



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail

Illinois



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The Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail follows the eponymous waterway alongside the Illinois River. It traverses the I&M Canal



The Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail follows the eponymous waterway alongside the Illinois River. It traverses the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor, designated in 1984, and the first National Heritage Area in the U.S. The pathway runs along the old canal towpath from LaSalle to the historical quarry town of Lemont. There are educational markers at nearly every mile so trail users can learn about the history of the canal and the stories of those who built and traveled the waterway.

The trail surface varies, from well-maintained crushed limestone to grass, asphalt, and gravel. In some sections, the path exists on both sides of the canal. Bicyclists should use thicker tires (hybrids or larger).

About the Route

The route leaves off in the south from the town of LaSalle at Huse Lake. The trailhead is located at a historical canal lock. Enjoy a mule-powered ride in a replica canal boat or explore Lock 14 and the steel silhouettes that help tell the stories of Abraham Lincoln and his family, Wild Bill Hickok, and other personalities associated with the canal.

From the trailhead, a short segment of trail heads west, while the vast majority of the trail unfurls to the east. Trail users may find that the short jaunt to the west is worth exploring, though, as it offers a nice tree canopy and views. Begin the longer journey by traveling eastward from the trailhead (to the right, when facing the canal).

The towpath surface is primarily compacted gravel and can collect water after heavy showers. Even with some puddles, the trail is widely used on weekends, and many families and groups of riders can be found with smiling faces. The LaSalle County Historical Museum is located in North Utica just across the canal from the trail, and many riders stop for a visit there and at the local cafés.

A small section of trail shares a paved roadway and provides access to private homes as the trail continues from west to east, but shortly after this section be prepared for occasional muddy conditions and wash-outs around the water crossing.

As the trail approaches Ottawa, the surface improves and there is a short rail-with-trail section. Trail users will find some options for food or cold beverages in Ottawa. The trail intersects with the short but paved Ottawa Riverwalk — a picturesque connection to the vibrant downtown business district. Then it crosses the historic Fox River Aqueduct, which was constructed to maintain grade on the canal, well above the river below. Leaving Ottawa, the path is mostly packed with gravel, but depending on seasonal rains, it can get wet in spots.

The trail passes through Marseilles, a former industrial



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States: Illinois

Counties: Cook, Grundy, La Salle, Will

Length: 79.5 miles

Trail end points: Dead end near Huse Lake (LaSalle) to Heritage Quarries (Lemont)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Crushed Stone, Grass, Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Fishing, Mountain Biking, Snowmobiling, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail runs between a dead end near Huse Lake (LaSalle) and Heritage Quarries (Lemont).

Parking is available at:

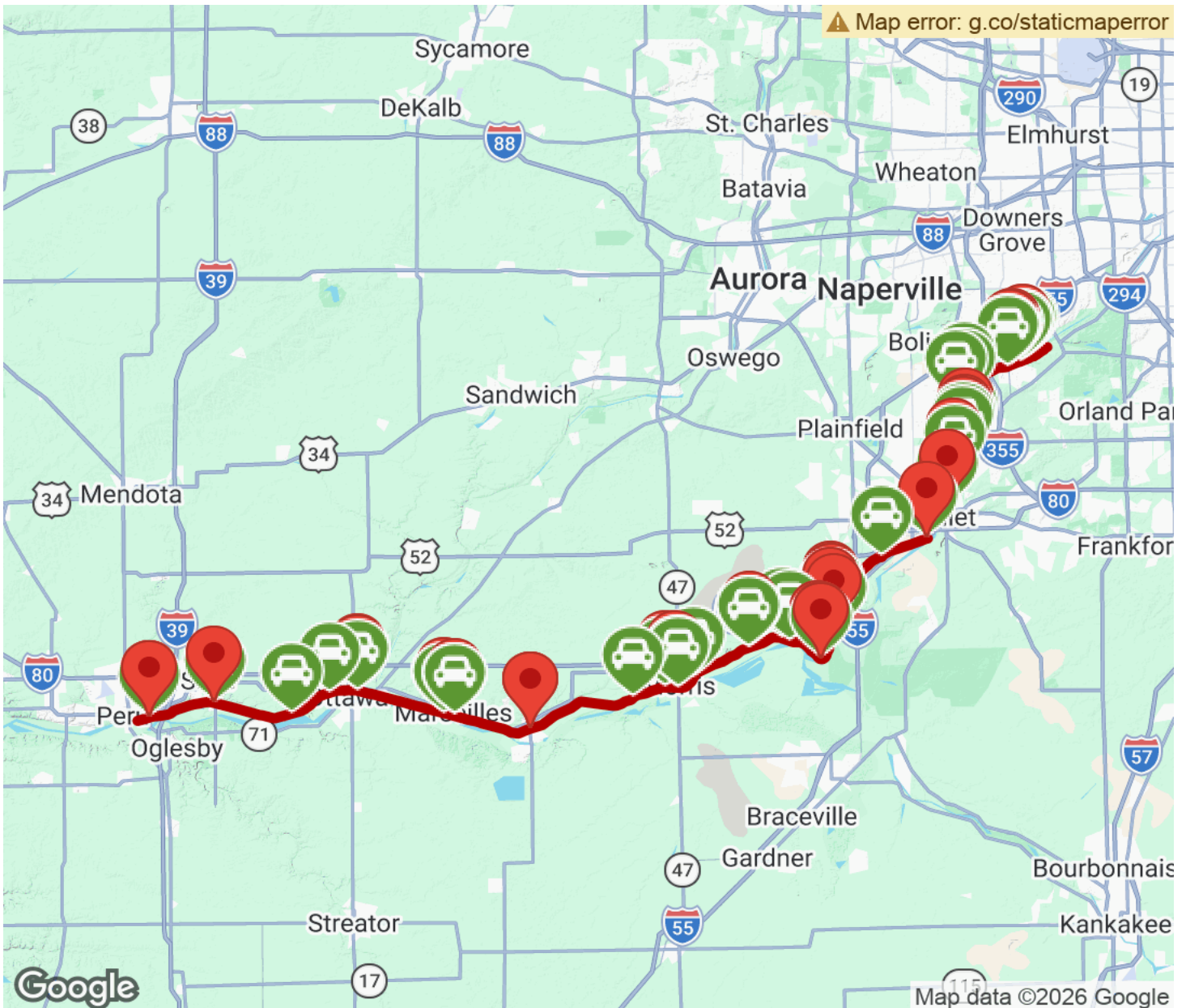
- Buffalo Rock State Park, 1300 N 27th Rd. (Ottawa)
- 401 Ottawa St. (Morris)
- Joliet Iron Works Park, 31 Columbia St. (Joliet)

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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