmba.org

Central Indiana Bicycling Association

Although it’s primarily a road-riding club, many CIBA members like to get dirty on the trail every now and then. \$25 annual dues. cibaride.org

IndyCog

IndyCog advocates for bicycle safety in Indianapolis, and also takes part in events like the Thirsty Thursday Urban Ride, a trail-cruising, barhopping good time. The route changes nearly every week. \$35 annual dues. 663-3423, indycog.org

Sub-9 Productions

Jonathan and Tania Juillerat put on some of the best biking events in the region, including the annual Midwest Women’s Mountain Bike Clinic. 413-0624, sub-9.com

On the Web

For more ways to explore this favorite fall destination, visit IndianapolisMonthly.com/Brown-County.

TO HESITATE IS DIVINE

A GORGEOUS BROWN COUNTY OVERLOOK
DRAWS BOTH HIKERS AND BIKERS.

BY ROBERT ANNIS & JONATHAN SCOTT



WE ENDORSE
HHC Trail
4 miles
MODERATE



Seeing fall foliage lures many to Brown County State Park's trails, but to get the best of both worlds—splendid views and an enjoyable workout—the Hoosier Hikers Council Trail, located on the west side of the park, wins. The longest of the available 12 hikes, the HHC Trail begins and finishes by lovely Ogle Lake. Granted, that means you'll share your hike with dozens of friends in waiting; my partner and I came across about 40 people before I stopped counting.

We began our trek from the left trailhead so as to travel

clockwise around the loop—otherwise, you'll start with a climb up steep steps that instead make for a relaxing denouement if you take this route. After a decently rigorous half-mile ascent, we steered left at a fork to continue toward Hesitation Point; veering right takes you to the Tulip Tree Shelter connector, slicing off about a mile of the excursion. The trail then leveled for a bit before we came upon a clearing that spilled down into a breathtaking valley. Just one man and his best friend, a boxer, were on hand, making for—finally—a serene scene replete with a view known for its

verdant, yellow, and ruddy hues come autumn.

Another half-mile uphill led us to the apex of a ridge. For a moment, we thought we'd fallen off the path somehow, as we climbed for more than a mile near the road that originally took us in from the park's west gatehouse. Though the traffic was light, that stretch almost killed our rustic buzz. The payoff, however, more than made up for it: Hesitation Point, one of Brown County's most beloved vistas. From there, we could spy the Aynes Loop and Hesitation Point mountain-bike trails, and nothing but forestland for miles

in the direction of bustling tourist haven Nashville. Picnic tables and park displays about wildlife, history, and more populate this highly trafficked spot. It's a busy intersection for parkgoers, but the view is pure.

From here, the hike finished up straightforward and pleasing—down a notably tighter path thankfully clear of foliage, and that series of wooden walkways reminiscent of the Swiss Family Robinson's pad. The trip was so pleasant, when I found myself back at the lake post-hike, I wanted to turn around and do it again—relentless crowds and all.

GETTING THERE Take I-65 to Columbus, right on S.R. 46 W/Jonathan Moore Pike (turns into Old S.R. 46), left at the stoplight in Nashville onto S.R. 46 W toward Bloomington, and left into



WE ENDORSE
Hesitation Point
Trail
2.1 miles
RUGGED



Brown County State Park cycling trails are well-lauded, even earning the coveted “Epic” status from the International Mountain Bicycling Association. And while options such as Limekiln or Green Valley make me feel as if I’m riding a two-wheeled roller coaster, Hesitation Point has been at times more of a dirt-and-rock house of horrors—one well worth the challenging slog.

Most riders start at the first trailhead at the parking lot near the entrance, where I wound my way up a few beginner and intermediate trails to reach

Hesitation Point. There, the narrow singletrack trail is thankfully wide-open, but a few tight spots and switchbacks kept me on the edge of my clipless pedals. My Giant Anthem’s front suspension absorbed the impact of the few small log crossings, allowing me to sail over them with relative ease.

The trail rose higher and steepened slightly when I reached the first of several rock gardens to cross. I’ve ridden my bike all over the Midwest for the last decade, but for some reason, rocks—be it weathered sandstone, slick limestone, or any other mineral—remain

my Kryptonite. Keeping your momentum going fast enough to roll over the rocky switchbacks unscathed while pedaling upward can be difficult. This is definitely a trail that rewards multiple visits, searching for the perfect line. My limbs are dotted with the scars of my failure over the years to do just that.

