



THE TOP TWENTY | august

## ILLINOIS STATE PARKS

**1. Chain O' Lakes**—With nearly 6,500 acres of water and 488 miles of shoreline along the chain, this group of natural lakes is one of Illinois' best water wonderlands. If getting wet isn't your thing, you can also bike and hike along the park's four trail systems.

**2. Illinois Beach**—For a great beach getaway destination, look no further than Illinois Beach. Take a quiet walk along the six and a half miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, swim in the lake, or go for a run through forested trails.

**3. Kankakee River**—This historic park is the ideal setting for everyone from canoeists to bikers. The shallow water of the Kankakee River makes for a relaxing trip, while the 10.5-mile bike trail past waterfalls and limestone canyons is sure to get your heart pumping.

**4. Moraine Hills**—For an off-road biking experience, check out the crushed limestone-surfaced trails. The trails highlight the park's impressive array of wildlife. Look for a white-tailed deer, a fox or even a coyote on your way.

**5. Buffalo Rock**—Located on a bluff that was once an island in the Illinois River, this small park lives up to its name: It houses two American bison on the grounds. For great hiking, head out to the Illinois and Michigan State Canal trail (I & M). The entrance is just across the road from Buffalo Rock.

**6. Starved Rock**—The park is best known for its fascinating rock formations which have been hewn out of countless sandstone bluffs, waterfalls, and cliffs overlooking rivers and streams. Hike, bike or stay the night at a campsite to fully appreciate the scenic surroundings.

**7. Rock Cut**—The two large lakes chiseled into the surrounding rocky area are the park's main landmarks. Swim in Olson Lake or go fishing at Pierce Lake.

**8. Apple River Canyon**—This scenic canyon area near the Wisconsin border was once part of a vast sea bottom stretching from the Alleghenies to the Rockies. Hike through densely forested trails to see limestone bluffs, deep ravines and fresh-water springs.

**9. White Pines Forest**—This small park is the perfect place for a family outing. Take the kids for an easy hike along a trail, stop for lunch at a shaded picnic area along the Pine Creek, and let 'em loose on the children's playgrounds.

**10. Franklin Creek**—This 664-acre park is home not only to the slowly flowing Franklin Creek, but also to many large natural water springs. Jump on a hiking trail to see the newly reconstructed Grist Mill—a corn and wheat flour mill built in 1847.

**11. Wolf Creek**—Try your hand at some different and interesting sports here, such as archery or windsurfing on Lake Shelbyville. This expansive park in east central Illinois covers

11,100 acres of water and 250 miles of shoreline, so there's no way you'll be bored.

**12. Kickapoo State Recreation Area**—Think scuba diving is reserved for the Caribbean? Think again. Kickapoo has 22 beautiful lakes, and divers can explore two of the deepest ones—Inland Sea and Sportsman Lake. For those who prefer a dry workout, check out the difficult 7.6-mile trail course.

**13. Nauvoo**—On the banks of the Mississippi River in western Illinois, this park lives up to its name. "Nauvoo" comes from Hebrew, meaning "beautiful place." The small park offers fishing, boating, camping and hiking in addition to an annual Grape Festival over Labor Day weekend.

**14. Pere Marquette**—Illinois' largest state park, Pere Marquette is famous for its fabulous fall colors and its bald eagles in the winter. Catch some incredible views of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers at scenic overlooks while hiking, biking, horseback riding or boating.

**15. Illinois Caverns State Natural Area**—About half an hour south of St. Louis, the Illinois Caverns stretch over six miles long. Enjoy a slow walk through the underground caves as you stare at the stalagmites, streams and spectacular rock formations.

**16. Red Hills**—As the highest point of land between St. Louis and Cincinnati, the park is a mix of hilly trails and sparkling lakes. Flex those muscles on the moderately difficult, eight-mile hiking trail or explore the 627-acre Chauncey Marsh Nature Preserve.

**17. Tunnel Hill State Trail**—The 45-mile trail is the perfect daylong adventure through southern Illinois. Pack your bike for a scenic spin through forests, flat farm country and lush wetlands. About midway, expect a rise in elevation of 680 feet at the actual Tunnel Hill—just enough to keep your ride interesting.

**18. Giant City**—Nestled in the Shawnee National Forest near Carbondale, the park is a unique standout when it comes to climbing. Grab your gear and try Devil's Standtable cliff or the Shelter No. 1 bluff for sweet rappelling and climbing locations.

**19. Channahon**—The park is the official trailhead of the I & M Canal State Trail, and it's here that the waters of the DuPage, Des Plaines and Kankakee rivers meet. The linear trail path extends 61 miles, so get pumped for a long bike ride or run.

**20. Hennepin Canal Parkway**—For an even longer trek, don't miss Hennepin's 104.5-mile linear trail path. The path spans five counties and connects the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. Try canoeing in the calm waters of the canal for a great workout or head out for a quick, flat run on the trail. —Lisa Reitz

For more information about these parks, check out [www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgmt/parks](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgmt/parks).

## EVENT WATCH

## Conquer Your Fears

Ready to arm-wrestle complete strangers? How about eat worms? Maybe even pole dance in a public place? At the City Chase Chicago, Prove how daring you really are at the City Chase Chicago, an urban adventure race hitting the Windy City on August 25.

"Teams of two will have to go out in the city and complete different physical, intellectual and humorous tasks that push you out of your comfort zone," says Jason Erkes, president of Chicago Sport and Social Club, which has partnered with City Chase to produce the event. Teams must run, walk and use public transit to find the clues for different challenges. The first team to find all the clues at the ChasePoints and successfully complete the tasks wins.

"The race combines many of the elements of reality TV shows like *Fear Factor*, *Survivor* or the *Amazing Race*," Erkes says. "A lot of the things that we've seen people do on the shows are built into this race."

Sure, it sounds intense, but that's part of the fun. There's no need to worry if you're up to snuff: Erkes says that they expect competitors of all ages and abilities.

The City Chase series, which began in Canada, has never been done before in the U.S. What's cool about this year's event? Winners will be flown to Rome, Italy, to compete in the 36-hour City Chase World Championships. For more information, visit [www.citychase.com](http://www.citychase.com). —LR

