



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Down East
Sunrise Trail**
Maine



Down East Sunrise Trail

Maine

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The 87-mile Down East Sunrise Trail passes through the woods, marshlands, and coastal villages of southern Maine. It takes its name from its location in Down East Maine, dubbed by early mariners for being “downwind” from more western ports such as Boston. Also, it’s one of the first trails to experience sunrise in the United States. ATV riders are the most frequent trail users and maintain the crushed stone and gravel trail surface. It’s also a major off-road component on the East Coast Greenway, a future Calais, Maine-to-Key West, Florida, route for bicyclists, hikers, and equestrians.

The rail-trail follows a section of a 19th-century railroad that ran between Calais and Bangor, later becoming the Calais Branch of the Maine Central Railroad in 1911. The branch closed after Maine Central was sold in the 1980s,

and the Maine Department of Transportation acquired the railbed in 1987. The first section of trail opened in 2009, and crews completed the 2-mile-long final section in Ellsworth in 2016.

The trail begins on Ayers Junction Road near Pembroke, site of a future extension eastward to the [Sipayik Trail](#). Your first leg heads mostly southwest through forestland for 29 miles toward the coastal village of Machias, site of the first naval battle of the American Revolution. Along the way, you can visit the East Machias Aquatic Research Center at 13 Willow Street, where you’ll find native fish from local rivers and hatchery tanks filled with Atlantic salmon. Food and lodging are available in the village on the Machias River.

Leaving Machias, you’ll cross many bridges over coastal rivers as you head west. In 3.5 miles, you’ll cross the Machias River on a trestle, one of 28 bridges on the trail. The next 12 miles cross a remote landscape from Whitneyville to Columbia Falls, where you’ll find drive-ins and cafés. After Harrington, the trail runs alongside US 1 on the way into Cherryfield, which calls itself the Wild Blueberry Capital of the World. Sandy soil and fog contribute to bountiful blueberry crops.

Crossing the Narraguagus River on the way out of Cherryfield, you’ll begin another lonely section for 15 miles to the 150-acre Schoodic Bog at the foot of scenic Schoodic Mountain. You’ll find insect-eating plants and turtles here, as well as beavers. Nearby, North End Road leads to a public beach and camping at the Donnell Pond Public Reserved Land. Refreshments are available about 5 miles past Schoodic Bog in Franklin. Watch for deer and other wildlife on the final 12 miles to Ellsworth, where you’ll find restaurants and groceries. The rail yard for the Downeast Scenic Railroad excursion train is about 0.3 mile north of the trailhead. Plans call for a connection with the [Ellsworth Rail Trail](#) less than a mile north.



Down East Sunrise Trail

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States: Maine

Counties: Hancock, Washington

Length: 87miles

Trail end points: SR 214/Ayers Junction Road
0.5 mile south of Mt. Tom Road (Pembroke) to
US 1/ SR 3/High St. and Beals Ave. (Ellsworth)

Trail surfaces: Crushed Stone, Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: ATV, Horseback