So why return to the site of so many scrapes and gashes? The view at the top—Hesitation Point—is absolutely spectacular, especially during autumn. Layered by the park’s rolling hills, the canopy of trees explodes in color, nature’s most perfect fireworks. Add in a fiery

sunrise or sunset, and even T.C. Steele couldn’t paint a prettier Indiana picture.

On the descent, I kept my pedals level and arms bent, letting gravity do the hard work. Soon I glimpsed the stone remnants of a Depression-era cabin that burned down to its foundation years ago, a popular meeting place for riders. As I rolled up, a few friends were there taking a breather, and we headed toward the next section of trail together.

On the Web

New to mountain-biking? An instructor will lead you through the basics at Indianapolis Monthly.com/Trails.





BACKYARD BACKCOUNTRY

— MORGAN-MONROE STATE FOREST —

SURPRISE! A REMARKABLE WILDERNESS LIES RIGHT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF INDY'S SOUTHERN SUBURBS. BY EVAN WEST

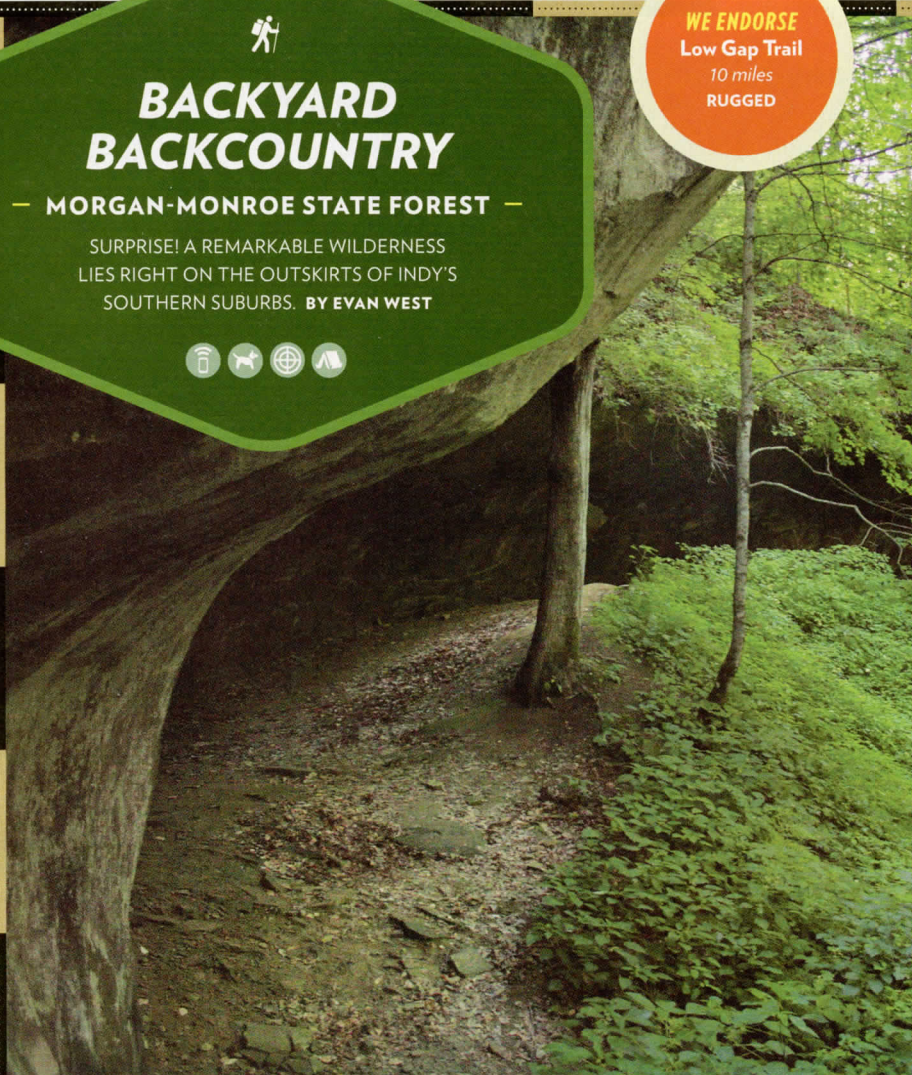


WE ENDORSE

Low Gap Trail

10 miles

RUGGED



It's a good thing I didn't read up much on the Rock Shelter Trail, the 3.1-mile first leg of the Low Gap. Before embarking, I imagined—dumbly—finding a hovel of stacked stones abandoned in a holler by settlers, or maybe remnants of the cellar-like springhouses that old-timers built into hill-sides all around Southern Indiana. Not until a mile or so in did I realize how far off the mark I'd been—and experienced the kind of a-ha discovery that hikers live for.

