

Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks:

Cedars of Lebanon's Hidden Springs Trail

By Fran Wallas

Hidden Springs Trail at Cedars of Lebanon State Park in Lebanon is an easy five-mile loop trail. Some highlights of what you might see along the trail include mosses, lichens, sinkholes and glade plants.

It is important to remember how the trailhead looks when you start hiking so that you stop hiking at the same spot. Otherwise, you might end up hiking this loop twice and that could be more fun than you want.

Begin by going to the right following the white blazes. Cedars of Lebanon State Park and Forest have the largest stand of red cedars in the country. Many of these trees were planted in 1935 to replace the forest that was cut down to make pencils. While you are hiking, notice that when you are walking primarily on rock, you will see cedars. When you are walking on mostly soil, you will see oaks and hickories. Each type of forest has a different feel, look, and smell.

It won't take you long to find the first of many sinkholes. Each sinkhole seems to have a path worn by people trying to get a better look. The mosses and lichens shading from gray blues to greens provide color and texture to the area. Reindeer Moss, which is actually a lichen, grows all along the trail. Since it is sensitive to pollution, the Reindeer

Moss indicates that the air quality at the park is good.

The trail goes through cedar glades and barrens. The Glade Cress, small white flowers with yellow centers, blanket the limestone glade areas. Look for St. Johnswort, Nashville Breadroot and other special glade flowers. After you pass a small wet pond area, you come to a road. An arrow marks the trail just across from you. The trail is easy to follow, and passes a few old fencerows.

At the long fence row on your right is the largest of some sinkholes. It is at the end of a wide dry streambed. The trail crosses the streambed and makes a tiny loop recrossing the same streambed. There is a rail fence around a hand dug well once used for making whiskey in the connecting cave. There is a spring in the back of that cave leading to the name of this Hidden Spring trail. Any water in the stream during the winter or wet spring disappears quickly down these sinks.

When you start seeing more oaks, there is a sign that says, "Entering Hidden Springs Trail Head." This is not where you first entered. Look to the right to see an oak tree with an amazingly large gall. Keep following the white blazes. You will come to another similar sign. Although this is not the right place to leave the trail, you are getting close. Cross another paved road. In less than a quarter mile,



A large oak gall seen on a tree along the Hidden Springs Trail at Cedars of Lebanon State Park. *Below left:* Glade Cress, seen along the Hidden Springs Trail.

you will see your car in the parking lot. It's time to leave this trail and explore the rest of the park.

Directions

Take I-40 to Lebanon exit 238. Go south on Highway 231 (State Route 10) for about seven miles. Turn left at the park entrance on Cedar Forest Road. Trail maps are available at the park office. Drive 1.5 miles past the office. Turn right following the arrows to the Hidden Springs Trail. There is a large parking lot on the right just after the turn. The trailhead is across the street.

Cedars of Lebanon State Park



(Fran Wallas is an avid hiker. She works as an attorney with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation in Nashville. You can read about her other Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks on the Web site www.tn.gov/environment/greathikes.)

