

# pekin loop

illinois river country nature trail



illinois river country 



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**nature trail**  
connecting great lakes to great rivers

# Illinois River Country

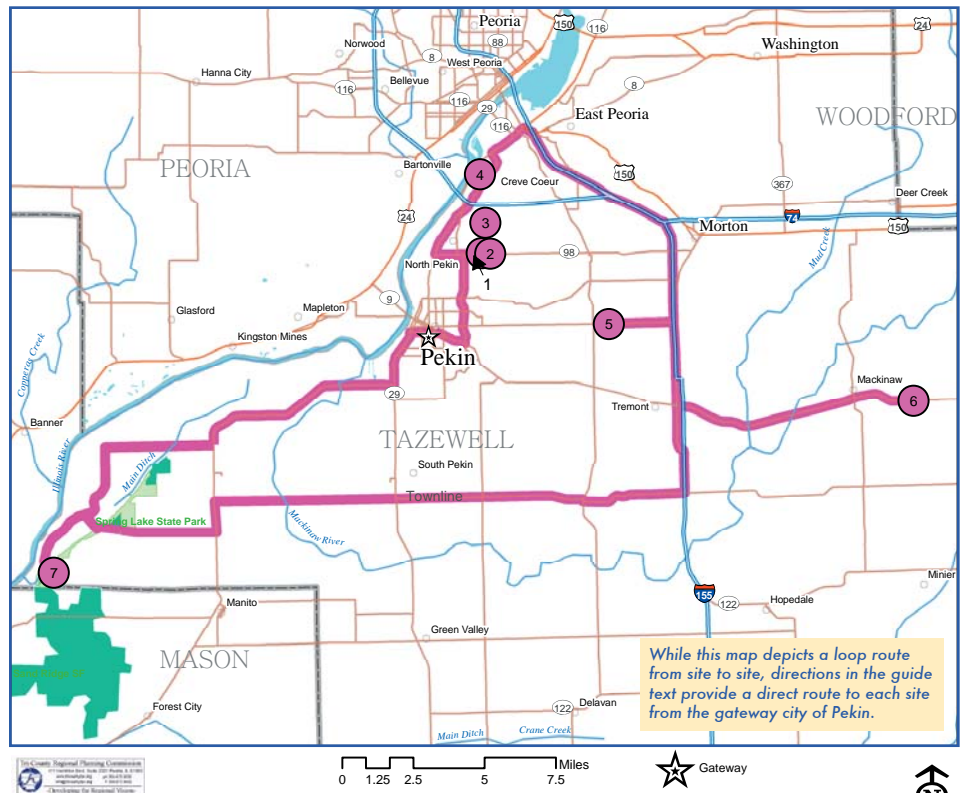
The Illinois River Country Nature Trail unites 100+ nature-based destinations in the Illinois River Valley beginning in Ottawa and ending 140 miles south in Havana. The trail showcases great places where visitors and residents alike can go to discover and experience the nature of the region. From hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, canoeing, wetlands, gardens, birding, and watching wildlife, the possibilities for adventure are endless.

As it follows the Illinois River south, the trail travels through a mixture of backwater lakes, bottomland forests, floodplain wetlands, upland forest, savanna and some of the country's last remaining tallgrass prairies. The river and these adjacent habitats provide an ideal environment for diverse birds, butterflies and other wildlife as well as numerous plant communities native to the valley. The Illinois River Country Nature Trail will guide you through the Valley to some of Illinois' most treasured, natural gems.

two

Research biologists have estimated that in pre-settlement days, approximately one-third of the Illinois River Valley landform was forested. Today, only about half of those associated woodlands remain. Fortunately, some of the best remaining examples of upland forest habitat can be experienced around Pekin at McNaughton Park, Fort Crevecoeur, and Tante Park.

Visit Spring Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area and explore its hiking trails, which run the gambit from bluff-top oak-hickory forests to bottomland silver maple-cottonwood. If hiking isn't on your itinerary, the lake's extensive shoreline is perfect for fishing, bird watching, or just plain relaxing. Between December and February, Bald Eagles flock to the river and in Pekin, are truly celebrated with the annual Pekin Main Street's Eagle Census Festival.





site: one  
 site access: free; hrs. 6am-10pm  
 gps: n 40.60447; w 89.60500  
 site contact: 309.347.7275  
[www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict](http://www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict)



