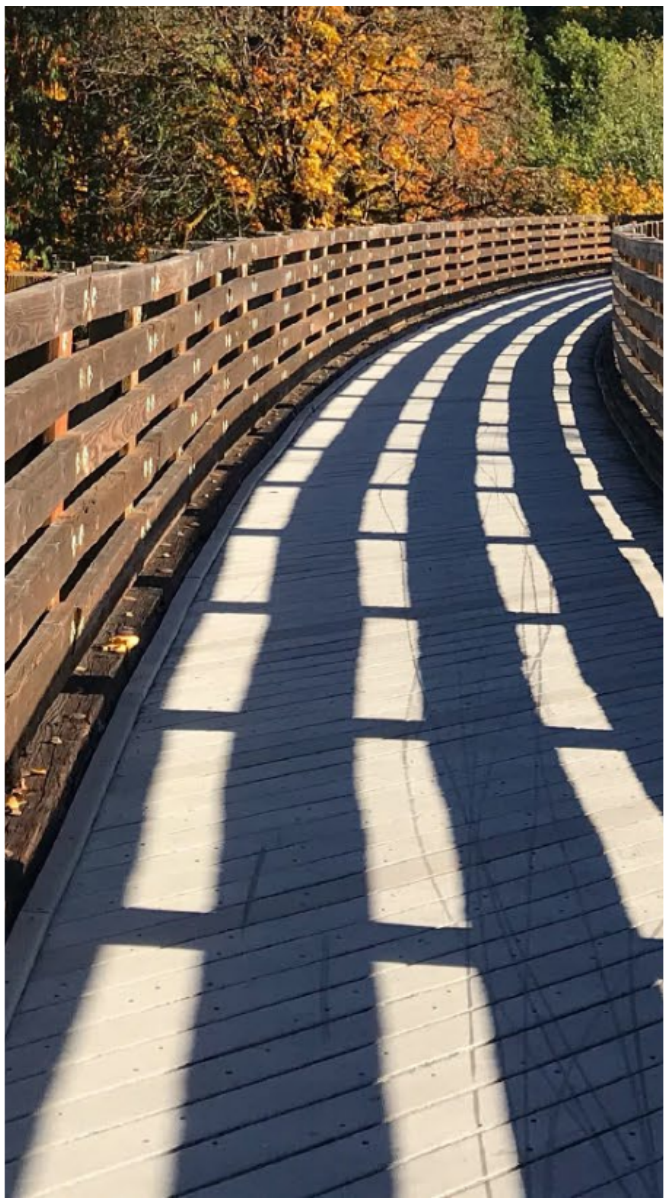
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2025

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Swatara Rail-Trail

Pennsylvania

Swatara Rail-Trail

Pennsylvania

The Swatara Rail-Trail runs for 10.2 miles between Lickdale and Pine Grove, snaking around an Appalachian Mountain in eastern

The Swatara Rail-Trail runs for 10.2 miles between Lickdale and Pine Grove, snaking around an Appalachian Mountain in eastern Pennsylvania. The trail passes through the forests of Swatara State Park most of the way, allowing for various activities on the multi-surface trail.

About the Route

The Swatara Rail-Trail's northern endpoint leaves off from the Hampton Inn Pine Grove and heads into 5 miles of wooded terrain and parkland. The trail passes a pedestrian bridge for the 0.4-mile Sand Siding Trail just after the halfway point. A side trip here crosses the creek and turns left for a mile on the Bear Hole Trail to an old log cabin built from on-site lumber and stone in 1939. The owner refused to leave when the park claimed the land, and the state let him live out his days here.

In another couple of miles, the trail begins a narrow passage through the water gap through Blue Mountain created by Swatara Creek. Here, the route passes the 1890 vintage Waterville Bridge, a 221-foot steel bridge relocated here after it was retired in the village of Waterville, over 100 miles from here. The bridge carries the Appalachian Trail across the creek and connects with the Bear Hole Trail, which runs 5 miles through the state park on the other side of the creek. Remains of seven locks, three dams, and sections of towpaths are visible in the state park.

The trail passes a historical marker nearby showing the spot of Fort Swatara, a stockaded blockhouse built in 1755 to guard settlements against attacks through the Swatara Gap during the French and Indian War. The southern endpoint for the trail sits just over a mile from this marker at a commercial campground in Lickdale.

Connections

The Swatara Rail-Trail intersects with the Bear Hole Trail just before the trail's midpoint and before the Sand Sliding Trailhead.

Trail History

The trail route started with the discovery of anthracite coal in nearby Tremont, prompting the construction of the Pine Grove feeder canal in the early 1800s that ran along Swatara Creek and connected with the main Union Canal near Lebanon. In 1862, a flood wiped out the feeder canal, which was never rebuilt. In the meantime, the Reading Railroad had built several connecting lines along the canal that were consolidated as the Lebanon and Tremont Branch in 1871. The Union Canal closed 14 years later.

