



2026

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.

About the Route

As one 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 when 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 as the trail heads to its northern endpoint on Cass Lake.

Connections

In Walker, the trail intersects with the [Shingobee Connection Trail](#) which connects to the [Paul Bunyan Trail](#).



Heartland State Trail

Minnesota

States: Minnesota

Counties: Cass, Hubbard

Length: 49 miles

Trail end points: 1st St. E (Park Rapids) to
Railroad St. (Cass Lake)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Fishing, Horseback
Riding, Inline

Skating, Snowmobiling, Walking, Wheelchair
Accessible, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Heartland State Trail runs between 1st St. E (Park Rapids) and Railroad St. (Cass Lake).

Parking is available at:

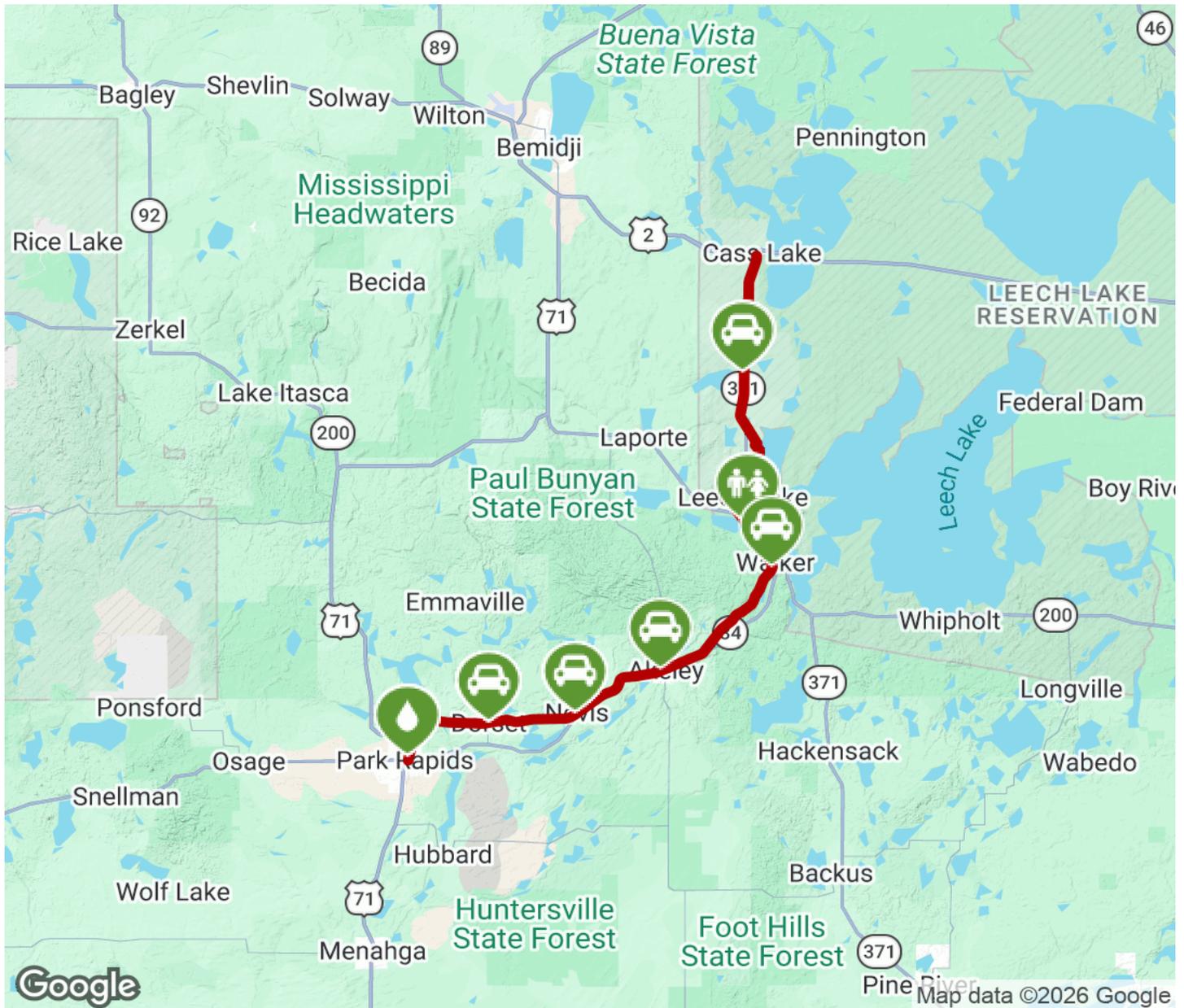
- Steamboat Lake Public Access, 13003 Omega Resort Dr. (Cass Lake)
- Erikson's Public Water Access, 8940 Heartland State Trail (Walker)

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



Heartland State Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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