

22 CALDWELL PARK



KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

LENGTH: 2.78 miles

CONFIGURATION: Series of loops

DIFFICULTY: Moderate

SCENERY: Woods, valleys, and streams

EXPOSURE: Shaded

TRAFFIC: Moderate-heavy

TRAIL SURFACE: Soil

HIKING TIME: 1-1.5 hours

DRIVING DISTANCE: 20 minutes from downtown Cincinnati

SEASON: Year-round

ACCESS: 6 a.m.-10 p.m.

MAPS: USGS Cincinnati East; Caldwell Park Map

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE: No

FACILITIES: Nature center when open.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Caldwell Preserve Nature Center, (513) 761-4313 or www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cityparks

SPECIAL COMMENTS: You'll find beautiful views and well-kept trails at Caldwell Park. Although there is a fair amount of traffic, expect some solitude while you hike.

IN BRIEF

Caldwell Park is a great place to take your family hiking. Several beautiful valley over-looks are peppered throughout the preserve. The Ray Abercrombie and Ravine Creek trails are very scenic, and the Paw Paw Ridge Trail provides some solitude. Be sure to venture behind the nature center to the platform overlooking the valley.

DESCRIPTION

Caldwell Park began in 1915, when J. Nelson Caldwell donated 89.3 acres to Cincinnati Parks as a memorial to his father, Major James Nelson Caldwell, who was one of this valley's early pioneers.

Caldwell's trail system is designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a National Recreation Trail. Hartwell Boy Scout Troop 14 constructed the earliest path, Ray Abercrombie Trail, in 1976.

After parking in the lot, look along the tree line to the left for the entrance to Ray Abercrombie Trail. You'll see strikingly white sycamore trees in the valley to the right.

The trail proceeds through a forest of black locusts, tulip poplars, and flowering dogwoods undergoing succession. This path sees heavy traffic, including dog walkers and people out for a day hike with their kids.

GPS Trailhead Coordinates

UTM Zone (WGS84) 16S

Easting 0716535.6

Northing 4342141.2

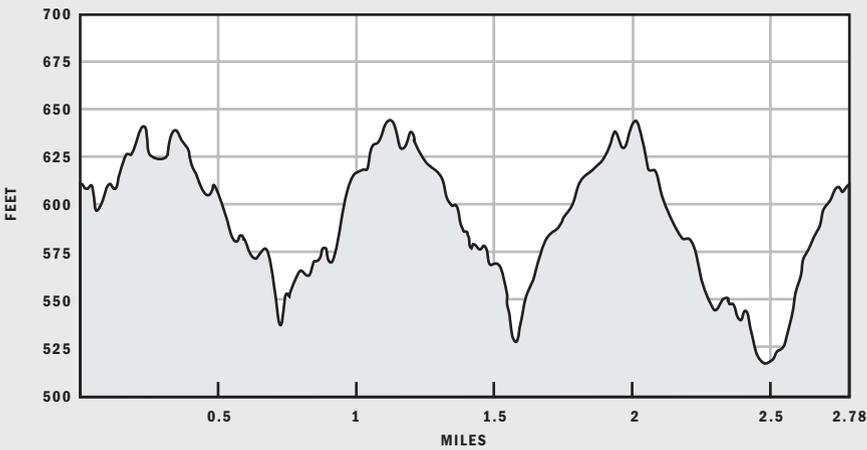
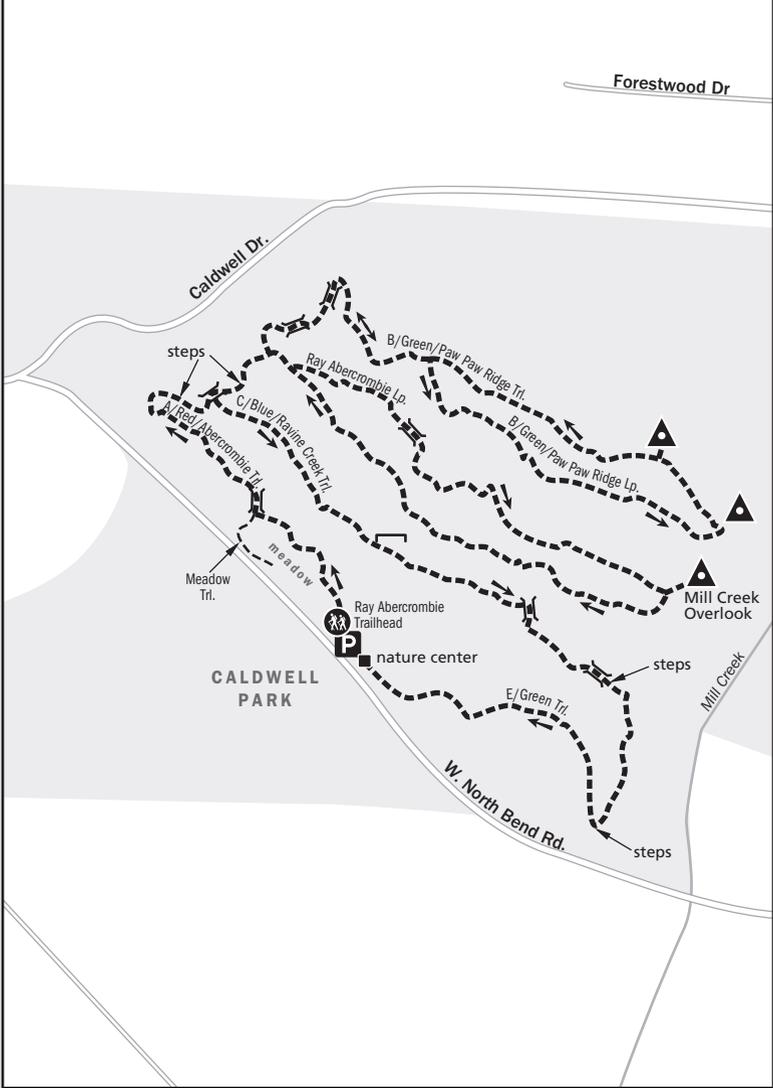
Latitude N 39° 12' 5.65"

