



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**Heritage Trail
of Madison**
Indiana



Heritage Trail of Madison Indiana

The Heritage Trail of Madison connects the downtown of Madison, Indiana, with its steep hilltop section. Begin your journey at the



cut,” this part of the old railroad line had the steepest incline of any standard gauge railroad in the country.

Traveling southwest from just north of the bridge over Crooked Creek will lead you via a gravel-surfaced trail to Clifty Hollow Road/State Route 56 near the entrance to Clifty Falls State Park. Continuing northwest instead will take you up the steep hill through dense forest to the historic Madison State Hospital. With a grade of 6% to 10%, this segment is challenging for most users, although the trail is paved from there to its northern terminus.

The Madison State Hospital, which occupies much of the hilltop, is the ultimate destination. Stop to take a breather and gaze in awe at the stunning views of downtown Madison, the Ohio River and rural Kentucky on the opposite shore. The psychiatric hospital, which is still active, is alone worth a trip. Opened in 1910, the innovative facility eschewed physical violence in favor of “moral treatment,” which coupled a beautiful, calming environment with productive work. Most of the Mediterranean-influenced buildings with red tile roofs are still standing today.

The Heritage Trail of Madison connects the downtown of Madison, Indiana, with its steep hilltop section. Begin your journey at the intersection of Vaughn Drive and Vernon Street along the Ohio River. From there, the trail follows an abandoned Madison, Indianapolis & Lafayette Railroad corridor north through a strand of trees before emerging at the local wastewater treatment plant. The railroad tracks are still in place, and the trail has a natural surface at times with gravel occasionally present.

After passing under Main Street, you have the option to continue up either McIntire Street or the old railroad grade—first crossing an old bridge over Crooked Creek—to reach the switchback portion of the Heritage Trail. Be sure to take a peek north up the corridor from the east side of McIntire Street: known as “the incline” or “the



Heritage Trail of Madison

Indiana

States: Indiana

Counties: Jefferson

Length: 2miles

Trail end points: W. Vaughn Dr. and Vernon St.
at the Ohio River (downtown) to Madison State
Hospital (hilltop)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Dirt,Grass,Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Inline

Skating,Walking,Wheelchair Accessible,Cross
Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

Parking for the Heritage Trail of Madison is available at the intersection of Vaughn Drive and Vernon Street in downtown Madison. Farther north, limited parking can be found at the end of McIntire Street. If you choose to start your journey at the top of the hill and travel down the steep incline, park at the Madison State Hospital off N. Outer Road.



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Heritage Trail of Madison

Indiana



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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