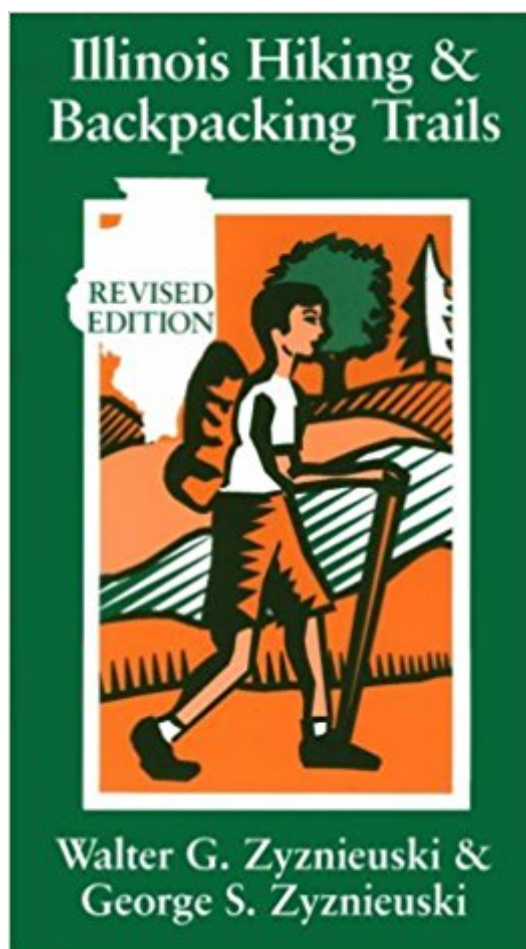


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Illinois Hiking And Backpacking Trails (Revised Edition)



Synopsis

In this completely revised, expanded, and updated edition, Walter G. Zyznieuski and George S. Zyznieuski describe sixty-nine trails that total more than eight hundred miles. Thirteen new trails have been added in this edition. All but four of the original maps have been revised and updated and many new photographs are included. Since the first edition was published, there have been many changes along the trails or at the parks or forests where the trails were located. In order to update their book, the Zyznieuskis contacted the headquarters of each park and forest to obtain detailed and up-to-date information. In the appendixes the Zyznieuskis provide information on obtaining trail maps, hiking organizations, and rules and regulations for Illinois state parks and recreation areas. As in the first edition, the authors have hiked each trail they describe. It is their firsthand experience that makes it possible for them to provide reliable, detailed, and up-to-date information on each of these trails for Illinois hikers and backpackers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The brothers Zyznieuski have struck another blow against those who imagine that Illinois offers nothing to do and no landscape to do it in. From Lake Le-Aqua-Na north of Freeport to Little Black Slough, south of Vienna, they describe in detail fifty-nine different paths through settings as different as suburban Chicago (Illinois Prairie Path), the 'Near-virgin deciduous forest' of Beau Woods in southeastern Illinois's Wabash County, and such man-made midstate environments as Lincoln Memorial Gardens, Allerton Park, and Wildlife Prairie Park." Harold Henderson,

Illinois Times" This will become the definitive trail guide for Illinois hikers."#151; Tim Renken, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Walter G. Zyznieuski is supervisor of environmental programs for City Water, Light, and Power, a municipal utility of Springfield, Illinois. George S. Zyznieuski is a sales engineer in customer training for Hunter Douglas, Inc., Window Fashions Division, in Broomfield, Colorado.

I think this book is well-done. It is dated, and appears that, although it was revised more recently, many chapters still reference the authors calling the park ranger in 1991. For this reason, for a current hiker in 2013-2014, I will deduct one star on the review. That said, it is a comprehensive overview of many hikes in Illinois, from north to south. It has 69 different hiking locations in over 300 pages; it's a thick book, with about 2-4 pages per location. As other reviewers here have mentioned, the maps are not detailed. They are rudimentary sketches of the hiking trails, as if done by hand. However, in this day of internet, there is not a hike that I would read from a book and run out and do without first checking the official website for hours, updates, intricate maps, hunting details (always of importance to hiker safety in the autumn), parking information, etc. What the Zyznieuski book does provide is the hike name, details, description of the roads to that location and trailheads, and then lovely descriptions of the hikes themselves. It describes trail markings, highlights along each trail, and lengths (it does not have GPS coordinates). It is written as if a friend is telling you about the trail. "You will then cross Beaver Creek, which can be overflowed and muddy in the springtime, and following the single track trail uphill for one mile will reveal an expansive vista from which you can see up and down the power line for several miles, with wildlife viewing at all hours. Next the path will turn south and proceed through hollows until you reach the old iron Benson Bridge over the Fox River." That sort of thing. I like that it seems rather complete for hiking locations in central and southern Illinois; it is less complete for every single municipal forest preserve in northern Illinois (of which there are dozens and dozens, beyond the scope of this book -- but see further below in my review). It has many locations (e.g. Forest Glen Preserve, 11 mile trail, Westville, IL) that I wouldn't even think of if it were not for this book. As a testament to the accuracy of the descriptions, even today, I have actually seen a couple of websites that, literally, just scanned the pages from this book onto the website. This was done, and I do not recall the website, for the sixty mile I and M Canal in Morris, IL area. I'm thrilled that I purchased this book. It gives me ideas of parks to visit, and the parks that I do know (Starved Rock, I & M Canal, etc.) are well described, and thus I can assume they are all similarly accurately detailed. I think the descriptions of the trails add much. A good book

