



2026

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Chichaqua Valley Trail

Iowa



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The paved Chichaqua Valley Trail crosses nearly 30 miles of central Iowa farmland between the northeastern Des Moines



The paved Chichaqua Valley Trail crosses nearly 30 miles of central Iowa farmland between the northeastern Des Moines suburbs and the rural community of Baxter. The trail's name, pronounced chee-chak-wah, is derived from a Native American word. Pioneers mistook it to mean skunk, but actually it refers to the aroma of wild onions that grew along the Skunk River, which the trail spans.

About the Route

Although the trail is paved, the inconsistent surfaces at the eastern end of the trail make for rough traveling between Baxter and Mingo. The trail surface is much smoother and trailside services are more frequent west of Mingo. The trail crosses gravel roads every few miles, but the crossings are easy, and for most of the trail there is no

noise but the wind rushing past. Trail users will be able to gauge their progress by watching for old railroad mile markers that show the distance to Kansas City.

The southern end of the trail begins just south of Mally's Weh-Weh-Neh-Kee Park (meaning "good place") in the former coal-mining community of Berwick, the junction with the Gay Lea Wilson Trail is 0.8 mile to the west and the trail end is 0.3 mile beyond that. Heading east, the trail leaves behind suburban sprawl and passes farms before arriving at Bondurant in about 5 miles. The town completed the trailhead park, featuring a replica train depot for restrooms and drinking water, in 2013.

You might spot wildlife and wildflowers as the curvy route passes through the Santiago Creek greenbelt east of town. In about 7 miles the route crosses the Skunk River railroad bridge that dates to 1885 and enters the Chichaqua Wildlife Management Area.

The trail takes a serpentine course through the creek drainages and river valleys that are uncharacteristic of the straight routes charted by many Midwestern rail trails. The next three small towns—Valeria, Mingo, and Ira—don't offer much in the way of food or refreshments over the next 15 miles.

Arriving at the end of the trail in Baxter, trail users will be greeted by a restored 1913 wooden caboose that also contains historical displays and restrooms. Baxter offers cafés, taverns, and markets to replenish weary travelers.

Connections

Near the southern end of the trail, the route connects with the [Gay Lea Wilson Trail](#).

Trail History



Chichaqua Valley Trail

Iowa

States: Iowa

Counties: Jasper, Polk

Length: 29.7 miles

Trail end points: 105 Railroad St. (Baxter) to NE 46th Ave. (Norwoodville)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Inline

Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Chichaqua Valley Trail runs between 105 Railroad St. (Baxter) and NE 46th Ave. (Norwoodville), with parking available at both ends.

Parking is also available at:

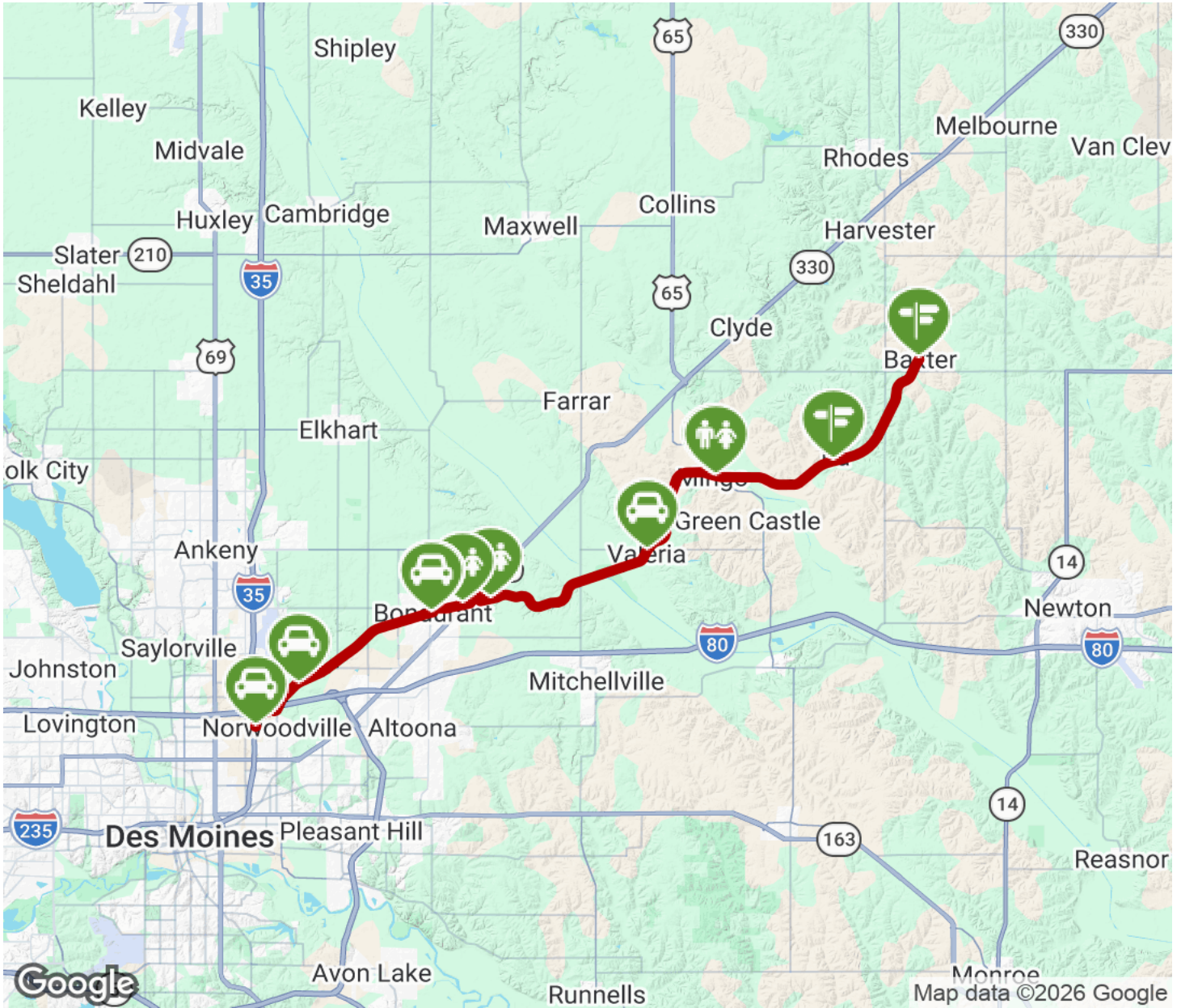
- Pawtocka Dog Park, 521 Pleasant St. NE (Bondurant)
- 6677 W 90th St. N (Mingo)

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



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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