



Garden of the Gods



Shawnee National Forest

Hidden Springs Ranger District

(618) 658-2111

2008

The Shawnee Hills took millions of years to form. The rock formations and cliffs at Garden of the Gods are made of sandstone and are about 320 million years old. Long ago most of Illinois, western Indiana and western Kentucky were covered by a giant inland sea. For millions of years great rivers carried sand and mud to the sea, where it settled along the shoreline. Over time, the weight of the sediments turned them into layers of rock thousands of feet thick. At Garden of the Gods the sediment layers were over 20,000 feet thick or about 4 miles deep. Eventually, a great uplift occurred, raising the inland sea above sea level causing it to fill in with sand and mud. The uplift also fractured the bedrock exposing it to nature's erosive forces. Since that time, windblown sand, rain and freezing and thawing actions have worn down the layers of sediment creating the beautiful rock formations at Garden of the Gods. To find out more read the signs along the Observation Trail.

The Observation Trail

The Garden of the Gods Observation Trail is a ¼ mile long interpretive trail. It is made of natural flagstone and leads to areas near the bluffs, where there are outstanding views of the Shawnee Hills and the Garden of the Gods Wilderness. Visitors will find many interesting rock formations with names such as Camel Rock, Anvil Rock and Devil's Smokestack. The Observation Trail has some short, steep grades and a few steps. However, as a whole, the trail is not tiring. **Caution should be used because there are high cliffs in the area.**

Trail System

Access is good from Garden of the Gods Recreation Area to the River to River Trail and Garden of the Gods Wilderness. Rocky streams, sheer cliffs, pine stands, hardwood forest, trickling streams, rock overhangs and scenic vistas are encountered along this trail system. Springtime offers abundant wild flowers and rushing streams. Autumn offers beautiful fall colors and ripe fruit, such as persimmons. Users are encouraged to obtain more detailed maps before entering the backcountry. Overnight parking is available at the backpacker's parking lot.

Camping & Picnicking

Pharaoh Campground is open year round. Facilities include 12 campsites, tables, fire grills, toilets, drinking water and trails. Nice views of the Shawnee Hills can be seen from the campground and picnic areas. The Pharaoh Picnic Ground is open year round as in the Observation Area. Call for fees.

Wilderness

Garden of the Gods Wilderness is 3,300 acres in size and is relatively undisturbed. The Garden of the Gods Wilderness borders the Recreation Area on three sides. No motorized vehicles or mechanized equipment is permitted in the Wilderness. Visitors are encouraged to "leave no trace" of their visit.

Length:

Observation Trail (stone path) - 1/4 mile
Total Trail System – 5.5 miles (excluding River to River segment)

[Map](#)

Travel Time: 3-4 hours

Surface Type: Dirt

Difficulty Level: Easy - Difficult

Recommended Season: Spring, summer and fall


Facilities: Picnic areas, restrooms, parking, camping, interpretive signs along the Observation Trail.

Access: From Harrisburg, take Highway 145 south 5 miles to Highway 34, turn south. Take 34 south for 5 miles, then east on Karbers Ridge Road 2.5 miles to Garden of the Gods Road. Turn north onto Garden of the Gods Road. 1.5 miles to recreation area entrance road. There are directional signs from Harrisburg to the recreation area.

Safety: Trail tread may be slippery during and after rain.

Trail Markings: River To River Trail (blue i)

Hiker/Equestrian Trail

 Hiker-Only Trail (blue)

Please Keep in Mind:

