



# **60 HIKES WITHIN 60 MILES**

## **CINCINNATI**

**INCLUDING  
SOUTHWEST OHIO, SOUTHEAST INDIANA, AND  
NORTHERN KENTUCKY**

**FIRST EDITION**

**TAMARA YORK**

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## 04

# CAESAR CREEK GORGE STATE NATURE PRESERVE: GORGE LOOP TRAIL



## KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

**LENGTH:** 1.53 miles

**CONFIGURATION:** Figure 8

**DIFFICULTY:** Easy–moderate

**SCENERY:** Tailwaters, forest, and cliffs

**EXPOSURE:** Mostly shaded

**TRAFFIC:** Moderate–heavy

**TRAIL SURFACE:** Old road, mowed path, gravel, and soil

**HIKING TIME:** 1 hour

**DRIVING DISTANCE:** 1 hour north of Cincinnati

**SEASON:** Year-round

**ACCESS:** Sunrise–sunset

**MAPS:** USGS Oregonia; Caesar Creek Lake Map and Guide to Trails, Plants, Wildlife, and Fossils

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE:** A portion of the area near the tailwaters

**FACILITIES:** Restrooms and drinking water at the front of the parking area

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Caesar Creek Gorge State Nature Preserve, (614) 265-6453

**SPECIAL COMMENTS:** Although this trail does not rate as a hard trail, the section that leads downhill has plenty of steps and is a little difficult to navigate in places.

## GPS Trailhead

### Coordinates

UTM Zone (WGS84) 16 S

Easting 0752425.3

Northing 4374513.3

Latitude N 39° 28' 59.53"

Longitude W 84° 03' 54.22"

## IN BRIEF

The Gorge Loop Trail at Caesar Creek Gorge State Nature Preserve offers a pleasant hike through the woods and a nice start or end to your hiking day. It's relatively easy except for portions that lead down a steep hillside.

## DESCRIPTION

Caesar Creek Gorge State Nature Preserve is 483 acres of Ordovician bedrock, woods, and Caesar Creek. The meltwater of a glacier carved a path through the area, forming the gorge.

The nature preserve is located beyond the dam of Caesar Creek Lake. This area is rich in fossils, but you are only allowed to collect them in the nearby emergency spillway. Before doing so, you should obtain a fossil-collecting permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. You'll most likely find brachiopods, horn coral, and crinoids. Resist the urge to climb up and inspect the rocks of the cut-through because it damages the habitat.

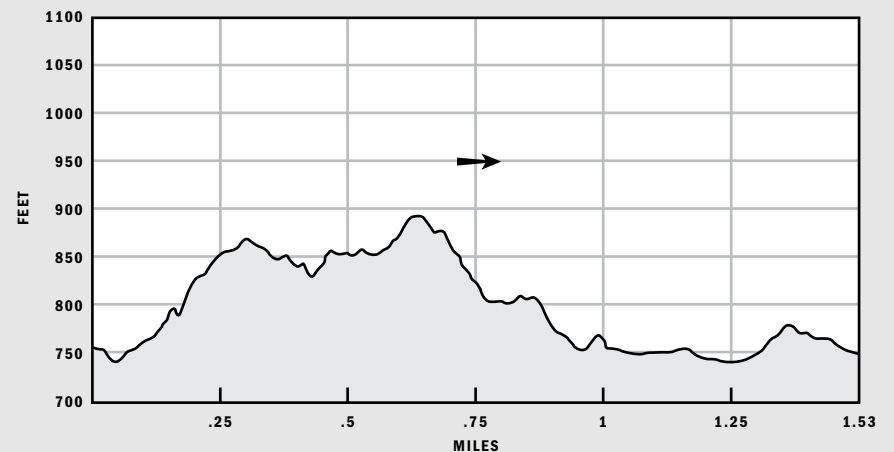
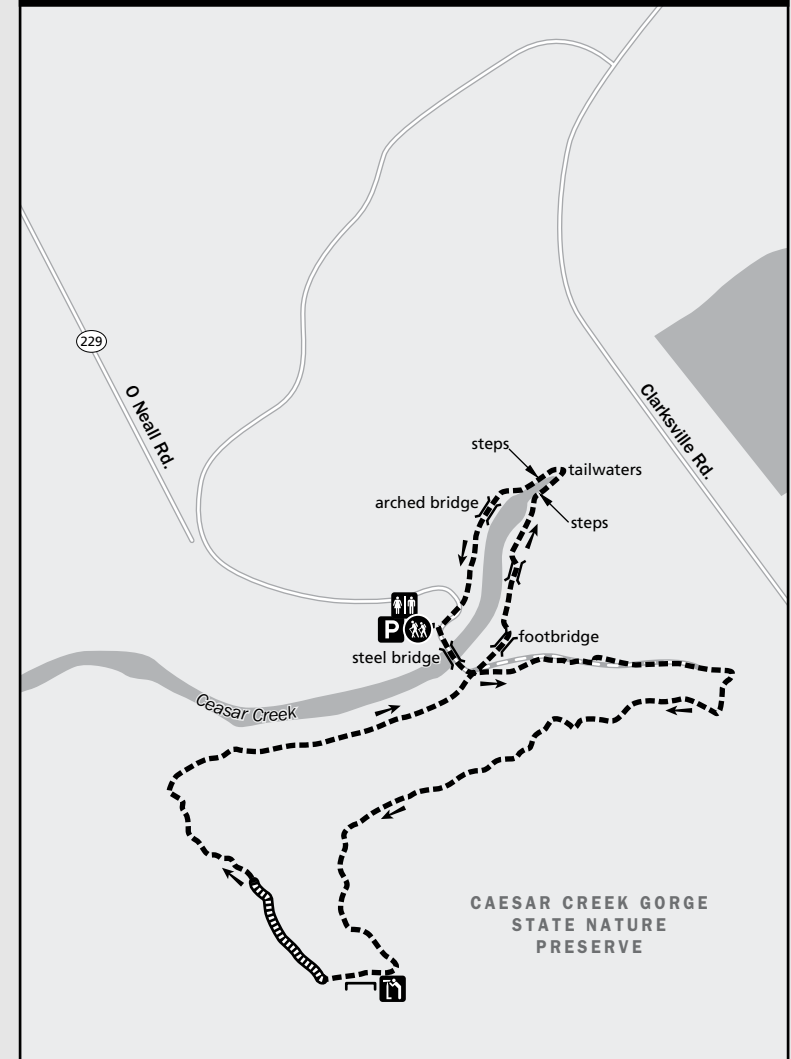
After you've parked your vehicle, walk toward the restroom area. Across the road from the restrooms is a steel bridge spanning the tailwaters of Caesar Creek Lake. The bridge is an excellent place to view Caesar Creek.

