



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Heart of Iowa Nature Trail

Iowa



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The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail traverses classic Iowa farmland along the former route of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific



The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail traverses classic Iowa farmland along the former route of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, also known as the Milwaukee Road. The trail transitions from smooth crushed limestone in the west to a rougher grass and dirt surface in the east, with a couple of on-road detours. While a hybrid bike is a minimum requirement for cyclists, those riding fatter tires might find the trip more enjoyable. As of 2019, the trail has been paved for 2.5 miles between 535th Ave.(Huxley) and Slater.

The trail connects the former depot towns of Slater, Huxley, Cambridge, Maxwell, Collins, and Rhodes. Most provide services to trail users. They originally served as stops on the Milwaukee Road's east-west railroad link between Chicago and Omaha until the company

abandoned the railbed in 1982. The conservation boards of Story and Marshall Counties have maintained the trail since 2003.

Beginning at the junction with the paved [High Trestle Trail](#) on First Avenue in Slater, you'll follow signs for the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail through town to a trailhead park on the eastern outskirts.

After heading across open farmland for a few miles, you'll encounter a permanent on-road detour for 1.3 miles that turns left onto 535th Avenue, right onto West First Street, and then right onto South Fifth Avenue.

Back on the trail, the trek continues as before, with a crushed-stone surface and brief stretches of asphalt at road intersections. After skirting the southern edge of Cambridge, the trail crosses the South Skunk River on a newer trail bridge with overlooks. You'll likely notice the crushed-stone surface start to lose its firmness; hoof marks point to heavy equestrian use.

Upon the approach to Maxwell, you'll cross a new trail bridge over Indian Creek. Turn right onto Army Post Road at the old concrete bridge abutment and then left onto State Route 210/ Main Street to enter town on this 0.6-mile detour. A right turn onto Broad Street regains the trail at the Legion Park soccer fields.

The route east out of Maxwell is much the same, although you'll lose some tree cover along this stretch. The trail segment ends in Collins at a trailhead with ample parking on Railway Street. The farming community celebrates vintage tractors the second Sunday of September for the Go CAPOOT (Collins Area People on Old Tractors) Tour.

There is no sanctioned detour to a 4.4-mile-long orphaned trail segment east of Collins that features one of the trail's highlights, the massive Hoy Bridge. Heading east from 730th



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Heart of Iowa Nature Trail

Iowa

States: Iowa

Counties: Marshall, Story

Length: 25.8 miles

Trail end points: 1st Ave N & Greene St near High Trestle Trail (Slater) to Railway St & 2nd Ave (Collins) to 730th Ave between 310th St & 305th St (Collins) to E Jefferson St (Rhodes)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Concrete, Crushed Stone, Dirt, Grass

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Horseback Riding, Mountain

Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available at Slater Municipal Pool near the High Trestle Trail and just north of 105 E Main St at the Main Trailhead.

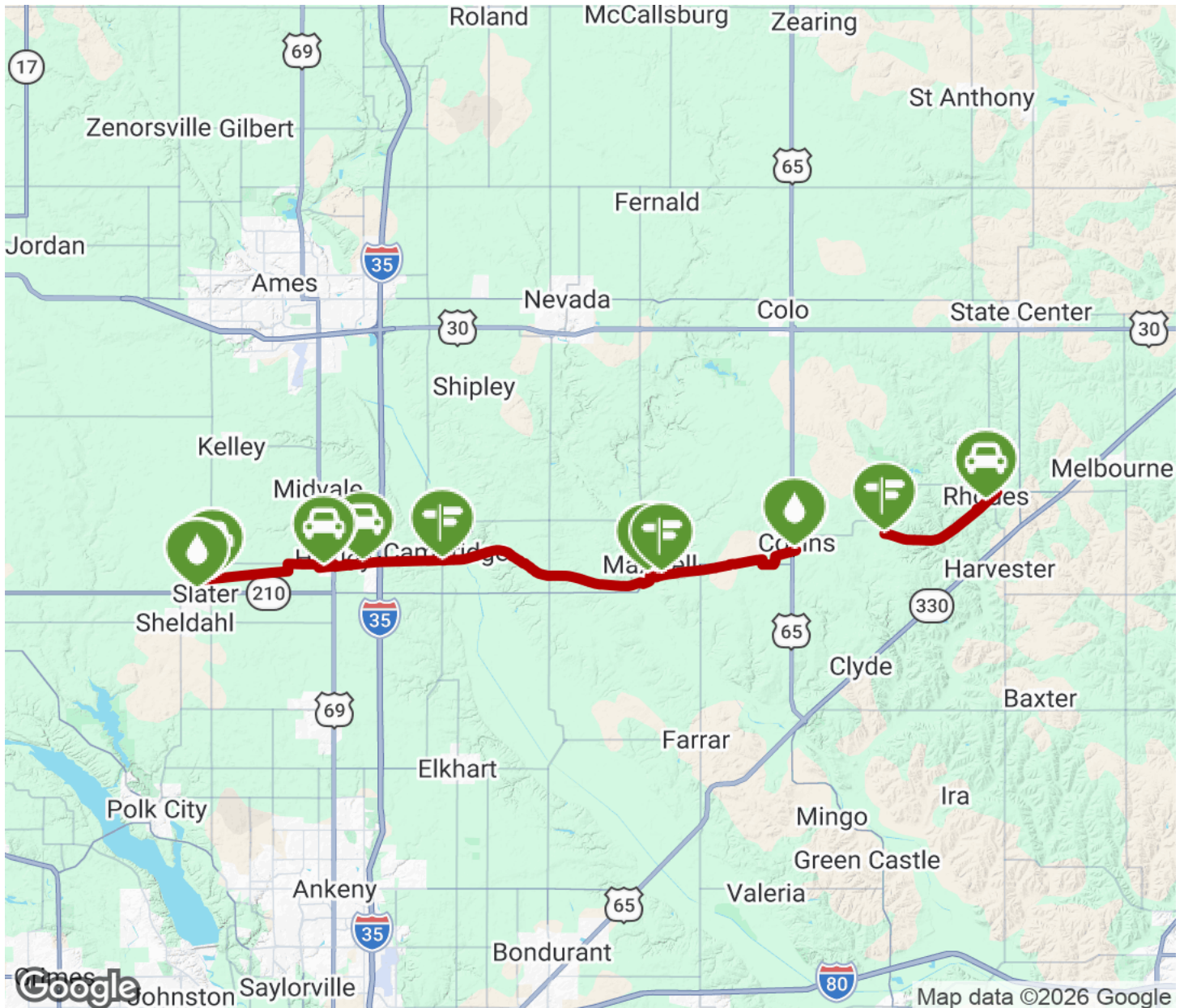
Additional parking can be found at 1318 Sand Cherry Ln (Huxley), 326 S Vine St (Cambridge), in Maxwell at 600 1st St, and at the trail's eastern endpoint in Rhodes, 209 S Main St.

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



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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