



# The Cache River Autotour

Discover the wetlands of Southern Illinois.



## Hidden Away in Southern Illinois is one of Nature's Masterpieces.



### Featuring ancient cypress-tupelo swamps,

bottomland hardwood forests, sandstone bluffs and limestone glades, the Cache River Wetlands is a rich and diverse area that provides habitat for many unique and fascinating plants and animals. It is a place to enjoy hiking, birding, kayaking and canoeing, hunting, fishing, photography and learning about the natural world. One could spend a lifetime exploring this gem – but, if you only have a weekend, or even a few hours, the Cache River Auto Tour is designed to showcase the area's highlights and whet your appetite for a return visit!

#### About the Cache River Wetlands

This portion of southern Illinois is situated at the intersection of four distinct ecological regions, which all contribute to its incredible biodiversity. Home to a complex web of organisms, including some of the oldest trees east of the Mississippi, the Cache River Watershed contains three National Natural Landmarks and has been designated a RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance. It harbors over 90 percent of the state's high-quality swamp and wetland communities and provides habitat for more than 100 of Illinois' threatened and endangered species.

#### Where To Start Your Visit

The Cache River Wetlands Center offers a variety of interpretive exhibits and information about the natural and cultural history of the Cache River Wetlands, as well as walking trails featuring both wetland and prairie communities. The center is located on Route 37, 3 miles south of Cypress. Hours of operation: Wednesday through Sunday, 9am to 4:30pm.

Another good starting point is Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters, which offers maps of the area and information about wildlife resources and recreational opportunities. The Refuge Office is located at 137 Rustic Campus Drive, Ullin, on the campus of Shawnee Community College. Hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 7:30am to 4pm.

### Some Suggested Itineraries

Be aware that several of the stops on the Cache River Auto Tour involve easy-to-moderate hiking. Doing full justice to all 12 stops can easily fill one or more long weekends. For those with limited time, here are a few suggested "mini-tours."

#### If you only have an hour or two:

Watch the twelve-minute introductory film about the Cache at the Wetlands Center, stroll the boardwalk at Section 8 Woods (#1) and take a short hike to view the giant Winnie-the-Pooh tree at Big Cypress Tree Access (#2).

#### If you have a morning or afternoon:

Make short stops at #1 and #2, then hike the Heron Pond Trail (#4).

#### For a full day of activity:

In the morning, stop briefly at #1 and #2, and then hike the Heron Pond Trail (#4). After lunch, hike the Tupelo Trail (#3), and finish the day with a late afternoon or early evening drive around Mermet Lake (#11).



#### If you don't want to stray far from your car:

Sites that can be enjoyed without leaving your car include Mermet Lake (#11) and Horseshoe Lake (#12). The boardwalk at Section 8 Woods (#1) is highly recommended for those with limited mobility who would like to see a close-up view of a cypress-tupelo swamp. Lower Cache River Access (#10) also provides easy access to a quality view of the river.

### Travel Tips

The Cache River Wetlands can be enjoyed throughout the year, as long as you dress for the weather and wear sturdy and comfortable walking shoes. Keep in mind that some trails may be muddy or inaccessible during wet weather. Carry water and snacks when hiking, and consider bringing binoculars, field guides, a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent. Drive safely, and remember to pull over when taking photos or viewing wildlife. Please respect the rights of property owners, and do not litter.

#### Canoeing and Kayaking

The Cache River offers a quality experience for canoes, kayaks, and jon boats (10-horsepower limit). A public boat launch is located on the Cache River Auto Tour at the Lower Cache River Access (#10). Three additional boat ramps are located on Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge; for locations, see [www.fws.gov/midwest/cypresscreek/](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/cypresscreek/). Boat rental and guide services are also available from local vendors.

#### Hunting and Fishing

Hunting and fishing are permitted on most public lands in the Cache River Wetlands, with the exception of designated nature preserves. Information on regulations and permits can be found for Cache River State Natural Area at [www.dnr.state.il.us/](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/) and for Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge at [www.fws.gov/midwest/cypresscreek/](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/cypresscreek/).

