

Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks:

Edgar Evins State Park – Views, Flowers, and Lots of Hiking

By Fran Wallas

At Edgar Evins State Park in Silver Point you can combine hiking the 2.5-mile Jack Clayborn Millennium Trail and the 5.5-mile Merritt Ridge Trail and enjoy a very strenuous eight-mile hike.

The trail has many steep ups and downs and narrow rocky sections. For hikers wanting a shorter and easier hike, the 2.5-mile first loop provides a stroll through a valley filled with early spring wildflowers.

The trail starts downhill and follows an old fence line. The edge of Center Hill Lake peeks through the cedars on your right.

Following the white metal blazes, you come to an old stone wall dating back to the 1800s or early 1900s. Here is the trail's easiest access to a quiet lake inlet. The trail goes up through a break in the wall and turns right.

When you get to a junction with blazes on your right and left, you are at the Millennium Trail Loop. Go right at this split to see a wonderful display of wildflowers. The side of the trail is white with Spring Beauty, Rue Anemone, Toothwort, and trillium.

Continue through the narrow v-shaped valley until you get to a sign on your right to the Merritt Ridge Trail. Climb up the switchbacks to the top of the ridge. As you stop to catch your breath, notice the very large oak and maple trees. You are now at the top of one of the narrow ridges that are part of the Highland Rim. Follow the fence

line and blazes along the ridge top to another climb leading to a rounded knob. The large flat rock at the end of the knob is a great place to have a snack and enjoy the lake view.

The trail goes straight down until you get to a double blaze where the trail turns right. Follow the trail along a rare level section that shadows the shoreline just above the lake. When you get to a double blaze and just past it another double blaze, you are at the end loop. There is also a mysterious red plastic flower on the tree. Take the right fork that steeply climbs to the top of another ridge.

When the trail flattens out, there is an arrow on the tree that shows you where to turn right. The trail climbs again to another ridge and more views of the lake. As you start down, there is a rock wall on your left. Just when you think the hike is getting easy, the trail climbs to another knob.

When you get back down from the knob, there is a canebrake on your right. This type of cane is a bamboo native to the United States and an important habitat for birds.

Another ridge climb is in your future. While you are trying to figure out if you have been on this ridge before, you will spot lots of yucca at the top. Each narrow ridge has unique features. Of course you will have to climb back down to the lake level to get to the end of the loop.

The rest of the hike is a repeat of the first part of the trail. When you get



Vines grow on a tree along the trail at Edgar Evins State Park. *Below:* Toothwort is one of the white blooms you might see in a spring hike along the trail at Edgar Evins.

back down to the wildflower valley, you can go 1.5 miles to complete the first loop or take the mile hike back to the trailhead. It will be hard to convince your feet and knees that you have only hiked eight miles.

Directions

Take Highway 40 to exit 268/State Highway 96. Drive south about four miles until the road stops at Highway 141. Drive straight across the intersection to the park entrance. Trail maps are at the visitor center. As you leave the visitor center, turn right and continue down the main park road. Parking for the trailhead is on the left about three-tenths of a mile past the maintenance shop.

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(Fran Wallas is an avid hiker. She works as an attorney with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation in Nashville. You can read about her other Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks on the Web site www.tn.gov/environment/greathikes.)



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