

10 Favorite Places to Enjoy the Outdoors in the Rockford Region

One thing we absolutely love about the Rockford region is its abundance of outdoor recreation. If you love hiking, birding, kayaking, biking, yoga, photography, or really anything outdoors, then the Forest City should be the next destination on your list of outdoor adventures. Our region has more than 40,000 acres of outdoor natural areas for you to explore and experience.

Here are **10 of our favorite places to enjoy the outdoors in the Rockford region.**

- Severson Dells Nature** is one of the premier outdoor adventure spots with several hiking trails and an interactive kids area that allows children to explore their natural environment in a variety of unique games and activities.

8786 Montague Rd. | Rockford, IL
www.seversondells.com
- West Rock Wake Park** allows you to get outdoors and wakeboard! No boat or experience required! Plan a girls night, get the kids in the water or get a monthly membership!

1420 S. Pierpont Ave. | Rockford, IL
www.westrockwakepark.com
- Pecatonica Prairie Trail** is a 14.3 mile rail-trail extending from the western edge of Rockford to N. Farwell Bridge Road, west of Pecatonica, IL. Bike, hike and enjoy passing through a landscape of farmland, wetlands, meadows and woods. Stop in the small villages of Winnebago and Pecatonica to eat and shop local.

Trail end points: South Meridian Road (Rockford) and N. Farwell Bridge Road (Pecatonica).
www.traillink.com/trail/pecatonica-prairie-trail/
- Rock Cut State Park**, one of Northern Illinois' larger state parks, offers camping, hiking, kayaking, paddle boarding, swimming, horse and bike trails, cross country ski trails, ice skating, and concessions. Fifty-acre Olson Lake is especially for swimmers. At the Outdoor Store, guests can rent kayaks, canoes, paddle boards, row boats, and fishing boats for use on Pierce Lake (162 acres).

7223 West Lane Road | Loves Park, IL
rockcutstatepark.net
- Colored Sands Forest Preserve** on the Sugar River near Rockton is known for its birds – and the bird banding at Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, its unique geology, and wonderful wildflowers. It offers outstanding panoramic views of the pristine Sugar River. Because of its sandy soil, Colored Sands Forest Preserve supports many plants, and their associated wildlife, that are not found anywhere else in the county.

Visit this preserve and 43 more, all a part of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County.

10602 Haas Road | Rockton, IL
www.winnebagoforest.org
- Rock River Recreational Path** winds behind the YMCA, through Sinnissippi Gardens, past Symbol, to meander through Shorewood and Martin Parks in Loves Park. Walk or bike right along the beautiful Rock River.

Park at the YMCA in downtown Rockford (200 Y Blvd | Rockford, IL)
www.gorockford.com/listings/rock-river-recreation-path/655/

7. **Baumann Park** is adjacent to the Kishwaukee River in Cherry Valley. A paved pathway runs through the park and loops around Baumann Park Lake. The park offers a playground, baseball fields, tennis and basketball courts, and picnic areas. Plus, fishing is allowed in the lake.

300 S. Walnut Street | Cherry Valley, IL
www.gorockford.com/listings/baumann-park/2552/

8. **Anderson Japanese Gardens** has been named one of the highest quality Japanese gardens in North America by Sukiya Living Magazine since 2004. Inspired by calm and tranquility, this 12 acre award winning landscape is comprised of koi-filled ponds, winding paths, gentle streams, cascading waterfalls, raked gravel gardens, beautifully trained pines, and more. Master craftsmanship and 16th century traditional architecture is found throughout the garden.

318 Spring Creek Rd. | Rockford, IL
andersongardens.org

9. **Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden** is Rockford's "living museum", filled with rare trees, special gardens, unique features and more. At 155-acres in size and with over 1.5 miles of paved, accessible paths and over 2.5 miles of unpaved trails, Klehm has something for everyone to explore. Be sure to bring the family to check out the Nancy Olson Children's Garden and it's "Kid's Creek" natural play water feature and splash pad!

2715 S. Main St. | Rockford, IL
klehm.org

10. **Nygren Wetland Preserve** is a 721-acre tract near the confluence of the Rock River and Pecatonica River, making it an important stopover and nesting spot for many species of birds including Sandhill Cranes. The Natural Land Institute, a private, not-for-profit land conservation organization, owns the preserve and began restoration of prairies, wetlands and woodlands to the area in 2000.

3190 W. Rockton Rd. | Rockton, IL
www.naturalland.org/carl-myrna-nygren-wetland/

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