Longitude W 84° 29' 32.58"

Directions

In Cincinnati, take Interstate 75 north to Exit 9/Paddock Road/Seymour Avenue. Turn left on Paddock Road. Then turn left onto West North Bend Road. The entrance to the park is on the right.

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The older forest is composed of red oaks and sugar maples. Look to the right into the valley and waterway below. Water's ambient sounds do an excellent job of blocking most of the noise from the surrounding metro area.

A little more than 300 feet into the hike is an intersection. Follow the A/red/Abercrombie Trail and head down a series of railroad-tie steps. The steps have fairly high rises, so be sure of your foot placement.

At 0.1 mile, the trail intersects with Meadow Trail, which leads back uphill and to the far side of the parking lot. Stay on the A/red/Abercrombie Trail and cross the footbridge.

After you pass through a nice grove of black cherry trees near 0.3 miles, the trail leads downhill along a series of steps. To the left is a creek. If the trains are moving you'll be able to hear train whistles echoing through this low area.

Cross the bridge at 0.4 miles, passing by C/blue/Ravine Creek Trail to the right and continuing on A/red/Abercrombie Trail. In 0.1 mile take the A/red/Abercrombie Loop to the right. At the next trail intersection 260 feet ahead, take the trail to the left side of the A/red/Abercrombie Loop. The forest is American beech and red and white oak trees. If you're lucky, you might see woodpeckers, nuthatches, and tufted titmice.

Take four steps down to the bridge at 0.7 miles and four steps back up to the trail. Pass a connector trail to the right at 0.8 miles. This is a fairly open woods with black cherry and shagbark hickory trees. Take a few moments to enjoy the view from the bench at 0.9 miles.

About 100 feet from the bench pass a connector trail on the left by staying on the A/red/Abercrombie Loop. Pass the earlier A/red/Abercrombie trail split and at 1.1 miles turn right at the intersection with the connector trail to B/green/Paw Paw Ridge Trail over the old access road.

Shortly after, cross a series of footbridges and head slightly uphill over the top of several erosion-control steps. The trail connects to B/green/Paw Paw Ridge Trail, which leads back to an old service road and then downhill. B/green/Paw Paw Ridge Loop winds through the park's oldest section of forest, a mix of American beech, tulip poplar, sugar maple, and pawpaw trees.

Cross the bridge over a creek ravine at 1.42 miles. The area suffers from a significant amount of erosion. Cross another footbridge at 1.48 miles and take a close look at the massive beech trees to the left and right of the trail. The path leads up a few steps into an open, flat-top area with lots of beech trees. The ravine to the right is filled with black cherry trees and red and white oaks.

Follow the B/green/Paw Paw Ridge Loop to the right at 1.6 miles through the white oaks, shagbark hickories, and sugar maples. Just 250 feet ahead are massive trees and a beautiful view of the creek ravine.

You'll be treated to another view of Mill Creek and the valley at 1.89 miles. After you've had your fill, return to the main trail and head uphill to yet another overlook at 1.96 miles. This overlook highlights a perfect example of drainage patterns in the southern Ohio area.

When you reach where B/green/Paw Paw Ridge Loop rejoins, take the trail to the right. Follow this trail back through the woods and downhill to the C/blue/Ravine Creek Trail you passed earlier. This is the intersection of the A/red/Abercrombie Trail and C/blue/Ravine Creek Trail near the bridge at 2.47 miles. Turn left on C/blue/Ravine Creek Trail and follow the creek. Several blue clay deposits are visible along the creek.

Take a break on the bench at 2.65 miles. Follow C/blue/Ravine Creek Trail to the right; it eventually leads to the nature center. Cross the bridge at 2.8 miles and head uphill.

The valley is significantly sheltered from urban noise and is very tranquil. A bridge crosses the ravine at 2.87 miles. At 3 miles, start heading uphill over a series of steps.

At the top of the hill at 3.1 miles, C/blue/Ravine Creek Trail connects to the figure-8 shaped E/lime-green Trail. Take the E/lime-green Trail to the right. When this trail joins with itself, continue to the right and then take the trail to the left, which leads to the back of the nature center. Walk around the nature center and return to your car in the parking lot.

NEARBY ACTIVITIES

The Cincinnati Museum Center and Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens are located in downtown Cincinnati. My daughters' favorite is the trading post at the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History at the Cincinnati Museum Center. Bring in seashells, rocks, or fossils to trade for other specimens.