The trail follows a fire road through a dry, breezy ridge-top forest before zigzagging down a precipitous hillside in a series of

switchbacks to a shady, fertile ravine below. From there, it splashes across a babbling creekbed and meanders deeper into the narrowing vale. Progressively higher cliffs rise up on either side as the path picks its way around tumbled-down boulders, and the watchful observer will begin to notice, between crags, dainty waterfalls and, curiously, rock projections that jut out from the hillside to form cozy, cave-like enclosures underneath. After spotting two or three such formations, I slowly realized that perhaps these were the “Rock Shelters” this portion of the trail was named for. Then I turned a blind corner, the ravine

widened, and there before me was the mother of all rock shelters: a deep recess, naturally carved from solid rock, that slithered along under an overhang for a distance of 100 feet or more. The serpent-like furrow feels like the kind of awesome, baffling feature that shouldn't be there but, incredibly, is. An obscure sanctuary that, once found, you don't want to leave.

After a climb back up the hillside, the trail forks, with one route back to the trailhead and another that turns east into the wild backcountry of the state forest, miles and miles of ridges and ravines just like these, and the very good likelihood that you'll encounter not another soul, but more inspiring places that are good for your own.

➡ **STAY** You don't have to camp for a deep-woods overnight in Morgan-Monroe: **Draper Cabin** (\$32.10/night, two-night minimum), a restored, 130-year-old log structure, offers a stone fireplace and an outhouse (but no electricity or running water), while handsome **Cherry Lake Lodge** (\$150/night, two-night minimum) has amenities like a full kitchen and a deck with a gas grill.

➡ **GRAVE CONCERNS** Historic burial places dot the state forest, most notably **Stepp Cemetery**, located just west of the intersection of Forest and Beanblossom roads (look for the unmarked gravel pull-off and low stone wall). Local teens have long thrilled to Stepp spook tales—beware the haunted stump!—but be respectful: Wreaths, flags, and plush toys testify to the fact that loved ones still visit these memorials, too.



➡ **ALTERNATE ROUTE** Setting out from the main forest office, the one-mile **Tree Identification Trail** consists of a pleasant, kid-friendly self-guided tour of Hoosier trees, with easy-to-spot markers calling out more than 30 species, from black gum to basswood. A companion map is available 24/7 outside of the office.

GETTING THERE Take S.R. 37 S, turn left past Martinsville at the brown “state forest” sign, take Old S.R. 37 to the big wooden Morgan-Monroe sign, turn left, and follow Forest Rd. to the Low Gap trailhead. in.gov/dnr/forestry/4816.htm

THE HOOSIERIST KNOWS



Q: Can my buddies and I drink beer on the trails?

A: Alcohol is perfectly legal on almost all trails, says the DNR, but not necessarily a great idea—especially if you get falling-down drunk and risk plummeting off a ravine. Still, booze-related injuries are comparatively rare. Of greater concern is the threat of dehydration, which can happen when you try to replenish your sweaty, overheated body with booze instead of H₂O. But no matter the beverage, make sure you don't ditch your empties by the trail. That's 100 percent against the rules.

WE ENDORSE
Cliffside Trail & Creekside Loop
 4 miles
RUGGED



ALL-TERRAIN FUN

— VERSAILLES STATE PARK —

RISK AND REWARD AWAIT MOUNTAIN-BIKERS
 AT THIS HISTORIC SOUTHEASTERN
 INDIANA OUTPOST. **BY ROBERT ANNIS**



Versailles saw action during the Civil War, as Confederate troops briefly held the city during the infamous Morgan's Raid. Now most of the sleepy hamlet's local excitement is of the two-wheeled variety: The wide mix of terrain over Versailles State Park's 16 miles of singletrack has made the trail system a favorite of many Hoosier riders. It's also why local race promoters love using the park for events, such as Doing INdiana Off-road's (DINO) 24-hour mountain-bike race. Each September, the event allows hardcore riders to bike the course for 24 hours straight. At night, members pedal with high-powered lights atop their helmets and handlebars, taking over the forest from the owls, raccoons, and other animals that normally own the night.

