Hiker’s Guide to Adams County Ohio

- 22 Nature Trails
- 4 Fitness Trails
- Plus Fold-Out Map of Nearby Shawnee State Park
We’re glad you picked up a copy of the new Hiker’s Guide to Adams County, Ohio. Inside you will find detailed trail maps, coordinates and other information for all of Adams County’s public hiking trails. This project is the work of Leadership Adams, with the financial support of local organizations listed on the back cover that made it possible.

Adams County’s most popular hikes are featured within the pages of this publication, including Buzzardroost Rock, Lynx Prairie and The Buckeye Trail. Also, other lesser-known hiking trails are included in this guide as well as four fitness trails.

Hiking is popular in Adams County and seeing the county on foot and getting outdoors is the best way to sample what makes Adams County so unique and to improve health and wellness. Fall, winter, spring or summer, hiking trails are open year-round with each visit as different as the seasons. Most hikes are easy to moderate hiking so that nearly anyone can enjoy them and on many trails the views are so spectacular you’ll wish you had a camera because what you see you’ll want to take home and keep. Trails are well maintained and marked and at most trailheads hikers will find a bulletin board with preserve notes, rules and an area map. Each hike is different as Adams County has a variety of rare flora, fauna and geological formations.

The organizations and agencies that built these trails include The Nature Conservancy, The Cincinnati Museum Center, the Arc of Appalachia, the Ohio History Connection, the Buckeye Trail Association and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and with many contributions from individuals and businesses.

Hike safely and please pack out what you take in.

Tom Cross
Executive Director, Adams County Travel & Visitors Bureau
www.adamscountytravel.org
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Cover Photo: Randall Schieber
ADAMS LAKE
14633 State Route 41, West Union
N38.813697 W083.52222

ADAMS LAKE STATE PARK

Paved Walking Path – .5 mile
This one-half mile paved trail is flat and easy walking as it follows the shore of Adams Lake, originally built as a water source for the village of West Union in 1947. The path is wheelchair and stroller accessible and is quite popular with those who regularly walk for exercise. This small lake is also a great place to watch for waterfowl during migration.

ADAMS LAKE PRAIRIE STATE NATURE PRESERVE

Post Oak Trail - .3 mile
This short shady loop explores the oak-hickory forest once common in this area. Notice the understory is populated not with oaks, but with young maples—a result of our forests changing in response to modern land-use and absence of wildfire. If you hike quietly, you may see gray squirrels or white-tailed deer and as they forage in the woods.

Prairie Dock Trail - .2 mile
A very short, easy loop passes through sparsely vegetated xeric, or dry, prairie situated on a highly eroded slope of calcareous Estill Shale surrounded by a second-growth oak-hickory woodland. Red cedar, post oak and blackjack oak occur sporadically in the prairie opening. Prairie grasses are sparse but Adams Lake Prairie supports diverse prairie forbs including a stand of prairie dock. Some of the interesting plants found growing at this cedar barren prairie include spider milkweed, shooting-star, green milkweed, Carolina buckthorn, American aloe, slender blazing-star and large summer bluets.
The Buzzardroost Rock Trail is one of the Edge of Appalachia Preserve System's most popular trails. For good reason, too. This enjoyable hike leads visitors through prairies and forest, over streams and springs, across ridgetops, and culminates in one of the absolute best views in the state of Ohio. Designated a National Natural Landmark in 1964 along with Lynx Prairie, Buzzardroost Rock Trail winds its way along the edge of two different eco-regions. The diversity in geology, plant life and animal life is greatest where the Unglaciated Appalachian Plateau region abuts the Interior Low Plateau. The former region produces primarily acidic soils and the plants that thrive on them, such as oak-hickory forests, while the latter supports globally rare xeric (or dry) limestone prairies, dolomitic rock outcrops and mixed-mesophytic forests. Enjoyable in any season, hikers can find a variety of spring and summer wildflowers, ferns, geological features and a stunning vista. Situated high above the Ohio Brush Creek Valley, the stunning view from Buzzardroost Rock is a must-see. Especially vibrant during peak fall color, the panorama stretches from the feeder stream in Leisure Valley down to Ohio Brush Creek and continues downstream towards the Ohio River and Kentucky. Improvements to the hiking trail in 2014 and 2015 included the addition of a loop along the central section of the trail allowing hikers to experience the flora and fauna of a xeric limestone prairie. A visit to Adams County is not complete without a trek on the Buzzardroost Rock Trail and taking in the incredible view from the overlook.
Crawdad Creek Trail – 1.2 miles
Crawdad Creek is a verdant dolomite stream valley bordered by 40-foot vertical rock walls. It is rich in spring wildflowers and very scenic geologically. Due to its location south of the glacial boundary, the forests have a prairie influence, and many prairie wildflowers persist under the shade of the forest canopy. The water quality of the streams rates among the cleanest headwater streams in all of Ohio.

