



LOCATION

A visit to Arkansas would be incomplete without enjoying the nature trail on Sugar Loaf Mountain. Nestled in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains, Sugar Loaf rises out of and towers 540 feet above Greers Ferry Lake. It is 1,000 feet above sea level. Located 70 miles north of Little Rock in Van Buren County, Sugar Loaf beckons you to enjoy the solitude of nature, uncluttered by civilization.

HISTORY

At the turn of the century, Mr. Fate Winfrey pioneered the heights of Sugar Loaf Mountain. His dream was a simple one, to turn the virgin acre-in-the sky into a bountiful orchard. He planted the seed and new life appeared. His hopes were short-lived, however, for a group of overactive youths in search of adventure destroyed his trees. He later planted corn on top of the mountain. Eventually he abandoned his dream of farming the mountain, and over the years nature covered his efforts with lush grass.

Long before the gates of Greers Ferry Dam were closed, in December 1962, Sugar Loaf Mountain had become a favorite attraction for picnickers and nature lovers, offering four seasons of diverse outdoor experiences. Some came from as far as Little Rock to enjoy the spectacular beauty of the mountain.

For almost a decade after the lake began to fill, the mountain was undeveloped, but employees of the Greers Ferry Project Office went to work in

1970 and began the project that would result in the trail being designated a National Recreational Trail in 1971. The work to blend a trail into the mountain's steep side was arduous and required the original materials to be hand-carried up the steep slopes. Self-propelled, walk-behind mowing machines provided some help with larger materials by providing a way to move the utility pole stringers for the bridge up the hill. Later, when additional trails were added, materials were flown to the island by helicopter and placed near the location where they would be used. Thousands from throughout the United States now enjoy the peace and serenity of Sugar Loaf Mountain National Recreation Trail.

THE TRAIL

Access is by boat and a courtesy dock is available on the southeast side of the mountain. The nearest marinas are Sugar Loaf and Fairfield Bay. Restroom facilities are not available and you should allow approximately 2 hours for the trip.

The trail rises 540' from the lakeshore to the summit, making the climb moderately difficult. The trail is well marked and the final segment to the top is made by flights of wooden steps that were hand fitted between bluff walls to provide safer access. There are many photo opportunities along the trail and at the summit, so bring your camera.

At the water's edge a large information sign provides a map of the trail. From this point, visitors can walk leisurely along the winding path. Numerous rest stops along the trail allow visitors to set their own pace while enjoying the panoramic view.

Visitors begin their trek to Sugar Loaf Mountain in the spring, when wildflowers at the lower elevations are beginning to bloom. They increase in numbers during the summer, when hiking and sightseeing are at their best. Then comes the fall season, when the whole area glows with radiant color as frost-touched leaves take on the flaming hues that foretell the coming of winter.

As you ascend the 1.6-mile winding trail, you will be spellbound by the variety of vegetation and

sandstone formations. Tree roots form a natural deterrent to erosion. The trail is well drained even after heavy rainfalls.

Large greenish-gray lichen-covered sandstone along many parts of the trail is enhanced by club moss and maidenhair fern. The most common trees to be observed are scrub and black oak, and short leaf pine. In contrast to these, you might spot a dwarfish banzai English elm standing only two feet high.

Along the south slope, the forest has a bountiful supply of black oak, short leaf pine, and hickory as well as scattered dogwood, black locust, black gum, and overcup oak. The trail forks above the three-fourths mark with the upward trail going along the south slope and the other leading around the sandstone and forested north face of the island. Along the north trail, you can see vertical fractures up to 100 feet deep in the sandstone face.

Sugar Loaf Mountain is the result of a long erosion and weathering process. The rock, which forms the top of the mountain, has served as a protective cap for the underlying softer shale and sandstone. The flat-topped surface and nearly vertical walls are characteristic of an erosion process referred to as pedimentation. The rocks forming the mountain are more than 300 million years old.

Parents are cautioned to watch children, as bluffs and steep slopes are potential hazards. Camping and fires are prohibited on the island, but camping is available at nearby parks. Hunting is not allowed.

For those not able to make the full climb to the top, an intermediate trail circles the mountain below the bluffs. This trail begins just below the $\frac{3}{4}$ waypoint. We hope you enjoy your visit to Sugar Loaf Mountain National Recreation Trail. Please help keep this unique resource unspoiled by bringing back any trash you may have and picking up any that others leave behind.

Questions and comments may be directed to Operations Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 1088, Heber Springs, Arkansas, 72543. Telephone 501-362-2416.