#### Other Nearby Attractions

The Shawnee National Forest offers more than 280,000 acres of scenic beauty and recreation opportunities. The Tunnel Hill State Trail, a 45-mile bicycle and hiking trail running between Harrisburg and Karnak, passes through five miles of the Cache River State Natural Area. The Trail of Tears National Historic Route runs along Highway 146, just north of the Cache River Wetlands. The Great River Road National Scenic Byway is located along Highway 3 to the west, and the Ohio River Scenic Byway on Highway 37 and Highway 2 to the east.

## Planning Your Trip

#### For travel directions, and information on nearby campgrounds, restaurants and lodging, contact:

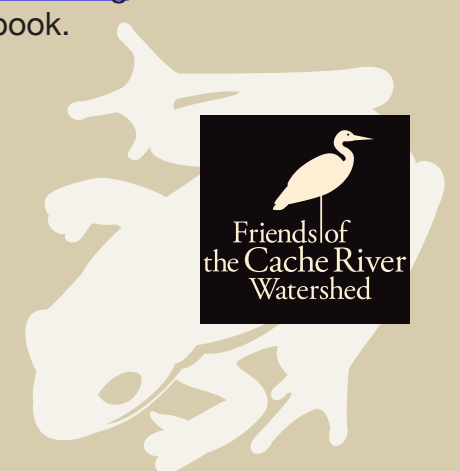
**Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau**  
P. O. Box 378  
Anna, IL 62906  
800-248-4373  
618-833-9928  
[www.southernmostillinois.com](http://www.southernmostillinois.com)

#### For hunting and fishing regulations, hiking maps, location of additional boat launches and other Cache River Wetlands information, contact:

**Cache River Wetlands Center at Cache River State Natural Area**  
8885 State Route 37 South  
Cypress, IL 62923  
618-657-2064  
[dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgmt/PARKS/R5/CACHERV.HTM](http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgmt/PARKS/R5/CACHERV.HTM)

**Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge**  
0137 Rustic Campus Drive  
Ullin, IL 62992  
618-634-2231  
[www.fws.gov/midwest/cypresscreek/](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/cypresscreek/)

The Cache River Auto Tour brochure was developed and produced by Friends of the Cache River Watershed, a not-for profit group of citizens dedicated to protecting, enhancing and sharing this unique natural area, the Cache River Wetlands. For more information, see [www.friendsofthecache.org](http://www.friendsofthecache.org) or like us on Facebook.







## Discover the Wetlands of Southern Illinois.

**1. Section 8 Woods** Perfect for a quick introduction to the swamp, this boardwalk located right next to Highway 37 will instantly transport you into a primeval, flooded forest of water tupelo and bald cypress. Depending on the season, pileated woodpeckers, prothonotary warblers or winter wrens may serenade you as you stroll to the end of the boardwalk, which provides a great view of the State Champion Water Tupelo.

**2. Big Cypress Access** The shortest hike in the Cache leads to a monumental reward—thousand-year-old bald cypress trees, the largest of which is forty-three feet in diameter! These giants, surrounded by their gargoyle-like knees, occupy the ancestral bed of Cypress Creek. Rubber boots are recommended during wet periods, when the end of the short trail could be submerged.

**3. Tupelo Trail** Start at the Marshall Ridge Access parking lot to explore this two-mile roundtrip trail that winds through a mature, oak-hickory forest with a pawpaw understory. The real gem, though, lies in the loop that leads to Little Black Slough, which features rock outcrops and a seemingly endless flooded forest of water tupelo and bald cypress. In fall, a carpet of swamp marigold forms one of the best wildflower displays in the Midwest.

**4. Heron Pond** Heron Pond is the signature destination for most visitors to the Cache. The one-to-two-mile hike will take you along the river, through the woods and, via a boardwalk, into the heart of one of the most beautiful and accessible swamps in the Midwest. You can then retrace your steps, or, for a longer hike, follow the trail as it skirts the swamp and eventually leads to the State Champion Cherybark Oak.

**5. Wildcat Bluff** Embedded deep in the wilds of Johnson County, Wildcat Bluff lords over the junction of the Shawnee Hills and the Coastal Plain of Illinois. The amber ribbon of the Cache winds its way through the forest below, and a small hill prairie displays a unique combination of plants on a steep slope with spectacular views. For the adventurous, a short but rugged trail follows the base of the bluff and leads to imposing rock overhangs.