Early Buttercup Trail – 1 mile
The Early Buttercup Trail follows a verdant dolomite stream valley that has created a gentle valley on the western portion of the preserve—a separate stream from Crawdad Creek. This is the best trail to admire spring wildflowers in mid-April, and the early showcase of the rare snow trilliums that bloom in mid to late March. The water quality of the streams rates among the cleanest headwater streams in all of Ohio, harboring a high diversity of invertebrates and fish for its small size.

Golden Meadows Trail – 1 mile
The Golden Meadows Trail is a pleasant walk through a sunny meadow that has established itself on land that was managed as an agricultural field by the previous owner. The meadow spreads across a wide swale and affords aesthetic views of the higher elevation forests that embrace Chalet Nivale to the north.
Four interconnecting hiking trails can be found at Chaparral Prairie as well as a number of well-maintained firebreaks, which may also be explored by the visitor. This is an outstanding xeric limestone prairie with post and blackjack oaks. It supports the most extensive population of rattle-snake master in the state. Prairie dock and spiked blazing star are also unusually abundant at this site. Eleven state-listed species have been recorded at the preserve including spider milkweed, prairie false indigo, pink milkwort and American bluehearts. Little bluestem is the dominant prairie grass. Chaparral Prairie is an excellent place to enjoy butterflies during the summer months. Uncommon species such as Edward’s hairstreak and the olive hairstreak have been observed here.
Agave Ridge Trail - .5 mile
This short, easy loop gets its name from a rare plant species once much more common here in the early 20th century. Agave virginica (now Manfreda virginica) is more commonly known as American aloe. Its prevalence in this area prompted the renowned botanist Dr. E. Lucy Braun (1889-1971) to name this low ridge after this unusual plant. The plant communities have changed considerably since Dr. Braun conducted research here and the area is now mostly forested. A geologic fault is visible where the trail passes close to Cedar Fork, a tributary to Scioto Brush Creek.

Sullivantia Loop - .5 mile
This half-mile loop treats the visitor to a great diversity of native flora as well as interesting geological formations. Passing through the floodplain of Cedar Fork, along vertical dolomite cliffs and dry oak ridgetops, provides the visitor with the opportunity to see many species of native plants. The endangered Walter’s violet occurs along this trail as does tall larkspur and the trail’s namesake, Sullivantia. Use caution as the trial passes near the cliff edge in places. Trailside interpretive signs help visitors understand the local ecology.

