



2026

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Rock Island Old Stone Arch Nature Trail

Iowa



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The Rock Island Old Stone Arch Nature Trail travels nearly 4 miles along an asphalt path atop a former railbed once owned by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. Starting near an I-80 on-ramp, the trail rolls through the town of Shelby before ending at a bridge across Silver Creek.

The old stone arch bridge that gives the trail its name dates from 1883. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 35-foot stone structure is said to be the first railroad structure built in Shelby County.

Beginning at Exit 34 on I-80, the trail provides a great opportunity to get off the highway and stretch your legs. It is ideal for families, runners, and cyclists looking for a short, easy, and beautiful ride.

Facing a restaurant on the northwest corner of the interchange, you'll head left (west) toward a small landscaped park with benches marking the trail entrance. Gravel for the first hundred yards may not be suitable for wheelchair users. The rest of the trail is paved, passing through a green corridor of farmed fields and restored wetlands.

You'll follow the trail west for 0.4 mile before heading north 1 mile to Shelby, where the rail line arrived in 1868 on its way to Council Bluffs. A restored train depot with restrooms greets visitors arriving by trail, and an old Burlington Northern caboose stands nearby. You can find restaurants in town, and parking is available.

In the summer, keep your eyes peeled for purple martins, the largest North American swallow. They congregate in birdhouses built along the trail, making this a great place for casual bird-watchers. Residents mounted some 50 birdhouses in the community, earning Shelby a designation as the Purple Martin Capital of Iowa for its natural mosquito eradication program.

You'll find the stone arch bridge 1.1 miles past the train depot. The trail ends at Silver Creek in another 1.1 miles at another old railroad bridge.



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States: Iowa

Counties: Pottawattamie, Shelby

Length: 3.75 miles

Trail end points: 385th St. between I-80 westbound on-ramp to County Road L34/York Road to east of Hackberry Road at Silver Creek (Shelby)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Crushed Stone

Trail category: Rail-Trail

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

Parking & Trail Access

To reach the southern trailhead from I-80, take Exit 34 onto 385th St. toward Shelby. Take the first left into a restaurant and gas station, and find parking on the left. The trail begins just past the small landscaped park.

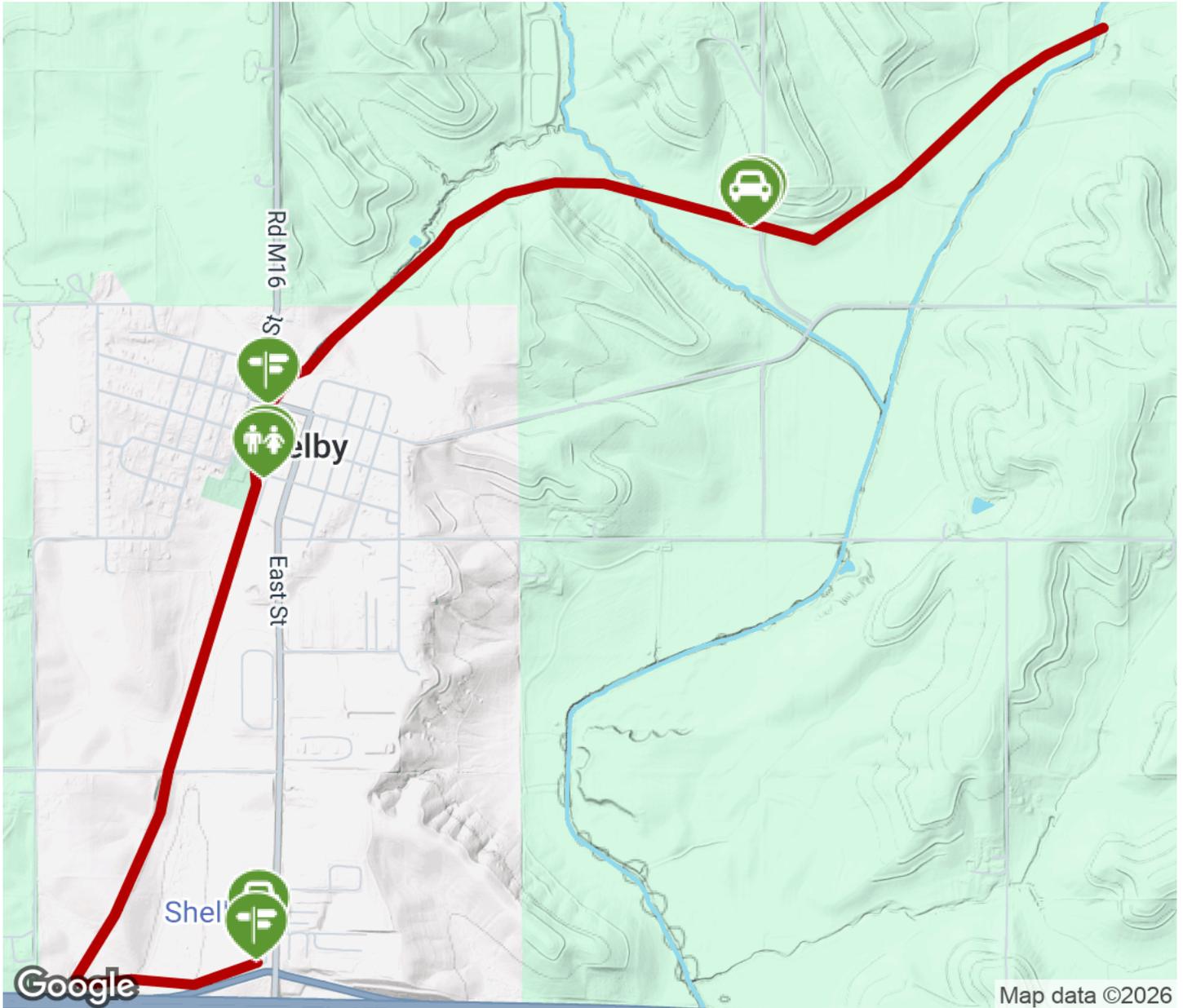
To reach trailhead parking in Shelby from I-80, take Exit 34 onto 385th St. toward Shelby. Go 1.1 miles, and turn right onto Station St. Parking is straight ahead at the restored depot.

To reach the northern trailhead from I-80, take Exit 34 onto 385th St. toward Shelby. Go 1.2 miles, and turn right onto Spring St. Go 1.1 miles as Spring St. becomes County Road F66, and turn left onto Hackberry Road. Go 0.2 mile, and find parking on the left. The endpoint is located 0.9 mile northeast along the trail (on the eastern side of Silver Creek).



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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