



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Heartland  
State Trail**  
*Minnesota*



## Heartland State Trail

Minnesota

*The Heartland State Trail is one of many long-distance trails managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.*



The Heartland State Trail is one of many long-distance trails managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. When established in 1974, it became one of the first rail-trail conversions in the country. The nearly 50-mile trail connects the small cities of Park Rapids and Cass Lake along a forested route. As you might expect from a trail in the heart of the Land of 10,000 Lakes, the Heartland State Trail runs past a number of lakes, rivers, and streams, many of which are directly accessible from the pathway. Public beaches, resorts, and campgrounds also line the route, so be sure to bring your bathing suit and fishing gear. When water is not the primary vista, towering white pine, spruce fir, and hardwood forests offer shade and habitat for various animals, including raccoons, red foxes, white-tailed deer, beavers, and porcupines.

The trail also skirts the edge of both Paul Bunyan State Forest and Chippewa National Forest, home to a large population of bald eagles. Because the Heartland State Trail is a rail-trail, the trek is fairly level and smooth. Still, those desiring a rest will want to stop in Dorset, Akeley, or Nevis, three small resort towns hosting restaurants and shops. Just west of the city of Walker on Leech Lake, indefatigable trail users can connect directly to the even longer Paul Bunyan State Trail. The Heartland State Trail resumes again where it crosses Morris Point Road at the west side of Walker Bay on Leech Lake.

An adjacent grass path between Park Rapids and Walker accommodates both equestrian users and mountain bikers, while a parallel treadway for snowmobilers runs from Walker to Cass Lake. Just north of Walker, a 4-mile segment of the trail leaves the level former railroad corridor, so be forewarned: The terrain here becomes significantly hillier.

About 2.5 miles south of Cass Lake, the trail crosses MN 371 at 148th Street Northwest (Pike Bay Loop Road/County Road 76), where it links up with the 19-mile, paved Mi-Gi-Zi Trail around Pike Bay. An alternate route at 148th Street Northwest is to continue north along the east side of MN 371 into Cass Lake and follow the streets up around to the northwest corner of the city, where Second Street Northeast/CR 206 swings north to meet US 2; there is a full-service rest stop here on the north side of the highway. Parking is also available on the south side of US 2.



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**States:** Minnesota

**Counties:** Cass, Hubbard

Length: 49 miles

**Trail end points:** 1st St. E./SR 34 just west of Riverside Ave. (Park Rapids) to Aspen Ave./SR 371 and Railroad St. (Cass Lake)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Bike, Inline Skating, Fishing, Wheelchair Accessible, Horseback

## Parking & Trail Access

A medium-size parking lot is available in Heartland County Park at the trail's southern endpoint in Park Rapids, where the trail meets Mill St. From the intersection of MN 210 and MN 371 in Baxter, near Brainerd, head west on MN 210. Go 19.5 miles, and turn right onto US 10. In 18.2 miles turn right onto N.W. Brown St./County Road 23. In 16 miles turn left onto MN 227, and in 0.3 mile turn right onto Hubbard Road/CR 23, which becomes CR 6. In 14.8 miles turn left onto CR 6/MN 87. In 5.3 miles turn left onto MN 34/First St. E. In 0.7 mile turn right onto Mill St., and then make a slight left onto Heartland St. in 0.4 mile. Parking is straight ahead within Heartland County Park.

