

CHASING WATERFALLS

WATERFALLS, BLUFFS, AND FOREST TRAILS AT STARVED ROCK STATE PARK



Time to bust the myth that Chicago is the only one-of-a-kind marvel in Illinois.

Just an hour and a half southwest hides **Starved Rock State Park** in Utica, offering the state's most pristine hiking trails along the peaceful Illinois River.

It's a utopia of outdoor activities, from kayaking to fishing to horseback riding. Get out there before sunny days give way to Snuggie season.

Where to crash

Complete with a fireplace overlooking the Illinois River, cozy **cabin-style rooms nestled amidst the trees and crickets at the Starved Rock Lodge** are the only accommodations located within the park (besides your tent).

When you're sick of immersing yourself in nature, head to the lodge's rustic Back Door Lounge to **knock back a few drinks on the expansive veranda** overlooking the bluffs. *Starting at \$100/night. Routes 178 and 71. (815-667-4211)*

What to do

Leave the bar crawls to Chicago and try a **waterfall crawl**. **Starved Rock State Park** has over a dozen along 13 miles of hiking paths, all well marked and easy to find along wide, well-groomed trails.

Routes 178 and 71. (815-667-4726)

Where to eat/drink

Discover a dash of New Orleans in the middle of nowhere at **Ron's Cajun Connection**. **Affable owner Cajun Ron serves up authentic gumbo, alligator and deep-fried corn** — and he'll probably even stop by your table for a chat or to suggest seconds. *897 E. US Hwy 6. (815-667-9855)*

Illinois may not be known for its fine wines, but **August Hill Winery and Tasting Room** may change that. **Taste six different wines for \$3**. Tip: stop here *after* the hike, not before.

106 Mill St. (815-667-5211)

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