Picnicking

Picnic tables are situated throughout the day-use areas and main complex for your relaxation and enjoyment. Three shelters in the park's main complex near Sheffield provide areas for group gatherings — the largest one can be reserved, so call ahead. Playground equipment will keep kids busy while the grownups have a chance to relax. Drinking water is available at Locks 21 and 22, as well as the Visitor Center. Toilets are located at Locks 11, 17, 21, 22, 23, and 24, Bridges 14, 15, and 23, as well as the Visitor Center.

Hiking

An old towpath, originally intended but never used by animals to tow boats along the canal's main line and feeder routes, provides 155 miles of on-foot hiking on the other 6. Because you're right next to the canal, you'll get a great view of its locks and aqueducts, not to mention the animal life. The going is level and easy at the Hennepin.

If you're up to something more challenging, try the Smile Trail in the main complex which is relatively difficult and gives you a broad view of the landscape from tall timber to grasslands to marsh. Hiking here is particularly satisfying in the fall when nature works its wonders on the leaves.

Bicycling

Mountain bikes are recommended on the majority of the towpath, as most of it is grass. There is a 17-mile agricultural lime trail along the feeder from Rock Falls to Bridge 56, which is an easy ride for any type of bicycle.

Fishing

It's a well-kept secret, but fishing along the Hennepin is well worth the trip. Whether you're angling for bluegill, crappie, wALLEyE or bass, 70 bridge or lock locations are available and the pools are stocked regularly.

Boating

There's unlimited horsepower for boats between Bridge 37 and Lock 24 at the Hennepin, otherwise it's 10 horsepower. Take off on the launching ramp at the Visitor Center complex, Locks 21, 22, and 24, Route 83 north of Geneseo, Route 90, Route 78 north of Annawan, bridge 36, bridge 28, and bridge 45.

Canoeing

If canoeing is your sport, come today for a workout. The water is 4 feet, calm, and serene; power is required. Many locks are no longer operational and must be portaged from Lock 21 east is particularly tough. For a great 2-night trip, begin at Rock Falls and continue to the Visitor Center.

Horseback Riding

Bring your own horse — there aren't any stables in the area. Gallop to your heart's delight along the towpath. Please stay out of the public areas and off the tow path between bridges 43 to 56 and Lock 30 to 32 in Milan.

Hunting

Take a shot at some hunting during season at the park's main complex. Or enjoy waterfowl hunting on Lake Simek near the Rock River. More than 40 bird sites are awarded in an annual draw.

Winter Sports

When the snowfall is low, drive out the path in a snowmobile. It's a 4.5-mile out and back trail at the main complex or venture out onto the canal, but keep an eye out for the snowmobilers. Hey, snowmobilers — the Hennepin boasts the longest snowmobile trail in the state — 76 miles on the towpath. You can use the ice at your own risk, but pay heed to the locks, bridges and culverts where the ice is likely thinner than the rest of the canal.

If grace under your power is more your style, bring your blades. There's skiing along the entire canal.

SPECIAL NOTE: No motorized vehicles, except for snowmobiles during designated times, are allowed on the towpath.

For The Disabled

The Visitor Center is accessible to the disabled, as is the largest picnic shelter at the park.