

Quiet glades, magnificent stone facings, bubbling streams and deep forest. It was this unspoiled beauty of Seven Hollows that inspired the creation of Arkansas's first state park: Petit Jean.

In April of 1907, executives of the Ft. Smith Lumber Company, who owned the Seven Hollows area, recognized that it should be preserved for everyone to enjoy. Under the direction of Dr. T.W. Hardison, resident of the mountain and physician for the lumber camp, a request was put to the National Park Service to study the area for potential park designation. Stephen Mather, director of the National Park Service, suggested that the area be set aside as a state park. Through much work on the part of Dr. Hardison, the inclusion of Seven Hollows into Arkansas's premier state park became a reality in 1923. The Seven Hollows National Recreation Trail now allows visitors to experience some of the land that led to the creation of Petit Jean State Park.

Trailhead to 1 mile

In August of 2000, a forest fire swept through the Seven Hollows area. The area nearest the trailhead was one of the most intensely burned. With the loss of the canopy and the death of the mature trees, the understory of this area has seen rapid growth. Notice the flourishing wildflowers, pokeweed, devils walking stick and greenbrier. Some of the pines are beginning to grow back, but this area will be a long time recovering.

As you begin your hike, bear left as the sign and trail blazes indicate. The light blue trail blazes, painted on trees about 5 feet above ground level, will guide you along the trail route.

Notice how the sandstone bluffs begin to rise on your right as you enter the first hollow. As the hollow narrows, the bluffs to the left come into view. All of the hollows that you will be walking through have been carved out by streams. These small streams still exist in the center of the hollows, slowly deepening the valleys. At times of heavy rainfall these streams can flood quickly making parts of the trail impassable.

1 mile to 2 miles

Two highlights are located on this section of trail: the natural bridge and the wet weather falls. The natural bridge, or arch, is easy to miss as you are walking along the trail because it lies behind a bend in the trail. Keep an eye out on your surroundings and it will be located on your left. If you come to the 1.5 mile marker, than you have gone too far. The sandstone bridge is thought to have once completely spanned the hollow, but the larger parts of the arch have worn away. Can you spot the collapsed sections of the bridge in the hollow?

The wet weather falls lies past the natural bridge. When the stream is running fast after a period of rain, this little falls shoots impressively through the surrounding boulders.

Leaving the first hollow, you will encounter a sandstone glade. The contrast in moisture and temperature between the glade and hollow creates two distinct environments. Notice the difference in the plant life. If it is warm enough for grasshoppers to be out, look for the unique color patterns (protective coloration) that allow them to blend with the lichen covered rocks. Also along this glade you will begin crossing one of many sections of turtle rocks on the trail. These unique formations were created by chemicals in rainwater slowly eating away veins in the rock. The resulting forms look like the shells of giant turtles.

2 miles to 3 miles

Next, you will be entering a forest of smaller trees- mostly post oak and mockernut hickory. The soil is dry and relatively poor here, but in May and June many varieties of colorful wildflowers will be blooming. Purple coneflowers, tall flowers with drooping lavender petals, may be present. Remember that wildflowers and plants here are protected for all to enjoy, so please don't pick them.

At the bottom of the second hollow you may continue on the trail across the creek bed or turn to the right and follow the creek to an interesting box canyon and waterfall. This is called the Grotto. It supports many different types of wildlife and was once inhabited by Native Americans. Take a minute and see what kinds of animals have visited the Grotto by looking for tracks in the soft sand. When you are ready to leave please backtrack to the main trail and follow the signs and blazes out of the hollow.

Once again the trail crosses a rock glade, through a post oak flat and across yet another glade. You will suddenly enter the third hollow and exit just a quickly onto another sandstone glade. During the summer, these open areas of exposed rock are good places to see eastern collared lizards. These large lizards, nicknamed "mountain boomers", spend the sunny days basking on the rocks. If you are careful they will let you step close enough to take a picture, but once frightened they will move quickly away, sometimes running on just their hind legs. Males are easily identified by the double black collar around the neck, sometimes enclosing a bright band of yellow.

3 miles to the trailhead

The last 1.5 miles contains some of the prettiest landscape in the entire park. As you pass into the fourth hollow, the terrain becomes level and it is easier to walk quietly down the trail. This is a good spot to watch for wildlife. Some of the most common birds found in this area are eastern phoebe, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, summer tanager and blue jays and a variety of different woodpeckers. If you are at the part of the trail in the afternoon, you may here the call of a barred owl as well. If you are a good detective, you may locate the

nest of an eastern phoebe under one of the many rock overhangs. The nests are constructed of mud and moss.

As you stroll up this quiet, peaceful hollow it is easy to imagine you are the first to see this incredibly beautiful area. The creek and towering sandstone bluffs set this hollow apart from all the others.

The last section of this hollow contains the remains of an illegal activity once common in the area: bootlegging. Some of the more enterprising inhabitants of the area took advantage of the isolated hollows and their access to cool water to manufacture moonshine whisky, especially during prohibition. If you had visited this area in the late 1920's, you may have been confronted by an armed guard acting as a lookout.

Close to the end of this last hollow the Boy Scout Trail leaves the Seven Hollow Trail and begins down the mountain. The blazes for this trail are white. Continue following the light blue blazes to return to the trail head. When the trail forks, be sure to bear left and follow the sign back to the point where you began your hike.

We hope that you have enjoyed the hike that inspired the creation of Arkansas's first state park. We think you will agree that it was a worthy plan to preserve this area for future generations.

Hiking Suggestions

You should be in reasonably good physical condition to hike this trail. It is long and in some places steep and rocky. Small children may have to be carried part of the way. Though the trail is blazed at some places it can be confusing, so watch the trail signs and follow your map closely. Wear sturdy and comfortable shoes- no sandals, flip flops or bare feet. Make sure to carry some drinking water along as well.

For those interested in learning more about the natural world at Petit Jean, excellent books on plants and animals are available at the visitor center. There you will also find exhibits, brochures and schedules of the many programs that are presented here at Petit Jean. Be sure to contact the Park Interpreters if you have questions about trails or programs in the park.

Seven Hollows Trail



For further information contact:

Petit Jean State Park

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(501) 727-5441


www.PetitJeanStatePark.com

www.ArkansasStateParks.com



**Petit Jean State Park
Morrilton, Arkansas**

Seven Hollows Trail

To Mather Lodge, campground, and visitor center. 

Pallisades Overlook

154

155

Trail Head

N

Map not to scale

4.0 miles

.5 miles

3.5 miles

1.0 miles

3.0 miles

2.5 miles

1.5 miles

2.0 miles

Grotto

Natural Bridge

Turtle Rocks

Notice:

To preserve scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have been installed in some park locations. Caution and supervision of your children are required while visiting these areas.

Trail Length: 4.5 miles

Hiking Time: 2 to 4 hours

Difficulty: moderate to hard

Trail Blaze: light blue

Trail Regulations

To preserve the natural beauty of the trail and surrounding environment we ask that you obey the following regulations:

- Stay on the designated trail and observe the light blue blaze trail markers and signs.
- It is unlawful to disturb or remove any plants, animals, or rocks.
- All park trails are limited to foot traffic only.
- In case of emergency, contact park personnel.