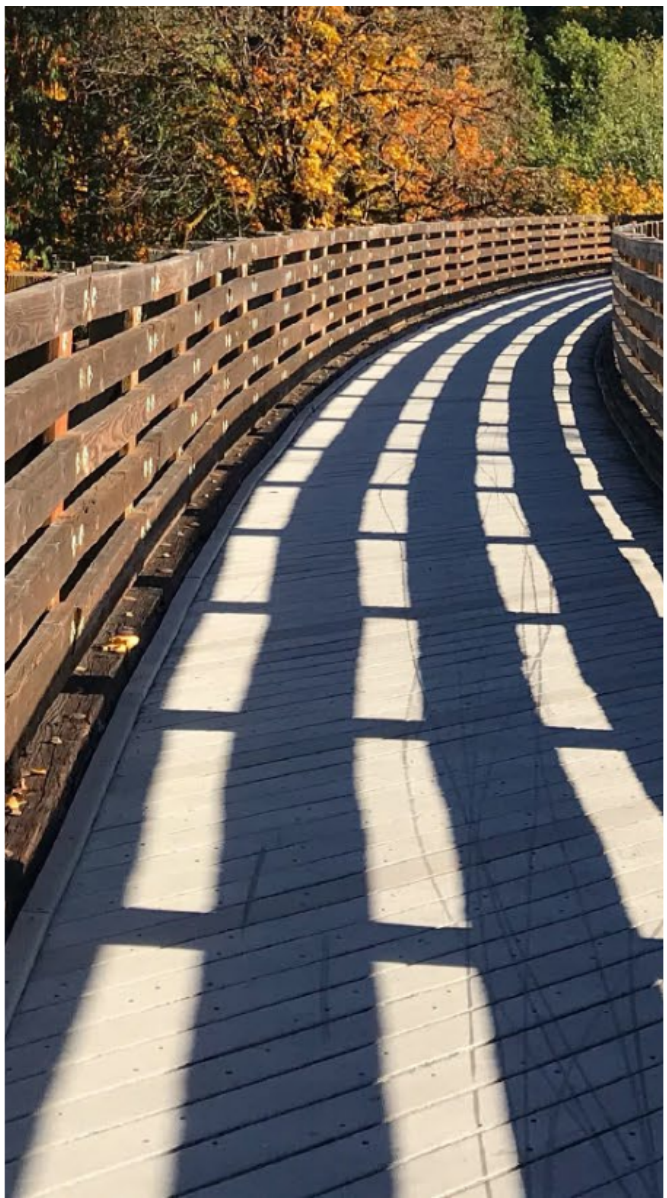
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2025

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Military Ridge State Trail

Wisconsin

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The Military Ridge State Trail finds the high ground as it rolls across 40 miles of idyllic farmland from the outskirts of Madison to the historic mining town of Dodgeville. It follows a native american footpath later used by pioneers and railroaders. Travelers will pass the base of the highest point in southern Wisconsin and find opportunities to explore small towns, state parks, and natural areas.

The trail was built on a branch of the Chicago and North Western Railway, which started service on the line in 1881 but stopped using it by 1982. Work on the trail started in 1983.

Snowmobiling is permitted on the limestone section of the trail but not on the paved section between Fitchburg and Verona.

About the Route

Leaving off in the east at the Madison suburb of Fitchburg, the route is comprised of a paved trail that parallels the busy US 18/151 for the first few miles. Just south of McKee Road, trail users will pass the junction for the Cannonball Path, which heads 3.9 miles northeast toward the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum. After crossing the first of nearly 50 bridges on the route, that paved trail becomes screened limestone as it leaves behind the noisy highway and enters the town of Verona. A park, coffeehouse, and brewpub are all within a block of the trail here. In Verona, the Military Ridge State Trail also meets the Ice Age Trail, a 1,200-mile hiking route across the state.

The trail crosses the Sugar River Wetlands as it leaves town, and then enters farmland on its way to Riley. In a couple of miles, the trail passes through Klevenville, and trail users may notice that the grade increases on the way to Mount Horeb, which celebrates its Norwegian settlers' heritage as the self-described "Troll Capital of the World." Located at about the trail's halfway point, the town offers plenty of cafés, bakeries, and brewpubs just a block or two north of the trail's visitor center.

From Mount Horeb, the trail traverses the top of Military Ridge, whose name comes from its use by the US Army and militias during the Black Hawk War in 1832. Local militia built a fort at the nearby town of Moundville (now Blue Mounds) during that war, sparked when American Indian followers of Sauk war chief Black Hawk attempted to resettle lands lost in a disputed treaty.

