



Hoosier National Forest Highlights



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Camping Abounds on the Hoosier National Forest



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Are you aware there are top notch campgrounds on the Hoosier National Forest? Not to be confused with Indiana State Parks, the Hoosier offers camping ranging from primitive to RV camping with hookups. Located in south central Indiana, the Hoosier is Indiana's premier federal resource, so why not enjoy a stay-cation here this summer?

Located on Lake Monroe, five miles south of Paynetown State Recreation Area, Hardin Ridge Recreation Area offers 212 individual campsites, some with electric and water hookups, an RV dump station, and a number of tenting sites. Campsites are available by reservation or first come, first served. There are six campground loops and many of the camping spurs are level and paved. Modern bathroom and shower facilities on the loops provide all the conveniences. If you're not into camping, check out our two lakeside rental cabins!

Hardin Ridge offers a three lane boat launch, with parking for 75 vehicles and trailers for those enjoying the lake for a day of water skiing or bass fishing. The area also provides two large picnic areas with pavilions near the lake, which can be reserved for family get-togethers. Each picnic area has toilets, horse shoe pits, grills, and tables. There is also an interpretive trail and a bike trail, for those interested in a bit of exercise during their visit. And, to top it off, Hardin Ridge has a 300 foot beach.

Indian-Celina and Tipsaw Lake Recreation Areas are located on the southern end of the Hoosier off Highway 37. Indian-Celina Recreation Area has two loops for a total of 63 individual campsites. Both loops have centralized water and modern bathroom and shower facilities. Some sites have electric and water hookups. There is even a recharging table for electric boat motors. An RV dump station which serves both recreation areas, located a couple miles down the road at Branchville.

Indian-Celina Recreation Area was named after Indian and Celina Lakes located within the area. Both lakes have boat ramps (electric motors only) and excellent pan fishing. There is a picnic area on Indian Lake, and another located at the Rickenbaugh House, a historic house built in 1874, which the Forest Service rehabilitated. The house is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is open to the public.

There are two trails in the campground: The mile long Rickenbaugh Interpretive Trail, and the 16-mile Two Lakes Loop National Recreation Trail encircles both Indian and Celina Lakes. This trail offers opportunities for short, day hikes, or longer hikes. The boat ramps, picnic area and hiking trails can be used for day use.

Tipsaw Lake Recreation Area is five miles further south. There are two loops with 35 individual campsites, some with electric and water hookups, and two group camping areas that each accommodates up to 65 people. Both of the group areas can be reserved and offer water and vault toilets.

Tipsaw Lake offers a picnic area with two shelters on the lake, one of which has electricity. The picnic area has tables, grills, horse shoe pits and a large open area for games. Both shelters can be reserved for gatherings or other activities. There is also a beach with playground equipment and bathhouse. Boating using electric motors is allowed on the lake, so bring your pan fishing gear and try your luck!

Additionally, there is a 5.9-mile trail around the lake for hiking or biking that includes scenic overlooks of the lake and valley. The trail, picnic area, beach and boat ramp are available for day use.

For equestrians, the Forest offers a number of horse camps. These are free to all, but are designed for camping with horses. They access the extensive multi-use trail system on the Forest. These primitive campgrounds offer vault toilets, large open camping areas, feed bunks and corrals. Non-potable water is available. Horse camps include Blackwell, German Ridge, Hickory Ridge, Shirley Creek, and Youngs Creek Campgrounds. (German Ridge charges a small fee).

If you are interested in free camping where no horses are allowed, check out Saddle Lake or Springs Valley campgrounds. Both offer primitive camping with picnic tables, fire rings, pit toilets and boat ramps, and excellent fishing.

So, if you are looking for a great family get-away close to home, consider one of these great opportunities. The three developed campgrounds are operated by a concessionaire under Special Use Permit. The main camping season is April 15 through Oct. 15 yearly, with limited winter camping available. For detailed information on locations, facilities available, fees, current regulations, trail tags, and how to reserve your campsite or cabin, please check out our website at: www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/hoosier/recreation.

For more information on camping opportunities on the Forest contact Vicki Gullang Harris at 812-276-4772 or vgullang@fs.fed.us.

Photos and Captions:



RV Campers at Hardin Ridge Recreation Area.



Campers at Hickory Ridge Horse Camp.