Buckeye Trail
The Buckeye Trail, a 1,400-mile hiking trail, which follows backroads, canal towpaths, old railroads and forested trails, passes through Davis Memorial State Nature Preserve and briefly follows both the Agave Ridge Trail and the Sullivantia Loop before crossing onto private property as it makes its way toward Mineral Springs Lake. It is NOT a local loop and does not return to the parking area.
**Snakeroot Trail – 1.2 miles**

Second-growth oak-hickory woods, impressive stands of tuliptree (or “yellow poplar”) and deep ravines comprise most of this preserve. Enjoy the open woods along sections of the trail, a site you don’t see much. This is due to the deep shade and the lack of invasive species. The most interesting sections are the prairie barren openings dominated by blackjack and post oaks. Some of the more significant species present in the prairie barren openings along Unity Road include green milkweed, spider milkweed, prairie false indigo, large summer bluets, false scurf-pea, Carolina buckthorn and few-flowered nut-rush. This area, like many others in Adams County, has had a long recovery following a period in the early 20th century when the land was denuded of trees and nearly useless for agriculture due to serious erosion. This little-known trail is great for birding in the spring.
Unlike any other place in Ohio, The E. Lucy Braun Lynx Prairie Preserve is named for the late preeminent plant ecologist Dr. E. Lucy Braun. Dr. Braun not only studied this area extensively, but was instrumental in its conservation, helping to secure the first parcels of this remarkable habitat through the newly formed Ohio Chapter of The Nature Conservancy in 1959. With the transfer of the properties to the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History for management purposes, the Edge of Appalachia Preserve System was born. This trail system consists of three loops weaving in and out of 10 different dry limestone prairie openings. These unique habitats have received a global conservation status of “G2” from NatureServe indicating that they are imperiled worldwide. Each opening is unique and filled with grasses and wildflowers, which thrive in the dry, shallow, calcareous soils. Due to the extraordinary plant diversity, the hiker’s experience through Lynx Prairie is a delight in any season but is best experienced in the spring and mid to late summer. Flowering prairie species include shooting star, hoary puccoon and scarlet paintbrush in the spring followed by various coneflowers, rose pink, and several species of blazing star in the summer. Along with Buzzardroost Rock, Lynx Prairie has been designated a National Natural Landmark and is a must-see on the Edge of Appalachia Preserve.
The trails in Shawnee State Park range in difficulty from an easy 3/4-mile walk along the lake trail to the more challenging 2-mile Lookout Trail, which affords a wonderful view of Roosevelt Lake and the surrounding forest. A short 1/2-mile ADA compliant trial behind the nature center circles through Hemlock trees in a cool moist ravine along Turkey Creek and has interpretive tree signs. The Knighton Trail also has interpretive signs sharing our rich natural history and was named for local mycologist Harry Knighton, who started the North American Mycological Association. For the more adventurous, the nearby Shawnee Day Hike trial offers 4 and 7-mile loop options and for the backpacker, the Shawnee Backpack Trail offers 50 miles of remote hiking and camping. Spring wildflowers and migrating birds adorn the forest floor and treetops in the spring. Beaver can be seen at dusk on and around the lakes. Fall affords an amazing blaze of color with the tree diversity in Shawnee and winter offers delightful quiet. Hiking in Shawnee is a peaceful getaway and a great place to enjoy native plants and animals. Two species of venomous snakes, the northern copperhead and the endangered timber rattlesnake, occur in Shawnee but are no significant danger to hikers if basic precautions are observed.
The Joan Jones Portman Trail winds its way up from the Ohio Brush Creek Valley to Flood’s Point, a relict prairie with sweeping views of the surrounding hills. Hikers begin by walking through a mix of native grasses and densely growing eastern red cedar trees, which gives way to early successional hardwoods such as tuliptree, redbud and sassafras. As the trail continues up the hill, hikers may encounter wildflowers like shooting star, round-leaved ragwort and green dragon. Before meandering in and out of a shale barren, the mix of cedars and small hardwoods create the perfect environment for fuzzy mosses and interesting lichens. As hikers pass through the rocky, grass-filled barren, prairie warblers and other songbirds are likely to be heard. The trail then levels out in an abrupt change in habitat as it has arrived at the first of two dolomite rock layers. A mix of tall, mature trees form a closed canopy and native spicebush shrubs and pawpaw trees thrive in the understory. The trail switchbacks through the forest, and an outcrop of Peebles Dolomite cliffs comes into view. Covered in ferns, wild hydrangea and columbine, hikers have the opportunity for an up-close study of this uncommon rock. The trail ends on the top of these cliffs with a view of the valley below. Hikers then retrace their steps to return to the trailhead. The Portman trail allows visitors to get glimpses of the many different habitats and plants that are found throughout the Edge of Appalachia Preserve.

