



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Gainesville- Hawthorne State Park Trail

Florida



Gainesville-Hawthorne State Park Trail

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Connecting the university town of Gainesville with rural Hawthorne, the 17.1-mile Gainesville-Hawthorne State Park Trail



From its western endpoint in Gainesville's Boulware Springs Park, the trail soon leads to the Paynes Prairie overlook, and 2 miles from the trailhead the trail enters the preserve itself. This area boasted a thriving lake with routine steamboat activity until 1891, when a sinkhole drained the basin, leaving behind a mixed landscape of prairie, marsh, and open water.

Several trailside overlooks offer views of the prairie, home to bison, wild horses, and numerous alligators. Park regulations ban visitors from feeding the gators, and dogs are not permitted, even if leashed. Rangers strictly enforce these rules. A half-mile into the park, a side trip on the La Chua Trail leads to another viewing area; bicycles are not permitted on this unpaved spur.

Connections

The Gainesville-Hawthorne State Park Trail connects with the [Gainesville Rail-Trails](#) and the [6th St. Rail Trail](#).

Connecting the university town of Gainesville with rural Hawthorne, the 17.1-mile Gainesville-Hawthorne State Park Trail makes for a great day trip, complete with a hill or two and plenty of wildlife. While the path roughly parallels State Route 20, it also traverses one of Florida's most environmentally sensitive areas: Paynes Prairie State Preserve. Just south of Gainesville, the park—though not the trail—is accessible via US Highway 441.

The well-maintained trail accommodates users with a 10-foot-wide paved path, regular trailheads and benches, and even a convenience store here and there. Between the Gainesville and Lochloosa trailheads, equestrians are given free rein on an adjacent grassy trail.

About the Route



Gainesville-Hawthorne State Park Trail

Florida

States: Florida

Counties: Alachua

Length: 17.1miles

Trail end points: Depot Park, 874 SE 4th St.
(Gainesville) to 218th St. (Hawthorne)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Fishing, Horseback
Riding, Inline Skating, Walking, Wheelchair
Accessible

Parking & Trail Access

The Gainesville-Hawthorne State Park Trail runs between Depot Park, 874 SE 4th St. (Gainesville), and 218th St. (Hawthorne), where parking is available.

Parking is also available at:

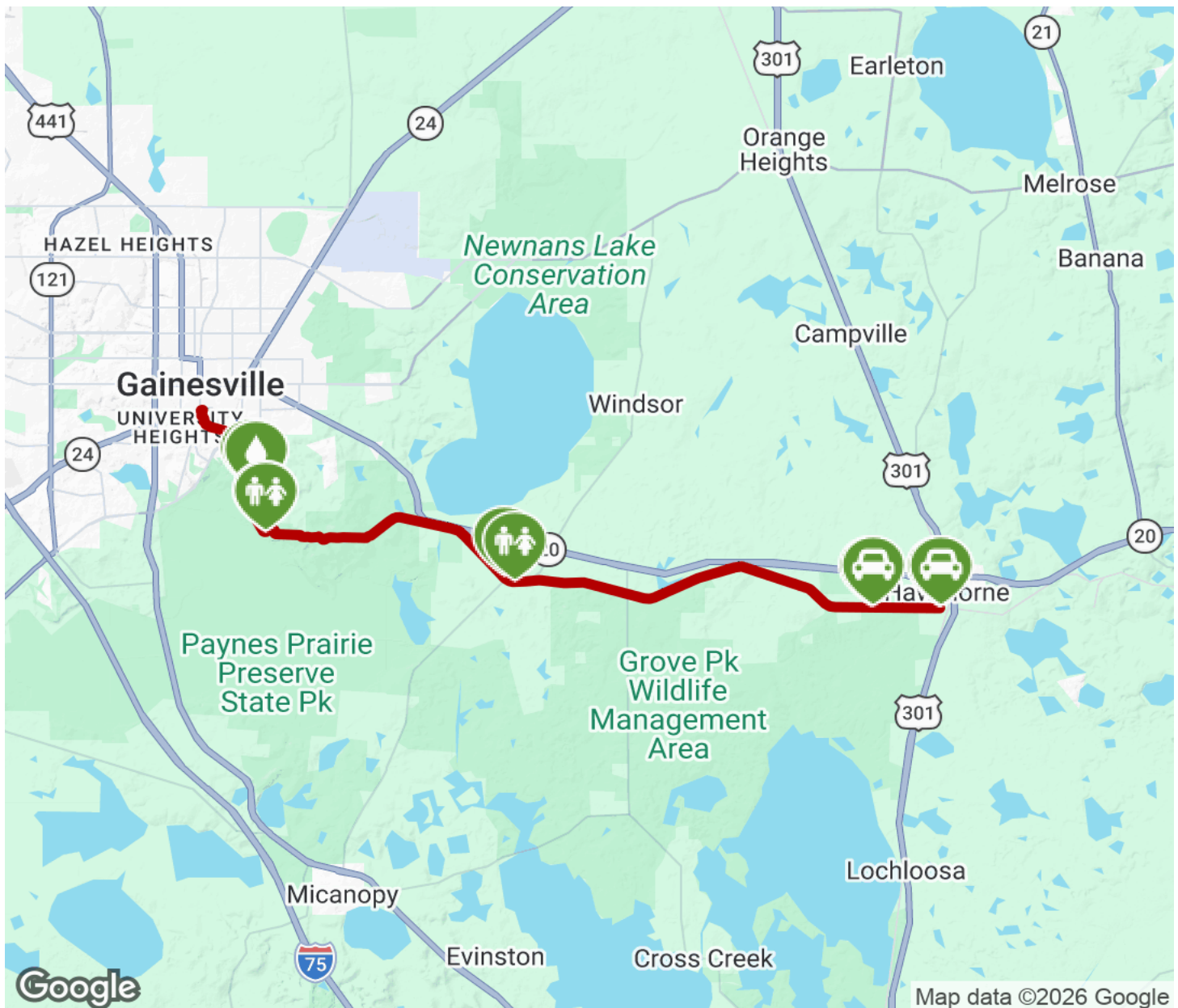
- Boulware Springs Park, 3300 SE 15th St. (Gainesville)
- 4270 SE 15th St. (Gainesville)

Please see [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



Gainesville-Hawthorne State Park Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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