



RICK TOWNLEY/DN
A COFFEE HOUSE WORKER prepares a cup of joe. The Coffee House, located at 1324 P Street, is "Lincoln's only New York style coffee house," said an employee of the Coffee House.

Parks offers getaway before school begins

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and take a half-hour trip to Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, which is teeming with outdoor opportunities.

The park's season runs roughly from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend.

Park spokeswoman Alice Veskerna said the park's craft center is open year-round on Saturdays, as is the mini-golf course - weather permitting.

"We even have people come to play mini-golf in January," she said.

The park's other year-round activities include horseback riding, fishing and hiking.

Mahoney also has cabins and lodging that are available for rental throughout the year.

Of course, state parks aren't the only option for outdoor entertainment.

Downtown Lincoln is more than an eclectic ensemble of bars, shops and Greek restaurants. Nestled away among the hubs of commerce are several beautiful parks and gardens available to all to help escape the concrete and racket of the business district.

The Sunken Gardens, located at 27th and C streets, is a former neighborhood dump site that was converted to a botanical garden during the Great Depression.

The park is most often reserved for wedding ceremonies, said Julie

Watson, a spokeswoman for the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department, and she added that on average, about 50 ceremonies are performed there per year.

The garden is the largest flower display in the city and blooms more than 50,000 flowering plants. The Folsom Children's Zoo, near the Sunken Gardens at 1222 S. 27th St., is another option for outdoor fun in the late summer.

With animals ranging from llamas to lemurs to dwarf crocodiles, the zoo offers the chance to see foreign wildlife close to home.

Todd Logan, marketing and events coordinator for the zoo, said many are dissuaded from visiting because of its name.

"I think college students would really enjoy what we have here, but they just don't come because they think it's only for children," Logan said. "It's really not that way."

The zoo began in the 1960s as a children's zoo with a focus on farm animals, but since then the zoo has continued to expand its scope and now includes larger, more exotic animals such as baboons and leopards.

Most of the zoo's activities are oriented toward families, Logan said, but he thought focusing more attention to college-aged people would be a success.

Lincoln is also a hot spot for bike

riding and has about 70 total trail miles throughout the city.

Rich Rodenburg, owner of Bike Pedalers, 33rd and B streets, said he has seen trail popularity grow in recent years with college students.

"Biking is a good recreational pastime," Rodenburg said. "When you're not in the bars, what else is there to do but get on a bike and go ride?"

Students find it much easier to ride a bike to campus than drive a car, Rodenburg said. The network of trails throughout the city makes it possible for students to get to campus on a bike much faster, he added.

The Billy Wolff and Rock Island Trails join together at 30th and A streets then continue north to 16th and R streets, ending up near City Campus.

The Murdock Trail, which begins at 17th and Holdrege streets, is convenient for those who need to bike to East Campus.

Rosenburg said the MoPac Trail, one of the longest trails in Lincoln, will soon extend all the way to City Campus.

"Biking is great transportation," Rosenburg said. "That makes it ideal for students."

Although none of these activities are that unusual, they are fun, cheap and close to campus, which makes any of them ideal for one last dose of summer fun.

Parents

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