Riding, Mountain

Biking, Snowmobiling, Walking, Cross Country

Parking & Trail Access

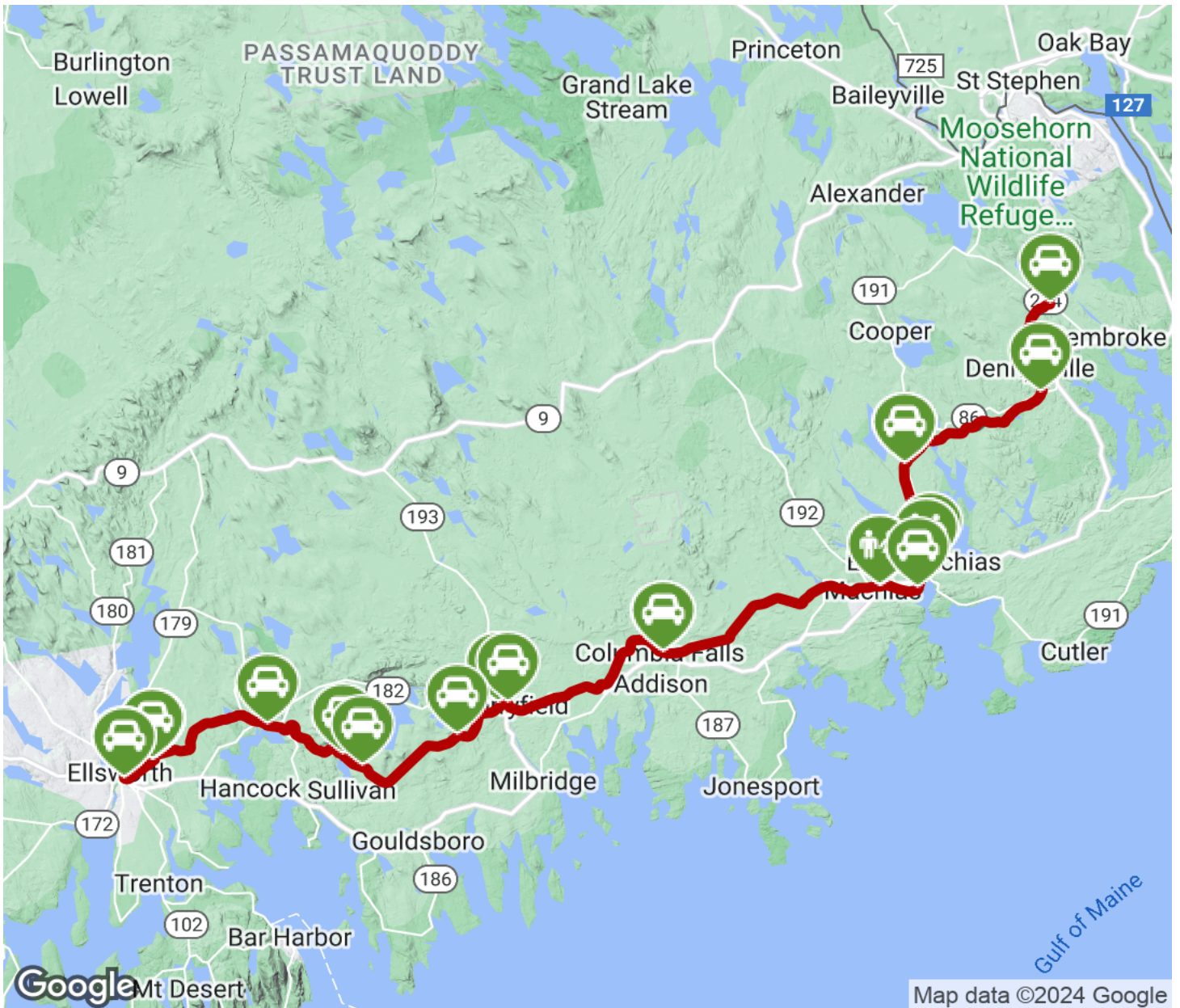
To reach the eastern trailhead from I-395 in Bangor, take Exit 6A onto US 1A E toward Bar Harbor. Go 5.4 miles east, then turn left onto SR 46. Go 4.9 miles, then turn right onto ME 9. Go 67.9 miles, and turn right onto Davis Road. Go 0.8 mile, and turn right onto Arm Road. After another 1.2 miles, turn right onto Cooper Road/N. Union Road, and go 5.8 miles. Turn left onto SR 191, go 4.7 miles, and stay straight onto ME 214/Conant Hill Road, which will become SR 214/Ayers Junction Road. Go 6.2 miles, and look for parking on the right.

To reach the western trailhead in Ellsworth from I-395 in Bangor, take Exit 6A onto US 1A E toward Bar Harbor. Go 23.1 miles, and stay straight onto US 1/SR 3. Go 0.4 mile, turn left onto Beals Ave., and look for trailhead parking on the right.



Down East Sunrise Trail

Maine



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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