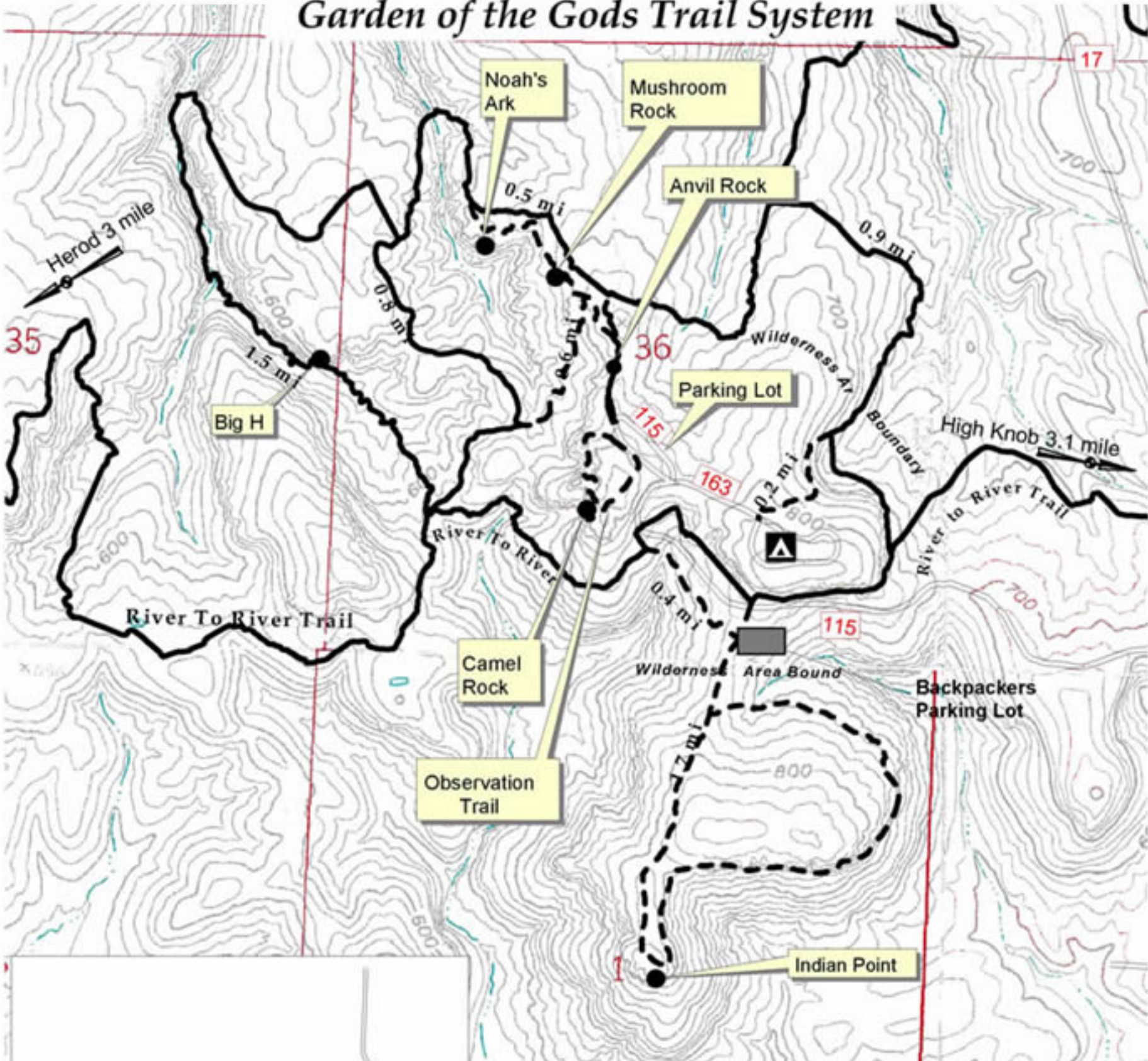
- 1) Pets are allowed only on a leash.
- 2) Picnic areas and Observation Trail are open 6am-10pm.
- 3) Use trash receptacles. Pack It In, Pack It Out rules apply to the entire trail system.
- 4) Camp only at designated sites in the campground.
- 5) Disposable food and beverage containers are not permitted on the Observation Trail.
- 6) Stay on the designated trail and leave the beauty of the rocks and plants for others to enjoy.

Surrounding Area

Pounds Hollow Recreation Area, Rim Rock National Recreation Trail, River to River Trail, High Knob Picnic Area, Illinois Iron Furnace, Saline County Conservation Area and Ohio River National Scenic Byway. The nearest hospital is Harrisburg Medical Center in Harrisburg.

Visit our website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee. The USDA Forest Service is a multicultural organization and is committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

Shawnee National Forest Garden of the Gods Trail System



LEGEND

- Road (Paved)
- Hiker/Equestrian Trail (white)
- Hiker Only Trail (blue)
- Wilderness Boundary
- Private Land
- Shawnee National Forest Lands
- Rock Formation
- River to River Trail (blue i)

Contour interval = 20 feet