Note: Although not complete as of this printing (Fall 2018), a portion of the Buckeye Trail is being rerouted and will follow the Portman Trail to the overlook and then continue eastward for 14 miles to Shawnee State Forest. Please check the Buckeye Trail Association website for the latest information.
The Serpent Mound is the largest surviving example of a prehistoric effigy mound in the world. Stretching 1,348 feet over the ground, the beautifully preserved ancient earthenwork depicts larger-than-life sinews of an immense serpent, with an intriguing oval shaped head. This earthen monument is anywhere from 1,000-2,000 years old, and the cultural identity of its American Indian architects remains wrapped in mystery, as does the exact ceremonial purpose behind its creation. Time, however, has not dampened the earthwork’s artistic effect on those who gaze upon it. The Serpent continues to elicit humility, wonder, and awe—drawing tens of thousands of visitors a year from across the country and the world. In addition to the Serpent, the park preserves three burial mounds of the Adena and Fort Ancient cultures, and ancient village sites. There is a small parking fee to access the site and a museum is open seasonally.

Ohio Brush Creek Nature Trail - .6 mile
This nature trail begins behind the museum and descends into the valley of Ohio Brush Creek where it leads the visitor through floodplain forests and nice spring wildflower displays as it circles beneath the cliff on which rests the head of the serpent.

Mound Walkway - .5 mile
Although not a very long “hike” this easy walkway is a must-visit for any history enthusiast. A paved path suitable for strollers but not recommended for wheelchairs provides the visitor excellent views of the nearly 1/4-mile long effigy mound, the largest serpent effigy in the world. To protect this ancient cultural feature, visitors must remain on the paved walkway.
Cedar Fork Trail – 1.5 miles