# Dirksen Park

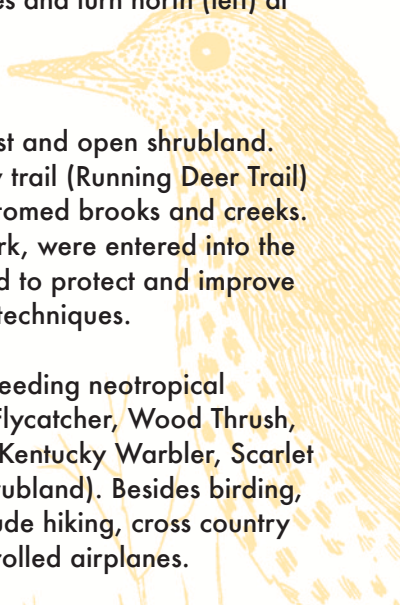
## directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 29 and SR 98/Edgewater Rd. in Pekin, go east on SR 98/Edgewater Rd. for 1.6 miles and turn north (left) at the Dirksen Park sign.

## description

This 459-acre site is comprised of oak-hickory forest and open shrubland. An extensive hiking/mountain biking/cross country trail (Running Deer Trail) runs through the park, crossing several cobble-bottomed brooks and creeks. In 2003, Dirksen Park along with McNaughton Park, were entered into the Illinois Land and Water Reserve Program, designed to protect and improve woodland habitats using restoration management techniques.

Dirksen Park is an important site for deep-forest breeding neotropical songbirds such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Yellow-throated Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, and Chestnut-sided Warbler (found in shrubland). Besides birding, other activities commonly pursued at the park include hiking, cross country running, mountain biking, archery, and radio-controlled airplanes.



## Pekin Main Street's Eagle Census Festival

One of Pekin's most celebrated nature events is the annual Bald Eagle Census Festival. Held on the Illinois Riverfront at the foot of Court Street near downtown Pekin, the festival usually takes place on the last Saturday in January, commemorating the annual tradition of censusing wintering eagles throughout the Midwest, which began in 1967. During the Pekin festival, visitors load up on buses to tour the official count, which takes place on the Illinois River within the stretch between Peoria and Havana. For more information and festival dates, please visit [www.pekinmainstreet.com](http://www.pekinmainstreet.com).

- |  |                     |  |                   |
|--|---------------------|--|-------------------|
|  | information         |  | picnic area       |
|  | parking             |  | viewing area      |
|  | restrooms           |  | hiking trails     |
|  | driving trail       |  | visitors center   |
|  | handicap accessible |  | drinking fountain |
|  | boat accessible     |  | fishing area      |
|  | cabins/lodge        |  | beach area        |
|  | camping             |  | lookout tower     |
|  | canoeing            |  | biking            |
|  | food                |  | swimming          |

### Photo and line art credits

Cover: clockwise from top left: Pekin Riverfront, Deverman Advertising; line art, USFWS; White-tailed Deer, Jim Miller; Great Blue Heron, Jim Miller; Pokeberry, Bill Fontenot/FERMATA, Inc. (BF); Eagle, Wildlife Prairie State Park; Bull Frog, Jim Miller; Eastern Bluebird, Jim Miller; fall leaves, BF; Page 3: Dirksen Center, Deverman Advertising; Sassafras, BF; Scarlet Tanager, USFWS; Page 4: McNaughton Park, Deverman Advertising; McNaughton Park, Deverman Advertising; Monarch, Jim Miller; Independence Park, BF; line art, USFWS; Page 5: Marigold Festival at Mineral Springs Park, Deverman Advertising; Fort Crevecoeur, Journal Star/Fred Zwicky; Dwarf Sumac, BF; line art, Mark Mohlenbrock/NRCS; Page 6: Pileated Woodpecker, Jim Miller; Kentucky Warbler, USFWS; Lavender, Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau; Lavender Creek Farms, BF; Page 7: Monarch, Jim Miller; Mallards, Jim Miller; line art, Mark Mohlenbrock/NRCS; Back Cover: line art, USFWS; McNaughton Park, BF.

The symbols used here are those of the various signing (official and unofficial) used by the Forest Service in marking recreation and other accommodations throughout the national forests.



site: two, site access: free, fee for equestrian stable (apr 1- nov 15); hrs: 6am-10pm, gps: n 40.60426; w 89.59933, site contact: 309.347.7275, [www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict](http://www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict)



# McNaughton Park



This savanna-like area is a great spot for glimpses of White-tailed Deer, Wild Turkey, and other interesting birds such as Eastern Bluebird and American Goldfinch.

## directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 29 and SR 98/Edgewater Rd. in Pekin, go east on SR 98/Edgewater Rd. for 1.8 miles. Turn south (right) and follow the McNaughton Park access road into the park.

## description

McNaughton Park's 850 acres contain some of the most impressive specimens of white oak in the entire Illinois River Valley. This savanna-like area is also a great spot for White-tailed Deer, Wild Turkey, and interesting birds such as Eastern Bluebird and American Goldfinch. Because of its role in providing habitat for a wide diversity of neotropical songbirds, McNaughton Park, along with Dirkson Park have been nominated for inclusion in the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Areas Program

Equestrian enthusiasts should visit Rockin' P Public Riding Ranch (309-382-1268), located in the center of McNaughton Park. The ranch offers guided trail rides, pony-on-a-lead rides, hayrack rides, horseback riding lessons, and horse boarding services for individuals or groups.



site: three, site access: free; hrs: 6am-10pm, gps: n 40.61998; W 89.60250, site contact: 309.347.7275, [www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict](http://www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict)



# Independence Park



## directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 29 and SR 98/Edgewater Rd. in Pekin, go north on SR 29 for 1.8 miles. Turn east (right) onto LaSalle Blvd. in Marquette Heights and follow it 0.8 miles to the park on the left.

## description

Once used as a proving ground for Caterpillar Inc., this 340-acre site is showing excellent signs of recovery. A major positive indicator of the ecosystem recovery process lies in the breeding presence of the Acadian Flycatcher, a dedicated closed-canopy deep-forest neotropical songbird.

The nature trail at Independence Park is a great place for catching glimpses of White-tailed Deer, especially during the spring and fall months. Spring (May-June) and fall (September-October) are also peak times to catch the neotropical songbird migration.



site: four, site access: free; fee for camping, (apr 1- oct 31);

hrs: dawn to dusk (apr 1 - dec 31), gps: n 40.64469;

w 89.60593, site contact: 309.694.3193; [www.ftcrevecoeur.org](http://www.ftcrevecoeur.org)



# Fort Crevecoeur Park

## directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 29 and SR 98/Edgewater Rd. in Pekin, go north on SR 29 for approximately 3.5 miles into Creve Coeur. Turn northwest (left) on Lawnridge Dr. and continue 3 blocks to the park.

## description

Fort Crevecoeur Park commemorates French explorer Robert Rene Cavalier de LaSalle's presence here on the east bank of the Illinois River in 1680. The fort was built to protect the Illini Indians from the aggressive Iroquois Nation. The 86.6-acre park was deeded to the village of Creve Coeur in 1976 and leased to the non-profit organization, Fort Crevecoeur, Inc. The organization has since reconstructed the fort to its original dimensions and design, established a museum, and developed extensive programming for the site.

The site's nature trail loops through a bluff-ravine hardwood forest which has been entered into the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Nature Preserve program. A small but high-quality glacial drift hill prairie is located on the northwestern-most ridge of the site, and contains over 50 prairie plant species including little bluestem, Indian grass, pale coneflower, and Canada milk vetch.

## Pekin Marigold Festival

The Marigold Festival began in 1972 as a way to honor one of Pekin's favorite sons, Senator Everett Dirksen. While in Congress, Senator Dirksen tried to make the marigold the national flower. Although unsuccessful in his efforts, Pekin soon became known as the Marigold Capital of the World. The Marigold Festival now attracts over 100,000 people. For more information, please contact the Pekin Area Chamber of Commerce at 309-346-2106.



site: five, site access: free; hrs: 6am - 10pm,  
 gps: n 40.56799; w 89.52054, site contact:  
 309.347.7275, [www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict](http://www.pekin.net/pekinparkdistrict)



# Tante Park



Besides its beautiful ravine-inhabiting trees, wildflowers, and morel mushrooms, Tante Park also hosts numerous nesting and migrating warbler species, as well as the magnificent, crow-sized Pileated Woodpecker.

## directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 29 and SR 98/Edgewater Rd. in Pekin, go east on SR 98/Edgewater Rd. for 5.3 miles to CR (County Road) 1/Springfield Rd. Take the ramp and go south on Springfield Rd. for 1.0 mile. The road name changes to CR 1/Springfield Rd.; continue 1.5 miles. Turn left (east) on CR 1700/Broadway Rd. for 0.6 miles to the park on the left.

