



2024

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Ernst Bike Trail
Pennsylvania



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Starting in Meadville, known as the home of the zipper, the 7.2-mile Ernst Trail closes the gap between the city and surrounding forests and farms for visitors. The trail is named for Calvin Ernst, who owned the unused right-of-way of the Meadville and Linesville Railway and donated it to French Creek Recreational Trails in 1996 for trail development.

One of the first towns settled in Northwestern Pennsylvania, Meadville became a destination for Revolutionary War veterans in the early 1800s, who received land grants for their service. Farming, logging, and iron production thrived, and the Meadville Railway Company laid tracks in 1881 to the Pennsylvania Railroad connection in Linesville to bring rail service to the area. That became the Meadville & Linesville Railway three

years later.

By 1900, the railway operated as the Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad, with passenger service to the summer resort at Conneaut Lake until 1934. Service on the Meadville branch ended in 1977. This period also saw the rise and fall of the local zipper industry operated by the Hookless Fastener Company, which was renamed Talon. Although developed in the 1890s, a good use for the zipper wasn't found until 1923, when B. F. Goodrich used the fastener on rubber galoshes called Zippers. The galoshes are long forgotten, but zippers survive today.

The old railroad corridor starts on Shippen Street across French Creek from downtown, taking a flat route. It heads south along French Creek before turning west around the base of a hill. You'll roll along the meandering creek for the first 3.4 miles of your visit. French Creek is considered one of the most biologically diverse streams in the state, as it's home to more than 80 species of fish and 26 species of mussels. Geologists explain that French Creek used to flow north to Lake Erie, but it changed course during the most recent ice age to flow south as a tributary of the Allegheny River. That allowed the river to adopt species from both the Great Lakes and the Ohio River.

Begin at the eastern end of Shippen St in the Kerrtown section of Meadville; crushed limestone and gravel comprise the trail surface of the first mile to the trailhead on US 19/US 322/Smock Highway. About 1.3 miles down the path, you'll cross a recently built covered bridge. The route then passes through a short stretch of cropland and forest alongside French Creek.

After 3.2 miles, the trail swings to the right and then heads west, crossing over Mercer Pike at 3.8 miles. Use caution here. The path then crosses under I-79, with the paved section ending at 5.5 miles (before the US 19/Perry Highway before the US 19/Perry Highway crossing). Turn right here, and go 0.2 mile to reach a trailhead and parking at Krider Road. Turn left onto gravel section before reaching the trailhead to travel



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States: Pennsylvania

Counties: Crawford

Length: 7.2miles

Trail end points: Shippen St near Park Row to Bailey Rd (Meadville)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Crushed Stone,Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Inline

Skating,Wheelchair Accessible,Walking,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available at a number of locations along the trail. Please view the map for all the options and for detailed directions.

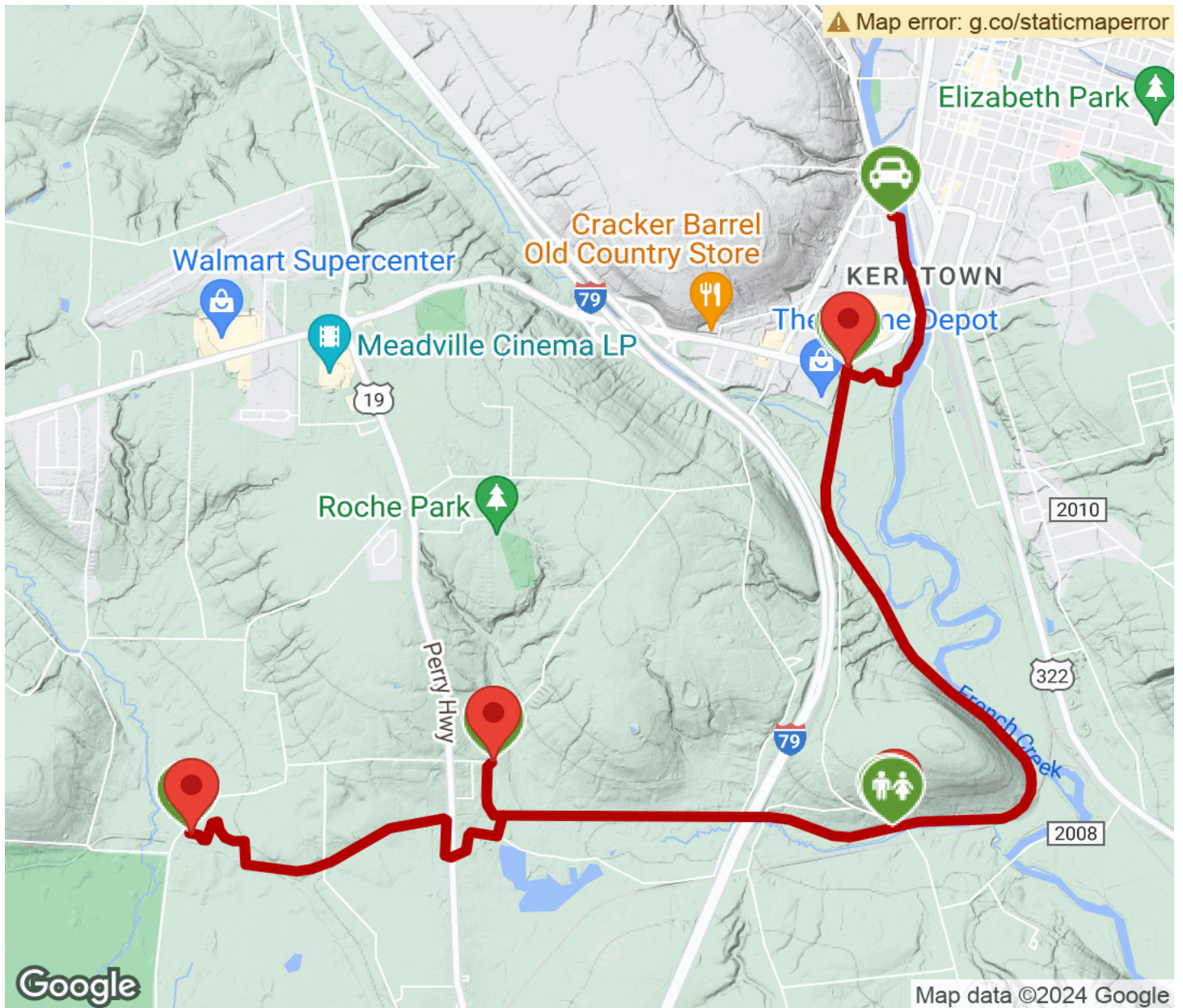
To reach the endpoint on Shippen St from I-79, take Exit 147A to US 6 E/US 322 E/US 19 N. Turn left onto Pennsylvania Ave., go 0.5 mile, and merge onto Pennsylvania Ave./SR 102. Go 0.4 mile, and turn right onto Shippen St. Go 0.2 mile, and look for trailhead parking directly ahead.

To reach the Bailey Road trailhead from I-79, take Exit 147B to US 6 W/US 322 W/US 19 S. Go 1.3 miles, and turn left onto US 19 S/Perry Hwy. Go 1.9 miles, and turn right onto Bailey Road. Go 0.7 mile, and turn left to stay on Bailey Road/T431. Go 0.6 mile, and turn left into the trailhead parking lot.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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