

A Guide to Hiking Trails in Southwest Missouri

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Enjoying the Great Outdoors in Springfield

You can pursue a variety of outdoor activities in the Springfield area without travelling far. This page highlights four hiking trails near Springfield; however, you may also want to visit the [Springfield-Greene County Park Board's](#) Web page to explore other green areas, biking trails, swimming pools, and nature walks in Springfield. To learn more about Busiek Conservation area, which is also close to Springfield, visit the [Christian County](#) page.

Wilson Creek Battlefield

Wilson Creek Battlefield is the site of "the first major Civil War battle fought west of the Mississippi River" ([NPS](#)). The battle occurred on August 10, 1861 and 2,300 men were killed or wounded during the battle ([NPS](#)). The park includes a five-mile car tour, several intersecting trails (both paved and non-paved surfaces), and a visitor's center and museum. Though the trails are well marked, you may want to pick up a map at the Visitor's Center before beginning your hike.



Wilson's Creek Battlefield is a [National Park Service](#) site and is open from 8 am to 5 pm daily.

To drive to Wilson's Creek from Springfield, [US Hwy. 60](#) south until you reach Hwy. MM. Continue on Hwy. MM to Hwy. ZZ for 1.5 miles. When you reach [FR 182](#), turn right. This is the entrance to the battlefield.

Fees

The entrance fee for vehicles ranges from \$5-\$10, but you will not need to pay a fee to enter the park on foot.

Activities

Hiking, picnicking, cultural/historical study and various events. To check a calendar of events, visit the [Missouri Department of Conservation Web site](#).

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Springfield Nature Center

The Springfield Nature Center is an urban nature retreat, maintained by the [Missouri Department of Conservation](#). It has 6 miles of interconnecting trails and a nature center with exhibits on native Ozark animal and plant life.

To reach the Springfield Nature Center from Springfield, take the Glenstone exit off of US Hwy. 60. Go south on Glenstone, cross the James River overpass, and turn left on the outer road. The visitors' center parking area is on the right (south) side of the road.

The Springfield Nature Center is open from 8 am to 9 pm from March to October and from 8 am to 6 pm during the rest of the year. The trails are for foot traffic only, and you cannot bring your pets.

Fees

None

Activities

Hiking, walking, jogging

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Little Sac Woods Conservation Area

Located 9 miles north of Springfield, the Little Sac Woods Conservation Area is an urban retreat where you can camp, hike, and hunt. The [Missouri Department of Conservation](#) maintains the area, which is 90% forest. The area features 7.3 miles of interconnecting hiking trails. You can use these trails for hiking or biking; however, since bikers primarily use these trails, the surface area is very rough and the trails are moderately difficult.

To reach Little Sac Woods Conservation Area from Springfield, drive north on State [Hwy. 13](#) and turn left (west) on [FR 115](#). Drive 1.4 miles down FR 115 to the parking area and trailhead. The mazelike trail branches off frequently, and the branches are not clearly marked, so bring a compass and a map of the trails. The Missouri Department of Conservation provides a [pdf version of the map](#) on their Web site.

Fees

None

Activities

Camping, backpacking, hiking, seasonal hunting, bicycling

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Valley Watermill Trail

The Valley Watermill Trail is a new trail located north of Springfield. The [Watershed Committee of the Ozarks](#) set up the trail to educate the public about water quality improvement, and it is still a work in progress. Currently, the trail features a springside learning station, a [Karst window](#), a fishing dock, and a wetlands habitat.



The Watershed Center and parking area is at 2450 E. Valley Water Mill Road. To reach the trail from Springfield, travel north on Glenstone to Valley Watermill Road. Turn right (east) on Valley Water Mill Road.

The 2.5-mile loop winds through a forest area and back to the parking area and will take around 1-2 hours to complete. Since the Watershed Committee prohibits biking and horseback riding on the trail, it has a soft surface, and the terrain is mostly level. You can find a map of the trail on the [Watershed Committee's Web site](#). The trail is open from sunrise to sunset.

Fees

None

Activities

Hiking, fishing

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