



# Little Grand Canyon



Shawnee National Forest

Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District

2006

Over time, erosion has carved this deep box canyon exposing its majestic bluffs. A cool and lush bottomland habitat thrives on the canyon floor. Along the upper portions of the trail visitors encounter expansive views of the colorful cliffs, the Big Muddy River and the Mississippi River floodplain. The canyon floor showcases seasonal waterfalls, large sandstone overhangs and towering beech and sycamore trees.

## Trail Highlights

The trail consists of a 2.9-mile loop. However, shorter and less strenuous paths lead to scenic overlooks before the trail descends into the canyon. You can reach these vistas by taking either leg of the trail leading from the parking lot. A unique feature of this trail is that both the approach and exit from the canyon is via steps carved into the rocky creek beds.

## Nature Viewing

Known for its plant and animal diversity, this area is also a haven for many neotropical migratory songbirds during the spring and fall. Year round residents include raccoon, mink, fox, deer and bobcat along with several birds, amphibians and reptiles. The rock ledges serve as snake dens for the copperhead, cottonmouth, and timber rattler, along with a few nonpoisonous species. From the scenic overlooks, turkey vultures and hawks are often seen soaring over the treetops. In 1980 the Little Grand Canyon was designated a National Natural Landmark due to its unique ecological and geological features. The area contains a variety of natural communities, including upland forest, dry hill prairies and sandstone outcroppings, plus an extensive floodplain ecosystem at the bottom of the canyon.

## Surrounding Area

Pomona Natural Bridge, Cedar Lake, LaRue-Pine Hills/Otter Pond Research Natural Area, Clear Springs Wilderness and Bald Knob Wilderness.

## Emergencies

The nearest hospital is St. Joseph's in Murphysboro. The nearest public phone is in Murphysboro.

**Length:** 2.9 miles

**Travel Time:** 3 ½ - 4 hours

**Surface Type:** Asphalt and dirt

**Difficulty Level:** Moderate to difficult  
Portions of the trail require moderate climbing.

**Recommended Season:** Spring, summer, and fall

**Facilities:** Parking, accessible restrooms, picnic area with grills, and interpretive signs. Site closed 10:00 pm to 6:00 am (day-use only).

**Access:** From Murphysboro, take Highway 127 south 6 miles to Etherton Rd.; then west 6.4 miles.\* From Alto Pass, take Highway 127 north 8 miles to Etherton Rd.; then west 6.4 miles.\* From Murphysboro Work Center office, take 20<sup>th</sup> Street south 1.5 miles to Hickory Ridge Rd.; then south 5.5 miles to the site.

\* At this point follow the directional signs.

**Safety:** Flash floods occur in the canyon, be aware of developing weather conditions. Extra caution should be used when the trail is near the bluffs at the entrances into the canyon and when traveling on wet, slippery rocks. Be aware of hunters during hunting seasons. Poison ivy, dead snags and poisonous snakes are present in the canyon.

**Trail Markings:**  White diamond

**Trail Ethics:** Pack it in, Pack it out. Stay on the designated trail and leave the beauty of the rocks, plants, and animals for others to enjoy.

## For More Information

Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District  
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[www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee)

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