



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



# Cheese Country Recreation Trail

*Wisconsin*



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If you're looking for an invigorating motorized-trail experience, the Cheese Country Recreation Trail (aka the Tri-County Trail) won't disappoint. If you're on foot, hoof, or self-propelled two wheels, however, the trail is a challenge. ATVs, trail bikers, and snowmobile riders primarily use the trail, leaving some areas in deep mud or dust while other sections are rutted or deeply graveled. Motorized traffic is heaviest on weekends. Be warned that some sections of the trail can even be difficult for bikes to navigate.

The 47-mile trail meanders through the heart of southwest Wisconsin's Driftless Area, noted for its rolling hills and rocky outcroppings left untouched by glaciers. It follows the corridor of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, which stopped using it in 1980. In

addition to the graded route between Monroe and Mineral Point, the railroad left behind dozens of bridges, including the 440-foot Browntown trestle, whose stone supports date to the 1880s, as it followed the Pecatonica River drainage.

Beginning in Monroe just a few blocks west of the [Badger State Trail](#), the Cheese Country Recreation Trail's southern terminus, you'll find yourself in a town that calls itself the "Swiss Cheese Capital of the USA." The trailhead is just 0.2 mile from the Badger State Trail and 0.7 mile from the National Historic Cheesemaking Center, both east on 21st Street.

Heading west from Monroe, you'll pass the lakes of the Cadiz Springs State Recreation Area and in 7.4 miles arrive in Browntown. Rolling within sight of SR 11, you'll notice the countryside is primarily cropland and dairy farms.

The trail veers away from the highway just past South Wayne, 4.9 miles from Browntown, and in 9.3 miles arrives in the old mining town of Gratiot, a good place for a break at the local restaurants and shops. From here, the trail continues northwest along stretches of farmland and wooded ridges for 10 miles to Darlington. You'll pass through the historic downtown on city streets, giving you an opportunity to explore or to stop for refreshments or supplies.

Another 5.8 miles on the trail brings you to Calamine. You'll pass a junction for the [Pecatonica State Trail](#), another ATV/snowmobile trail that rolls 10 miles west to Belmont. From Calamine, the Cheese Country Recreation Trail heads north 9.3 miles to the northern trailhead in Mineral Point at the old Railroad Depot Museum, built in 1856 and the oldest in the state. Mineral Point, a historic mining village, is rich with artists' studios and galleries, restored homes, restaurants, and bed-and-breakfasts.

NOTE: Cheese Country Recreation Trail stickers are required for motorcycles, mopeds, golf carts, and dirt bikes, as well as