**6. Hickory Bottoms** Located off Mount Olive Road, this secluded site is a mature, lowlands forest featuring 200 acres of oak and hickory trees, in addition to large cypress trees along Adds Branch. Hickory Bottoms has received national recognition for its populations of songbirds. A 1.5 mile trail provides many opportunities for wildlife viewing, so be sure to bring your binoculars.

**7. Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve** An accessible wildlife overlook is found along Cache Chapel Road. At first glance, you might not see much. But, time your journey to coincide with spring and fall migration, when thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds can be viewed in the late afternoon or early morning, and you will begin to appreciate what the term "wildlife refuge" really means.

**8. Limekiln Springs** The parking lot just south of the Bellrose overlook is the entry point for this unique area. The trail includes boardwalks across Limekiln Slough, and also passes Limekiln Springs, which flows from the exposed limestone bedrock. The site provides habitat for a diversity of waterfowl, fish, reptiles and amphibians, and is a great place to look for wildflowers in spring and early summer.

**9. Lower Cache River Access/Buttonland Swamp** The road dead-ends into a parking area that provides easy access to Buttonland Swamp, a National Natural Landmark, where swamps form a contiguous corridor over nine miles long and nearly a half-mile wide. A short walk to an overlook offers spectacular views of this watery wilderness, while a marked canoe trail allows an intimate encounter with some of the oldest trees east of the Mississippi, including the State Champion Bald Cypress. Abundant aquatic life includes numerous species of waterfowl, wading birds, water snakes and ghost shrimp.

**10. Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area** Mermet Lake, between Karnak and Metropolis, is one of the finest wildlife viewing areas in the state, and you never have to leave your car! The five-mile loop drive passes large lotus beds, isolated cypress trees that serve as roosts for cormorants, eagles and egrets, and also skirts a flooded forest. Wood ducks, wild turkeys, river otters and more provide photographers with a wealth of opportunities. [Note: Mermet Lake drive is closed during the winter hunting season]

**11. Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area** Located less than 20 miles southwest of the Cache River State Natural Area is a large oxbow lake that supports an incredible community of bald cypress. Access is easy by car, and several short boardwalks lead into the swamp. Any season is good to visit, especially winter, when abundant waterfowl can be glimpsed against the dark, primeval backdrop of lichen-covered bald cypress, and summer, when the American lotus seems to stretch to the horizon. Everything from tundra swans to hooded mergansers may show up for the patient observer.

## Historic Points of Interest

**H1. Main Brothers Box & Lumber Company** Interpretative signage marks the former site of one of the state's first and largest timber-cutting companies. The Mains moved their thriving operation to the tiny settlement of Oak-town in 1905, replatted a new community and named it after the ancient Egyptian city of Karnak.

**H2. Post Creek Cutoff** This 4.8-mile-long drainage ditch diverts the Upper Cache into the Ohio River. Completed in 1916 as part of a series of efforts to drain farmland, it was also used to float logs down to Main Brothers' sawmill. Deepening and widening over the years, the cutoff has caused dramatic alterations in the flow of the Cache.

**H3. George Rogers Clark Campsite** A historical marker indicates the site where Clark and his troop of 170 volunteers camped on June 30, 1778. They had just captured Fort Massac and were on their way to take the British fort at Kaskaskia, which helped secure the Illinois Territory during the Revolutionary War. The marker is located on Highway 45, just south of the Massac County line.

**H4. Bost Cabin** The two-room cabin, located on Boss Island in Little Black Slough, was built out of hand-hewn cypress logs in 1853 by settlers John and Christiana Bost. About 1.5 miles from the Wildcat Bluff trailhead, cross the Cache River via a rocky ford. From there, it is a short distance to the cabin.

**H5. Johnson County Courthouse & Carnegie Library** Both buildings, located on Vienna's town square, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The courthouse was completed in 1871. The library was built in 1911 through a grant from the Carnegie Foundation. Designed by local architect Thomas Clymer, it served as American Red Cross headquarters during the devastating influenza epidemic of 1917.

