

Everybody's Treehouse: The First Universally Accessible Treehouse in Ohio

by Dave Gamstetter, Natural Resource Manager, Cincinnati Park Board, Cincinnati, Ohio

Photos Courtesy of Cincinnati Park Board



The only such public treehouse in the Tri-State (Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana), this universally accessible treehouse has a series of ramps that provides access to all, including children with special needs who are confronted with barriers to fun and play in their daily lives. Built in Cincinnati, Ohio's lush Mt. Airy Forest with volunteer labor and donations, the treehouse is a testament to community spirit.

(left) The Cincinnati Park Board provides environmental education programs for children with special needs.



"The Treehouse project will open up a world of adventure and fun to Cincinnati youth who never thought they would be able to play in a treehouse," Cincinnati Mayor Mallory has said.



The treehouse has a series of ramps that allow people with special needs to experience the forest environment.



Inside the treehouse

Mt. Airy Forest, with 1,470 acres, is the largest park in the Cincinnati Parks system. Located 10 minutes from downtown Cincinnati, Mt. Airy Forest has 900 acres reforested in hardwoods and evergreens, 269 acres in native woodland, and 170 acres of open meadow. Its 120-acre arboretum has more than 5,000 plants representing 1,600 species and varieties of deciduous trees, evergreens, and shrubs. The park also offers 14 miles of hiking trails, 16 miles of bridle trails, 23 picnic areas, and playgrounds including a handicapped-accessible playground. For more information: www.cincinnati-oh.gov/parks. 🌿

Treehouse Facts

Total Square Footage:
(including ramp and landings)1,500 square feet

Height of Treehouse: 14 feet

Width of Ramp: 6 feet

Wood Used to Build Treehouse:
Black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), black maple (*Acer nigrum*), ipê (*Tabebuia* spp.), and cedar shakes

Trees Connected to Structure: 12 trees

Expected Life of Treehouse: 50+ years

Estimated Volunteer Hours to Build: 4,000 hours

Project cost: \$500,000

Designers: *Forever Young Treehouses* (Burlington, Vermont)

Forever Young Treehouses are not only ADA compliant, but also safe, unique in character and craftsmanship, and use building methods that protect the health of the trees. Refer to their Web site, for additional pictures of the Mt. Airy project: www.treehouses.org/projects/mountairy.shtml



The structure is supported by white oak, red oak, sugar maple, and black walnut trees and black locust support posts. The brackets that attach the treehouse to the living trees are specially designed to allow movement and growth of the trees. The bolt that is drilled into the tree is made of titanium.