



# Multi-Use Trail System Bicycle Guide

## The Story of Crowley's Ridge

To understand the fragile nature of Crowley's Ridge, you must first understand its fascinating geologic past.

The unique environment of Crowley's Ridge owes its origins to the ancient ocean which covered most of what is now eastern Arkansas some 50 million years ago. The global climate patterns were much different then and the ocean levels were much deeper. An extended arm of the Gulf of Mexico, known as the Mississippi Embayment, covered the entire area. Layers of marine sediments deposited by the ocean formed the foundation of Crowley's Ridge. Eventually, this ancient ocean retreated from Arkansas, leaving behind a wealth of marine sediments and fossils contained within them.

Evidence indicates that a gently rolling plain made of layers of clay, sand and gravel, extended from Little Rock to Memphis. During the decline of the Ice Age, massive trenches were scoured out by the two major river systems, the Ohio River to the east of the ridge and the Mississippi River to the west. Carrying torrents of glacial melt-water, these rivers carried off most of the ancient marine sediments that had been deposited in what is now the Delta. Left standing between the two parallel running rivers was a thin strip of land, which became known as Crowley's Ridge.

The unique topsoil that caps the ridge is called "loess" and is a wind-blown deposit. This soil was created by glacial rock grinding during the Great Ice Age and was carried downstream by the glacial melt-water. When this fine "rock flour," or silt, dried it was picked up by the prevailing westerly winds and deposited on the ridge.

Unlike the other ridges and mountains of Arkansas, which have a foundation of solid bedrock, Crowley's Ridge has a foundation of clay, sands and gravel. The

erosive nature of the soil creates some unusual terrain. Steep ravines and hog-back ridges, as well as sheer-sided bluffs, are typical and common sights along the trails.

## Forest and Plant Communities

The unique topsoil has two distinct properties. In addition to the fragile nature of the soil, it is also extremely rich in nutrients and minerals. The forest and plant communities here are so unique they are found nowhere else in Arkansas and constitute a separate natural division.

Covering most of the rugged terrain of the park is a mixed hardwood forest. The general forest type is white oak/red oak/hickory with one sub-division being white oak/beech. The latter type forest, which is dominant on the eastern portion of the park, also features sugar maple and tuliptree.

Beech trees, with their smooth gray bark, are found scattered throughout south Arkansas and in sheltered, moist valleys of the Ozarks and Ouachitas. However, on Crowley's Ridge they are one of the most common trees in the mature forest and often dominate the forest canopy. Because of this, the original land grant survey descriptions named the area around Village Creek "Beech Creek."

These forest types are associated with a large assemblage of different species. Sweet gum, white walnut, American holly, basswood, and Kentucky coffee tree are usually found as single, isolated trees in the deep, moist gullies. White ash, sassafras, slippery elm, cucumber magnolia and swamp chestnut grow on the well-drained slopes.

The understory is dense with pawpaw, ironwood, wild hydrangea, spicebush, flowering dogwood, muscledwood, redbud, and Hercules club. Rare flowers also abound here at Village Creek. The large yellow ladies slipper orchid, pennywort, goldenseal, and bloodroot thrive in the more undisturbed areas of the park.

## Wildlife

Wildlife thrives in the habitats of steep ravines and hog-back ridges that are a result of the unusual soil found here. The park is well known for the great numbers of white-tailed deer and wild turkey that appear alongside the trails and open fields.

The approximate twenty-five miles of multi-use trails pass along high ridgetops and streams, and through bottomland forest communities, offering the rider the opportunity to view bobcats, foxes, hawks and several species of woodpecker. Move quietly; watch closely; listen carefully.

Enjoy your ride, and please take special care when using the trails so that future generations of riders may enjoy them as well.

**Remember, the way you care for and use the trails will influence trail management decisions and policies. Thank you.**

**TO REACH THE PARK:** from Interstate 40, take exit 242 (near Forrest City) and travel 12 miles north on Hwy. 284. Follow the signs to the park.

V • I • L • L • A • G • E  
  
C • R • E • E • K  
S T A T E P A R K  
**Village Creek State Park**  
201 CR 754  
Wynne, AR 72396  
870-238-9406  
villagecreek@arkansas.com

*NOTICE: To preserve scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. Caution and supervision of your children are required while visiting these areas.*

*Toward fulfillment of our conservation mission, we have printed this brochure on recycled paper using soy ink.*



## Village Creek State Park



Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism  
#1 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
1-888-AT-PARKS  
www.ArkansasStateParks.com



The multi-use trails at Village Creek State Park traverse some of the most scenic areas of eastern Arkansas. The park offers incredible beauty with towering forests of sugar maple, tuliptree and American beech, but the soil is very fragile and *special care is needed while riding these trails.*

Village Creek State Park lies entirely upon the unique natural division known as Crowley's Ridge. Crowley's Ridge has a very fragile soil known as "loess" which was glacially created and blown in by the wind. This soil is extremely erosive. For this reason, the multi-use trails are subject to closing to horses and bicycles at any time, depending on wet conditions. Please call ahead for trail closings.

- All bicycles must enter and exit from the designated bicycle entrance at the visitor center parking lot.
- Ride on designated trails only.
- Riding is permitted from sunrise to sunset only; riders must be off the trails before dark.
- Remember to pack all your trash out with you.
- When passing oncoming bicycles, keep to the right.
- Please use helmets for your protection.
- Control your bike in a safe manner while on the trail.
- Before your trip, calculate the total distance traveled by considering the distances to and from the trailhead, not just the loop mileage.
- Building ramps, jumping obstacles, trick riding, and racing is prohibited.
- When encountering horses, stop and step off the trail; horses may be frightened by bicycles and unfamiliar individuals.
- Some parts of the trail are closed to bikes for safety reasons (these areas are posted).

- It is crucial to hear others approaching. Wearing ear phones and headsets can cause serious safety hazards between users.
- If you stop on an uphill, it is considered good trail etiquette to allow those cycling uphill to have the right-of-way.

## Trails and Distances

**BICYCLE ENTRANCE:** From the entrance, a beginner's loop can be accessed by going through intersections 11, 12, 13 and 14. This includes a portion of the Lake Dunn Hiking Trail. The loop is 4.5 miles in length.

**CENTER RIDGE TRAIL (A, B, C):** This trail is 6.05 miles in length. The trail traverses high ridge tops and treats the rider to some of the most scenic areas of the park. Most of this trail is rated as intermediate. B loop is closed to bicycles.

**BEECH VALLEY TRAIL (D,E,F,G):** This trail is 4 miles in length. The trail passes near Lake Dunn and runs deep into the forests of Crowley's Ridge. Most of the trail is rated as intermediate.

**SOUTH RIDGE TRAIL (H,I,J,K):** This trail is 6.5 miles in length. I loop is closed to bicycles. During the winter, you can see Delta farmland on the ridge south of intersection 15. Most of this trail is rated as easy.

**DEER RUN TRAIL (M,N,P):** This trail is 4.6 miles in length. A portion of the trail (1.2 miles) runs along the gas pipeline and is rated as difficult. Nice views of Lake Austell are accessible from this trail. Most of the trail is rated as intermediate.

**OLD CATTLE TRAIL (L):** This trail is closed to bicycles and is 1.4 miles in length.

# Village Creek State Park Multi-Use Trail System