To get to the Cliffside and Creekside trails, the most scenic of the lot, I traversed Shadow Run, an easy four-mile jaunt perfect for opening up the legs. Two miles in, I reached Cliffside, rising 250 feet and running along the hillside—the dropoff to the ravine can be steep, so stay alert. The topography is worth the risk, though, particularly for the lovely waterfall you ride by. Cliffside connects to Creekside, which descends, splashing across a couple of ankle-deep streams, to the trailhead along Laughery Creek. When I noticed the herons and cranes relaxing in the creek, I shook the urge to jerk my handlebars to the right and take the refreshing plunge.

➔ **DON'T FORGET** An extra pair of socks, for when the water level's high at Laughery Creek.

GETTING THERE Take I-74 E to U.S. 421 S, follow for 26 miles, turn right on U.S. 50. The park will be on your left. The bike trails can be accessed from the parking lot closest to the camp store. in.gov/dnr/parklake/2963.htm



MORE RAMBLE, LESS GAMBLE

— FRENCH LICK —

THIS PEACEFUL ROUTE UP MT. AIRIE FEELS A
 WORLD AWAY FROM THE NEARBY SLOTS.

BY ROBERT ANNIS



After signing in at the Valley Links golf course's pro shop—a courtesy for using the free trails—I followed the signs to Buffalo Trace, a loop so named for the eponymous path that once graced the land nearby. The loop ascends into the hills from the French Lick Resort complex, but traversing the trail clockwise provides a slightly more gradual uphill climb than tackling it from the steeper opposite direction.

A glutton for punishment, I took the harder route. As my legs churned and my lungs screamed for more oxygen, I quickly realized this stretch has significantly more elevation gain than most Hoosier trails—including Brown County's Hesitation Point. Designed by Alex Stewart, the architect of much of Brown County State Park's acclaimed singletrack, Buffalo Trace contours to the

area's numerous slopes as it rises toward Mt. Airie.

My nostrils detected the scent of fresh pine long before I noticed the fallen needles on the ground; the temperature seemed to drop 10 degrees as I rolled through a grove. About halfway up, the more difficult four-mile Waterfall Loop connects to Buffalo Trace, and it proved a worthwhile detour—a small waterfall lies 1.5 miles in.

Many of French Lick's visitors rarely find themselves outside the luxe onsite casino, so traffic on Buffalo Trace can be sparse. During my visit, the only other riders I came across were a young couple exiting the woods as I approached the trail. (Next time, wear helmets, guys.)

➔ GOOD TO KNOW

The pro shop offers bike rentals costing \$25 for four hours—and a shower if you bring your own towel, gratis.

GETTING THERE S.R. 37 S to S.R. 60 W, left on Fleenor Rd., right on W. County Rd. 700 N, left on N. County Rd. 500 W, right on S.R. 56, and right into French Lick Springs Hotel, where the trail begins. frenchlick.com



WE ENDORSE
Buffalo Trace Trail
 6-plus miles
MODERATE

KNOBSTONE 101

Three ways to dip your boots into the Knobstone Trail, Indiana's longest footpath—a beloved practice run for the Appalachian Trail.

BY ADAM WREN

In 1973, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources tasked a young University of Oregon graduate, Jerry Pagac, with creating a long-distance hiking trail along the stark bluffs and ravines of an escarpment rock formation in Southern Indiana that featured round-topped hills, or “knobs.” The result: Indiana’s lengthiest footpath, stretching across 58 miles of the state’s roughest terrain and two state forests—from Deam Lake State Recreation Center in Borden to Delaney Park in Salem.

Avid hikers often use the Knobstone to warm up for longer hikes along the Appalachian Trail—even calling it “the little AT.” But if you’d like an easier introduction, these three day hikes will do the trick. Gird your glutes!



DELANEY PARK LOOP

6 miles / Moderate

Consider this section Knobstone’s Choose Your Own Adventure area, where you can shorten our suggested route to a quick two-mile jaunt or extend it to a nine-mile circuit past Spurgeon Hollow Lake. The six-mile loop, however, will take you around logging operations (and consequently, the trail is sometimes rerouted). Dotted with patches of greenbrier and water-bars, this region features a mix of flat footpaths and inclines, too. After mile marker 42d, you can catch picturesque views of the forest thanks to thin trees and fall colors. Near Spurgeon Hollow, you will contend with narrow sections of the trail that are often dense and overgrown.