Operating under several subsequent owners, the rail branch

Swatara Rail-Trail

Pennsylvania

States: Pennsylvania
Counties: Lebanon,Schuylkill
Length: 10.2miles
Trail end points: 481 Suedberg Road (Pine Grove) to 11 Lickdale Road (Lickdale)
Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Crushed Stone,Dirt,Grass
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Bike,Horseback Riding,Walking,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Swatara Rail-Trail runs between 481 Suedberg Road (Pine Grove) and 11 Lickdale Road (Lickdale), with parking available at the southern endpoint.

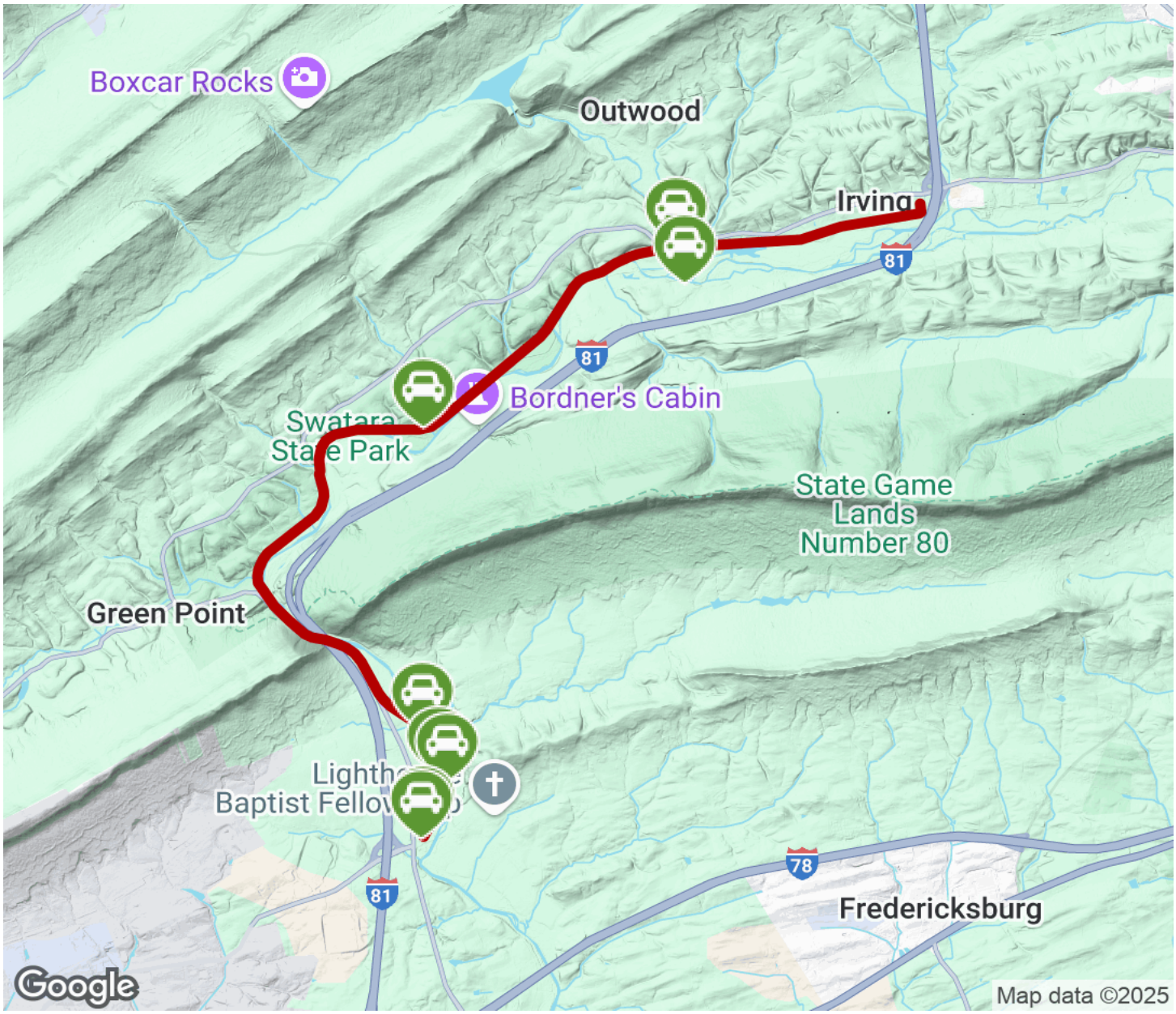
Parking is also available at:

- Sand Sliding Rd (Jonestown)
- Swatara Rail Trail - Lickdale Trailhead (Monroe Valley Rd)
- Suedberg Rd (Pine Grove)

Please see the TrailLink Map for all parking options and detailed directions.

Swatara Rail-Trail

Pennsylvania



Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com