



2025

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**Prairie Spirit  
Trail State  
Park**  
*Kansas*



## Prairie Spirit Trail State Park

Kansas

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Spanning 51 miles, the Prairie Spirit Trail State Park runs from Ottawa to Iola, offering plenty of recreation and enjoyment for birdwatchers, cyclists, walkers, joggers and anyone with a desire to explore the heartland—the spirit—of Kansas.

### About the Route

The trail offers visitors a taste of rural, middle America at its finest—rolling pastures, lazy streams, wooded ravines, friendly townspeople, colorful wildflowers, big farms and an endless sky. To celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Prairie Spirit, Rails to Trails Conservancy added the trail to its Hall of Fame (August 2011) for embodying the unique natural and cultural history of the region and acting as a vanguard for other rail-trail projects.

The trail has proved popular with residents and visitors alike. The variety of ecosystems and geography, including wooded areas, farmland and prairies, makes the trail inviting. It also incorporates urban areas and small towns. Among some of the Prairie Spirit Trail's more notable natural features are the nearby native prairie preserves, including The Nature Conservancy's Anderson County Prairie Preserve, which protects the rare Mead's milkweed and other vanishing species of the tallgrass prairie.

### Connections

At its northern terminus in Ottawa, the Prairie Spirit Trail intersects the [Flint Hills Nature Trail](#).

From the southern endpoint in Iola, trail users can continue south for another 6.5 miles on the same rail corridor to the city of Humboldt via the [Southwind Rail Trail](#).

### Trail History

Two centuries ago, this area was part of a vast and largely untouched prairie ecosystem that sustained not only millions of bison and other wild creatures, but also native Kanza and Osage people who hunted game and grew crops here. As European settlers began to move in, so too did the railroads. In 1858 a group of businessmen from Lawrence broached the idea of the first north-south rail line through the state. In the 1860s the idea became a reality with the opening of the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Fort Gibson Railroad (which later became the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Galveston Railroad).

By the mid-1970s the line fell into disuse; in 1990 it was sold to the Kansas City Terminal Railway Company (KCT), which filed for abandonment not long after. Fortunately, government officials saw an opening to create the state's first rail-trail along this corridor.

Construction began in 1992, and the first section, 17 miles



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**States:** Kansas

**Counties:** Allen, Anderson, Franklin

Length: 51miles

**Trail end points:** W Tecumseh St. (Ottawa) to  
W Bruner St. (Iola)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt, Crushed Stone

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Bike, Walking, Wheelchair  
Accessible

## Parking & Trail Access

The Prairie Spirit Trail State Park runs between W Tecumseh St. (Ottawa) and W Bruner St. (Iola), with parking available at both ends.

Parking is also available at:

- Kanza Park, 200 W 13th St. (Ottawa)
- 1310 N State St. (Iola)

Please see [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



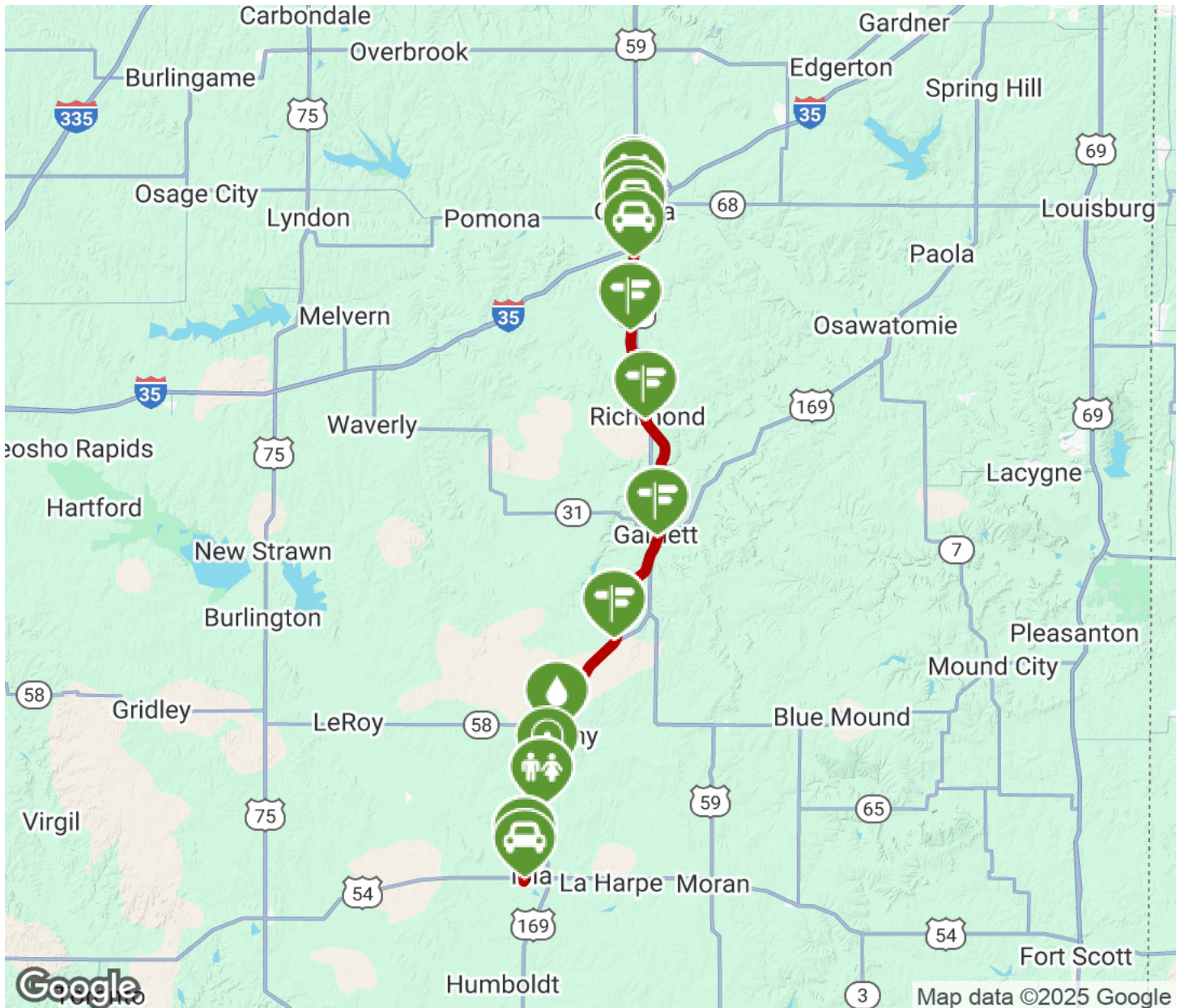
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# Prairie Spirit Trail State Park

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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