



2026

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



# MKT Nature and Fitness Trail

*Missouri*



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The MKT Nature and Fitness Trail spans just over 9 miles between the famed [Katy Trail State Park](#), which stretches across Missouri, and Columbia. It gets its name from the former spur line of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) Railroad, which it follows.

Its southern trailhead in McBaine offers a paved parking lot, bathrooms, and drinking water. Carefully follow the signage marking the start of the trail. After crossing Perche Creek, stay to the right at the trail fork to follow the MKT Trail; the Katy Trail continues to the left of the fork.

The first half of the MKT is rural and cuts through wooded areas and sprawling farmland while following nearby Perche and Hinkson Creeks. The crushed stone along this

portion of the trail is well packed and easily passable by hybrid bike. Road bikes may also be suited to this terrain. Enjoy the sights, sounds, and flora and fauna of the Missouri countryside as you pass through a patchwork of shaded and exposed corridor. The second half of the trail is fully canopied, and you cross over several old wooden bridges across Flat Branch Creek.

Highlights along the scenic route include the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial at Battle Garden and the Forum Nature Area. The former features a bucolic landscaped backdrop for a memorial dedicated to the venerable civil rights leader, while the latter offers a wetlands trail and opportunities for bird watching. To the north of the Forum Nature Area, the [County House Trail](#) provides access to the Twin Lakes Recreation Area, which allows boating, fishing, and swimming. The MKT Trail also connects to [Hinkson Creek Trail](#), which reaches the recreational gems of Grindstone Nature Area and Stephens Lake Park.

The trail is dotted with bathroom, parking, and water facilities along its entire length and has some of the best amenities of any trail in the state. The closer you get toward the center of Columbia, the more populated you will find the trail. Runners, walkers, bikers, and students from the local University of Missouri campus fill the trail, especially along the last 3 miles.

The trail splits in the last 0.5 mile as you enter town, but stay to the left to pass through a small tunnel and travel by a lovely water feature and into Flat Branch Park, where you'll find a picnic area, drinking water, and parking. From here, you're only a short way from Columbia's charming downtown.



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**States:** Missouri

**Counties:** Boone

**Length:** 9.3miles

**Trail end points:** Flat Branch Park at S. Fourth St. and Cherry St. (Columbia) to Katy Trail State Park at MO K (McBaine)

**Trail surfaces:** Concrete,Crushed Stone

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Bike,Walking,Cross Country  
Skiing

## Parking & Trail Access

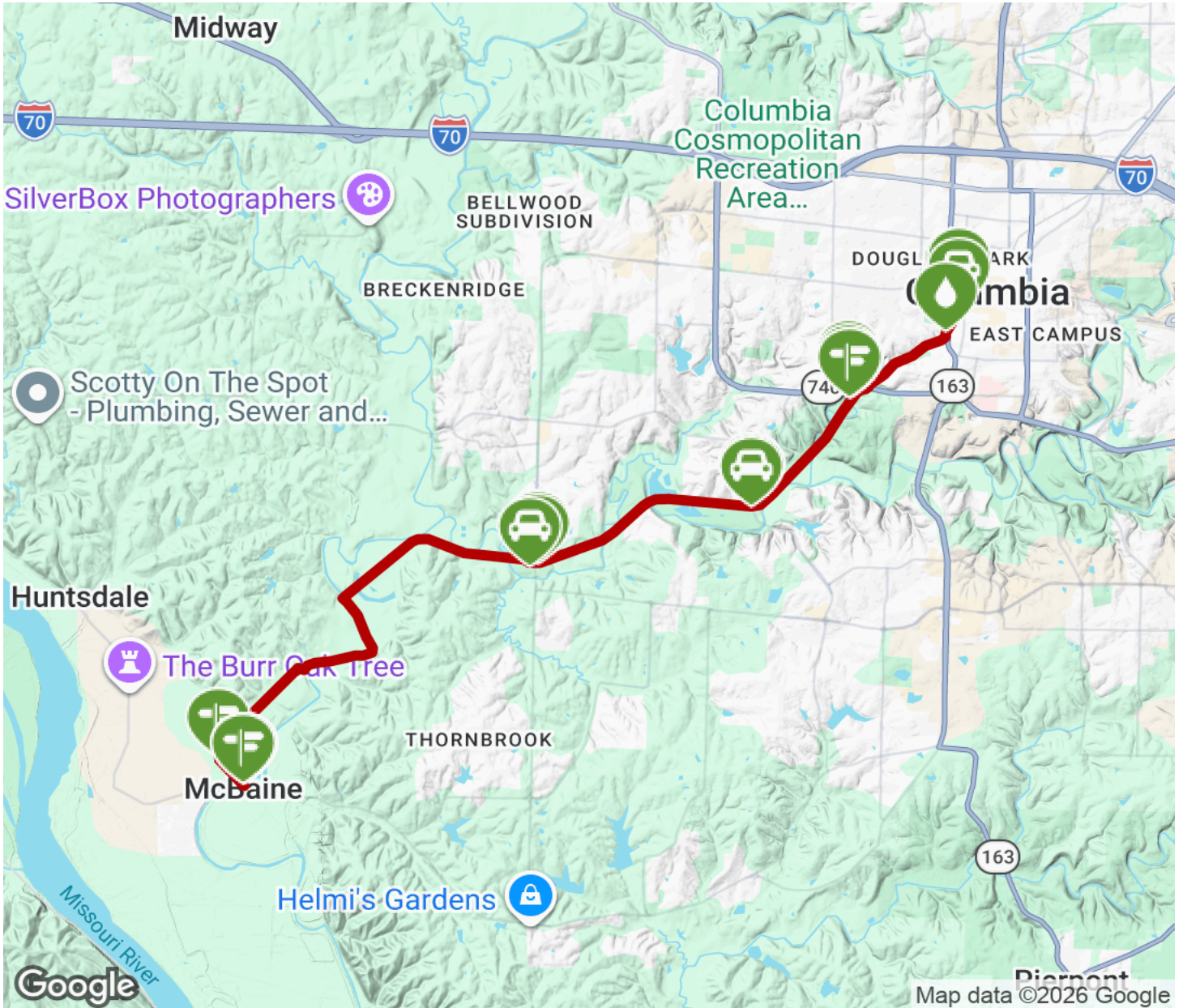
To reach the southern trailhead from Columbia, take MO 163/ Providence Road south to a right onto E. Nifong Blvd. Continue on the roadway westbound as it becomes W. Vawter School Road. You could take a right onto Scott Blvd. to a trail access point and parking, or continue straight on what is now S. Brushwood Lake Road. Continuing on this roadway as it heads south and becomes S. Howard Orchard Road will bring you to a T-intersection with MO KK; take a right onto MO KK, and then another immediate right onto MO K. As you pass the Columbia Water Plant, look for the sign directing you into the trailhead parking lot.

To reach the northern trailhead in Columbia from I-70, take Exit 126. Take a left onto MO 163/N. Providence Road. Travel south until you reach Locust St. and take a left. Take your next left onto S. Fourth St. You'll see parking spots on either side of the street.



# MKT Nature and Fitness Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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