Continue across the bridge to an intersection with three trails. Follow the Gorge

## Directions

From the northeast corner of Cincinnati, take Interstate 71 north (from Interstate 275) 28 miles and turn left onto OH 73. Travel west on OH 73 for 7.6 miles. Turn left, heading south on Clarksville Road for 2.5 miles. Turn right onto the entrance road to Caesar Creek Gorge State Nature Preserve.

## 04 Caesar Creek Gorge State Nature Preserve: Gorge Loop Trail



Loop Trail to the left and uphill. This trail, which is made of gravel and old asphalt, follows a retired roadbed. It enters a mature forest of American beech, sugar maples, and elms.

A fair amount of aging and erosion has pitted this portion of the trail. Be careful of your footing. Butterflies are common here as they take advantage of the small pools of water and salts.

Near 0.13 miles, parts of this trail are marked with blue blazes, as this is also a portion of the Ohio Buckeye Trail. At 0.15 miles a beautiful ravine area begins, with flat stones to the right at 0.28 miles. The trail then transitions from the forest to an open area. Take a right onto the wide, mulched trail.

At the next intersection, take the trail to the right. It enters a field with no overstory. The field is going through succession, as you can tell from the red cedars, which are usually the first trees to pioneer an old field habitat. This area has plenty of red cedars as well as elms and poison ivy.

The trail enters into a mixed hardwood forest with a canopy at about 40 feet. Near 0.3 miles, the forest is composed of chinquapin oak trees and beech and sugar maple saplings. The trail is shaded as it weaves through the sugar maple saplings and pawpaw trees. At 0.38 miles, cross a footbridge over a small intermittent stream, then another footbridge shortly thereafter.

The trail begins to head uphill over several large steps. Beautiful red and white oaks and several shagbark hickory trees fill the forest. The trail winds uphill and passes an enormous red oak tree at 0.47 miles. Red oaks can be easily identified because of the distinguished dark and light gray bark that, near the top of the tree, looks like ski tracks.

Unlike some gorge trails, this one typically has a good breeze flowing through that makes for a nice, cool hike on a hot summer day. And even though the Gorge Loop Trail is popular, it remains a quiet place to hike.

Near 0.5 miles, trillium covers the hillsides. Pass by the black cherry tree with grapevine growing into its canopy. Dogwoods, basswoods, and elms border the trail along this portion.

Pass by the small retention wall and enjoy a break on the bridge at 0.59 miles. Outfitted with benches, this is a wonderful spot to enjoy the view of the gorge. After you cross the bridge, the trail leads uphill for a little bit. It banks and passes by several large trees within 10 feet of each other. The first on the right is a sugar maple, the second one on the right is a red oak, and the next one to the left is a shagbark hickory.

The canopy of the mature woods is now about 60 feet tall. At 0.69 miles, when the trail splits, take the trail to the right. It leads downhill and, at 0.71 miles, splits again. The trail to the left leads to the spillway; follow the Gorge Loop Trail to the right and downhill via the steps.

Take 21 steps down to the platform and look to the left at the gorge area. After 12 more steps, the trail becomes a mulched path. At 0.74 miles, you'll encounter another series of steep steps and a boardwalk. The gorge and stream are to the left.



View of Caesar Creek from the small spur trail

Decorated by several large, flat stones, the trail winds along a shelf on the hillside. Watch out for the poison ivy on both sides of the trail, especially near 0.86 miles where it overgrows the edges.

Pass through another area with a retaining wall and descend the steps. The steps end at 0.91 miles. The creek bed is just a few feet to the left. Pass over more steps and the mulched path leads to a gravel-covered path. To the left is another bridge.

Take a few moments to enjoy this area and the rock formations.

Follow the gravel road to the right. The creek is to the left. Several spur trails lead to the edge of Caesar Creek. Follow this path to the first intersection and take the concrete path straight ahead.

Cross over the small footbridge and continue along the edge of Caesar Creek. Take the steps up and over the tailwater outlet. At 1.4 miles, cross the bridge with the steep incline. Caesar Creek is to the left and a small stream is to the right.

Follow the concrete path back to the parking lot and your vehicle.

## NEARBY ACTIVITIES

Caesar Creek Lake State Park, Spring Valley Wildlife Area, and Fort Ancient offer additional hiking opportunities and are included in this book. Waynesville has several great hometown restaurants as well as plenty of antique stores.