



2026

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Great River
Trail**
Illinois



Great River Trail

Illinois

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The Great River Trail is a breathtaking journey along more than 60 miles of the Mississippi River in northern Illinois. In places, the paved trail follows the former spur route of the Chicago, St. Paul, Milwaukee, and Pacific Railroad.

Elsewhere, it's a mix of low-traffic rural roads, dedicated bike lanes, and riverfront trails running atop flood levees. It's part of the 500-mile Grand Illinois Trail network in the north; in the south, it traces the American Discovery Trail, which crosses the country with a mixture of trails and on-road routes.

About the Route

Starting at the trail's northern endpoint in Savanna, the

trail heads south through several small towns with traditions still steeped in river culture before reaching the industrial center of the Quad Cities, which includes Rock Island and Moline. Many opportunities exist for browsing antiques, enjoying catfish dinners, and viewing river traffic. Camping and lodging are available for overnight trips. Leaving Savanna, the secluded route rolls across the sand prairie, past nature preserves and farmland to Thomson. Watch for signs that direct trail users onto quiet local roads from the paved trail.

Farther south, in Fulton, an unusual sight greets trail users along the route: a Dutch windmill that will make trail users feel as though they've been transported to the Netherlands. It's no wonder; the structure was originally built there and then transported here to be reassembled by craftsmen.

About 8 miles south in Albany, take a short detour through the Albany Indian Mounds State Historic Site and view dozens of earthen burial mounds that date back more than 2,000 years.

The trail runs alongside IL 84 (Great River Road) most of the way to Cordova, where it meanders through town on local streets. After less than 2 miles, the rail trail picks up again and closely follows Great River Road for 4 miles into Port Byron, a charming river town visible from the trail's riverbank course. Most of the corridor here is shared with an active rail line, a fine example of a rail-with-trail.

Three miles downriver is Rapids City, where blue herons, gulls, and other waterfowl are plentiful.

As the Great River Trail crests a levee 4 miles south in Hampton, trail users will get a glimpse of Campbell's Island, the site of the Battle of Rock Island Rapids during the War of 1812. Just ahead on the left, the John Deere manufacturing plant marks the beginning of the trail's urban section. Traveling atop the levee affords majestic vistas of the bridges over the Mississippi River connecting the Quad Cities.



Great River Trail

Illinois

States: Illinois

Counties: Carroll, Rock Island, Whiteside

Length: 63.3 miles

Trail end points: Broderick Dr. (Savanna) to
Sunset Lane (Rock Island)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Fishing, Inline
Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross
Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Great River Trail runs between Broderick Dr. (Savanna) and Sunset Lane (Rock Island), with parking at both endpoints.

Parking is also available at:

- Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center, 6870 Riverview Rd. (Thomson)
- Shuler's Shady Grove Park, 1128 1st Avenue (Rapids City)
- Ben Butterworth Parkway, 3000 River Dr (Moline)

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