Shoemaker State Nature Preserve was a gift to the state in 2007 by Joyce Shoemaker in memory of her husband, Alvie Shoemaker. A portion of the land had been in Mrs. Shoemaker’s family for more than 100 years. The 22-acre site protects several significant natural features including seven state-listed plants. The rarities found at this Adams County preserve include heart-leaved plantain (Plantago cordata), a state endangered species only known from three other sites in Ohio. Not only botanically significant, the site is geologically significant as well. It features two natural arches, dolomite cliffs and slump blocks harboring several species of ferns and other plants found in calcareous cliff communities. In order to reach the preserve, the Cedar Fork Trail crosses private property by means of a written agreement between ODNR and Hanson Aggregates, Plum Run Stone Quarry. Visitors are required to stay on the trail and all preserve rules apply.
Twin Leaf Trail – 2 miles
The Twin Leaf Trail at Whipple State Nature Preserve climbs and then follows a narrow, wooded ridgetop pocketed with small sinkholes. The ridgetop and head of the valley are bordered by dolomite cliffs of 10-30 feet in height. Glimpses of the Ohio River are visible when the foliage is not too heavy. One of the southern-most preserves in Ohio, Whipple boasts an early display of spring ephemeral wildflowers. For the best wildflower displays, follow the trail down the eastern side of the ridge to the rich woodland below. Three species of trillium, fabulous displays of bluebells, dwarf larkspur and bishop’s cap make this trail especially popular in spring. This preserve is dedicated in honor of Robert A. Whipple, who generously gave this land to the Division of Natural Areas and Preserve in 1989. Shoulder-parking only is available on the east side of State Route 247. Use caution.
The Charles A. Eulett Wilderness Trail is named after an Adams County teacher and naturalist who shared the importance of nature and conservation with his students and neighbors. Due to the unique and outstanding biological makeup of the area, The Wilderness Preserve was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1974. Looping through an ever-changing backdrop of forest, cliffs and streams, The Wilderness Trail has something to offer in any season. Fascinating geology, towering trees, spring wildflowers and migrating songbirds are just a selection of natural history delights hikers can encounter along the trail. Fall and winter are the best times to view the tall, Peebles Dolostone Cliffs, which are home to rare plants and animals. Plant highlights, depending on the season, include northern white cedar, Carolina buckthorn, pink and yellow lady slippers, American Colombo, scarlet cup and stiff gentian. The spring migration of warblers and other colorful songbirds can be seen and heard from all parts of the trail especially during the first part of May. Close to 200 species of birds have been observed utilizing the Edge of Appalachia. During the latter part of April and into May, then again in July and August, Shivener Prairie bursts into a colorful pallet of wildflowers, which attracts a myriad of bees, butterflies and other interesting flower visitors. This rocky, rugged trail winds up and down hills giving hikers an up-close look at the diversity of natural history encompassing the Edge of Appalachia Preserve.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Latitude/ Longitude</th>
<th>Pets Permitted</th>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake Trail</td>
<td>N38.813697, W083.52222</td>
<td>On leash</td>
<td>Paved, ADA, Lake views</td>
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<td>Post Oak</td>
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<td>Prairie Dock</td>
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<td>Prairie flora</td>
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<td>Prairie View</td>
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<td>Agave Ridge</td>
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<td>Diverse flora, Streamside boardwalk</td>
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<td>Snake Root</td>
<td>N38.85063, W083.526571</td>
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<td>Tuliptree forest</td>
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<td>Spring flora, Geology</td>
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<td>Twin Leaf</td>
<td>N38.718003, W083.508988</td>
<td>Service dogs only</td>
<td>Spring flora, Ohio river view</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
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## Arc of Appalachia Preserve System

### Chalet Nivale

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<th>Trail</th>
<th>Latitude/ Longitude</th>
<th>Pets Permitted</th>
<th>Key Features</th>
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<th>Distance</th>
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<td>Crawdad Creek</td>
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<td>Early Buttercup</td>
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<td>No</td>
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### Serpent Mound State Memorial

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<th>Latitude/ Longitude</th>
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<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
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<td>Ohio Brush Ck Trail</td>
<td>N39.022655 W083.43379</td>
<td>On leash</td>
<td>Along Ohio Brush Creek</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mound Walkway</td>
<td>N39.022655 W083.43379</td>
<td>On leash</td>
<td>Paved path, Effigy mound</td>
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<td>0.5 Miles</td>
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## The Nature Conservancy and Cincinnati Museum Center

### Buzzardroost Rock Preserve

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<td>Buzzardroost Rock</td>
<td>N38.777358 W083.42556</td>
<td>On leash</td>
<td>Spectacular overlook</td>
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### E. Lucy Braun Lynx Prairie Preserve

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<td>Lynx Prairie</td>
<td>N38.759273 W083.407118</td>
<td>On leash</td>
<td>Diverse flora, Butterflies</td>
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### Joan Jones Portman Trail

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<td>Portman</td>
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<td>On leash</td>
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### The Charles A. Eulett Wilderness

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<td>Wilderness</td>
<td>N38.780266 W083.417257</td>
<td>On leash</td>
<td>Diverse flora, Geology</td>
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<td>2.4 Miles</td>
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## Local School District

### Fitness Trails

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<tr>
<td>Manchester Fitness</td>
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<td>North Adams Fitness</td>
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<td>Peebles Fitness</td>
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<td>Gravel walkway</td>
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Acknowledgements

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**Members of Leadership Adams Class of 2018:**

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Richard McCarty  The Nature Conservancy
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David Seaman  DPL Engineering Team
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