



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail

Illinois



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Paralleling the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers along the border between Illinois and Mississippi, the Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail



Paralleling the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers along the border between Illinois and Mississippi, the Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail (also known as the Sam Vadalabene Great River Road Bike Trail) runs 20.5 miles between Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton and Piasa Park in Alton.

About the Route

Sandwiched between towering limestone bluffs and the confluence of two mighty rivers, the Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail offers scenery once enjoyed by riverboat captains. Experience the views from an asphalt trail and bike lane that runs just over 20 miles between Pere Marquette State Park and the outskirts of Alton.

Visit Pere Marquette State Park, the largest park in the

state's system, before setting out. Named for the first European to set foot on Illinois soil, the park is known for its scenic overlooks, American Indian burial mounds, autumn colors, and winter population of bald eagles.

Leaving the park, trail users might be challenged by some short hills until the trail settles in comfortably alongside IL 100 after 3 or 4 miles. Catch fleeting glimpses of the Illinois River through the woods here and visit a stone monument commemorating Jacques Marquette's arrival in 1673 at 4.5 miles from the trail's northwest end.

The trail heads into the historical river town of Grafton in another 0.5 mile as the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers meet. The trail traces the waterfront for a mile, where there are turtles and waterfowl, then it shares a street, where it passes a marina and ferry landing within a block of shops and cafés on Main Street.

At the east end of downtown Grafton, the trail merges onto IL 100 as a 3- to 4-foot-wide bike lane separated from traffic by rumble strips. While traffic whizzes past on the left, barges make their way up and down the wide river that's flowing along on the right. Adding to this spectacle, towering limestone bluffs soar above the trees across the road. Running along the Mississippi River for the next 8.3 miles, the trail uses this highway that's part of the Great River Road, which runs from Minnesota to Louisiana and is designated as a National Scenic Byway.

Four miles from Grafton, there is a pleasant detour in the town of Elsah. A spin through the hamlet on LaSalle and Mill Streets reveals pre-1860 stone buildings still in use, lending Elsah a step-back-in-time quality that earned it a spot on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Four miles past Elsah, the Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail crosses IL 100 and finishes the last 5.6 miles as a bike path with a sometimes rough surface at the foot of the bluffs on the



Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail

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States: Illinois

Counties: Jersey, Madison

Length: 20.5 miles

Trail end points: Pere Marquette State Park (Grafton) to Piasa Park (Alton)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Fishing, Inline Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible

Parking & Trail Access

The Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail runs between Pere Marquette State Park, 13112 Visitors Center Ln (Grafton) and Piasa Park, 900 W Broadway (Alton), both of which offer parking and restrooms.

Parking is also available at:

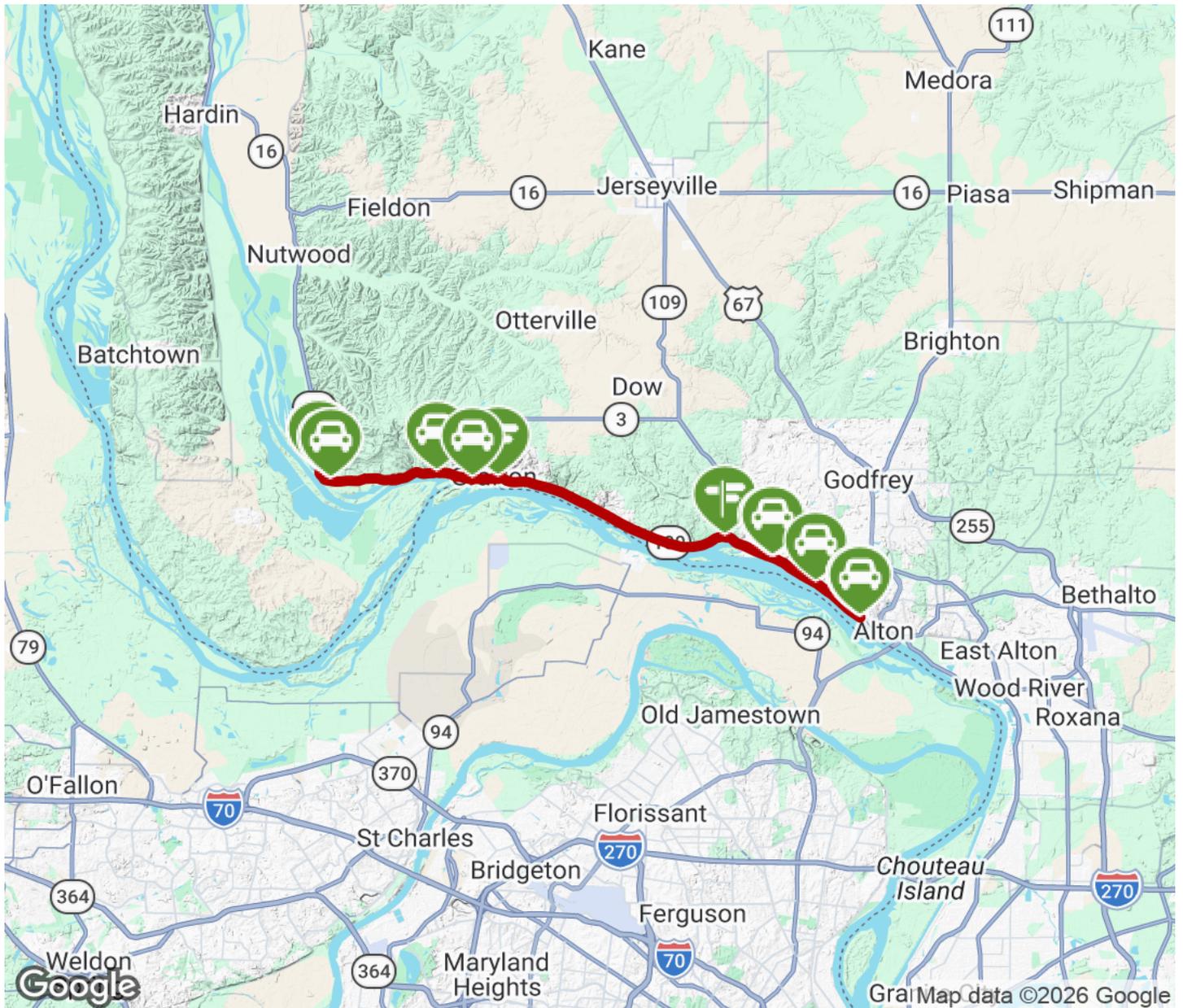
- Clifton Terrace Park (Godfrey)
- Hoffman Gardens (Godfrey)

Visit the [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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