



Big Bone Lick State Historical Site

Location: southwest Boone County KY: 3380 Beaver Rd, Union 41091. Park phone: 859-384-3522

Website: <http://parks.ky.gov/parks/historicsites/big-bone-lick/default.aspx>

Driving Directions: Park is on KY-338. KY-338 is 1st exit off I-75 / 71 north of I-71 / I-75 split near Walton. Follow 338 west, changing roads to follow the 338 signs, the last at a blinking light where US-42 & KY-338 split. KY-338 descends a long hill into a valley. Park entrance is on left.

Hiking Trail Miles: Over 4 miles unpaved through woods, also a short paved interpretive trail not in woods. Bison Spur is about 0.7 miles with yellow blazes. Cedar Run is 0.9 miles with white blazes. Coralberry Trail is 1.9 miles with red blazes. Gobblers Trace is 0.5 miles with no blazes.

Trail Features: Mostly wooded trails with climbs & descends, some up to 150' each, occasionally slippery or tricky in wintery or wet weather. Restroom access uncertain November to April. Coralberry Trail loops around Big Bone Lake which is partially visible at times through the woods, fully visible where trail crosses an earthen dam. Cedar Run and Bison Spur were created by Sierra Club's NKY Group in early 2000s. Coralberry and Cedar each cross wooden footbridges over creeks. A section of Bison Spur parallels the fenced pasture where the herd is often visible.

Dogs: Allowed if leashed.

Park History: The park's history is one of the most unique in this guide. The landscape is one of its most interesting features. Park sits atop warm salt springs that have bubbled up since the Pleistocene and can still be seen today. Large Pleistocene mammals such as woolly mastodon were attracted by the salt springs. Some became trapped in marshy soil and their bones became the fossils for which Big Bone is named. The site was the first major New World fossil site known to Europeans, and it is among the first scientifically significant fossil locations in the world. George-Louis Buffon, one of the finest 18th century European naturalists, studied fossils from the

site. Jefferson ordered Lewis and Clarke on a collecting expedition to Big Bone. Many fossils found by Lewis and Clarke are in museums around the world, including the French National Museum of Natural History in Paris and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Some are held by Cincinnati's Museum Center. Some fossils can be seen in Big Bone's own museum.

The salt springs also influenced more recent history. Native Americans hunted the animals that continued to be attracted to the area for its minerals. White pioneers collected salt by boiling the water. The area became a trading center due to this important preservative.

Other Activities: Fishing, camping, picnicking, miniature golf, tennis and wading in the campground's pool are other popular recreational activities.

