



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



# Union Canal Trail

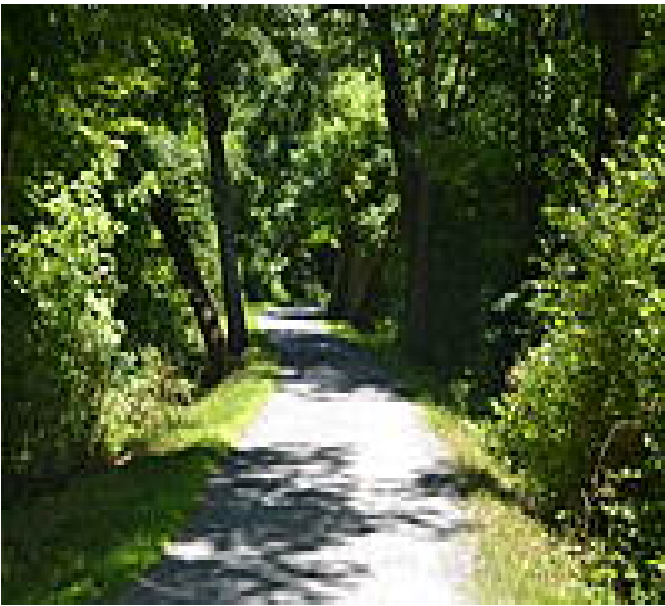
*Pennsylvania*



## Union Canal Trail

Pennsylvania

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The Union Canal Trail runs along the Tulpehocken Creek from the city of Reading up to Blue Marsh Lake in Leesport. The trail makes up a segment of the 71.7-mile [Schuylkill River Trail](#) in southeastern Pennsylvania. The flat, crushed-stone trail surface makes for a comfortable journey on foot, bicycle, cross-country skis, or even snowshoes.

The Union Canal historically connected the Schuylkill River in Reading to the Susquehanna River in Middletown, creating a means to ship coal and lumber from the rest of Pennsylvania to Philadelphia. Construction began during George Washington's presidency but was not completed until 1828. The canal ran 82 miles and had 93 locks, the remnants of several of which are visible along the trail. The canal operated until

the 1880s, when the combination of costly repairs and the emergence of the Lebanon Valley Railroad led to the canal ending service.

Beginning in a public parking lot at the Stonecliffe Recreation Area in Reading, you'll head north along Tulpehocken Creek, a tributary of the Schuylkill River. About 0.8 mile into your ride, you'll pass a bridge across the creek that leads to the Berks Leisure Area of the Berks County Park Rangers. This area has a picnic pavilion and restrooms.

Crossing back over the bridge and continuing down the trail another 1.8 miles will bring you to the Berks County Heritage Center, a historical interpretive complex. Here you'll find the Gruber Wagon Works, a facility that made wagons from the 1880s to the 1950s. In the late 1970s, the building was relocated to its current location and designated a national historic landmark. The Heritage Center also includes the Red Bridge, originally known as Wertz's Bridge. The longest covered bridge in Pennsylvania, the Red Bridge crosses over the creek to provide trail access from its southern bank. Another site at the center is the C. Howard Hiester Canal Center, which details the history of the canal system in the United States and southeastern Pennsylvania.

Another 1.8 miles will take you to the end of the main portion of the trail at the intersection of Rebers Bridge Road. There is parking available just south of the creek across the bridge. This area is known for its fly-fishing. The remainder of the trail is also known as the Union Canal Connector, as it bridges the gap between the Union Canal Trail and the 28.6-mile [Blue Marsh Lake Multi-Use Trail](#).

The first leg of the connector has a similar surface to the previous section of trail, though it's slightly less developed. In about 0.8 mile from Rebers Bridge Road, you will encounter a fairly steep curved hill as you reach a parking lot at Swiftwater Lane/Palisesades Road. For the remaining mile of the connector, you'll ride alongside fields and grassland. This



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**States:** Pennsylvania

**Counties:** Berks

Length: 6.5miles

**Trail end points:** Stonecliffe Recreation Area at Columbia St. and Montgomery St. (Reading) to Blue Marsh Lake Multi-Use Trail at Palisades Dr. just south of County Welfare Road (Leesport)

**Trail surfaces:** Crushed Stone,Gravel

**Trail category:** Canal

**Trail activities:** Fishing,Wheelchair

## Parking & Trail Access

To access the Stonecliffe Recreation Area trailhead in Reading from I-176, take Exit 11B to merge onto US 422 W. In 4.9 miles take the exit onto SR 12 E toward Pricetown. Go 0.5 mile, and turn right onto Chester St. Go 0.2 mile, and turn right at the second cross street (0.2 mile) onto Columbia St. Go 0.2 mile, and the road terminates at the Stonecliffe Recreation Area parking lot, to your left.