**H6. Forman Depot and Railroad Museum** Built in 1900 by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, this depot was originally located at Forman. Facing closure after World War II, the building was moved to a local farm, where it remained for 50 years. Moved to Vienna City Park in 2002, the restored depot is now a railroad museum and tourism center.

**H7. George Rogers Clark Route** A historical marker on Highway 146 about two miles west of Vienna indicates Clark's route on his march from Fort Massac to Kaskaskia.

**H8. Hell's Neck** This area along Old Cypress Road, off Highway 146 just west of Vienna, was once the notorious neighborhood known as Hell's Neck. From the Civil War to the 1890's, the "Hell's Neck Feud" between the Arnett and Stanley families cost several lives. Graves of the two clan heads, J. B. "Burb" Stanley and James Arnett, can be found in Bridges Cemetery, just past Oak Grove Baptist Church.

**H9. Trail of Tears** Nearly 9,000 Cherokees were marched through southern Illinois along the infamous Trail of Tears between November 1838 and January 1839. They passed through Vienna, and roughly followed the route that is now Highway 146 on their way to cross the Mississippi. Signage marks sections of Highway 146 that parallel the old trail.

**H10. Glass Hill** The rounded bluff just southwest of Cypress, also known as Round Bluff or Cypress Citadel, supports a rich diversity of native wildflowers, grasses and ferns. Main Brothers Box & Lumber Company once owned Glass Hill, intending to mine its silicon deposits to manufacture glass jars. Woodland Indians, known as the Lewis People, occupied the site from 600 to 900 AD. Glass Hill is part of the Cache River State Natural Area, and can be accessed from Dongola Road.

**H11. Ullin Depot** Built in 1897 by the Illinois Central Railroad, Ullin Depot is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The depot offered passenger and freight service, was a telegraph station and provided temporary housing for victims of the 1937 flood. Located at the corner of Central and Ullin Avenue, the building was restored in 2012 and now serves as Ullin's village hall and library.

**H12. Tamms Depot** This unusual curved structure, located on Front Street, was specially built in 1899 so that one dispatch office could overlook two railroads, the Chicago and Eastern Illinois and the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio. The restored depot houses Tamms' village hall and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