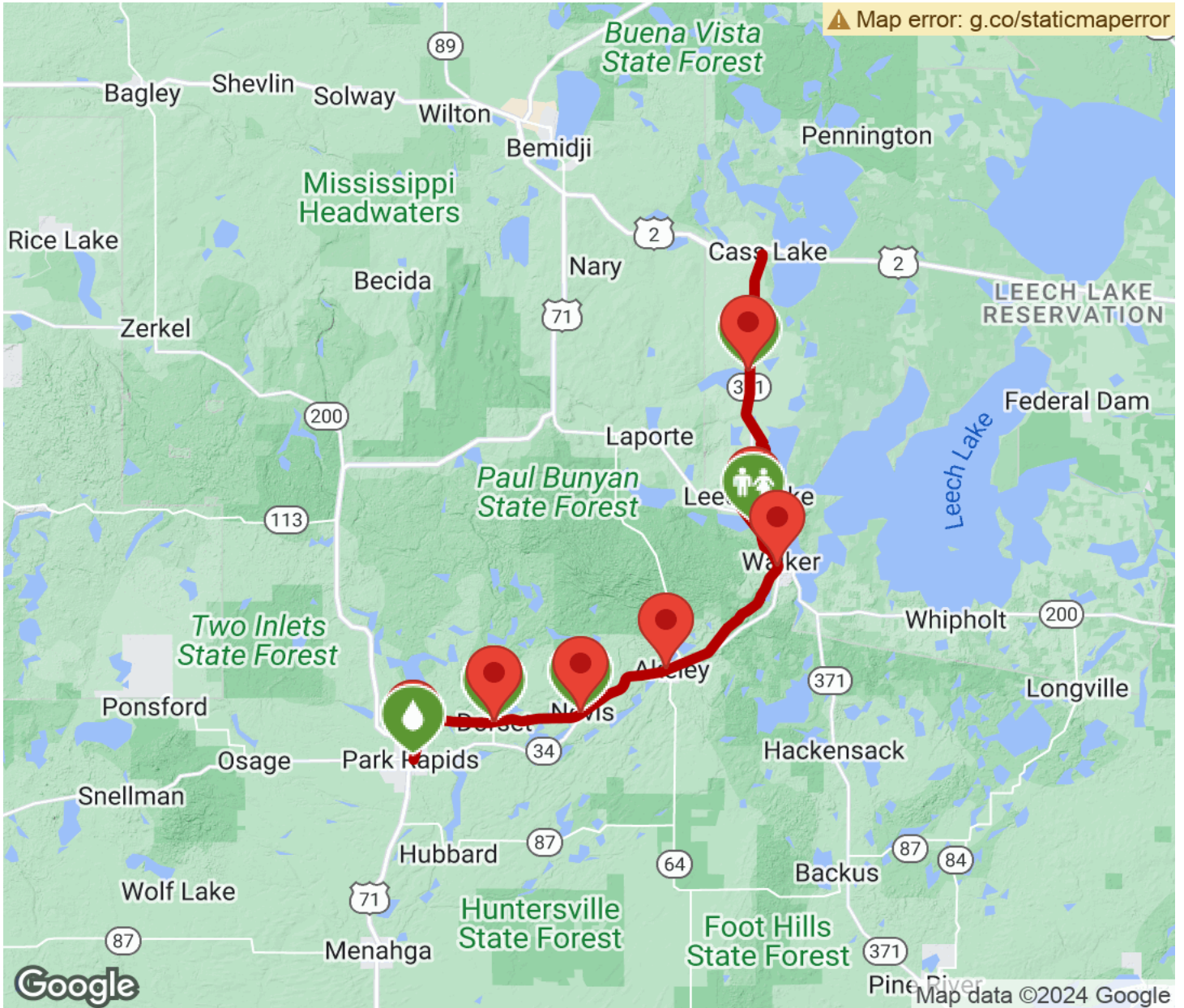
Small parking lots are also available in Dorset, Nevis, Akeley, Walker, Erickson's Landing, and Cass Lake.

Parking and restrooms are available at Steamboat Lake landing. From the intersection of MN 210 and MN 371 in Baxter, near Brainerd, head north on MN 371. Go 54.3 miles, and turn left onto MN 371/MN 200; continue another 18 miles. Turn left onto CR 141, and in 0.1 mile turn left to reach the parking lot.



# Heartland State Trail

Minnesota



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



## TrailLink

by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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