



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Great Northern Historical Trail

Montana



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The Great Northern Historical Trail extends 22 miles between the lakeside town of Somers and the mountain valley community of Kila. The trail follows part of the route of the old Great Northern Railway, which was later bought by Burlington Northern. The railway's iconic logo of the mountain goat standing on a rock is symbolic of the Rocky Mountains through which the rail once operated. The original Great Northern Railway emerged from the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad and represented the northernmost transcontinental rail in the county. The line, completed in 1893, ran between Saint Paul, Minnesota, and Scenic, Washington.

You'll enjoy this paved, albeit remote, trail through Montana's Flathead Valley, offering unmatched views of the surrounding mountains, including the Swan, Mission,

Salish and Whitefish ranges. The inverted V-shaped trail begins in Somers, on the northern shore of stunning Flathead Lake—the country's largest natural freshwater lake west of the Continental Divide. Here you'll find a few cafes where you can feed up before your 22-mile journey (or 44 miles if you prefer a round trip!).

Heading north, you'll see the mountains of Glacier National Park in the distance (on a clear day) to the northeast. Through a landscape of cultivated fields, pasture and light industrial storehouses, you'll travel toward Kalispell, while paralleling US 93 for a few miles before going underneath it at the creek crossing and taking a more westerly tack.

The Great Northern Historical Trail keeps to the west of Kalispell, but if you want to head into downtown, turn east off the trail at Sunnyside Drive and take it to the bend north, where it turns into 5th Avenue W. Follow 5th Avenue to 11th Street and turn right (east), taking it 9 blocks to Main Street (US 93 Bus).

Back on the main trail, continue heading in a northwesterly direction. The trail again parallels the US 93 bypass then crosses another creek. The branch heading to the right goes a short distance farther to dead-end at a government building just north of US 2. The left branch goes under US 93 and continues to Kila.

The trail parallels US 2 through scattered homes sites and fields and past a small waterfowl reserve. You're already on the downward leg of the inverted V and nearing trail's end at Kila and Smith Lake, another waterfowl reserve. From here, enjoy the mountain scenery before heading back to Somers.



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States: Montana

Counties: Flathead

Length: 22miles

Trail end points: US 93 nr. Sunnyside Ave.
(Somers) to Kila Rd. at Smith Lake Rd. (Kila)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Wheelchair

Accessible, Horseback Riding, Mountain

Biking, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

There are plenty of places of hop on the trail on the western outskirts of Kalispell and along the trail's route. Parking is also available in several places. To park at the southeastern end in Somers, take US 93 south from Kalispell and park at the pullout along the lake across from Sunnyside Avenue. You can also park in the town of Somers off Somers Road (across the road from the Post Office).

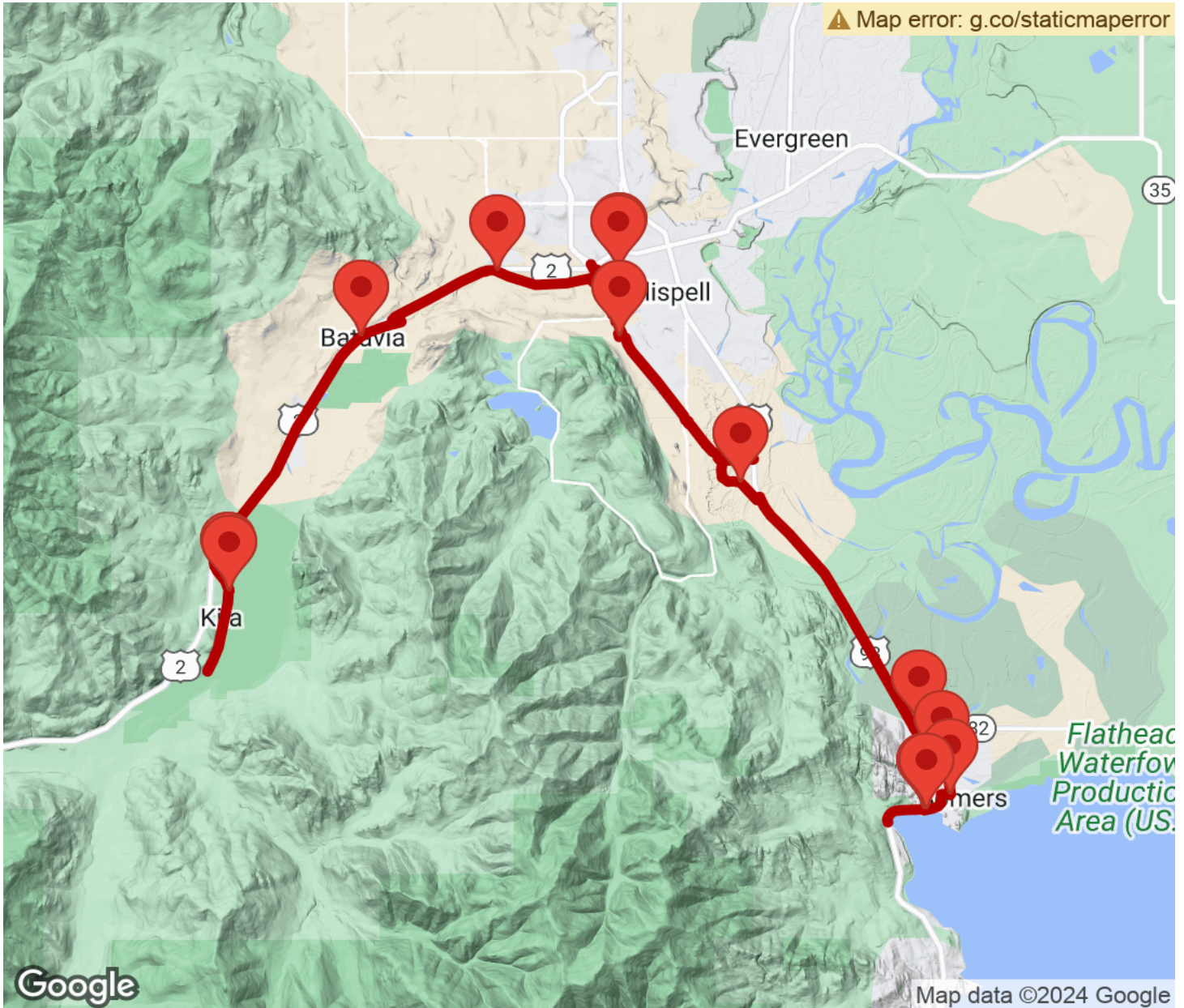
South of Kalispell, there's space for a few vehicles off Ashley Meadows Road, where the trail crosses the road. West of Kalispell, you can park off US 2 just east of where US 2 intersects Spring Creek Road.

In Kila at trail's end, park along Kila Road across from where it intersects Smith Lake Road or a little farther north on Kila Road at a small pull-out area.



Great Northern Historical Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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