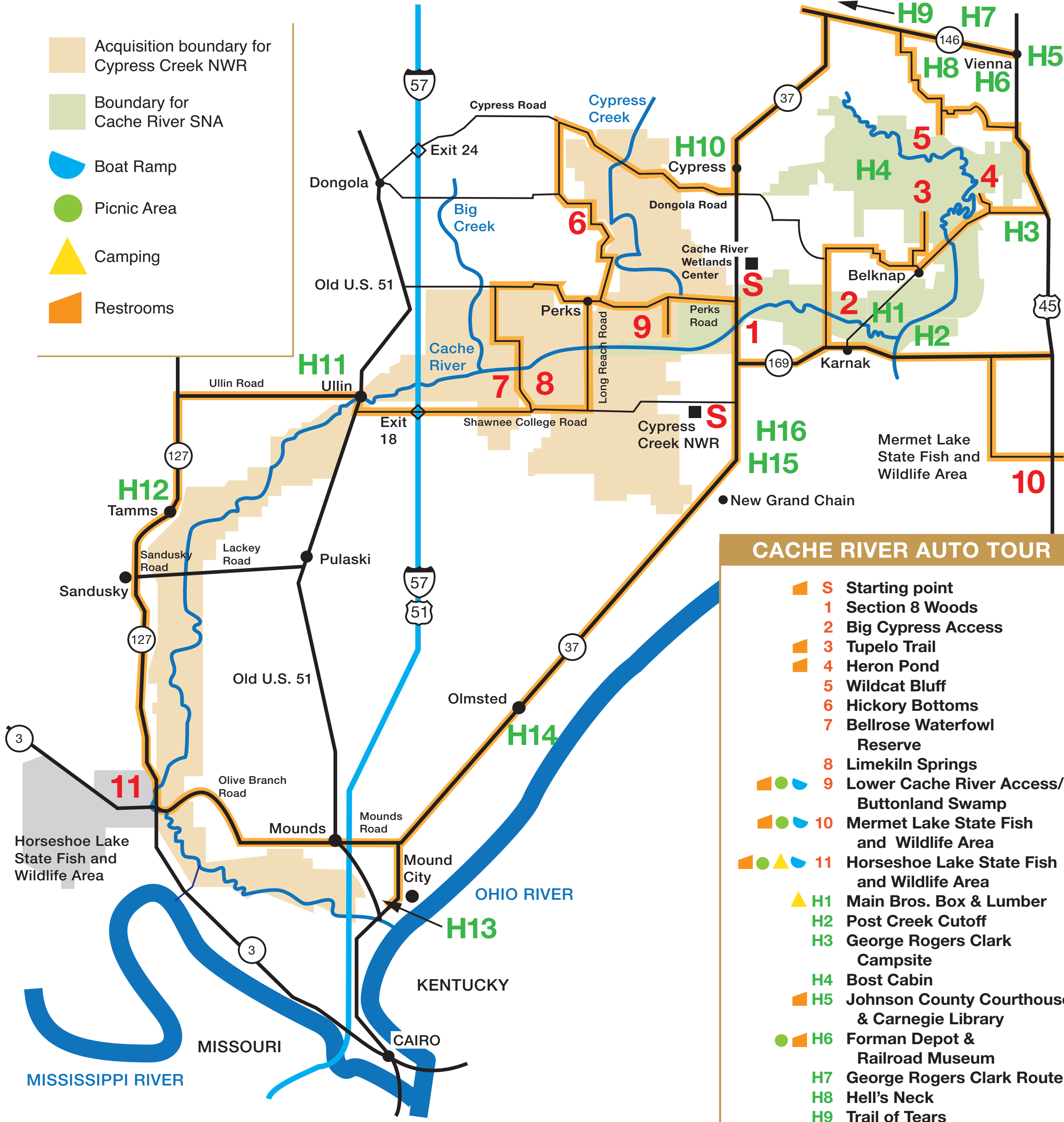
**H13. Mound City National Cemetery** Designated as one of the country's first national cemeteries in 1864, this extensive burial ground was used to inter both Union and Confederate soldiers who died at the nearby Mound City Civil War Naval Hospital (now demolished). Points of interest include the Illinois State Soldiers and Sailors Monument, erected in 1874.

**H14. Olmsted Depot** Built in 1872 by the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad, the Olmsted Depot provided passenger and freight service until 1955. The building, located on Front Street, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**H15. Cantonment Wilkinson-Ville** Just south of New Grand Chain on Illinois Route 37 is a historical marker for a U.S. Army training post established in 1797 and named for its commander, General James Wilkinson. The post was garrisoned until 1804, and about 70 soldiers, including Wilkinson himself, are buried in unmarked graves on the site.

**H16. The Old Jail House** This tiny structure in New Grand Chain, approximately 10 by 10 feet, has been refurbished and opened as a tourist attraction. It can be found along the town's main street, across from the building that formerly housed Heubotter's General Store.

- Acquisition boundary for Cypress Creek NWR
- Boundary for Cache River SNA
- Boat Ramp
- Picnic Area
- Camping
- Restrooms



## CACHE RIVER AUTO TOUR

- S** Starting point
- 1** Section 8 Woods
- 2** Big Cypress Access
- 3** Tupelo Trail
- 4** Heron Pond
- 5** Wildcat Bluff
- 6** Hickory Bottoms
- 7** Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve
- 8** Limekiln Springs
- 9** Lower Cache River Access/ Buttonland Swamp
- 10** Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
- 11** Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
- H1** Main Bros. Box & Lumber
- H2** Post Creek Cutoff
- H3** George Rogers Clark Campsite
- H4** Bost Cabin
- H5** Johnson County Courthouse & Carnegie Library
- H6** Forman Depot & Railroad Museum
- H7** George Rogers Clark Route
- H8** Hell's Neck
- H9** Trail of Tears
- H10** Glass Hill
- H11** Ullin Depot
- H12** Tamms Depot
- H13** Mound City National Cemetery
- H14** Olmsted Depot
- H15** Cantonment Wilkinson-Ville
- H16** Old Jail House