GETTING THERE From I-65 S, take exit 29 to S.R. 56 toward Salem, right on S.R. 135, right on Delaney Park Rd., and then right into Delaney Park.



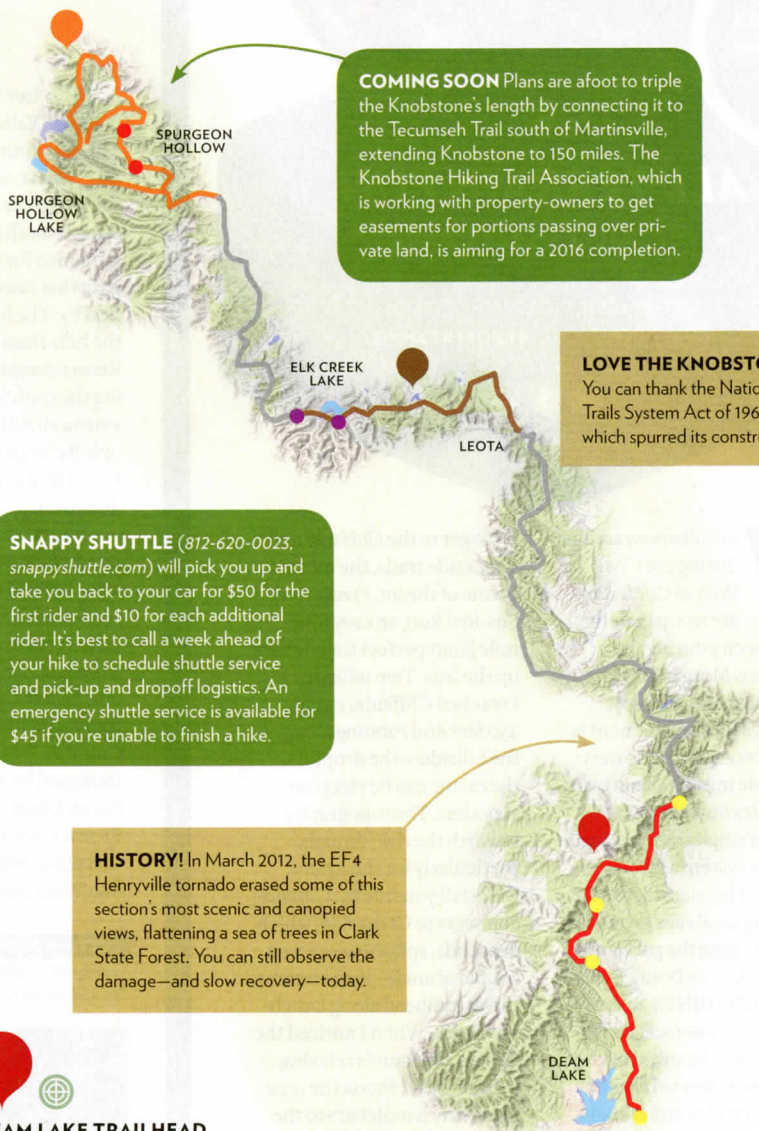
LEOTA TO ELK CREEK LAKE

7 miles / Rugged

Here, you’ll start your hike near a picturesque valley but will quickly ascend 850 feet above the nearby town of Leota. Next, you’ll enter the trail’s backcountry and some of its most challenging terrain, including steep uphill climbs and switchbacks. For most of the rest of the hike, you’ll trudge under a deep canopy of chestnut oaks as the dirt trail snakes through a dry creekbed, thinning to only a foot wide in some places, with a 60-degree-or-so drop between knobs. At mile marker 32, your sylvan toiling pays off with a stunning, foliage-framed view of Elk Creek Lake.

GETTING THERE From I-65 S, take exit 29 to S.R. 56 toward Salem, left on Zion Rd., right on Stagecoach Rd., right on Leota Rd., right on Saylor Rd., and right into the gravel trailhead entrance.

TAKEALONG The path’s quintessential guidebook, *A Guide to the Knobstone Trail: Indiana’s Longest Footpath*, by Louisville naturalist Nathan D. Strange (Indiana University Press, \$9.98)



COMING SOON Plans are afoot to triple the Knobstone’s length by connecting it to the Tecumseh Trail south of Martinsville, extending Knobstone to 150 miles. The Knobstone Hiking Trail Association, which is working with property-owners to get easements for portions passing over private land, is aiming for a 2016 completion.

