

Greensfelder County Park Trail Guide

If you want to hike in the Ozark Mountains then Greensfelder Park is your destination. This rugged Ozarkian terrain has many hidden treasures on its steep slopes, winding ridge tops, and narrow hollows. Sandwiched between the Missouri Department of Conservation's Rockwood Reservation to the north and Rockwood Range to the south, Greensfelder Park with over 1,600 acres provides the trail user with a near wilderness experience. All 3 public lands are interconnected with over 25 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails on over 5,200 acres of public land. If you are planning on a trip to Greensfelder keep in mind the hills are steep, the terrain is rugged and make sure you bring plenty of water.

Greensfelder Park is primarily undeveloped due to the rugged terrain. It is the home of the department's savanna restoration project, which began in 1986. Savanna is one of the rarest natural communities in Missouri. It consists of widely spaced trees with an understory of native prairie grasses and wildflowers. These open areas are usually found on the west or south facing slopes. The lack of fire, development and other human interventions brought an end to the estimated 10 million acres of savanna in the early days of Missouri. Today, fire has returned to some of the hillsides at Greensfelder restoring the diverse flora. For many of the wildflowers, Greensfelder Park is the only place where the flowers can be found in the St. Louis County Park system. Each month during the growing season brings a parade of different flowering plants.

Quiet trail users can see deer, turkeys, pileated woodpeckers and a whole host of wildlife. Greensfelder is one of the more diverse county parks as the trail system will take you through dry woodlands, cedar glades, rock outcroppings, creeks, springs, alongside caves, savanna and much, much more.

Greensfelder Park was named after Albert P. Greensfelder. Mr. Greensfelder was an avid conservationist and not only protected this park but also secured Rockwoods Reservation for the state of Missouri. The Greensfelder's' had a weekend retreat "the Round House" located just off of park property on the Rockwoods Range tract.

All of the trails at Greensfelder are multi-use for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians.

Listed below are some of the trails at Greensfelder Memorial Park:

Eagle Valley

4.5 miles Steep Gravel & Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

Eagle Valley Trail is a 4.5-mile loop trail beginning at the Visitor Center and ending at the equestrian camping area or back at the visitor center. The trail treadway consists of packed gravel most of the length but is a natural surface behind the Visitor Center. The trail is well signed, wide and easily followed. Once you leave the comfort of the Visitor Center remember there will be no facilities or water along the way.

Beginning at the Visitor Center the trail user will slowly descend the hill to the valley following a series of long switchbacks. At the bottom of the hill the trail remains in the Car Creek valley and is relatively flat. The valley is an excellent area for woodland spring wildflowers. The lush vegetation attests to the richness of the narrow hollows. Carr Creek is seasonal with no year round flow. A couple of small seeps and springs provide yearly flow into the creek but this water disappears underneath the creeks gravels and

rocks. The trail crosses the creek a number of times and is vulnerable to flash flooding so pre-cautions need to be taken during times of intense rainfall.

The trail makes a sharp turn to the west (left) at the site of the old dam. The dam was constructed in the 1890's by mules with the hope of creating a small lake in the valley. Upon completion a portion of the dam gave way during a large rain storm and was never rebuilt ending the dreams of creating a lake in the valley. The trail continues to the west at the base of a south facing hillside. Seen from the Eagle Valley Trail this dry hillside supports a host of prairie plants not found in other county parks. A rock outcropping at the base of the hill supports a small year-round spring.

Now it is time to start climbing out of the valley. Through a series of switchbacks the trail climbs up to the ridgetop and continues through the woods to the equestrian campground. Ultimately the trail continues to the Visitor Center completing the trail loop. Portions of Eagle Valley Trail, in the valley, are suitable for cross country skiing.

Beulah Trail

2.1 mile Steep Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

Beulah Trail is a 2.1-mile loop trail, located in one of the more remote portions of Greensfelder Park. The trail has an earthen treadway. Named for a mule, you may wish you had one of the beasts of burden when you are puffing up the last hill. The trail starts near Beulah Shelter at the top of a ridge. Regardless of which leg of the loop trail you choose the first portion of the trail will be on a ridge heading toward the east. The entire trail is through the woods providing shade during the summer months. Once you begin to descend the hill the trail begins to deteriorate. Instead of one nice treadway the treadway is divided with many users creating additional trails to move around wet or soft areas of soil. Both descends are rather steep, and you know what that means. Regardless of which leg of the trail you start on it will be a steep climb out of the valley and back to the top of the ridge. For the duration of the trail you will be in the woods. Keep an eye open for the blueberries that frequent some of the dry rocky areas during the middle of summer. The trail is one of the favorite equestrian trails and is well used. There are no modern facilities or water at Beulah Shelter.

Beulah was foaled in either 1963 or 1957 and was purchased by Ed Bright in 1967. In 1971 Beulah won the title of the World's Champion Riding Mule and the National Show of the American Donkey and Mule Society. Ed and Beulah made 3 wagon train trips for the Bicentennial celebration in 1976. In 1972 Mr. Bright donated money to construct the shelter in honor of his mule. Ed Bright passed away in 1979 and donated Beulah to the Parks Department. Beulah spent the rest of her life at the Suson Park Farm. Beulah died in 1998 somewhere between 41 and 35 years of age.