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Wisconsin

States: Wisconsin
Counties: Dane,Iowa
Length: 40miles
Trail end points: N Iowa St. (Dodgeville) to Cottonwood Dr. (Fitchburg)
Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Crushed Stone
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Bike,Inline Skating,Fishing,Wheelchair Accessible,Snowmobiling,Walking,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Military Ridge State Trail runs between N Iowa St. (Dodgeville) and Cottonwood Dr. (Fitchburg).

Parking is available at:

- Mounds View Park, 10900-10978 Brigham Ave. (Blue Mounds)
- Liberty Park, 1201 Cox Dr. (Mount Horeb)
- Hometown USA Community Park, 531 E Verona Ave. (Verona)

See TrailLink Map for all parking options and detailed directions.

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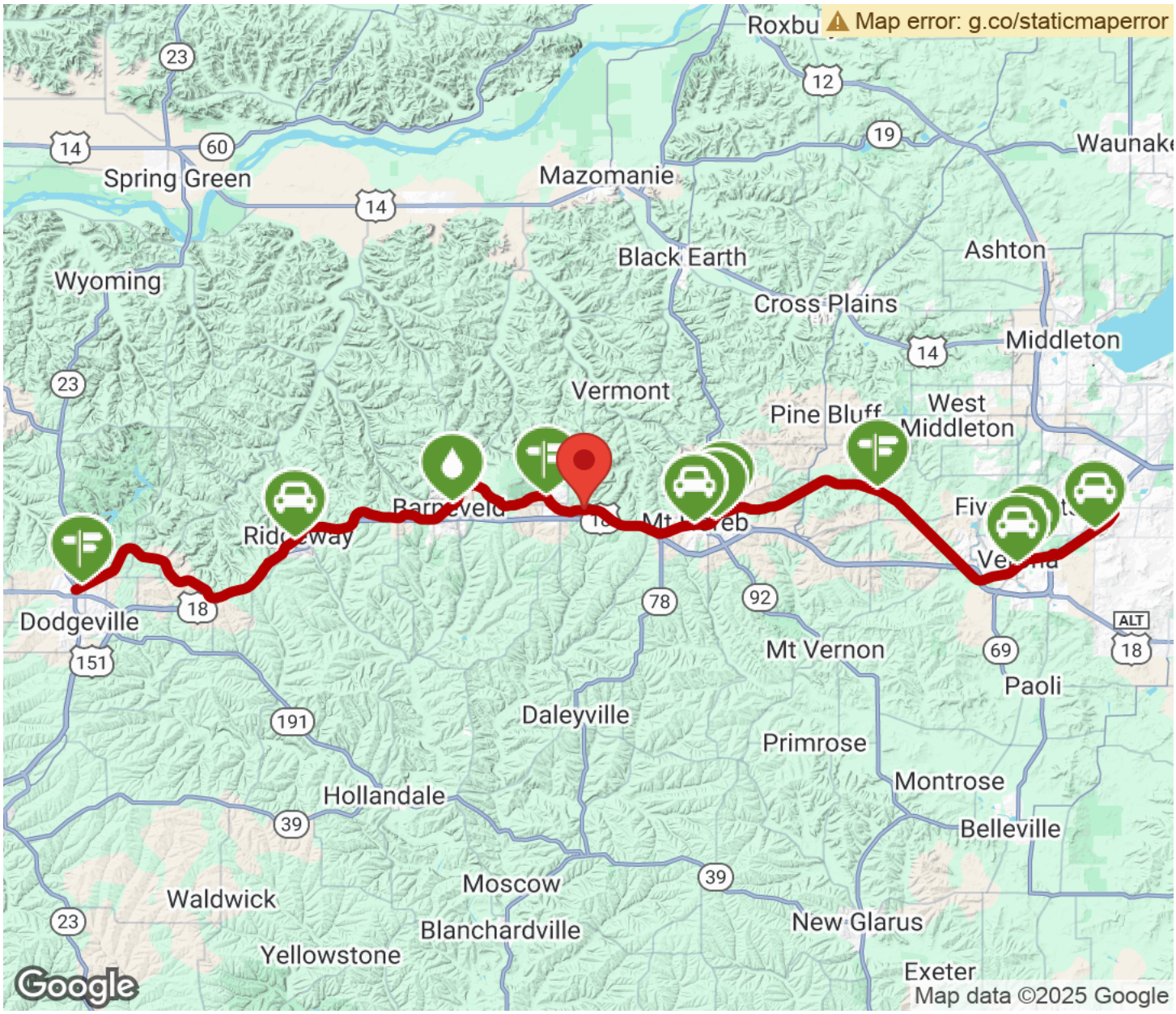

Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

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