

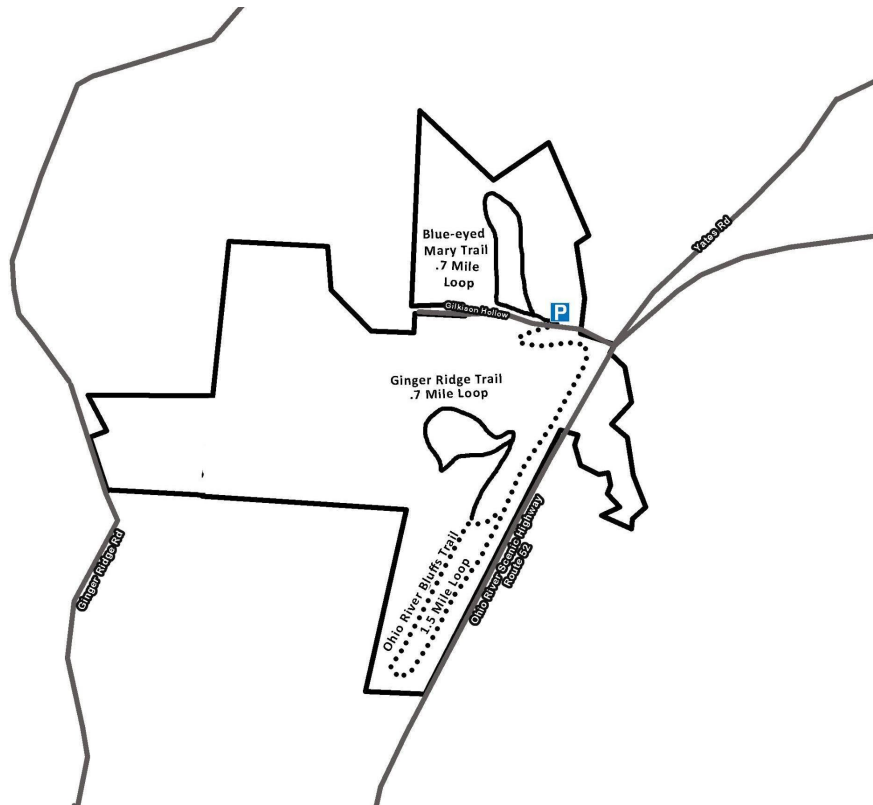


VISITING & HIKING

Ohio River Bluffs

Current Size: 300 acres

The Arc of Appalachia's operations are 100% supported by private donations. If you love what we do, [please support us](#), so that our wildlands preservation work and trail stewardship can continue.



Dogs are not permitted at Ohio River Bluffs. Please see [Hiking Arc Preserves](#) for dog-friendly trails.

Hiking Trails (3 trails) **Ohio River Bluffs Trail 1.0 mile loop** begins at the Trailhead Parking Lot on Gilkison Hollow Road. During the first two weeks of April, it takes visitors through one of the most breathtaking spring wildflower displays in the Eastern United States. Because of its botanical richness, it is of vital importance that visitors stay on the trail at all times to avoid stepping on the bulbs, tubers, and rhizomes of the wildflowers that surround you. Soil compaction will destroy the flowers that currently lick your ankles as you walk by. The loop trail follows along US-52 and climbs gradually to the top of the bluffs with vistas overlooking the Ohio River. **Ginger Ridge Trail 0.7 mile loop** originates off of the Ohio River Bluffs trail and takes visitors on a trail encircling Ginger Ridge on higher elevations. **Blue-eyed Mary Trail 0.7 mile loop** begins at the Trailhead Parking Lot and follows Gilkison Hollow Road a short distance before meandering through one of the densest and largest populations of blue-eyed Mary spring wildflowers in the state.

You are Entering a Highly Protected Nature Preserve. Regulations exist to protect natural communities from the impact of public visitors. Please follow them to leave Junction Earthworks as beautiful as you found it. Remain on trails at all times, walking in single file to protect bulbs of native wildflowers bordering the trail. Do not disturb, pick or collect flowers, plants, rocks, or wildlife. Hunting, caving, fishing, trail biking, rock climbing, wading, campfires, and swimming are prohibited.

Directions: 400 Gilkison Hollow Rd, Manchester, OH 45144

Directions south from West Union: Follow the signs for OH-41 as it jogs through the town. About 4 miles south of West Union you will reach Bentonville. Turn LEFT on OH-136 and follow 5 miles into the town of Manchester. Turn right on US-52 and travel through the town of Manchester. As you leave the village limits on the west side of town, set your odometer. Ohio River Bluffs is one mile from town. After leaving Manchester, look for a road to your right called Yates Road, and immediately after Yates, turn right onto Gilkison Hollow Road. The parking lot will be on your right.

Interpretive Kiosk: An interpretive kiosk is at the trailhead. We recommend snapping a photo of the trail system before setting out on the trails.

Ohio River Bluffs hiking trails are open from sunrise to sunset. Please note parking lots are not winter-maintained and the trails are not safe to hike during periods of heavy rain, ice, and snow. Trails are closed during our annual Deer Management Hunts which take place on 1) the Monday through Sunday following Thanksgiving, and 2) the Saturday and Sunday before Christmas.

Fantastic Wildflower Displays. The Ohio River Bluffs is an outstanding example of a classic Ohio River corridor forest with its high density of spring wildflowers – a distinctive mix of species that was once the hallmark of the Ohio River’s steep bluffs lining the river corridor where Silurian limestone bedrock is exposed. This is the same bedrock that supports the noteworthy wildflower displays at nearby Whipple State Nature Preserve and the Arc of Appalachia’s Highlands Nature Sanctuary. The Bluffs is arguably the most splendid and showy wildflower display of them all. Ohio River Bluffs preserves the last remnant of what was once an unbroken floral display several miles in length.

Ohio River Bluffs has a wildflower display so spectacular that it is not unusual for automobiles passing by to pull off US-52 to pause to take in the magnificent view: a long stretch of steep bluffs covered with a nearly solid carpet of wildflowers from the base to the ridgetop. The species diversity is not particularly high, but the density of flowers is stunning – almost overwhelming to the eye. The most common flowers for the site include Virginia bluebells, blue-eyed Mary, toad trillium, dwarf larkspur, and wild hyacinth. The trailside panoramas from the top of steep limestone bluffs southward are equally attractive. As one stands in drifts of twinflowers, one can see the sinuous sweeping curves of the Ohio River below, and further beyond, the hills of Kentucky.

Woodlands. The entire tract is forested with a rich mixture of diverse tree species, including white oak, sugar maple, red oak, elm, hackberry, Kentucky coffee tree, and white ash. The understory woody layer is dominated by young buckeye trees. The forest was timbered just prior to the Arc’s acquisition, which would have caused an influx of bush honeysuckle that would have annihilated the flowers had Arc staff and volunteers not intervened to remove them.