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**States:** Wisconsin

**Counties:** Dodge, Green, Iowa, Lafayette

Length: 47miles

**Trail end points:** W 21st St & Fourth Ave W  
(Monroe) to Commerce St & Old Darlington Rd  
(Mineral Point)

**Trail surfaces:** Crushed Stone, Gravel

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** ATV, Horseback

Riding, Mountain

Biking, Snowmobiling, Walking, Cross Country

## Parking & Trail Access

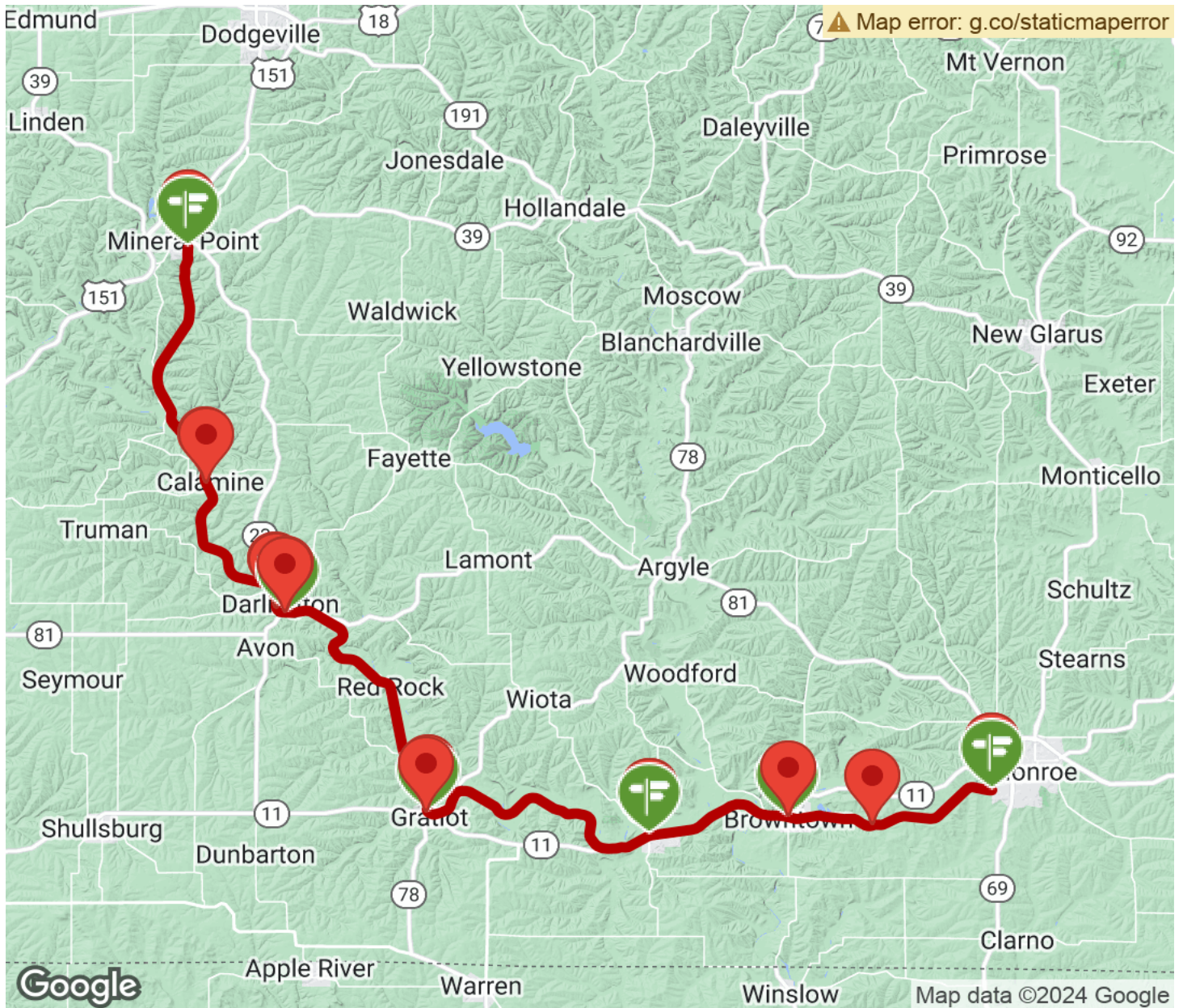
To reach the Monroe trailhead from I-39/I-90, take Exit 142A onto US 12/US 14/US 18/Beltline Hwy., heading west. In 8 miles, take Exit 258 and, in 0.7 mile, turn left (south) to continue on US 18. Go 9.6 miles on US 18, and take Exit 77 to WI 69 toward Monroe, heading south. Go 8.9 miles, and turn right onto WI 69/WI 92/W. Main St. in Belleville, heading west. In 3.6 miles, bear left at the Y to continue south on WI 69. In 19.3 miles, bear right (west) at the exit for SR 11 W./SR 81 W./WI 69 S. toward Dubuque. In 0.3 mile, bear right at the exit for WI 81 W./WI 69 S. toward Argyle and Freeport. In another 0.3 mile, turn right (north) onto WI 81 and, in 0.4 mile, make a U-turn south onto WI 81/WI 69/Seventh Ave. In 1.9 miles, turn right onto W. 21st St. in Monroe. The trailhead is 0.7 mile ahead on the right.

To reach the Mineral Point trailhead, follow the directions above through the second sentence. Follow US 18/US 151 west-southwest for 43.9 miles. Take Exit 40 onto SR 23 toward Mineral Point, go 1.5 miles, and turn left onto Commerce St. Go 0.8 mile, turn left onto Old Darlington Road, and turn left immediately into parking for the Mineral Point trailhead.



# Cheese Country Recreation Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



**TrailLink**  
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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