LOVE THE KNOBSTONE?

You can thank the National Trails System Act of 1968, which spurred its construction.

SNAPPY SHUTTLE (812-620-0023, snappysshuttle.com) will pick you up and take you back to your car for \$50 for the first rider and \$10 for each additional rider. It’s best to call a week ahead of your hike to schedule shuttle service and pick-up and drop-off logistics. An emergency shuttle service is available for \$45 if you’re unable to finish a hike.

HISTORY! In March 2012, the EF4 Henryville tornado erased some of this section’s most scenic and canopied views, flattening a sea of trees in Clark State Forest. You can still observe the damage—and slow recovery—today.



DEAM LAKE TRAILHEAD TO MILE MARKER 10

10 miles / Rugged

Start your trek at Deam Lake, the Knobstone’s southern terminus. From there, serpentine paths and moderate terrain get the blood flowing. At mile marker 4, the trail tapers atop Bartle Knob, where you can catch your breath, grab a snack, and enjoy autumnal views of Blue Lick below. Just feet from mile marker 6 stands a rock formation carved with the initials of Hoosier hikers dating back to 1896. Steps off the trail, just up a hill to the north, rises Round Knob, one of the footpath’s highest marks. Mile marker 10 provides a panoramic vista of Louisville—a sight that will make you forget your aching legs.

GETTING THERE From I-65 S, take exit 16. Head west on Memphis–Blue Lick Rd., left on Bartle Knob Rd., left on Beyl Rd., and then right on Crone Rd., which picks up on Cummins Rd. Take a right on Wilson Switch Rd., and then left on Flower Gap Rd. The Deam Lake Trailhead will be on your left.



LINES IN THE SAND

— INDIANA DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE —

ONE-OF-A-KIND HABITATS ALONG LAKE MICHIGAN OFFER HIKERS MORE THAN JUST A DAY AT THE BEACH. **BY EVAN WEST**

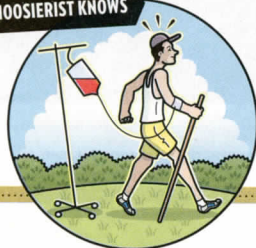


WE ENDORSE
West Beach trails
3.4 miles
MODERATE



GETTING THERE Take I-65 N to Gary, east on U.S. 12 (Dunes Highway) to National Lakeshore West Beach entrance at County Line Rd. nps.gov/indu/index.htm

THE HOOSIERIST KNOWS



Q: What's the dumbest thing someone has done on a state trail?

A: Indiana conservation officer Jet Quillen says you shouldn't hike a couple of days after major surgery. Which, apparently, a few geniuses have attempted. "They get out a mile or two and realize they've pushed themselves past their limit," he says. "Then conservation officers or firefighters have to hike in and pretty much carry them out." Also, don't trek in wingtips, flip-flops, or bare feet. "I've never seen high heels, but I've seen a lot of footwear that wasn't meant for hiking," Quillen says.

If I had my trip to do over, I would hike the Succession Trail—the most impressive of three conjoined loops in the national lakeshore's West Beach area—twice.

A ranger had described the trail as perhaps the most ecologically unique corner of Indiana. I was skeptical. Somehow, right on the border of gritty, Rust Belt Gary, and just a few miles from roaring I-94, lay not only windswept, grass-speckled dunes, but hardwood and fragrant evergreen forests; a wetland wildlife sanctuary; and even, the ranger said, "one of the rarest habitats in the world." We'll see, I thought.

Farthest inland, the flat 1.6-mile Long Lake Trail follows the westernmost bank of its namesake and a shallow marsh—a renowned birding site thought to be the only place in the state to see the Red Crossbill and Long-eared Owl. Next, the 1.4-mile West Beach Trail rings a crater where sand was mined before the land came under federal protection. Restoration efforts there established a scarce "oak savanna," a prairie-like setting of sparse trees and dense, golden grasses evocative of Africa's dry plains; it also hosts Indiana's lone native cactus species, the Eastern prickly pear.

The Succession Trail Loop, though, proves the centerpiece, beginning in powdery, calf-burning sand and climbing a 250-step wooden staircase up the side of a sun-parched dune. After a heart-stirring 180-degree view, the path drops down a second staircase into a bowl dense with deciduous trees shaded by high, sandy ridges. Another climb, panoramic summit, and descent takes you across more shifting dunes, and then delivers

you to that precious habitat the ranger described:

pockets of wet, low-lying sand known as "pannes," which, due to their high alkalinity, support threatened and endangered plants like lakeshore rush, rose gentian, and horned bladderwort. Resembling little swamps, but without the muck, the pannes are flanked by a grove of Jack pines held over from Indiana's post-glacial days, the southernmost indigenous colony of the trees in the Great Lakes region.