of hikes, if one is from northern IL, is 60 Hikes Within 60 Miles of Chicago. 60 Hikes Within 60 Miles: Chicago: Including Aurora, Northwest Indiana, and Waukegan, which is a more comprehensive book, too, for that area. It includes some hikes (e.g. Silver Springs State Park, Yorkville; Pratt Woods, Wayne, IL) that are not in Zyznieuski; some trails are in both, but many are not. The 60 Hikes book has many smaller preserves in the Chicago suburbs. Certainly, trails more than 60 miles from Chicago are only in Zyznieuski. This makes both books, as a set, a great resource for the Chicago area hiker looking for sojourns in greater Chicagoland and in the entire state as an aside for long weekend trips. Enjoy the trails.

To be fair, this was the first book on the subject that I have purchased so I really don't have much else to compare it to. I do have to say that with this book I found many trails I never knew were there. Some of them right in my backyard. This book gives a lot of background on the areas as well as contact information. This contact information I think is important to obtain good maps from the parks and districts where the trails are located. That leads me to the biggest problem I had with the book. The maps appear to be hand drawn sketches. This is fine in most instances but I can think of a few times when I would have killed for a good map :) Ah but that is part of the adventure isn't it. Anyway with this book you will find many trails in the state and overall I think it is a worthwhile purchase.

Since I gave a 2-star rating, I don't want to leave the impression that this book is bad (it is not). To this end, let me start by stating some of the book's positive attributes and then describe some shortcomings. First, this work contains a wide variety of hikes. A total of 69 destinations are described, and the distribution is relatively even throughout the state. Trail distances range from 3 to 57 miles, and I would put the average at around 10 miles. Difficulty ranges from flat bike trails in the Chicago area to steep mountain hikes in Shawnee National Forest. Each hike contains a map (more on this later), a good background on the area, and directions to the trailhead. With this wide variety of hikes to choose from, you will have no trouble finding a trail to suit your location and ability. One should note that the author does not spend all 370 pages describing trails. 45 pages are devoted to an appendix containing Illinois state regulations on use of natural areas. I am not suggesting this is a good or bad use of space, but such a large addendum is unusual, and I thought it should be noted. Unfortunately, I now need to move to some shortcomings this book possesses. I mentioned above the presence of a map with each hike. While this is true, the maps as presented may not be of much use on the trail. The "maps" are really nothing more than drawings. They fail to show

contours, names of trails, significant structures (i.e. park office and toilets) and natural features, and sometimes even the trailhead! It can be a challenge to determine on the map which trail the author is describing. Another significant shortcoming is the trail descriptions themselves. In fact, many of the "trail" descriptions do not describe a trail (i.e. route for walking), but rather a trail system. Further, no suggested route through the trail system is given. In my opinion, this is a significant problem. As readers, we rely on the author to direct us to a trail of interest. We need information about what can be seen on a specific route to determine if we want to hike that route. We view the author as the expert and rely on his recommendation as to which route would be of greatest interest. The author of this book either does not possess enough knowledge about the area to recommend a route or simply refuses to share that knowledge. This makes it very difficult to choose a trail to hike. In conclusion, I cannot really recommend this book. In addition to the above, this book is now several years old, and trails do change over time. In lieu of this book, I suggest you consider purchasing "Hiking Illinois (America's Best Day Hiking Series)" by Susan L. Post. I have not personally read Post's book, but my familiarity with this work and with the America's Best Day Hiking Series (I have personally read several works in that series) combined with the positive review Post's book has obtained suggests to me that it is a superior work.

was just what i was looking for - great reference book

the book is outdated and some trailheads don't exist anymore. you spend more time looking for trail heads on some of the trails that the authors seemed to have invented themselves. While there are good trail descriptions, don't depend on the hand drawn maps to get you by or to even be correct all of the time. invest in something more up to date and avoid this book for the time being.

We tried to use this book on some recent hikes in S Illinois. The maps are very poor, information given is pretty brief and is basically the same as what the National Forest and State Parks give out. This could have been a great book but it's mediocre at best.

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