The Tower Rock Boy Scout National Trail

TRAIL INFORMATION

WHO? Any organized group under adult supervision may make application.

WHAT? Tower Rock National Historical Trail is a 10 mile (circular) trail. Saxon Historical Trail is a 12 mile circular trail.

WHERE? Located in Perry County 4 miles east of Altenburg, Missouri on Route A - then 2 miles south on gravel road.

WHEN? These trails are open year round.

HOW? Applications are available from our office whose address is listed on the back of this folder. Confirmation, information on church services, maps and additional information will be forwarded upon receipt of application.

Further Information

* Each group hiking the trail must have one adult to each 10 hikers.
* The trail should be hiked in one day.
* Scouters must wear complete Scout or Explorer uniforms. During June, July, and August, official Scout or Camp tee shirts may be worn in place of the regulation Scout shirts - others dressed in good taste.
* Snake bite kits and water canteen are a must.
* Groups must stay together at all times.
* NO KNIVES, GUNS, MATCHES, OR AXES will be allowed on the trail. NO GUNS OR AXES AT THE CAMPSITE.
* NO SWIMMING WILL BE ALLOWED.
* Ferry ride across Mississippi River and use of camping area included in registration fee of 50c per person.

The Tower Rock Trail has many points of historical value and importance which will be of interest to the individual.

Many groups and individuals visit the popular points of interest up and down the Mississippi River. One such site of dramatic significance is scenic Tower Rock. It figures prominently in the earliest period of our history. Since the beginning of time the perils of the adjacent whirlpools have been notorious.

Mark Twain, famed writer and riverboat pilot, often stopped his boat at Grand Tower to take on wood and transfer passengers and freight. He mentioned the propensity of the inhabitants to ascribe ownership of the locality to His Santanic Majesty. At one time he described the islet saying it “is one of the most picturesque features of the scenery of that region.”

Tower Rock is a natural phenomenon in the Mississippi River. Set aside for “Public Purposes” by President Grant in 1871, it was entered in the “National Register of Historical Places” on February 26, 1970, by the U.S. Department of Interior. Although it was known to natives and early explorers for ages, some Roman Catholic priests planted a Cross on the top of the rock in 1698 to signify the arrival of Christianity in the area.

The camp grounds near Tower Rock mark the beginning of the Trail which winds through the picturesque river hills overlooking the “Father of Waters.” The area is especially rich in wildlife, both fauna and flora and is of great interest geologically. Spring and fall are especially colorful and unmatched in their natural beauty. The somber, pastel shades of budding oaks, gums and maples make a contrasting background for flowering redbud, dogwood, and tulip trees. In the spring and fall you can find many other interesting plants in abundance.

Animal life includes deer, wild turkey, coyote, wolf, fox, rabbit, squirrel, ground hog, beaver, bobcat, and black bear have been sighted. Many varieties of birds such as eagle, mocking bird, cardinal, wren, blue bird, robin, purple martin and quail are seen. Reptiles include the poisonous copperhead and rattlesnakes. This is the reason that hikers should have anti-venom kits along on the hike.

The geological makeup of the area is extremely varied. There is an abundance of limestone and sandstone outcroppings. Minerals of various kinds have been mined in the vicinity in limited quantities. These include silica, lead, okra-umber and iron ore. In fact, the southern extremity of the Trail is at the Silica Pits which have long been abandoned but which yielded a large quantity of silica sand for manufacturing purposes in years gone by.

At the northern end of the Trail lies the once bustling town of Wittenberg, founded by Lutheran settlers from Saxony, Germany, who landed at the mouth of the Brazos Creek in 1839. Some 700 people emigrated for religious reasons and over 500 of them came to Perry County where they settled and established the towns of Altenburg, Dresden, Frohna, Johannisberg, Seelitz, and Wittenberg. Wittenberg was to be the “metropolis” of all the settlements in East Perry County but it is now more nearly a “Ghost Town.” The ancient beer cellars of the Brenner Brewery are now called the “Wittenberg Bomb Shelter.” In 1922 the notorious train robber, Jack Kennedy, was captured and killed here by a posse.

Included on this Trail is a spectacular ferry ride across the Mississippi River to Devil’s Bake Oven, a promontory rock point in the river on the Illinois side which resembles the Rock of Gibraltar. At this point, the world’s longest pipeline suspension bridge crosses the Mississippi. This structure is 3,690 feet anchorage to anchorage; the 2,150