From there, a short scramble delivers you to the lakeshore and the most disappointing stretch of the hike—passage through a brick-and-concrete bathhouse and along a paved driveway. In an instant, the natural beauty I should have backtracked to see again seemed not just a hundred feet behind but miles away.

→ DETOUR! Pinhook Bog.

about a half-hour drive east of West Beach, may be the last feature of its kind in Indiana. The 300-acre bog's lake, formed by a hunk of melting glacier, is up to 70 feet deep in some places and covered by a thick mat of sphagnum moss. Only very rare vegetation, including three species of carnivorous plants (inset), can tolerate the highly acidic water. The public may access the bog's interior via a floating plastic boardwalk by appointment (219-395-1882) or at Sunday open houses.



On the Web

Use a wheelchair or have stroller-age children? Find mobility-friendly trails at IndianapolisMonthly.com/Trails.

EXPERT PICK



SALLY MARCHAND COLLINS

MOUNTAIN-BIKE RACER WHO PLACED THIRD AT THE 2007 24-HOUR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

“Brown County’s **GREEN VALLEY** guarantees a smile. It’s a fast, swooping trail that causes me to scream like a little girl as I launch off the top of each little roller-coaster peak. There are times I find myself sideways as I punch out of a turn, hoping I hit the ground before the next bend.”
browncountymountainbiking.com



A WORTHY QUARRY

— FRANCE PARK —

TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS HAVE THIS LOGANSPORT DESTINATION ON THE UPSWING. **BY ROBERT ANNIS**



WE ENDORSE
DINO Race Course
5 miles
MODERATE

As a Logansport native, I spent much of my formative years at the expansive France Park, camping, swimming, and trying to look cool in front of the ladies. It wasn’t until I ventured to Ball State in the early 1990s, though, that mountain-biking really took off at the Northern Indiana recreation spot.

France Park, however, eventually got stuck in a rut. Trails that once seemed fast and exciting to hundreds of mountain-bike noobs were rendered tame and boring over the ensuing years as other parks across the state began building their own singletrack. France Park’s mountain-bike glory days seemed to be over.

That is, until the past few years, when Doing Indiana

Off-road (DINO) race organizer Brian Holzhausen, park staff, and volunteers began to drag the trails into the 21st century. A longer, more manageable descent replaced a terrifyingly steep downhill. And a technical climb flanked by limestone cliffs and dense tree cover took the place of a much-too-difficult uphill hike-a-bike section.

The best way to navigate the trails, I’ve found, is by following the DINO race route, a map of which can be found at dinoserries.com. Trail markings are virtually nonexistent, so print out the map beforehand or ask for one at the gate. Even with map in hand, be prepared to do some wandering; luckily, the park is fairly small, so it’s impossible to get too lost. Despite volunteers’

efforts, few sections are truly challenging, making the route an ideal place to really open it up and get in some fast laps.

Pedaling up to the edge of the limestone cliffs, though, offered me the perfect time to slow down a bit. Below, a crystal-blue vision of the Old Kenneth Quarry opened up, with large shadows moving in the water. Reaching up to seven feet long and 160 pounds, these massive paddlefish look fearsome but are actually very gentle creatures. Bald eagles, too, pass through the park, so stash a pair of binoculars in your hydration pack in case you’re lucky enough to catch a glimpse.

➔ **DON'T FORGET** Your swimsuit for the clear-as-glass quarry lake.



GETTING THERE Take U.S. 421 N to S.R. 29, and then take the U.S. 24 Logansport Bypass. francepark.com

The Hickory Ridge Lookout Tower soared into the sky as I reached the Sycamore Trail parking lot. The tower, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps back in the '30s, would wait, though—my reward for taking on the Sycamore Trail, the sole hiking-only path in the Charles C. Deam Wilderness, 13,000 acres of steep ridges, curving creeks, and thick woods within the Hoosier National Forest.

The loop begins on a small stretch of the Terrill Ridge Trail and then turns east and forks in two directions—stay to the right. Hardly anything broke the path's peace, especially after I lost cell service when the elevation sank alongside a bare creek bend. I encountered only a handful of other backpackers—and two fluttering, black-and-orange monarch butterflies—during my three-and-a-half-hour adventure.

