

Burden Falls Wilderness Quest

Quest Description:

Note: *There are many user-trails running up and down the side of the falls that visitors use. One of the preferred ways down is to use the faint path that enters the forest through the west side of the parking lot. Follow the western bluff for about ¼ mile, then as the path descends; hug the bottom of the bluff back to the Burden Falls.*

We do not recommend crossing Burden Creek in order to descend down the boulders to the right. Rough and elevated terrain may make the journey unsafe for children and may increase risk for all individuals.

Burden Falls Wilderness is located in Pope County and is located adjacent to Bay Creek Wilderness. It was designated as a wilderness area by the Illinois Wilderness Act of 1990 and totals 3,687 acres. It is comprised of a central hardwood ecosystem with some pine plantations and is known for its seasonal, scenic waterfall. This creek falls 20 feet over a sandstone ledge and then descends another 80 feet in a series of cascades making it the highest free falling waterfall in Illinois. One benefit of wilderness is improving water quality because these largely undisturbed ecosystems provide natural filtration that makes water clean and protects the watershed.

As you leave the parking lot and start your journey towards the falls, draw a map of your route using the water as your central piece of the map. Be sure to note or draw unique land features that would help someone find their way there and back.

Things to include:

- Trail to Burden Falls
- North, East, South, West
- Trees, bushes, plants
- Rocks, boulders, bluffs
- Water sources

What else can you include?

- Animals, animal tracks or signs, insects, moss
- Legend or Key



This is also a good area to practice your compass skills or mapping using a GPS so consider bringing those along on your journey!

Trail Name and Marker: Burden Falls Parking Lot – User trail (no designated trail)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Trail Length: 1 mile

Travel Time: 1.5 hours

Trail Type: Dirt and rock

Best Season: Winter, spring, early summer, fall (and after a rain)

Possible Hazards: Falling, loose rocks, roots, poison ivy, and trail slippery when wet.

Wilderness Ethics: Plan ahead and prepare for your trip, Leave what you find, Pack in/pack out, Travel on durable surfaces, Respect wildlife and other visitors.

Waterfall Safety: As beautiful as waterfalls are, they can also be dangerous. Keep children close by and away from edges/cliffs. Rocks may be slippery when wet.

Directions to the trailhead:

From Rt. 45 in Ozark, take Ozark Road east. Follow signs to Burden Falls. This road turns into Forest Road 402. The parking lot is on the north side of the road before the water crossing.

From Rt. 145 in Delwood, take Forest Road 402 west. Parking lot is on the north side of road after water crossing.

Supplies Needed:

1. Map
2. Water
3. Snack
4. Journal
5. Pencil

In Case of Emergency: 911
Harrisburg Medical Center
100 Warren Tuttle Dr.
Harrisburg, IL 62946
(618) 253-7671

For More information:

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