**TrailLink**
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

**2026**

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# Guides

## Tunnel Hill State Trail
*Illinois*

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*With a dark railroad tunnel and two dozen trestles crossing streams and rocky ravines, the scenic Tunnel Hill State Trail*

With a dark railroad tunnel and two dozen trestles crossing streams and rocky ravines, the scenic Tunnel Hill State Trail travels 55 miles through forests, wetlands, farmlands and towns in the rural countryside of southern Illinois. The aptly-named town of Tunnel Hill marks the route's crest, where a 543 foot tunnel changes a gentle uphill into a gradual downhill in either direction.

About the Route

The western endpoint of the Tunnel Hill State Trail is at the Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center, in Cypress, 3.5 miles south of the town center. From here, the trail heads east to Karnak through the swampy Cache River State Natural Area, home to giant cypress trees, some 1,000 years old. In Karnak, the trail passes a

campground, where it turns northeast to follow Karnak Rd, on a straight-away enveloped by tree canopy. In Belknap, the trail passes the Heron Pond–Little Black Slough followed by the Cave Creek Glade Nature Preserves, both wetland forests rich with wildlife. After passing underneath US-45, the trail comes to the town of Vienna, where a trailside park offers a spot to rest, peruse the Forman Depot Museum, or take a look at the giant penny-farthing sculpture. Cafés and groceries are also available nearby in town.

Continuing to make its way north, the trail enters the Shawnee National Forest and steepens slightly on a 6 mile stretch between Bloomfield and its highest point in Tunnel Hill. Here, as the name suggests, a 543-foot tunnel takes the trail into pitch black. A flashlight or bike lamp is a must. As it re-emerging into the light, the trail comes to a trailhead in the town of Tunnel Hill, which has bathrooms, parking, and drinking fountains.

A high canopy of the Shawnee National Forest provides ample shade for the 6 mile forested stretch between Tunnel Hill and New Burnside. Once it crosses IL-166 in New Burnside, the trail follows nearby US-45, which it runs adjacent to for 1.5 miles approaching the town of Stonefort. Here, a restored railroad depot next to the trail houses a museum. Northeast of Stonefort, US-45 remains in sight most of the way to Carrier Mills. Keep an eye out for turtles and snakes, which also like to use this trail.

After passing farm fields, the trail comes to the east side of Harrisburg, the largest town on the route, with restaurants, grocery stores, and motels nearby. Leaving Harrisburg, the trail crosses IL-13 and then a bridge across Middle Fork of the Saline River, before continuing for 8 more miles northeast to Eldorado. Upon entering Eldorado, the trail shares an on-road right-of-way with Kennedy St. for just under a mile. The Tunnel Hill State Trail's northern endpoint is near the Eldorado High School athletic fields, about 1200 feet due east of 2213 N Main St. in Eldorado.

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**States:** Illinois

**Counties:** Johnson,Pulaski,Saline,Williamson

Length: 55.2miles

**Trail end points:** Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center (Cypress)  to Eldorado High School Athletic Fields (Eldorado)

**Trail surfaces:** Boardwalk,Concrete,Crushed Stone

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

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

## Parking & Trail Access

The Tunnel Hill State Trail runs between the Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center (Cypress) and the athletic fields at Eldorado High School (Eldorado), with parking available at the endpoint in Cypress.

