Access / Parking: The Heritage Quarries Recreation Area (HQRA) is just half a mile east of downtown Lemont. The HQRA entrance is located at the end of Pruxne Street, which can be accessed from Talcott Avenue or Main Street. A large parking area is situated at the main entrance to the HQRA, on the south side of the Illinois & Michigan (I&M) Canal. Four smaller parking areas are distributed throughout the park; these parking areas can be accessed from the north side of the canal. There is no cost for parking.

Recreation: The HQRA offers visitors the opportunity to engage in a variety of recreational activities. The I&M Canal Trail provides 6 miles of crushed stone surface for runners, hikers, bikers, and dog walkers. For those who wish to exercise or train in the HQRA, signs along the I&M Trail mark courses of 2 miles, 5k, and 5 miles, respectively. These looped courses begin and end at the trailhead located in downtown Lemont. Free parking is available adjacent to the trailhead.

Fishing is allowed in all quarries and a boat ramp provides access to the Great Lakes Quarries for boats, canoes, and kayaks. Two picnic areas offer shady spots to relax.

Nature: In addition to the canal and quarries, the HQRA has two other notable water-related features. On the east side of the park lies a small waterfall. Depending on the time of year, water may be trickling calmly or crashing down to the canal. Just west of Icebox Quarry is a limestone fen; a fen is a rare type of wetland that supports a diverse plant and animal community.

The open waters of the quarries attract water birds like grebes, coots, and ducks during their fall and spring migrations. In winter, bald eagles have been spotted and summer always brings herons and swallows to the HQRA.

Rules & Regulations

Open Dawn to Dusk
Parking in Designated Areas Only
Dogs Allowed (must be leashed)
No Swimming
No Hunting
No Alcohol
No Open Fires
Boats Allowed (paddle, oar, and electronic trolling motors only)
Lemont, Illinois: Your Home Base for Outdoor Recreation

The Heritage Quarries Recreation Area sits among thousands of acres of forest preserves with over 65 miles of hiking and biking trails. For more information on nearby attractions, including the Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center and Isle a la Cache Museum, visit the following websites:

Cook County Forest Preserve District - fpdcc.com
(Wifi for a map of all nearby facilities, click on the Preserves and Trails maps for Regions Six and Seven)

Will County Forest Preserve District - reconnectwithnature.org
(Wifi view the listings for Keeps Pure Preserve, Veterans Woods, and Isle a la Cache)

DuPage County Forest Preserve District - dupageforest.com/Conservation.ForestPreserves/Waterfall_Glen

With a charming downtown and great restaurants throughout the community, Lemont makes the perfect home base for a day or a weekend of outdoor fun in the southwest suburbs. For more information on local shopping, dining, and other amenities, visit ilivelemont.com.

The I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

Lemont owes its existence to the Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal. Begun in 1836 and finished in 1848, the I&M Canal represented a revolution in the transportation of goods and people and set Chicago on its path to become a great American city.

Digging the I&M Canal was arduous work and construction was particularly difficult in Lemont because Dolomite limestone was found just below the topsoil. This discovery led to the development of quarries. Some notable buildings constructed of Lemont limestone include the Chicago Water Tower and Holy Name Cathedral. The quarrying industry declined near the turn of the century; the former quarries are now freshwater lakes that, along with the I&M Canal, are the key features of the Heritage Quarries Recreation Area.

In August, 1984, the U.S. government officially recognized the historical significance of the I&M Canal by making it the country's first National Heritage Corridor, a place where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. For more information on the I&M Canal, visit iandmcanal.org or heritagecorridorcvb.com.