Along the way, I spotted other lovely bits of nature: moss-coated rocks bordering the stream crisscrossing the trail; mushrooms breathing off

rotting bark; sunlight sneaking through the towering pine trees. Below, rust-colored needles dusted the ground, making the hike softer on my feet. The difficulty returned in the hills that follow the curves of a narrow cliff.

After rejoining Terrill and making my way back to the parking lot, it was finally time for Hickory Ridge. The 110-foot gray steel tower's narrow staircase shook slightly as I climbed to the cramped overlook, once used for spotting fires. When I saw "Turn Back!!" scribbled on the railing four flights up, my heart pounded, and I briefly considered doing just that. Two flights from the top, an encouraging "Almost there" kept me going. The 360-degree sightline revealed a brilliant sea of sycamores, beeches, and pines. I scanned with pride the woods I had just hiked beneath. On the way down, I noticed another message—"You are awesome!" Indeed.

➔ **LOOKOUT!** By the 1950s, 33 **lookout towers**—used to patrol the surrounding farms and forests for fire in the pre-aerial surveillance and pre-cell phone days—dotted Indiana. Today, there are only 16 towers left, and all but one remain open to the public.

WE ENDORSE
Sycamore Trail
6.2 miles
MODERATE

AN OUTLOOK TO REMEMBER

— CHARLES C. DEAM WILDERNESS —

FOR THIS SERENE RAMBLE, THE PAYOFF COMES 110 FEET ABOVE GROUND.

BY LINDSEY ERDODY



GETTING THERE Take S.R. 37 S to the S.R. 45 N/46 E exit. Turn left onto E. 3rd St. Turn right onto S.R. 446. Turn left onto Tower Ridge Rd. and park at Hickory Ridge Fire Tower. fs.usda.gov/recarea



NATURE'S STAIRMASTER

— CLIFTY FALLS STATE PARK —

IN SEARCH OF THE SIGNATURE CASCADES, OUTDOOR-LOVERS CONQUER A CANYON FULL OF UPS AND DOWNS.

BY MEGAN FERNANDEZ

WE ENDORSE
Trails 3, 4 & 5
3 miles round-trip
RUGGED



First, the bad news. The four cascades that give Clifty Falls its singular appeal slow to delicate "bridal veils" in autumn. The upside: Even without the plunging flumes that arrive with spring's snowmelt, the steep canyon knifing through the park's 178-acre nature preserve offers plenty of drama.

The nicely groomed trails dip in and out of the wooded gorge and lead to ledges, rock walls, and scenic overlooks. To flirt with the park's rigors, I cobbled together a trek of varying difficulty from intersecting trails, one that would pass the two tallest falls.

Pick up a flat section of Trail 3 across from the Poplar Grove parking lot and bear right. The going is easy until a bend, when the woods surrounding Hoffman Falls open for your first glimpse of the canyon's immense scale, a sight striking enough to compensate for the trickling waters. I crossed a hulking log bridge to Trail 4, where the terrain changes to short, natural-rock staircases, slippery little grades, and slim paths right on the edge of the dropoff. The choppy, meandering trail

gradually descends into the canyon until you can hear creek-hikers at the bottom.

Pass by a daunting wooden stairway to Lilly Memorial and pick up Trail 5, a smooth, high passage with occasional wooden boardwalks and steps. It ends at the prettiest, longest waterfall, Tunnel Falls, which sits in the middle of a broad clearing. You can see to the other side from a big observation deck next to the 83-foot shale-and-limestone wall.

There are three ways back: a calf-busting staircase to the shaded road at the rim; the way you came, a gradual climb; or the wooden stairs at the half-way point. Someone smartly built benches into the observation deck just for pondering the decision.

➔ **DANGER!** Copperhead snakes occasionally sun themselves on the trails. Stop by the nature center to see one in a glass case and read precautions.

➔ **STAY** The park's lodge-like **Clifty Inn** (from \$110/night, cliftyinn.dnr.state.in.us) perches above the Ohio River with a fireplace and patio backdropped by panoramic views. Buy a s'mores kit in the gift shop. ●

GETTING THERE Take I-65 S to Scottsburg and follow S.R. 56 east toward Madison to the park's south gate. When you see massive smokestacks from an Ohio River-front plant, you're close. in.gov/dnr/parklake/2985.htm