

Loop 11– Caddo Canyons Loop



Red Rock Canyon Adventure Park (11-1): 405.542.6344;

www.travelok.com/listings/view.profile/id.6275;

Directions: Take Exit # 101 off of I-40, then 5 miles south on Hwy 281.

What to Expect: The dominant landscape in this Loop are the canyon systems, cut by water through dry, rolling plains. These narrow, vertical-walled canyons provide protection from the sun and hot winds. Small flowing streams wind through densely wooded bottomlands that show marked affinities to eastern deciduous forests. In fact, these canyons contain some of the most diverse forest of the Great Plains. Eastern tree species such as sugar maples, box elder, Ohio buckeye, and black walnut can be observed in the canyons. The canyons also support ferns, mosses and flowering wildflowers associated with eastern forests. The bird life in these canyons resembles that of the Ozark Mountains including the **Eastern wood-pewee, wood thrush, white-eyed vireo, and Louisiana waterthrush**. In sharp contrast, the dry eroded slopes and bluffs above the canyons support scrub oak and Eastern redcedar. Here you will observe **rock wrens, 3 oriole species, roadrunners** as well as **skinks and collared lizards**, basking on the rock ledges. Reservoirs in this Loop support abundant wintering **waterfowl, herons and egrets** in summer and **osprey** during fall migration.

Lodging: Clinton: (9) motels, www.clintonok.org 580.323.2222; **Cordell:** 41 Motel Cordell, www.fortyonemotel.com 580.832.3377; **Weatherford:** (5) motels, <http://cityofweatherford.com>, 800.725.7744. **Camping:** Crowder Lake University Park – www.swosu.edu/crowderlake; Cordell Reservoir and Public Use Area – Entrance key required, Cordell City Hall, 101 E. Main St., 580.832.3825, M-F – 8 am – 5 pm; Ft. Cobb State Park – www.travelok.com/listings/view.profile/id.2822, 405.643.2249; Red Rock Canyon State Park (see contact info above).

One-Day Outings: Fill up your gas tank and pack a picnic lunch (grocery stores in Clinton, Cordell, Hinton and Weatherford) or eat at one of the many cafes and restaurants in the above listed towns.

State Parks: A day could easily be spent at each of these parks: **Crowder Lake University Park (11-3)**, **Ft. Cobb State Park (11-2)** or **Red Rock Canyon Adventure Park (11-1)**. At **Crowder Lake (11-3)** be sure to walk the 1 mile hard surface interpretive trail. For boating and fishing spend the day at **Ft. Cobb State Park (11-2)** where personal watercraft can be rented. Be sure to check out the Nature Center. **Red Rock Canyon Adventure Park (11-1)** is an oasis created by narrow red walls and flowing creeks. Be sure to take the time to walk the two nature trails.

Cordell Reservoir Wildlife Conservation and Public Use Area (11-4) offers fishing, picnicking and the opportunity to leisurely walk the 20-acre woodlands, creeks, bottomlands and prairie. Entrance key is required. Contact information under **Lodging**.

Prairie Canyon (11-6): For your own private excursion into a Caddo canyon, schedule a private tour at **Prairie Canyon**. A guided tour on this private property located near Hinton, includes a combination of driving through upland prairie and scrub brush and walking down into deep canyons that shelter large trees such as Caddo maples, oaks, walnuts, and hackberries. A walk within the canyon alongside a stream provides the opportunity to observe evidence of many wildlife species such as bobcat, beaver, turkey and deer. This site provides birders the opportunity to look for both typical eastern songbirds such as red-eyed vireos and Baltimore orioles as well as western songbirds such as great-crested flycatchers and rock wrens within the canyon and grasshopper sparrows in the prairie. Guided tours are available all year. For more information call 580.772.4192.

Birding Route: A good opportunity to observe both eastern and western bird species can be found on this Loop. Early morning first stop should be at **American Horse Lake (11-5)**. Drive the scenic route west from the Lake toward Thomas and take Hwy 54 south to Weatherford for a break. Next stop, should be at **Crowder Lake University Park (11-3)**. Next, stop at **Ft. Cobb State Park (11-2)** and then on to **Red Rock Canyon Adventure Park (11-1)**. This route is about 130 miles. Also recommended is to drive east of **Red Rock Canyon Adventure Park (11-1)** on Hwy 37 through the majestic hills and canyons to Hwy 152 and head west. Keep your eyes open for the bison herd as you circle back toward the Park.

Evening Walk: After dinner consider walking the trail at **Hinton Recreational Trail and Nature Park (11-7)** located on the north end of Hinton, entrance is on the west side of Hwy 8, 0.2 mile north of Sky View Drive. The $\frac{3}{4}$ mile concrete walking trail winds its way around a small lake and habitat perfect for evening bird and wildlife watching. Trail is well lighted and picnic tables with benches are scattered around the trail. This nature park creates a “slice of nature” within a city.