Overlook Trail

.8 mile Rolling Gravel Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

Overlook Trail begins on the north end of the Beulah Shelter parking lot. The rather short trail follows a descending ridge to the north before quickly descending into the valley to connect with Eagle Valley Trail. Just before the trail descends to the valley there is a scenic overlook providing a wonderful view of the hills and woods to the west. This is a great view with every changing season. The treadway down to the overlook is wide and graveled. From the overlook down to the valley the trail is steep, rocky, with an earthen

treadway. From the trailhead down to the overlook the trail would be suitable for cross-country skiing.

DeClue Trail

6.7 miles Steep/Rocky Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

DeClue Trail is a loop trail that can be accessed off of Allenton Six Flags Road at the first parking lot on the left coming from I-44 and is the first parking lot on the right past Hencken Road coming from the north. The 6.7-mile loop trail is steep and rocky. The treadway is natural and because of the steep terrain the trail is relatively narrow. The trail intercepts a number of other trails in the area so the trail user must be careful it would be easy to get off on the wrong trail very quickly. In addition, DeClue Trail, Green Rock Trail, and Deer Run Trail, all share portions of the same treadway.

The trail goes through some of the degraded savannas that occur in the park just north of Six Flags. Prairie wildflowers and grasses can be found in these degraded areas a drastic change from the plant species found in the neighboring woodland. Knarley chinkapin oaks are the typical oak found in these rocky harsh environments. These odd shaped trees are a product of the droughty conditions. Trees growing on the savanna/glade usually do not have to compete with other trees and spend their energy growing out laterally. Trees growing in a woodland setting are competing for nutrients and sunlight and spend their energy growing upwards.

DeClue Trail is named for a long time Parks Department employee. There are no modern facilities or water at the trailhead.

Green Rock Trail

14.5 miles Steep/Rocky Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

One of the oldest and longest trails in the St. Louis area is the 14.5-mile Green Rock Trail. The trail connects the Missouri Department of Conservation's Rockwoods Range off of Fox Creek Road and Rockwoods Reservation off of Highway 109 with Greensfelder Park. Greensfelder Park is sandwiched in the middle with nearly 7.8 miles of the Green Rock Trail. Access to the trail can be obtained at a number of locations along the Scenic Loop Road. Only the portion of the Green Rock Trail that runs through Greensfelder Park is open to equestrians and mountain bikes. The section of trail that runs through Rockwoods Range is open to equestrians but not mountain bikes. And the section of trail that runs through Rockwoods Reservation does not allow equestrians or mountain bikes.

The trail was originally designed, built and maintained by the Boy Scouts of the Greater St. Louis Area. Today the trail is managed by Park staff and GORC, the Gateway Off Road Cyclist. GORC is a not for profit organization and has built and maintained trails throughout the St. Louis area.

The Green Rock Trail shares its treadway with a number of trails throughout its journey across Rockwoods Range and Greensfelder Park. The trail is marked but it is still a good idea to have a good topo map and compass, just in case you make the wrong turn on one of the trails. Green Rock Trail begins near Fox Creek one of the most diverse quality small streams remaining in the County. The trail follows the ridgetops before dipping down into another creek valley only to be climbing back up again and again and again. For nearly a mile Green Rock Trail and Eagle Valley Trail share the treadway along Carr

Creek, with little change in elevation. Restroom facilities and drinking water are not found along the entire 10 mile trail. Some side excursions are necessary to obtain water at the Visitor Center in Greensfelder or at the equestrian campground. The trail ends at the Rockwoods Reservation Visitor Center.

Dogwood Trail

2.6 miles Steep Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

This 2.6-mile loop trail begins at Dogwood Shelter off of Hencken Road. The trail starts at the top of a ridge then quickly descends to the valley below. Following a seasonal creek the trail climbs once again to the top of the ridge. Along the way are numerous large Christmas Ferns growing on the north slope of the hills. This trail has some steep portions descending to the valley and the climb back out, but the nice wooded sheltered valley is worth the climb. The trail crosses a parks department gravel road which can make for a nice side trip. The road leads to the site of the Greensfelder's get-away cottage the "Round House." The site provides a great vista of the surrounding hills. The treadway is earthen. Dogwood Trail can be accessed near the Dogwood Shelter or coming from Interstate 44 it would be the first parking lot on the left before Hencken Road. Coming from the north it would be the first parking lot on the right past Hencken Road. Dogwood Trail also connects with the DeClue Trail.

Mustang Trail

1.7 miles Steep Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

Mustang Trail is a 1.7-mile loop trail. The treadway is narrow, and the user will encounter steep, rocky terrain. As with most of the trails in Greensfelder Park they don't waste much time when going down or up the steep hillsides. So be prepared for a hardy climb. Because this trail ties in with the equestrian area of the park it is a heavily used by horses. From Mustang Trail the user can also access Eagle Valley Trail. A couple of small springs exist in the narrow valley at the base of the hills.

Deer Run Trail

2.5 miles Steep/Rocky Natural Treadway Equestrians/Hikers/Mt. Bikers

Deer Run Trail is a 2.5-mile trail that begins near the equestrian barns. The trail starts out following the ridgetop and is 10 feet wide with a gravel treadway. After ½ mile the treadway goes to earthen, and narrows to a pathway. The trail has some portions that are steep and traverse rocky terrain. This is a heavily used trail by equestrians who use this trail to access other trails in the park. Deer Run Trail parallels Allenton Six Flags Road and the Scenic Loop Road through the park so you are never far away from automobiles and asphalt. Deer Run Trail can also connect you to Dogwood Trail, DeClue Trail, Green Rock Trail and Eagle Valley Trail.