Parking is also available at:
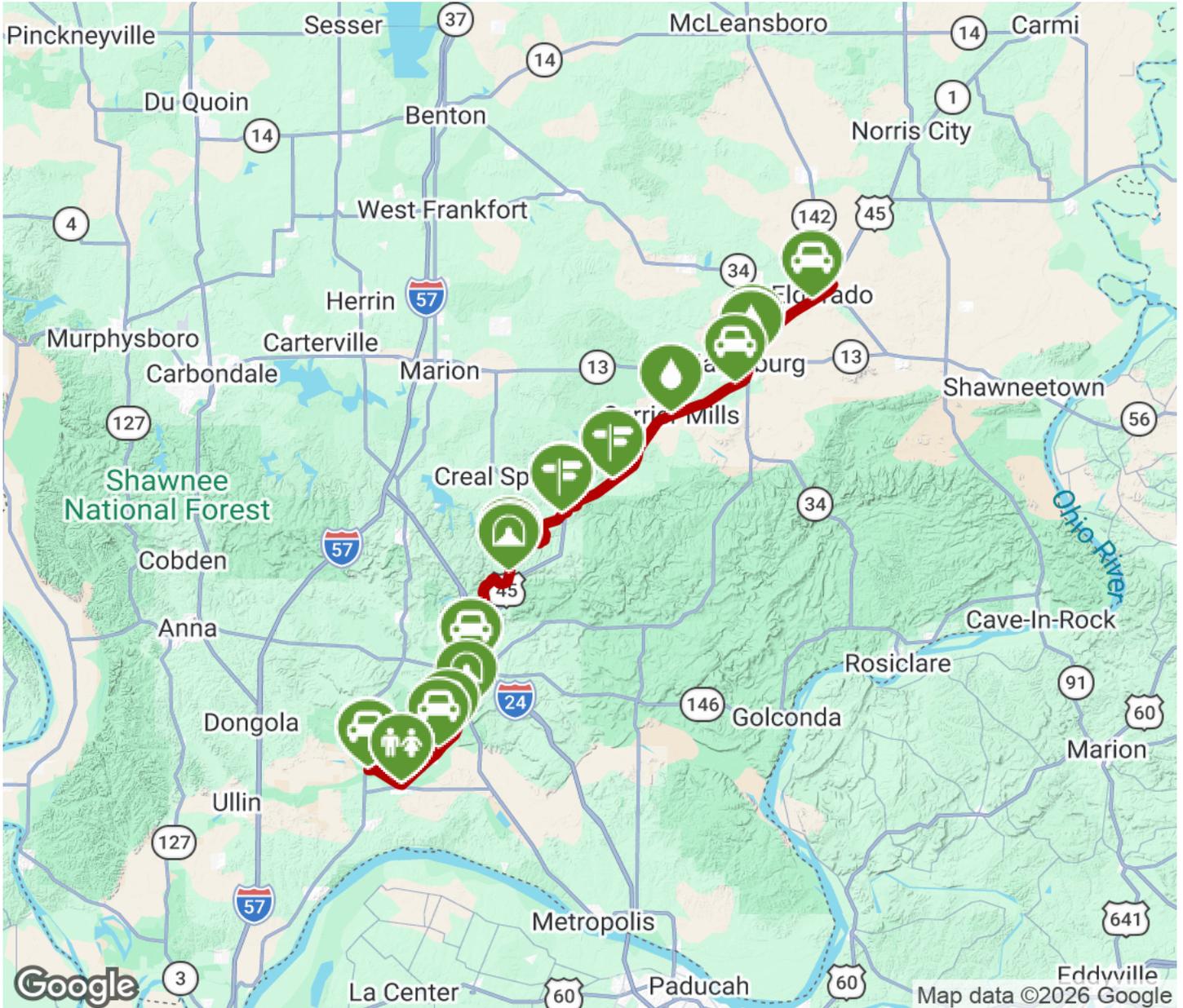
• 302 E Vine St (Vienna)
• 20 W 2nd St (New Burnside)
• 1422 US-45 (Eldorado)

There are numerous parking options along this route, see TrailLink Map for all parking options and detailed directions.

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Pinckneyville · Sesser · 37 · McLeansboro · 14 · Carmi

14 · 14 · Norris City · 1

Du Quoin · Benton · 45 · 142

4 · West Frankfort · 34 · Eldorado

Herrin · 57 · 13 · burg · 13 · Shawneetown

Murphysboro · Carterville · 56

Carbondale · Marion · Carrier Mills

127 · Creal Sp · 34

Shawnee National Forest · 57 · Cave-In-Rock

Cobden · 45 · Rosiclare · 91 · 60

Anna · 24 · 146 · Golconda · Marion

Dongola · 57

Ullin · 127 · Metropolis · 641

57 · La Center · 60 · Paducah · 60 · Eddyville · 3

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**Trailhead** · **Restroom** · **Parking** · **Water Fountain** · **Tunnel**

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