



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides   



**Des Plaines
River Trail**
Illinois



Des Plaines River Trail

Illinois

The Des Plaines River Trail runs alongside the Des Plaines River for just over 56 miles, protecting watershed habitat and forestland



The Des Plaines River Trail runs alongside the Des Plaines River for just over 56 miles, protecting watershed habitat and forestland through much of Lake and Cook Counties. The trail is a natural oasis within a short drive of Chicago and its northern suburbs. Having such a long, lush trail just outside of such a densely populated urban area is truly a wonderful asset to the surrounding community.

About the Route

There are a variety of trail surfaces across the whole route, from pavement to crushed stone to single-track forest trail. Be prepared for this terrain to change quickly and often for an exciting adventure at every turn. The northernmost 20 miles of the trail are well maintained and frequented by nearby residents. Keep an eye out for

deer, birds, snakes, and turtles, all native to the area and abundant along the path.

Moving farther south, the corridor becomes narrow and filled with roots in certain segments. If the ground is wet, be careful when making turns. Also be cautious at the multiple instances where the trail crosses over several highly trafficked roads. Most of these intersections are well marked and have signals for cars to stop. Additionally, several crossings are by tunnel, which makes it much easier to continue along the trail at these intersections.

Nearly the entire length of the trail is hemmed in by various forest preserves including Van Patten Woods, Wadsworth Savanna, Sedge Meadow, Lake Carina, Captain Daniel Wright Woods, Camp Pine Woods, Schiller Woods and more.

Just north of Golf Road in Des Plaines, the trail runs into an active railroad line and continues just on the other side of the tracks. Caution should be used here when crossing the tracks. About 3 miles of the trail parallel tracks in a [rail-with-trail](#) formation.

Restrooms, picnic areas, and water fountains are frequent throughout this system of connected forest preserves. Several parking lots are also located along the trail's entire length, making it easy to access the route at a variety of points.

In Lake County, snowmobiles are permitted along the trail between Wadsworth Road (and in the wetlands research project area) and the northern terminus at Russell Road.

Connections

In Wheeling, the trail connects with the [Phyllis Harmon Path](#).



Des Plaines River Trail

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States: Illinois

Counties: Cook, Lake

Length: 56.1 miles

Trail end points: 15601 W Russell Rd
(Wadsworth) to Sunset Bridge Meadow (River
Grove)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Crushed
Stone, Dirt, Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Horseback
Riding, Mountain

Parking & Trail Access

The Des Plaines River Trail runs between 15601 W Russell Rd (Wadsworth) and Sunset Bridge Meadow (River Grove), with parking and restrooms available on both ends.

Parking is also available at:

- 16400 W Buckley Rd (Libertyville)
- 619 S Milwaukee Ave (Vernon Hills)
- River Trail Nature Center, 3120 Milwaukee Ave (Northbrook)

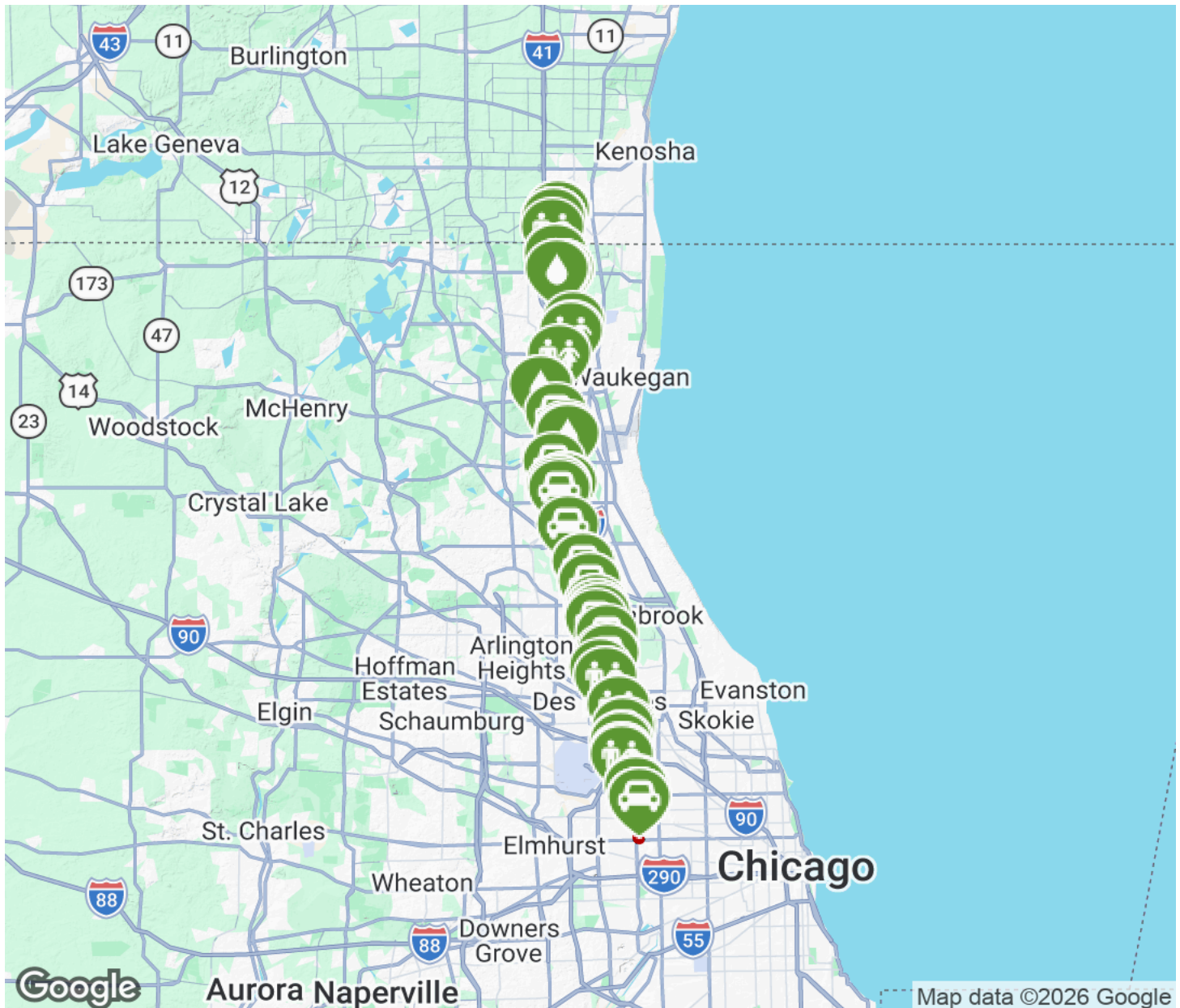
The Chicago suburbs have a robust public transit system that provides car-free trail access, [here](#).

Parking is available at a number of locations along the trail, please see [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



Des Plaines River Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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