

Honey Bee Stables, Shawnee National Forest, Illinois

BY KATHY A. WALSH

I'd like to share a wonderful experience my husband and I had this fall. We've been horse owners for more than half our lives and used to live outside of Chicago. Everyone talked and dreamed about riding in the Shawnee National Forest, or "the Shawnee" in southern Illinois. But without a trailer, it was a tough go.

Fifteen years ago, we moved to Michigan and became content with nearby trails and camps. But still, the lure of the Shawnee remained. Our kids grew up, and we were finally empty-nesters. We set our sights on trailering to the Shawnee for a riding vacation. But, as luck would have it, my horse became lame and needed 6 to 12 months of layup.

So instead, we decided to drive to Kentucky to visit family. My husband suggested we find a rental stable in the Shawnee area to ride for a day. We did much better: We found Honey Bee Stables in

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Illinois' Shawnee National Forest features unique rock formations. Walsh and her husband rode out from Honey Bee Stables, run by Wendy Daugherty. Honey Bee offers guided rides for a half-day, a full day, or several days.



Honey Bee Stables, Illinois

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Golconda, Illinois, run by Wendy Daugherty. Wendy offers guided rides for a half-day, a full day, or several days.

We chose to book two days. Wendy's horses are calm and easy to ride. (Prior riding experience is preferred, but not required.) We opted for the all-day rides, which include a great packed-in lunch. As a bonus, Wendy spoiled us with handmade chocolates for dessert!

The first day, we rode off from the stable into beautiful forest, crossing creeks and lunching at a waterfall in a small canyon. The colors were just changing, and it was fantastic.

The second day, we trailed out to Lusk Creek and rode to an area called Indian Kitchen, which has unique rock formations. While we ran into several large groups, everyone was very nice and the horses were well-mannered. Some trails



are narrow, but there are places to pass. The woods are deep and quiet, making this a must-ride area.

We missed our horses, but couldn't

have asked for nicer mounts. And having a guide was a plus, as many of the trails are poorly marked. (This problem is being rectified.) Wendy was also a willing photographer, so my husband and I have vacation photos with both of us in them! Wendy also shared the history of the area, which we enjoyed.

This is a great way to see the Shawnee, and check out the trails and camps before taking your own horse. Although, with the high price of gas, we might just pay Wendy another visit. **TTR**

Above: "The colors were just changing, and it was fantastic," writes Kathy A. Walsh of her recent ride. "The woods are deep and quiet, making this a must-ride area." Left: Walsh and her husband aboard Honey Bee Stables' calm mounts.

For more information on the Honey Bee Stables, call (618) 949-3791, or visit www.honeybee-stables.com. For more on the Shawnee National Forest, visit www.fs.fed.us/r9/Shawnee or www.shawneeheartland.com/snfh.html. Also, see "The Trails of Shawnee," *Destinations*, July/August '07.