



2024

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail

Illinois



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The Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail follows the eponymous waterway alongside the Illinois River. It traverses the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor, designated in 1984 and the first National Heritage Area in the U.S. The pathway runs along the old canal towpath from LaSalle to the historical quarry town of Lemont. Nearly every mile, you'll find educational markers, so you can learn about the history of the canal and the stories of those who built and traveled the waterway.

The trail surface varies, from well-maintained crushed limestone to grass, asphalt and gravel. In some sections, the path exists on both sides of the canal. Bicyclists should use thicker tires (hybrids or larger).

The route begins just south of the town of LaSalle at Huse

Lake. The trailhead is located at a historical canal lock. Enjoy a mule-powered ride in a replica canalboat or explore Lock 14 and the steel silhouettes that help tell the stories of Abraham Lincoln and his family, Wild Bill Hickok and other personalities associated with the canal.

From the trailhead, a short segment of trail heads west, while the vast majority of the trail unfurls to the east. You may find that the short jaunt to the west is worth exploring, though, as it offers a nice tree canopy and views. Begin the longer journey by traveling eastward from the trailhead (to the right, as you face the canal).

The towpath surface is primarily compacted gravel and can collect water after heavy showers. Even with some puddles, the trail is widely used on weekends, and many families and groups of riders can be found with smiling faces. The LaSalle County Historical Museum is located in North Utica just across the canal from the trail, and many riders stop for a visit there and at the local cafés.

A small section of trail shares a paved roadway and provides access to private homes as you continue from west to east, but shortly after this section be prepared for occasional muddy conditions and wash-outs around the water crossing.

As the trail approaches Ottawa, the surface improves and there is a short rail-with-trail section. You will find some options for food or cold beverages in Ottawa. The trail intersects with the short but paved [Ottawa Riverwalk](#)—a picturesque connection to the vibrant downtown business district. Then it crosses the historic Fox River Aqueduct, which was constructed to maintain grade on the canal, well above the river below. Leaving Ottawa, the path is mostly packed gravel, but depending on seasonal rains, it can get wet in spots.

The trail passes through Marseilles, a former industrial powerhouse on the Illinois River, which once housed one of



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States: Illinois

Counties: Grundy, La Salle, Will

Length: 79.5 miles

Trail end points: Huse Lake near Joliet St./IL 351 and A St. (LaSalle) to near Maley Road and Main St. (Lemont)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Crushed Stone, Grass, Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Fishing, Wheelchair Accessible, Mountain

Parking & Trail Access

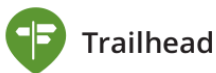
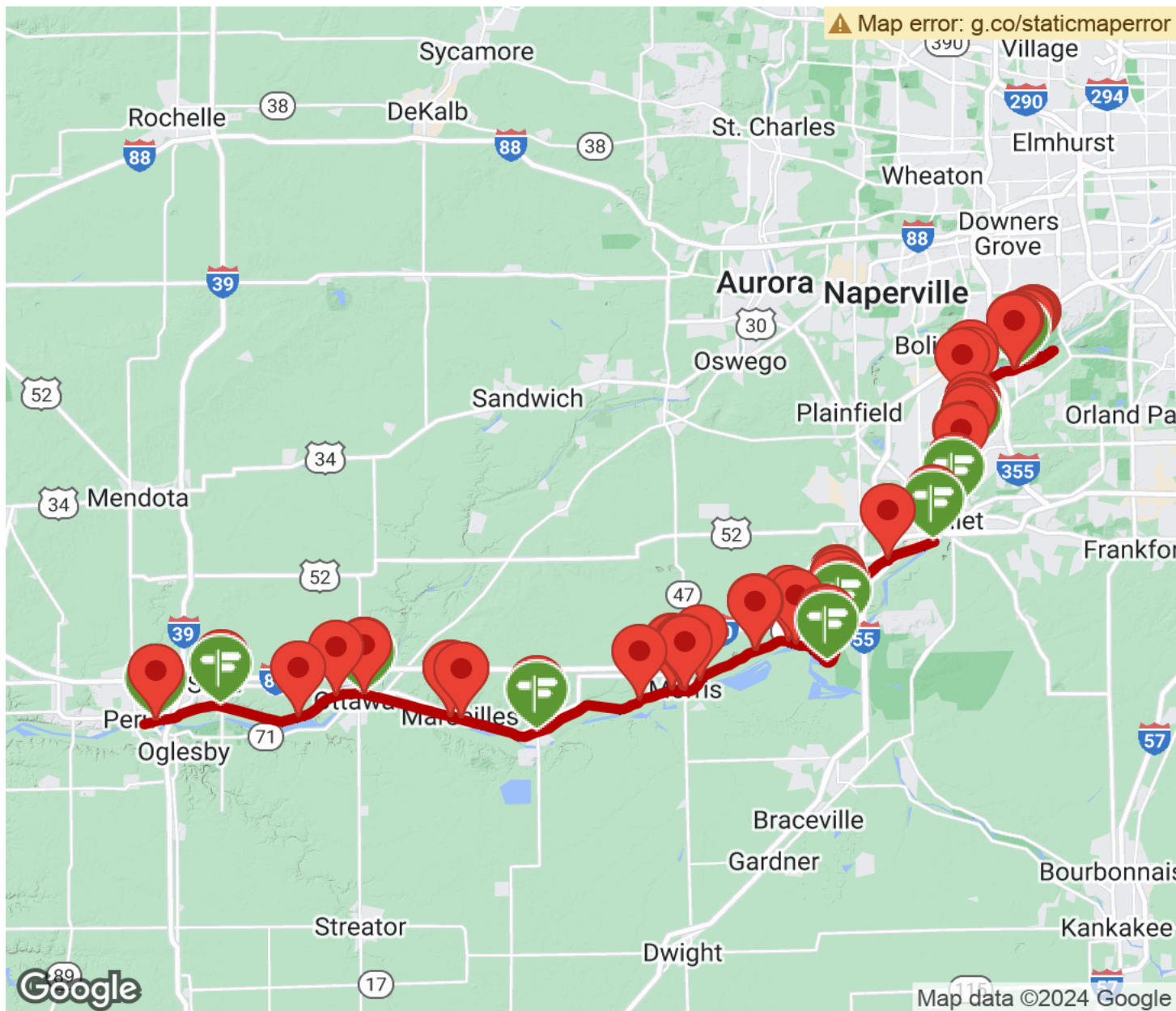
To reach the westernmost trailhead in LaSalle: From I-39/US 51, take Exit 57 for US 6 toward LaSalle-Peru. Head southwest on US 6 W. In 1.2 miles, turn left onto Joliet St. Continue over the bridge and take the first right, which will take you to the parking lot.

To reach the easternmost access point at the Heritage Quarries Recreation Area: From I-55, take Exit 271A to Lemont Road. Head south on Lemont Road, and in 2.9 miles, turn left onto E. Illinois St. In 0.6 mile make a sharp left onto Main St., then a right onto Talcott Ave. After crossing the railroad tracks, turn right. After you cross a second set of railroad tracks, the entrance to the recreation area will be on your right. Parking is available just beyond the entrance.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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