

Carlyle, IL Bike Trails & Routes

Carlyle Lake Bike Trail

An unofficial route exists that allows bikers to travel all the way around Carlyle Lake. It is unmarked, but certainly a challenge at over 60 miles. If starting from the Carlyle Lake Visitors Center, the route travels east along the top of the Lake Dam and along Saddle Dam 2 through South Shore State Park.

From South Shore, the route travels along county and township roads all the way back to Carlyle.

The route is not appropriate for small children and un-experienced riders. Only well-experienced bike riders should attempt this route. The route is predominantly made up of county and township roads upon which cars and trucks sometimes travel at high rates of speed. The roads were not constructed to include bike riding facilities. After you leave Carlyle, comfort facilities such as bathrooms and gas stations are found very sparingly along the trail.

It is along this route that the City, Corps, and volunteers are working to identify the future location of more appropriate and prototypical trails to take bike riders off of county and township roads. A \$20,000 grant application has been submitted to the Dept. of Natural Resource's Greenways & Trail Planning Program to assist us in this endeavor.

Carlyle Prairie View Trail

The Carlyle Lake Visitors Center is a good location from which to begin this route. If traveling east, the route will take you along the top of the Lake Dam, which is about 1.25 miles long. The Dam is very scenic. Looking south, you will see area grown up in timber and the Kaskaskia River / Spillway. Looking north, you will be able to see the expanse of Carlyle Lake.

After leaving the Dam, be prepared for a pretty steep hill which will crest just south of the McNair Campground. After passing McNair, you will travel along Saddle Dam 2, along which you'll get additional views of Carlyle Lake to your left. Furthermore, after McNair, bathroom facilities are difficult to find and are off the route for the remainder of the Trail. Cars and trucks with campers and boats sometimes travel along Saddle Dam 2, but traffic is usually not heavy. The posted speed limit is 35 MPH, and Saddle Dam 2 maintained well.

Saddle Dam 2 will eventually turn into a road that will travel along South Shore State Park. After entering South Shore, be prepared to travel up another hill, after which, travel will remain pretty level for the remainder of the route.

From South Shore, the route will pass through a gate and turn due east along Saddle Dam 3. Saddle Dam 3 is a service road primarily used by Corps vehicles. Along Saddle Dam 3, you will see a swath of timbered area to the north and farms and barns along the south. The Trail terminates atop Saddle Dam 3 at Boulder Road.

After you return to the Visitor's Center, you may consider making a stop at one of a couple places for a drink, ice cream, or bite to eat. The Lighthouse Grill is located just north, within sight, of the Visitors Center, offering a typical American menu with sandwiches, fish, hamburgers, and steak. If you continue along the Trail west along William Road, you will find McDonalds at the intersection of William Road and Route 127. This portion of the Prairie View Trail is not currently constructed, but is due to be finished in July 2009.

Due to the Trail's length, it may not be appropriate for young children. Vehicle traffic can be found along this route, but traffic is typically not heavy or speedy (however, pay attention to holiday weekends).

[View bike routes at www.playandstaycarlyle.com/bike-hike.htm](http://www.playandstaycarlyle.com/bike-hike.htm)

City of Carlyle Bike Route

All public right-of-ways are open for bike riding in Carlyle, but the route proposed herein is recommended to visitors. In total, the Carlyle Route, and its loops offer over 10 miles of bike routes. This route is mostly appropriate for children who are able to ride for distance. Care will always have to be taken when interacting with traffic, of course.

The Dam West Recreation Area, near the Visitor's Center, is a perfect place to start this route. Head south along Lake Road. We recommend you do the out-and-back on top of the Lake Dam, a 2.5 mile trip. The asphalt road on top of the Dam is about 10-15 feet wide. Great views of the expanse of the Lake and the Kaskaskia River are found on top of the Dam. After returning to Lake Road, continue south (left). The recommended route would have you turn left at the Spillway Road and take you to West Spillway Area and the Kaskaskia River path on the west side of the River. At the end of the River Path, you run into the General Dean Bridge, a pedestrian bridge on the National Historic Register. There is no other bridge like it in Illinois.

At the General Dean Bridge, the route will take you west along Fairfax Street. This is the general area where Carlyle was first settled in the 1810s. This is also the general area where the Goshen Trail traveled through Carlyle. The Goshen Trail was an unofficial route that cut across Southern Illinois and was used by Native Americans and animals for travel. Older homes are scattered along Fairfax Street, which also travels through Downtown Carlyle. While you are downtown, stop for some antique or gift shopping or grab some lunch or dinner at the LuBar, Cruisers, or Schleichers. While Downtown, please do not ride your bicycle on the sidewalks.

