



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Longleaf
Trace**
Mississippi



Longleaf Trace

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Stretching 44 miles northwest from Chain Park, which is nestled along the Leaf River in Hattiesburg, to small-town Prentiss, the Longleaf Trace traverses landscapes that range from the bustling heart of Mississippi's third largest city to the rural farmland that predominates in this area.

A designated National Recreation Trail, it runs atop a stretch of Mississippi Central Railroad line that saw much activity as the region's timber industry flourished between the late 1800s and 1920s. As the industry began to fade, so too did the need for the rail service, and although the railroad struggled into the 1970s, it eventually ceased to be economically viable. Fortunately, a concerted effort by local groups and individuals preserved the corridor, and in 2000 it opened as a trail.

Today, the route is again active, as cyclists, inline skaters and pedestrians ply the trail's smooth, well-maintained surface. Eight small covered rest areas along the route provide travelers with shade, restrooms and vending machines, while three small shelters offer places to wait out brief summer rain showers.

Begin at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg to have access to the trailhead's parking, restrooms, and drinking water. Visitors can also pick up a plant identification guide and a bike rental at the welcome center.

If you prefer, you could begin 1.9 miles farther east in historical downtown Hattiesburg, but just note that there are no amenities at that trail terminus. A 2018 extension of 0.85 mile from the Hattiesburg Train Depot to Chain Park in northeast Hattiesburg provides another option for a quick exploration into nature. The 37-acre park provides relaxing greenspace along the Leaf River and includes a playground and restrooms. An additional spur built in 2021 links the trail to the African American Military History Museum on 6th Street in Hattiesburg.

Leaving Hattiesburg behind as you head northwest, you'll progress through a range of quintessentially Southern landscapes, from piney woods and wetlands to small lakes and charming towns. In the first few miles, you'll also cross several bridges and traversing tunnels. In Epley, 15 miles northwest, the trail meets a dirt equestrian path that zigzags across the Trace some 25 miles to Carson.

Thirty-three miles out, just past Bassfield, is a stable, while 2 miles farther is a primitive camping site. The rolling hills that define this section may pose a challenge to less experienced cyclists. While the grades aren't particularly steep, factor them in if you're on a day trip or traveling with small children.

At trail's end in downtown Prentiss, an attractive trailhead provides restrooms, parking and vending machines. If you've



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States: Mississippi

Counties: Forrest, Jefferson Davis, Lamar

Length: 45.5 miles

Trail end points: Columbia Ave. and Front St. (Prentiss) to Chain Park (Hattiesburg)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Inline

Skating, Wheelchair Accessible, Horseback

Riding, Walking

Parking & Trail Access

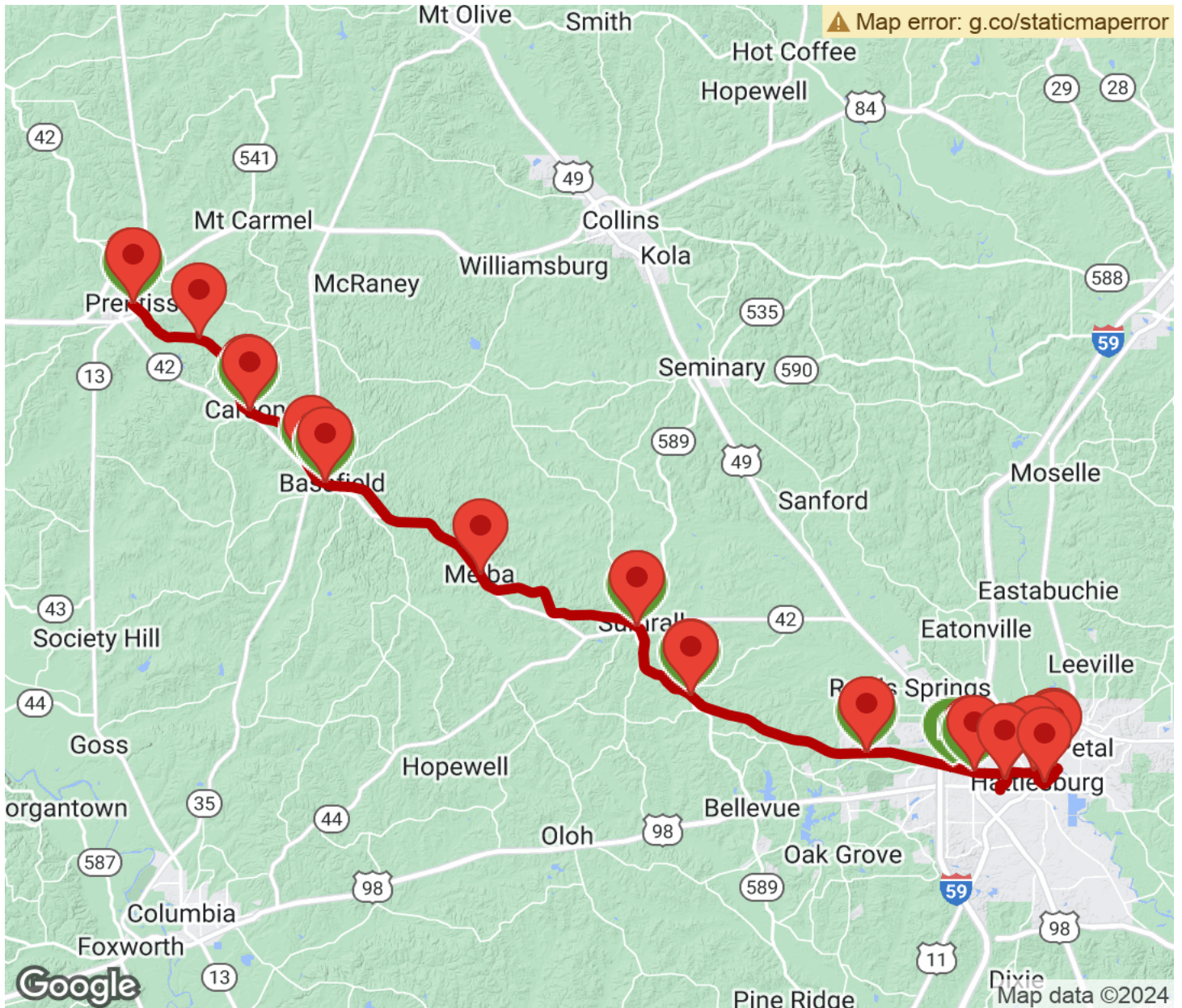
To reach the Hattiesburg gateway: Take I-59 to Exit 65/Hardy Street and head east. Following the brown trail signs, turn left on 38th Avenue then right at the next light on Fourth Street. Just past the Southern Miss football stadium, turn left into the trailhead parking lot.

To reach the Prentiss trailhead: From Hattiesburg, take US 49 about 27 miles northwest to Collins and turn west on US 84. Nearly 20 miles west in Prentiss, the Trace crosses the highway near its trailhead in a park. Just shy of this crossing, turn right on Front Street to access the trailhead.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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