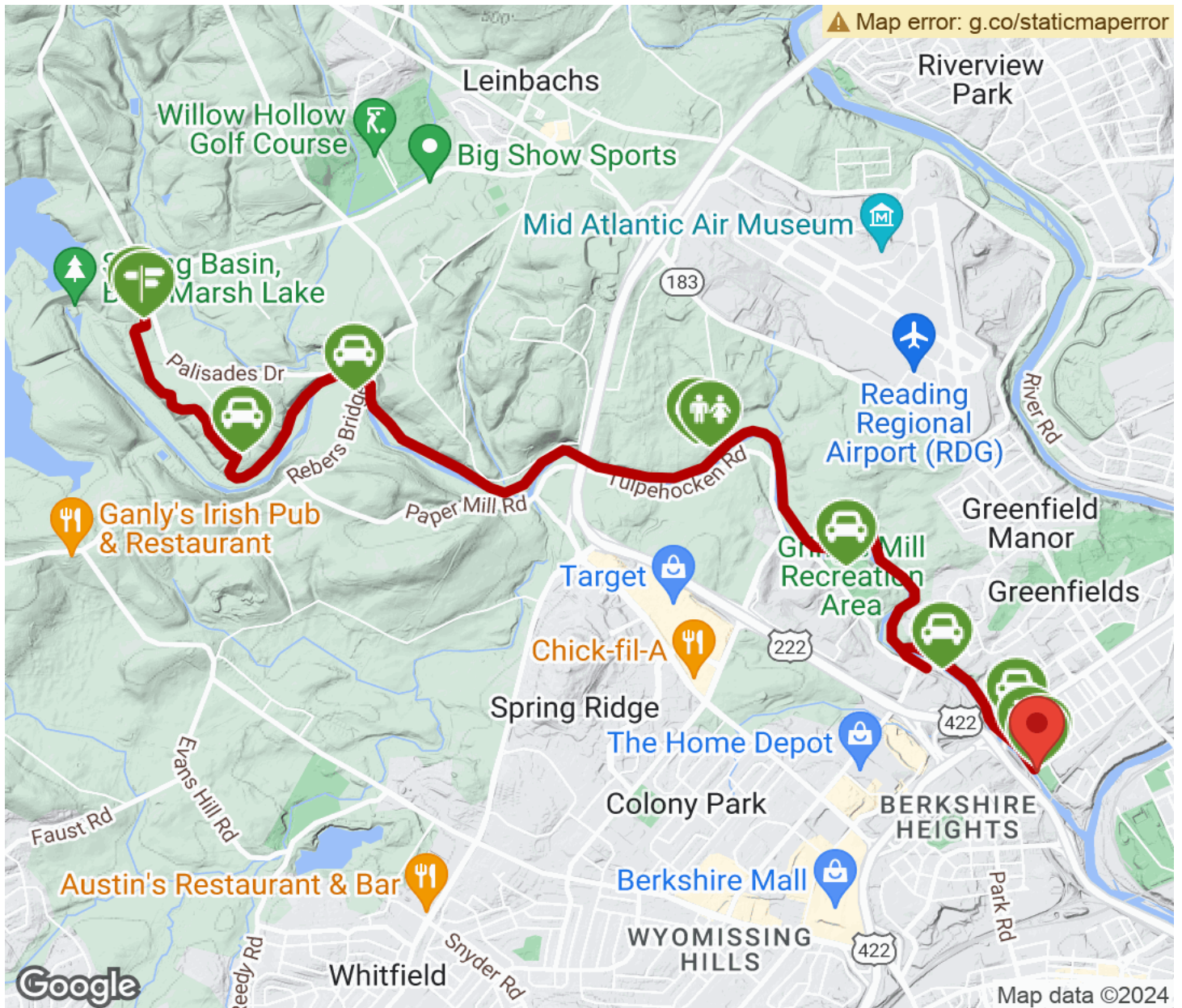
To access parking at the northern endpoint near Blue Marsh Lake from I-176, take Exit 11B to merge onto US 422 W. In 5.8 miles continue onto US 222 N. Go 1.1 miles, and take the Spring Ridge Dr. exit. Turn left onto Spring Ridge Dr., and go 0.1 mile. Turn right onto Paper Mill Road, go 0.3 mile, and turn left to stay on Paper Mill Road. Go 1.1 miles, turn right onto Rebers Bridge Road, and then go 0.6 mile. After you cross the creek, turn left onto Palisades Dr., and go 1.0 mile. Turn left onto the access road, and then take an immediate right into the parking lot.





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- Trailhead
- Restroom
- Parking
- Water Fountain
- Tunnel