

St. Vincent Park Trail Guide

One of the most eerie sites at the park is the old St. Vincent DePaul mental hospital that overlooks the entire park. Its gothic steeples could place it in a horror movie on a cold thundery night. In the early 1890's the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent DePaul originally purchased 97 acres of farmland for \$23,000 to build a mental hospital. The hospital was named the Castle at Mount St. Vincent and was built in 1892 for less than \$500,000. Surrounding the hospital was a farm operated by the nuns and mental patients. Milk cows, hogs, and crops were raised for food. The farm provided jobs for the patients until operations ceased in the late 1940's. The hospital was closed in 1978 when the Daughters of Charity relocated to the DePaul Community Health Center. The Parks Department purchased 120 acres of farmland from the Daughters plus another 14 acres in 1978 for a total of \$947,000. The "Castle" was not part of the purchase. The "Castle" has since been renovated into apartments. In 1982 the "Castle" was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

St. Vincent Park consists of 132 acres. Most of the park is open with developed ballfields. Some woodlands occur along the eastern side of the park. A year-round small creek flows along the east boundary.

St. Vincent Greenway Trail

1.2 miles Flat Paved Treadway Hiker & Biker

As envisioned by the Great Rivers Greenway the St. Vincent Greenway when completed will be 7 miles long. The Greenway will extend in a north-south direction from Forest Park to Ramona Lake Park in Berkeley. Along the way it will connect parks, open spaces, and more than 15 communities in St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis. The St. Vincent Greenway will be connected to the following greenways: Coldwater, Maline, Dr. King, Centennial, River Des Peres and the Chouteau Greenway.

To date only the trail within St. Vincent has been completed. The St. Vincent trailhead is located in the north end of the park near the tennis courts. Beginning here the trail goes around some active play areas and lawns before entering the adjacent woodlands. The trail winds through the woodland and descends a slight slope before becoming more flat. The woodland consists of mature oaks and hickories. During the spring of the year morels edible mushrooms can be readily found in these woods. The mushroom hunter needs to make sure they can properly identify this tasty morsel. The trail continues to the south parallel to a small year round tributary of Engelholm Creek. A couple of small springs along the St. Vincent and UMSL boundary provide year round water. Aquatic insects, frogs and other critters can be found in the creek. The trail crosses a small boardwalk and continues to the south. Here the trail enters a successional woodland an area that once supported farming activities of the Daughters of Charity. The trail turns to the west and ascends a slight hill and passes near the old St. Paul Mental Hospital. Near the entrance road to the park the trail concludes but not before intersecting with the Walking Path. The trail user can take the Walking Path to the north and return to the trailhead. The Walking Path begins at the park roadway entrance and parallels the park road past the swimming complex, the community center before terminating at the St. Vincent Greenway Trailhead. Suitable for cross country skiing.