

## Wandering Indiana

Indiana State Park Inns have an awesome deal every winter. During the week you can buy one night and get the second night for free. We have accepted that challenge the past couple of years. Our destination this year was [Spring Mill State Park](#). I have been there many times before but never in the winter. Our choice for best trail is trail #4. You follow a couple of creeks, climb some stairs, can see Hamer and Donaldson Caves and the Pioneer Village with scenery that is great. If you are fortunate like us, you might get an opportunity to see a coyote or red headed woodpecker. Trail #5 along spring Mill Lake was another great hike as well.



[Hemlock Bluffs](#) is a State Nature Preserve and is located east of Bedford. There is a nice hike along the top of the ridge overlooking Guthrie Creek. The hemlock trees are easy to see and are fairly rare in Indiana. The hike is well worth it and in 18-degree sunny weather, the hike is much different from the summer hike I took many years ago.

Monroe Lake became one of the destinations for hiking this past month. We have been to Monroe many times before, but we typically visited Paynetown Recreation Area. We thought we would try some other areas. First up was [Fairfax Recreation Area](#). We hiked the Big Oak Trail which was not marked very well but it was pretty easy to find your way around. There were a few grades to climb but overall, the difficulty of the trail was not too awful bad. We did get to see the “big oak”. The say it is approximately 175 years old. It looks pretty gnarly and is definitely good sized.

We continued around the lake to the south side across the dam and past the emergency spillway. The dam seems really small for the state’s largest lake. We drove to Hardin Ridge and Allen’s Creek areas. This particular area seems to be much more remote and less populated. There were a couple of trails in each area that we did short hikes on. There is a lot to see while visiting. Take an area and go and visit.



Per a recommendation from Paul & Nancy Nysewander, we took a drive to Northern Hamilton County and hiked the south outer loop at [Strawtown-Koteewi Park](#). It is about 3 miles (5K) and is mostly through prairie with some in the woods along White River. Very enjoyable hike on the flat unimproved trails. It was a treat to see the two restored iron bridges that span White River. The parks were quite busy with the snow tubing hill, other hikers, and the Taylor Natural History Center. Great park and another place I plan to visit again.

Send me your places to wander. Cannot find enough good places to hike, visit or drive to.

~ Jeff Banning