## description

At 40 acres, Tante Park is one of the quietest and most secluded of Pekin's natural area parks. Its Woodland Wildflower Trail runs along a creek bank, and past many old growth specimens of sugar maple, white ash, black cherry, and hawthorn. The southern end of the trail terminates at quite possibly the grandest white oak in Tazewell County. Besides its beautiful ravine-inhabiting trees, wildflowers, and morel mushrooms, Tante Park also hosts numerous nesting and migrating warbler species, as well as the magnificent crow-sized Pileated Woodpecker (during migration). Picnic shelters are located at the northern and middle reaches of the trail system, as well as restrooms near the trailhead at the northern end.



site: six, site access: free; reservations required,  
 gps: n 40.52764; w 89.31760,  
 site contact: 309.359.5555, [www.lavendercreekfarm.com](http://www.lavendercreekfarm.com)



# Lavender Creek Farms



## directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 29 and SR 98/Edgewater Rd. in Pekin, go east on SR 98/Edgewater Rd. for 8.1 miles. Take the ramp and go south (right) on I 155 for 5.5 miles to Exit 25/SR 9. Turn east (left) on SR 9 and go 8.6 miles to the farm on the right.

## description

This 10-acre all-organic farm is owned and operated by Ruth Hertzfeldt, who planted the farm's first lavender crop in the spring of 1999. Today, lavender remains the #1 crop, but vegetables, grapes, and a fruit/nut orchard have been added as well. While butterflies love lavender flowers, most other insects deplore it. Planted with roses, lavender will repel aphids and other pests. Planted near hostas, lavender will deter rabbits. For humans, however, lavender is a proven stress reducer and energizer.

Lavender plants and other lavender products are sold at the farm year round, but during Harvest Days (mid-summer) the public is invited to participate in harvesting their own plants for purchase. Additionally, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, visitors are invited to attend the farm's Holiday Open House.



site: seven (Tazewell Co.), gps: n 40.44281; w 89.89162

site contact: 309.968.7135, [http://dnr.state.il.us/](http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgmt/parks/r1/spl.htm)

[lands/Landmgmt/parks/r1/spl.htm](http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgmt/parks/r1/spl.htm)



# Spring Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area

## directions

From the intersection of SR (State Route) 29 and SR 98/Edgewater Rd. in Pekin, go south on SR 29 for 2.0 miles. Bear right (south) on SR 29/N 5<sup>th</sup> St. for 0.5 miles. Turn right (west) on SR 29/Margaret St. for 0.3 miles. Turn left (south) on SR 29/ 2<sup>nd</sup> St. for 2.5 miles. Turn west (right) onto Manito Rd./CR (County Road) 1500N and go 10.3 miles. Turn west (right) on Spring Lake Rd./CR 1000N and go 4.0 miles into Spring Lake Area. Cross the lake, turn southwest (left) and follow signs 3.0 miles to the headquarters.

## description

Once the main channel of the Illinois River, Spring Lake is now geologically classified as a "meander scar," an abandoned channel of the river. Guarded by a high sandstone bluff, this 1,946-acre site is one of the few Illinois River floodplain components where upland pine forests still exist. The Spring Lake area possesses a total of 7.5 miles of hiking trails spread over 3 different trail systems. Besides hiking, these trails are also great for studying the bird, insect, and plant life associated with the site. Waterfowl watchers will want to utilize the numerous parking sites and day-use areas located along the 18 miles of lake shoreline.

illinois river country nature trail - pekin loop

This site is one of the few Illinois River floodplain components where upland pine forests exist.

THE MAGNIFICENT MILE IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF GIMMAA

# nature trail pekin loop



## ↓ illinois river country

The City of Pekin (pop. 33,857) is located in west central Illinois, along the eastern bank of the Illinois River. Robert De La Salle is believed to be one of the first European explorers to visit the area in 1680. In 1829, County Surveyor, William Hodge laid out what was to become Pekin. He called it "Town Site," indicating the land was suitable for settlement. The town was named Pekin, after China's City of the Sun - Pekin(g). Today, visitors can enjoy swimming, horseback riding, golf, a one-of-a-kind park system, and for those interested in politics, the Dirksen Congressional Center. Pekin also offers numerous community festivals, a nearby zoo and entertainment center, unique restaurants and various shops. For more information, please contact the Pekin Visitors Bureau at 800-669-7741 or visit [www.pekintourism.com](http://www.pekintourism.com).



 ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.