



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Wabash Trace Nature Trail

Iowa



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A Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Hall of Fame rail-trail, the Wabash Trace Nature Trail earns its title—providing an amazing trip



A Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Hall of Fame rail-trail, the Wabash Trace Nature Trail earns its title—providing an amazing trip through the rural forests and countryside of southwest Iowa. The trail takes you on a 63-mile journey from Council Bluffs (just outside of Omaha, Nebraska) all the way to the Iowa–Missouri border in Blanchard, Iowa—which boasts a population of fewer than 50 residents—passing through certified trail towns along the way, some that are burgeoning with shops and destinations and others that are quaint and rustic.

The trail’s roots go back to the Wabash Railroad—and the famous Wabash Cannonball, a passenger train that connected St. Louis and Detroit—which was one of the most important connections between the farmlands, factories, and people of the American heartland and

points east in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, the Wabash Trace Nature Trail is known for its peacefulness, amazing vistas, secluded wooded sections, and encounters with wildlife. The trail also has become a social hot spot for people in the Council Bluffs and Mineola areas who enjoy Thursday night “Taco Rides,” bike rides organized in the spirit of supper and good times. In Shenandoah, the annual Wabash Trace Nature Trail Marathon, Half Marathon, and Marathon Relay take place each September.

Starting in Council Bluffs, the trail begins at Iowa West Foundation Trailhead Park, where it links with the 7.2-mile [Valley View Trail](#) heading northward and the 7.5-mile [Lake Manawa Trail](#) that heads west and curves around its namesake.

Be prepared for the most populated portion of the Wabash Trace Nature Trail and the most strenuous; there are approximately 6 miles of gentle climb leaving the town heading southeast. Following the trail, you’ll pass through an area known as the Loess Hills, named for the fine, wind-deposited soils that created the corrugated landscape. The Loess Hills are home to some of the best remaining native prairies and woodlands in the state and also provide crucial habitat to prairie wildlife such as red-tailed hawks.

The trail makes its way to downtown Silver City, where there are a handful of amenities, including a water fountain (one of few along the route, so a good opportunity to fill up), small stores, and a bike shop. Of note at Silver City Centennial Park—along the trail at 287th Street/Main Street and Second Street—is a time capsule that is set to be opened in 2029!

Approximately 22 miles into the route, the Malvern trailhead features water and parking, and the town offers a haven for trail users, with a pharmacy, cafés, and shops. The city square is an homage to trail users and cyclists, with interesting sculptures and murals decorating the downtown.



Wabash Trace Nature Trail

Iowa

States: Iowa

Counties: Fremont, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie

Length: 63 miles

Trail end points: Iowa West Foundation Trailhead Park at E. South Omaha Bridge Rd. (Council Bluffs) to N. Railroad St. just north of the Iowa–Missouri state line (Blanchard)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Concrete, Crushed Stone

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Fishing, Wheelchair

Parking & Trail Access

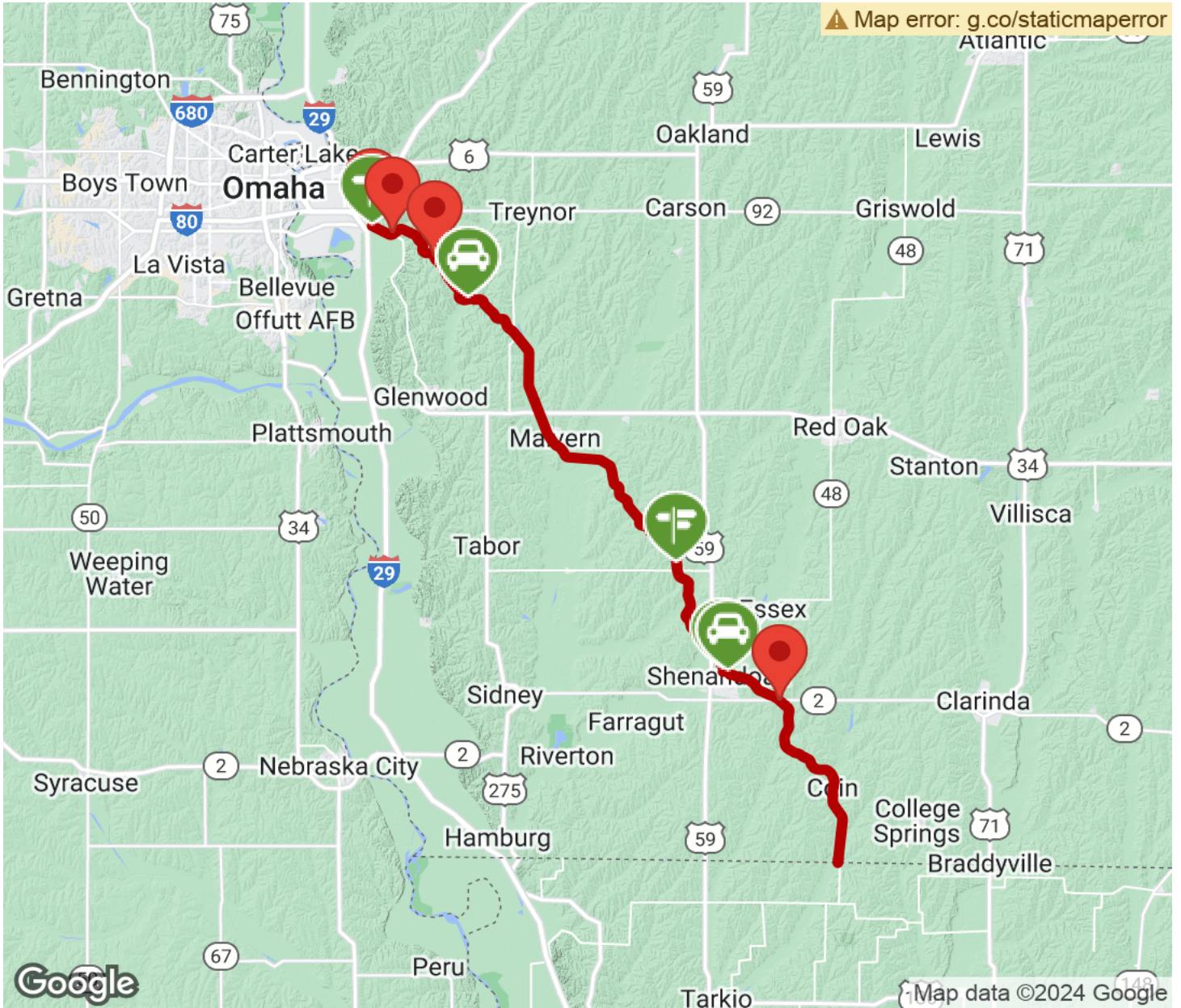
To reach Iowa West Foundation Trailhead Park in Council Bluffs from I-29, take Exit 47 for SR 92 E, and head east for 0.7 mile. Turn right onto Harry Langdon Blvd., and go 0.7 mile. Turn right onto E. South Omaha Bridge Road, and turn right into the park. Signage for the park and the Wabash Trace Nature Trail is well marked from the street.

The closest dedicated parking to the southern endpoint is located in Shenandoah near Four Mile Creek in Waubonsie Park. To reach the parking area from SR 2, head north on A Ave., go 0.7 mile, and continue on S. Center St. for 1.3 miles. Turn right onto Ferguson Road and look for the parking lot on your right in about a half block, by Waubonsie Park. The southern endpoint is located about 17.7 miles along the trail southeast at N. Railroad St. and the Iowa–Missouri state line.



Wabash Trace Nature Trail

Iowa



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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