



2026

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Great Western Trail (IA)

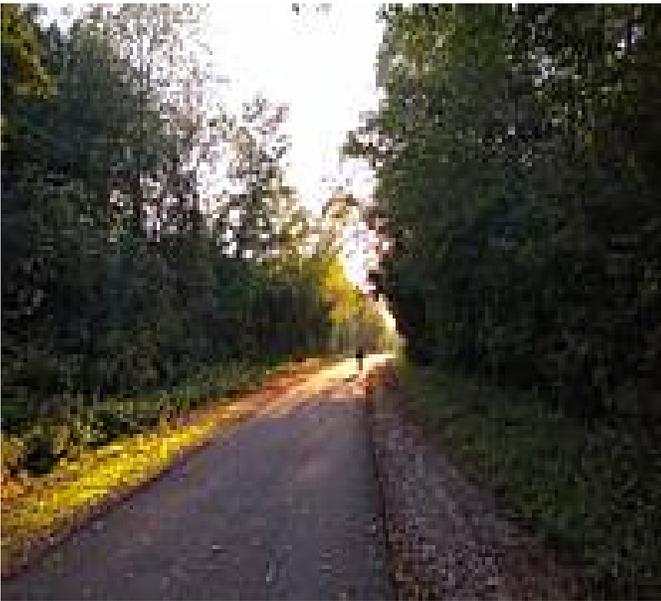
Iowa



Great Western Trail (IA)

Iowa

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Built on a former section of the Chicago Great Western Railroad (built in 1893), the Great Western Trail spans 19 miles between Des Moines and Martensdale.

About the Route

The trail's northern end is at Carney Park in Water Works Park, where the trail connects to the Bill Riley Trail and the Meredith Trail. Curving southwest, the trail parallels George Flagg Pkwy to the north-most trailhead across from the Izaak Walton League venue space (4343 George Flagg Pkwy, Des Moines). The trailhead has trail signage, a paved parking lot, and restrooms.

There are several nearby bars and restaurants nearby that are popular with cyclists and other trail users. From the

trailhead, follow a paved spur north to connect to Water Works Park, which has more parking, restrooms, and drinking fountains.

Paralleling SW 46th St, the trail continues south and passes Des Moines International Airport. Curving southwest, the trail leaves the outskirts of Des Moines. The trail passes under State Route 28, and then the route cuts through the Willow Creek Golf Course before passing under SR 5.

A short time later, the trail reaches Orilla, after which the trail empties into rural territory with cornfields and woods; here the ride is quiet and peaceful.

About 3 miles southwest of Orilla, the trail passes through the tiny town of Cumming, where there are restrooms and parking available, as well as a bar and a distillery.

The route then becomes completely rural, with open fields quickly transitioning to shady woodlands that feel extremely remote—particularly during the work week. Highlights along this stretch include a historic railcar and panoramic views of the North River. The trail's southern end is on Inwood St/Iowa Ave in Martensdale, where there is a large trailhead with parking and restrooms.

Connections

At its northern end, the Great Western Trail connects to the [Bill Riley Trail](#) and the [Meredith Trail](#).



Great Western Trail (IA)

Iowa

States: Iowa

Counties: Polk, Warren

Length: 19 miles

Trail end points: Carney Park (2780 SW 30th St, Des Moines) to Inwood St/Iowa Ave (Martensdale)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Concrete

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Inline

Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Great Western Trail runs between Carney Park (Des Moines) and Inwood St/Iowa Ave (Martensdale), both of which offer parking.

Parking is also available at:

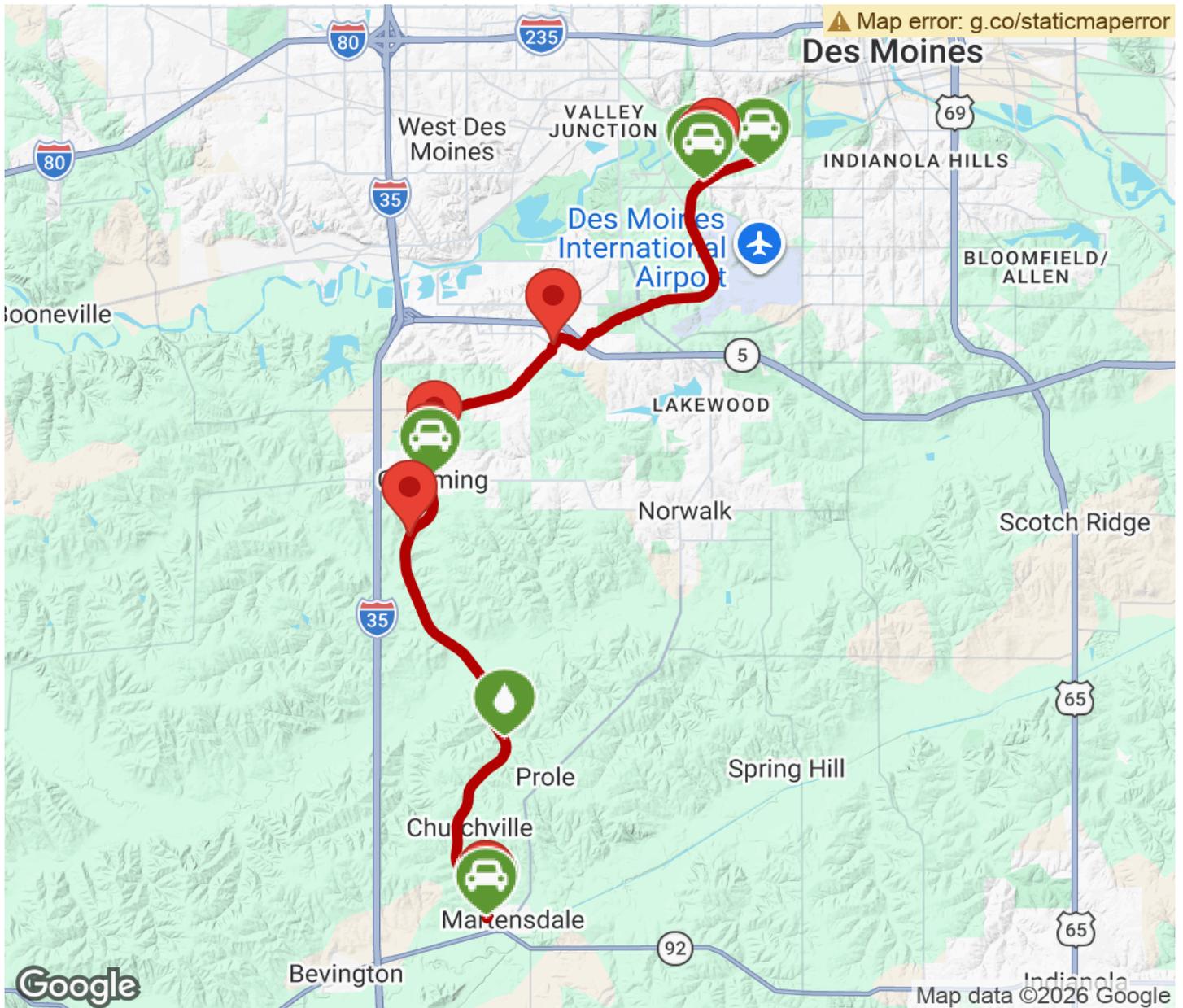
- trailhead across from the Izaak Walton League venue space, 4343 George Flagg Pkwy (Des Moines)

Visit the [TrailLink map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



Great Western Trail (IA)

Iowa



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com