



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Old Railroad Bed Trail

Alabama



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Located in eastern Huntsville, the Old Railroad Bed Trail (also known as the Monte Sano Railroad Trail) boasts an intriguing history. In the late 1800s, as yellow fever raged in Atlanta, a hotel was built atop 1,600-foot Monte Sano (which means "mountain of health" in Italian). Guests were drawn to the resort by the area's fresh springs, cool climates, and valley views. The rail line was built to ferry passengers from Huntsville, replacing the previous four-hour horse-and-carriage ride.

A construction crew of 500 men took just four months to complete the line, which included 8.5 miles of rail, five trestles and four small bridges. Earning a mere dollar for each 12-hour shift, these workers later staged Huntsville's first labor strike, demanding—without success—a 10-hour day. The line opened in August 1888, but by October a

derailment, caused by brake failure, had frightened passengers away. Only freight cars plied the line until the trains stopped running in 1896.

Land Trust of North Alabama purchased the line and built the trail, and they continue to maintain it. As you stroll the narrow dirt and stone bed, you will pass cascading springs and the original stone bridge supports, built without mortar. Atop the peak, close your eyes and picture the Hotel Monte Sano, an elaborate, 223-room haven from turn-of-the-century health scares. After your hike, head to the Huntsville Depot Museum or the North Alabama Railroad Museum for more local railroad lore.

The Old Railroad Bed Trail is part of the Monte Sano Nature Preserve trail system. The Monte Sano Nature Preserve—at 1,107 acres—is one of the largest urban nature preserves in the U.S. This 25+ mile trail system, along with the trails on the Land Trust's Blevins Gap Nature Preserve, the Wade Mountain Nature Preserve, and the Harvest Square Recreational Preserve, were the first trail systems in Madison County to be honored as National Recreation Trails.



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com



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States: Alabama

Counties: Madison

Length: 2miles

Trail end points: Bankhead Parkway NE, near
Toll Gate Road SE to Monte Sano Preserve
entrance

Trail surfaces: Crushed Stone,Dirt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Walking

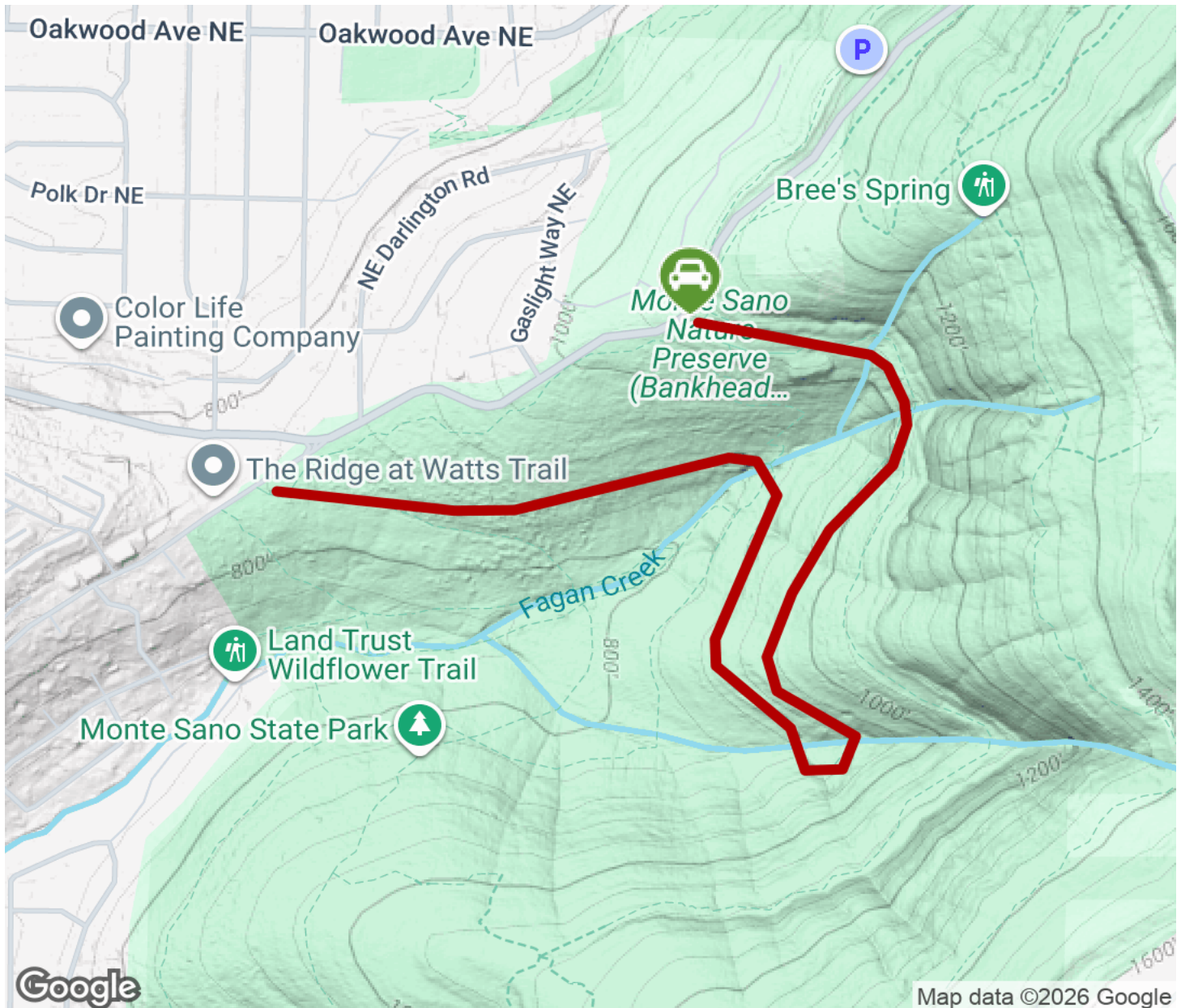
Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available in the Monte Sano Preserve (2442
Bankhead Pkwy. NE, Huntsville).



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Map data ©2026 Google



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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