When Fairfax reaches 12th Street at the Flamingo Tavern, turn north (right). Unlike the Downtown area, we recommend you keep your bicycle on the sidewalk. Along 12th Street, you'll pass St. Mary's Catholic Church, Henkel's Hook & Arrow, KFC / Taco Bell, among other businesses.

Twelfth Street is served by a sidewalk until you reach Bond Street. North of Bond Street, the City is constructing a bike path that will connect Bond Street to the Carlyle Lake Visitors Center, expected to be completed in July 2009. Until July, please turn east (right) on Bond Street and turn north (left) on West Lake Drive until you reach William Road. Turn east (right) on William Road to travel back to the Visitors Center, or turn west (left) to cut over to McDonalds for an ice cream or soda, if you'd like.

All told, the route described above is 4 miles.

Carlyle Bike Route Tips

1. Depending upon the maintenance schedule, certain Carlyle streets may be covered with small rocks or chips (and oil) that we use to keep our streets strong and durable. However, these chips can make biking a little dangerous. Be careful when traveling along chipped streets.
2. The Kaskaskia River path, on the west bank of the River, is a "rotomill" path made up of compacted, recycled asphalt. This surface is a little loose, but not as bad as chipped streets.
3. In the early Spring, the River path may be inaccessible as it could be underwater. If this is the case, travel south on Lake Road and turn west (right) on Clinton Street.

Little Prairie Nature Trail Loop

The KML you may have downloaded from the City website shows the Little Prairie Nature Trailhead along the Spillway Road. This is a short, wooded loop you may be interested to take if you have a mountain bike. The path here is either grass or dirt. At the Trail's Switchback, you can turn left to loop back to Spillway Road. Or, you could continue east along the grassy trail where you'll end up at the Kaskaskia River Path. You could very likely see deer trying to mind their own business on this half-mile loop.

[View bike routes at www.playandstaycarlyle.com/bike-hike.htm](http://www.playandstaycarlyle.com/bike-hike.htm)

City Park Loop

Carlyle's City Park is a pretty park nestled underneath its many trees. Near the centerfield fence of the ballpark, there is a path that opens up and drops down to the River bottoms. You may likely choose to walk your bike down this first hill, as it is pretty steep and can be bumpy. In the bottoms, you'll come to a fork. Take an immediate left to cut straight to the Kaskaskia River Path. Or, you can veer right and continue along the bottoms before it takes you back towards the River Path. If riding, or walking, through the River bottoms is not your choice, you can follow the Park road through the Park back out to Lake Road and Clinton Street. This loop is about 0.5 miles.

Dam West Campground Loop

This out-and-back route loops through the Dam West Campground, Carlyle Lake's most popular campground. Ride through the Campground to see where campers clamor for Lakeside sites. Along the way, you'll ride past the pretty sailboats in the West Access Marina. This loop also travels through the picnic area of the Dam West Recreation Area. Feel free to stop for a picnic, a swim at the beach, or to play on the playground. This loop is about 1.5 miles, out-and-back.

Eldon Hazlet State Park Bike Route

Eldon Hazlet does not offer bike riding trails that are separate from the park roads that are shared by vehicles, including trucks hauling campers and boats. Nonetheless, biking in Eldon Hazlet is doable, although great care should be taken when biking with kids whose bike riding skills are not well developed. This especially goes for the park road on the west side of the Park where the speed limit is 35 MPH. For most other places in the Park, the speed limit is 25 MPH or less.

Keep your eyes peeled for wild life, especially deer and turkey, all throughout the Park.

The recommended route will take you west (right) out of the Allen Branch parking lot, south, down to the Carlyle Sailing Association marina. Along the way, you'll find the Park swimming pool (admission) and the Camp Store. The Store will cook you a hamburger or pizza if you'd like. Otherwise, soda and ice cream is available.

Just before you reach the CSA marina, you'll find the Olympic Pavilion, which provides a great place for a picnic and overlook of Carlyle Lake.

After you turn back north to return to the Allen Branch parking lot, you may choose to ride loops through the camping areas of the Park. Eldon Hazlet is one of the most popular RV camp grounds in Illinois. Once you turn into the campground, the only way back out is the way you turn in. Scattered in the campgrounds are several restrooms and shower buildings.

After leaving the campgrounds, continue north (right) and take the next possible park road east (right). Along this road, you'll have a choice to a couple jogs to either the Lakefront Cottages and/or the Cherokee Trail area.

The route presented is over 5 miles, not including any jog you might take.

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