Zaleski State Forest
1094 State Route 278
McArthur, Ohio 45651
877-247-8733

town to the Zaleski State Forest

Welcome to the Zaleski State Forest

Backpack Trail

This trail was established to provide backpacking opportunities in the Zaleski State Forest. For a 10-mile day trip, follow the southern loop backpack trail. For those seeking a longer experience, the trail provides access to the Licking River, the Adena Mound at Point J, and an overlook from the highest point in Ohio. Day hiking trailhead parking.

Location Map

Additional Information
ZALESKI STATE FOREST
P.O. Box 370 State Route 278
Zaleski, Ohio 45651
877-247-8733

LAKE HOPE STATE PARK
27331 State Route 278
McArthur, Ohio 45681
Park Office: 740-596-4938

forestry.ohiodnr.gov

Emergency Phone Numbers
EMERGENCIES: Call 911

Zaleski State Forest

Trail Tips
1. For safety, hike with a companion. Disabling injuries are very difficult to treat when hiking alone.
2. The only drinking water supplies available are shown on the map. We suggest that visitors carry their own water. The supply is limited so please use water conservatively.
3. Respect the solitude sought by other backpackers and park visitors.
4. The main trail is marked with orange blazes, and side trails are marked with white blazes. It helps to carry a map and a compass.
5. Beware of venomous snakes. High leather boots or shoes afford good protection. People should watch where they sit or put their hands, especially in heavy leggings.
6. Stream crossings may be impassable due to runoff following a heavy rain. Respect all marking rails carefully. Scrape away all leaves and dust to mineral soil. Be especially careful with campground fires and smoking during March, April, May, October and November, the forest fire danger periods in Ohio.
7. If hikers discover a forest fire, hike the trail to the nearest road immediately and report it to the forest fire headquarters.
8. For the protection of hikers, park vehicles only at the trailhead.
9. Stream crossings may be impassable due to runoff following a heavy rain. Respect all marking rails carefully. Scrape away all leaves and dust to mineral soil. Be especially careful with campfire fires and smoking during March, April, May, October and November, the forest fire danger periods in Ohio.
10. Stream crossings may be impassable due to runoff following a heavy rain. Respect all marking rails carefully. Scrape away all leaves and dust to mineral soil. Be especially careful with campfire fires and smoking during March, April, May, October and November, the forest fire danger periods in Ohio.
11. Winter backpackers should be experienced and prepared for the changing weather and conditions they may encounter.
12. Be aware of the various hunting seasons as public hunting is permitted on state forest land.

Emergency Phone Numbers
EMERGENCIES: 911
Zaleski State Forest: 740-596-5741
Vinton County Sheriff's Office: 740-596-5262
Athens County Sheriff's Office: 740-593-6633
F. Located on the next hilltop from this overlook is a section of railroad track that is claimed to be haunted by a ghost, known as the Moonville Ghost. He was killed while he was supposedly drunk and trying to stop a train near the Moonville Tunnels by waving his lantern. He was buried in the Moonville graveyard, but reportedly, he can still be seen waving his lantern trying to stop that train.

G. Ohio’s State Forests provide habitat for a variety of purposes, including timber production and wildlife habitat. Areas like Goose Creek, which is adjacent to woodland cover, provide a unique and special habitat for a variety of species.

H. The small, doughnut-shaped mound is a ceremonial ring that was built and used by the Native Americans of the Adena group.

I. This trailhead parking is located on the next hilltop from this overlook.

J. This selective harvest was completed in 2012. The purpose of the harvest was to remove trees that were stressed, damaged, or inhibiting the growth of other seedling trees.

K. The railroad tracks run parallel to the side of the trail and have vertical grooves cut into the face of the sandstone. These were drilling marks left from when this site was used as a stone quarry. The sandstone from this site was most likely used to build one of the local iron furnaces, railroad abutments or local structures.

L. This area is part of the Ohio State University’s research study that began in 2006. The goal of this study is to use a mix of prescribed fires and tree removal to find the best combination for increasing oak seeding development. Without any control, such as fire regimes, oak seedling growth falls behind that of tolerant maple trees. The type of harvest being used is called a precommercial. This type of harvest is used to increase the oak component in the stand by allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor, thereby allowing oak seedlings to continue to grow.

M. The 20 acres to the north were regenerated with a clearcut harvest in 1987. In this area, foresters have mimicked the natural disturbance cycle of the forest by creating an opening in the canopy, allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor. This encourages certain tree species, such as oaks and hickories, to thrive naturally. In 2003, a prescribed burn was conducted on this same site. Scientists have determined that Ohio is losing its young forests due to a lack of disturbance so this type of harvest is important to develop habitat for species such as ruffed grouse, which are dependent on immature forest conditions.

N. Trail intersection with State Roads 278. This is an older road area. To the southeast, people can see remnants of the old railroad car wash that was used to haul coal mined from the site. The thickness of trees growing in this stream bottom are very thick, which can be identified near the end of the area.

O. This area is part of a selective timber harvest that was completed in 1993. This is the same type of harvest done at Point J. Although the impact of the harvest on the forest is not noticeable to the common eye, the remaining trees have benefited from additional growing space.

P. This is a historical site that is a reminder of the early settlement that took place in the area. The stone masonry walls and buildings are reminders of the early settlers who constructed homes and businesses in the area.

Q. This is an old township road, used until around 1920. It was an important link between the divisions of Forestry and Wildlife to provide habitat for propagation and wildlife. This type of “two-aged” cutting practice achieves the forest management goals of creating early successional habitat while retaining some mature trees. As the forest grows larger, larger diameter trees, hard mast and large snags become part of the ecosystem of the forest much sooner than they would if they were in a forest regenerating from a clearcut.
The distances between the tick marks (•) are shown on the map in red ink. The south loop is 9.3 miles long (Waypoints: BCDEFGHJKYB). The west loop is 8.7 miles long (Waypoints: XYVNMKXYX). The north loop is 7 miles long (Waypoints: PQRSTUP). The length of the entire backpack trail loop, to and from the Hope Schoolhouse, is 28.8 miles.

1. Camp only in the designated campground areas shown on the map.
2. A self-registration permit (no fee) is required for all hikers. The permit must be filled out prior to entering the trail and is available at the trailhead and carry the stub on the trail.
3. No person is permitted to camp more than 14 days in any 30-day period. Camps must be moved to another backpack campground each day.
4. Domestic dogs or cats are permitted in the backpack campgrounds and on the trail, provided they are leashed or under control at all times.
5. Fires are prohibited except in designated fire rings or in portable stoves. Fires must be attended at all times. The cutting of trees is prohibited.
6. Camps must be maintained in a clean and sanitary manner and condition. All refuse must be packed out for proper disposal.
7. No person may disturb the peace and quiet of others in the campgrounds in any manner between the hours of 10 p.m. and 8 a.m.

State forest boundaries shown are represented and backwarranted as correct but not warranted. State forest boundary lines on the ground are identified with signs and or yellow paint marks on trees.

Map reviewed and approved by Robert Boyles, Chief, ODNR Division of Forestry, 04/2016

Data provided by ODNR Forestry, ODNR GIMS, US Census Tiger; ODOT

LEGEND
- Zaleski State Forest
- Lake Hope State Park
- Waterloo Wildlife Area
- Private Land
- State Highway
- Road
- Backpack Trail
- Side Trail
- Service Road
- Parking
- Campground
- Drinking Water
- Waypoint
- Point of Interest

APPROXIMATE DISTANCES

Backpack Trail Rules

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