



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**Hennepin  
Canal State  
Trail**  
*Illinois*



# Hennepin Canal State Trail

Illinois

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The Hennepin Canal State Trail stretches for 93 miles in northwest Illinois along an old canal towpath. The trail is administered as a State Park by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and aside from the trail corridor itself, the entire 104-mile linear parkway offers a variety of recreational opportunities including fishing, boating, camping, and even more.

Water is scarce along the route (found only at locks 21, and 22 and the visitor center), so be sure to bring plenty, especially during hot days.

Equestrian use is allowed along the route between April 15th and October 31st. 91 miles of the trail is open for snowmobiling when the ground has 6 inches of frost (below ground) and 4 inches of snow.

## About the Route

Across the entire route, the landscape varies from forest to grasslands to marsh to farmland, all along the relatively flat towpath. The trail surface is suitable for both road and mountain bikes, although those on hybrid bikes will have the easiest time. During winter, the canal often freezes, making it suitable for ice skating. Anglers will find stocked bluegill, crappie, walleye, and bass.

The trail features two distinct corridors, one that extends west-east between East Moline and Bureau Junction, and the other that extends north-south between Sterling and 18221 County Rd 400 E (Sheffield).

Several features and amenities mark the trail and can be located by the numbered old canal locks that are featured periodically along the route. Toilets are located at locks 3, 6, 11, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 26. The trail also features bridges at locks 14, 15, and 23 and the State Park Visitor Center, along the main canal. Additional toilets can be found at bridges 50, 52, and 64 on the north spur. The Hennepin Canal State Trail is also a popular spot for camping and bike-packing. Class "C" Campgrounds (those without vehicle access) can be found at locks 6, 11, 17, 21, 22, 23, and 26 and bridges 14 and 23. Several vehicle-accessible campgrounds dot the route, including the Geneseo Campground (22978 IL-82).

The Hennepin Canal State Trail is a regional destination trail, drawing many visitors from the surrounding region including the famous Hennepin Hundred, a 100-mile (or 50-mile) ultramarathon that is held on the trail each year.

## Connections

At the trail's northern endpoint in Sterling, the trail connects to the [Sterling Multi-Activity Recreational Trail \(SMART Pathway\)](#).



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**States:** Illinois

**Counties:** Bureau, Henry, Whiteside

Length: 93miles

**Trail end points:** Timbrook Field Boat Ramp  
(East Moline) to Hennepin Canal Lock #2  
(Bureau Junction)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt, Grass, Gravel

**Trail category:** Canal

**Trail activities:** Bike, Fishing, Horseback

Riding, Mountain

Biking, Snowmobiling, Walking, Wheelchair

## Parking & Trail Access

The Hennepin Canal State Trail runs between Timbrook Field Boat Ramp (East Moline) and Hennepin Canal Lock #2 (Bureau Junction), with a spur that has a northern endpoint at Martin's Landing (Sterling).

Parking is available at:

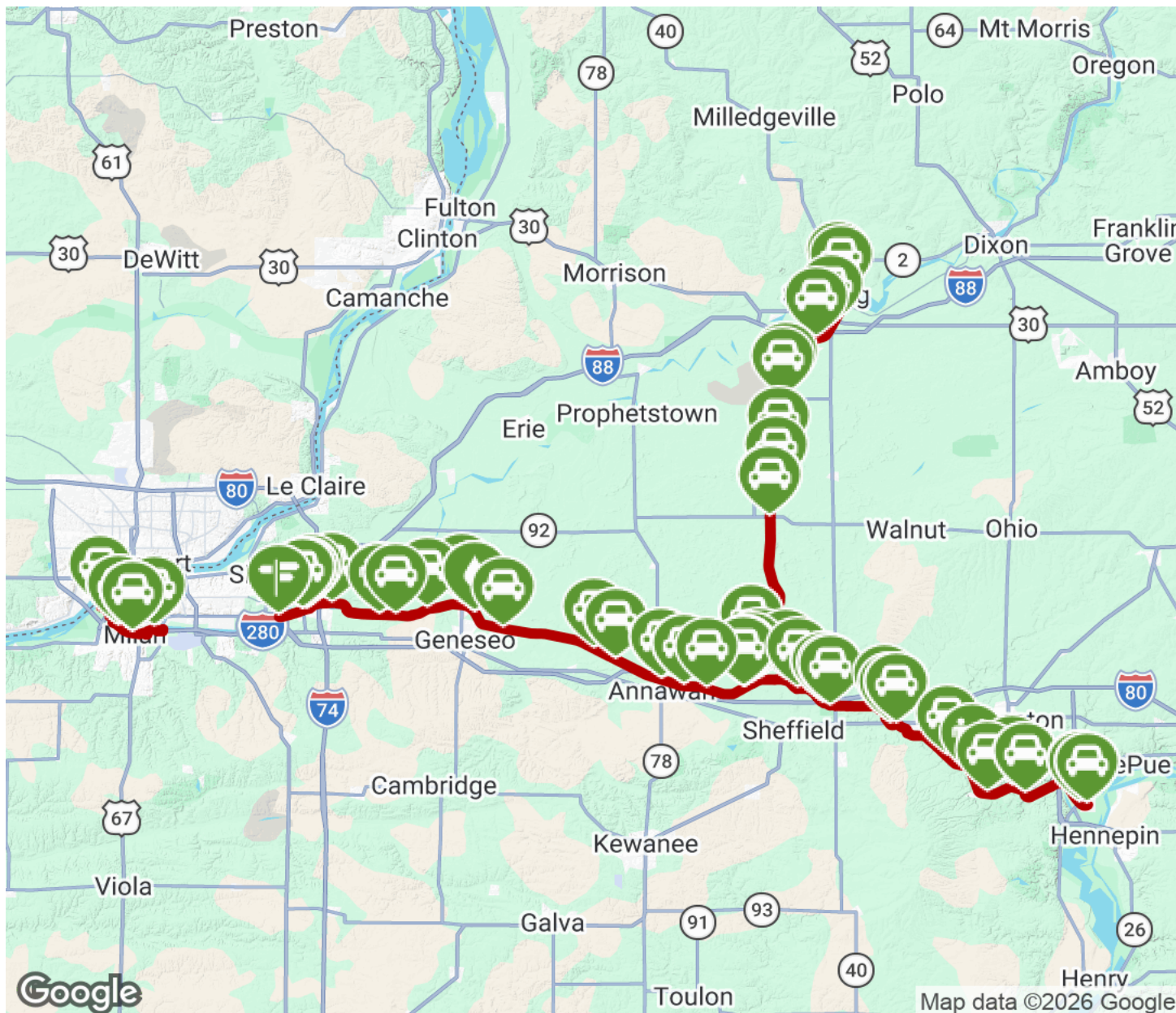
- 810 E 2nd St (Rock Falls)
- Geneseo Campground, 22978 IL-82 (Geneseo)
- Hennepin Canal Parkway State Park, 16006 E. Street (Sheffield)

There are numerous parking options along the route, please see [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



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- Trailhead
- Restroom
- Parking
- Water Fountain
- Tunnel