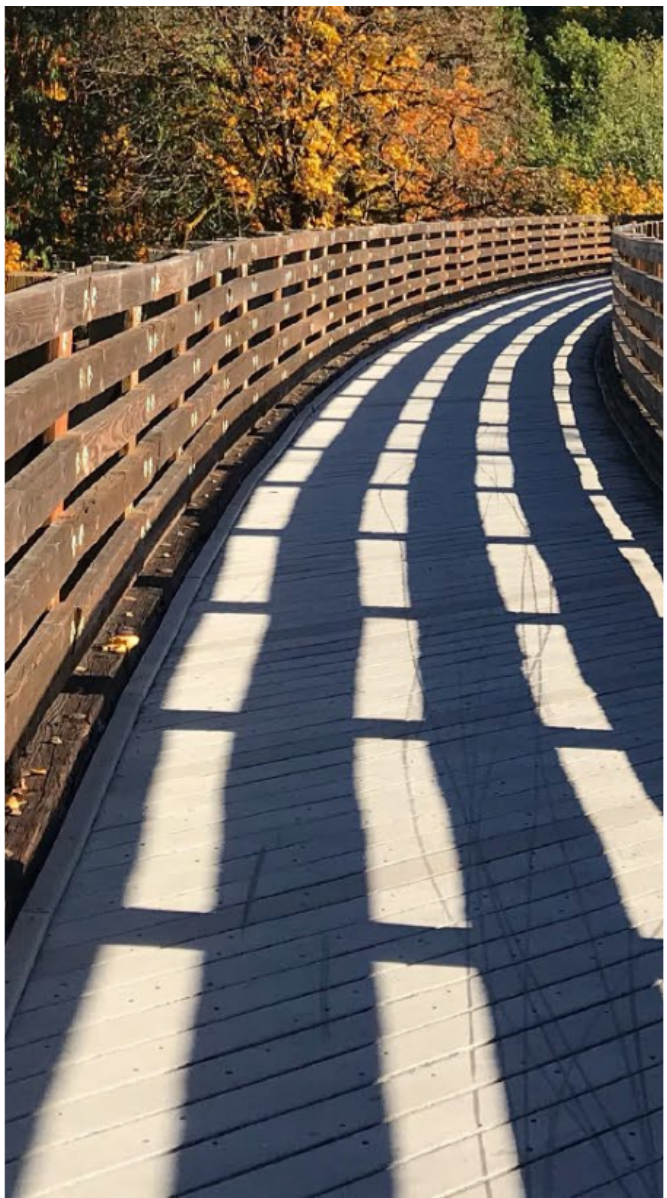
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2026

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Blackhand Gorge Trail

Ohio

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Closure Notice: The Blackhand Gorge Trail is experiencing ongoing closures due to construction. Please check with Ohio DNR for more

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The Blackhand Gorge Trail is the only bike path in the Ohio nature preserve system, and in just over 4 miles, its users are treated to some of the best scenery in the state. Inside the State Nature Reserve of the same name, cyclists, hikers and other trail users will marvel at the adjacent river, pools of spring water, and a path rich with transportation history, all while trekking through dense woodlands that provide year-round shade.

About the Route

The Blackhand Gorge Trail runs east-west through the Blackhand Gorge State Nature Reserve. The Blackhand Gorge Trail's western endpoint is at 14001 Brushy Fork Rd SE (Heath).

The trail loosely follows the Licking River as it meanders for 4.3 miles through the parks's stunning sandstone formations. As the trail was built on a former rail corridor, uphill and downhill grades are gentle, and the local railroad history unmissable, as you pass through huge pieces of blasted rock and decommissioned tracks that are still visible throughout the trail. Additionally, visitors will find the historic towpath and locks of the Ohio-Erie Canal, remnants of the gorge's canal era. A well-preserved trestle bridge, located 1 mile from the eastern endpoint, blends seamlessly into the lush natural landscape, while letting visitors get up close to its rusted crossties and looming supports.

The Blackhand Gorge Trail's eastern endpoint is at 2200 Gratiot Rd SE (Toboso).

Connections

The Blackhand Gorge Trail is the only paved, multi-use trail through the State Park. Multiple hiking-only trails branch off from the Blackhand Gorge Trail, offering additional opportunities for trail users to explore the beautiful and historic nature preserve.

Trail History

The gorge and its sandstone formations were carved by the Licking River millennia ago. The name "Blackhand" originates from a Native American carving found on the face of a sandstone cliff on the Licking River's northern bank. The engraving, in the shape of a hand, was destroyed in 1828 to make way for a towpath for the the Ohio-Erie Canal. In 1850, the Central Ohio Railroad laid the first railway tracks through the gorge, which by 1865 was part of the Baltimore and Ohio

Blackhand Gorge Trail

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States: Ohio
Counties: Licking
Length: 4.3miles
Trail end points: Gratiot Rd. SE and Claypool Rd. (Toboso) to Brushy Fork Rd. SE just east of Brownsville Rd. SE
Trail surfaces: Asphalt
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Bike,Fishing,Inline Skating,Walking,Wheelchair Accessible,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Blackhand Gorge Trail runs between 14001 Brushy Fork Rd SE (Heath) and 2200 Gratiot Rd SE (Toboso). Parking is available at both endpoints.

See TrailLink Map for detailed directions.

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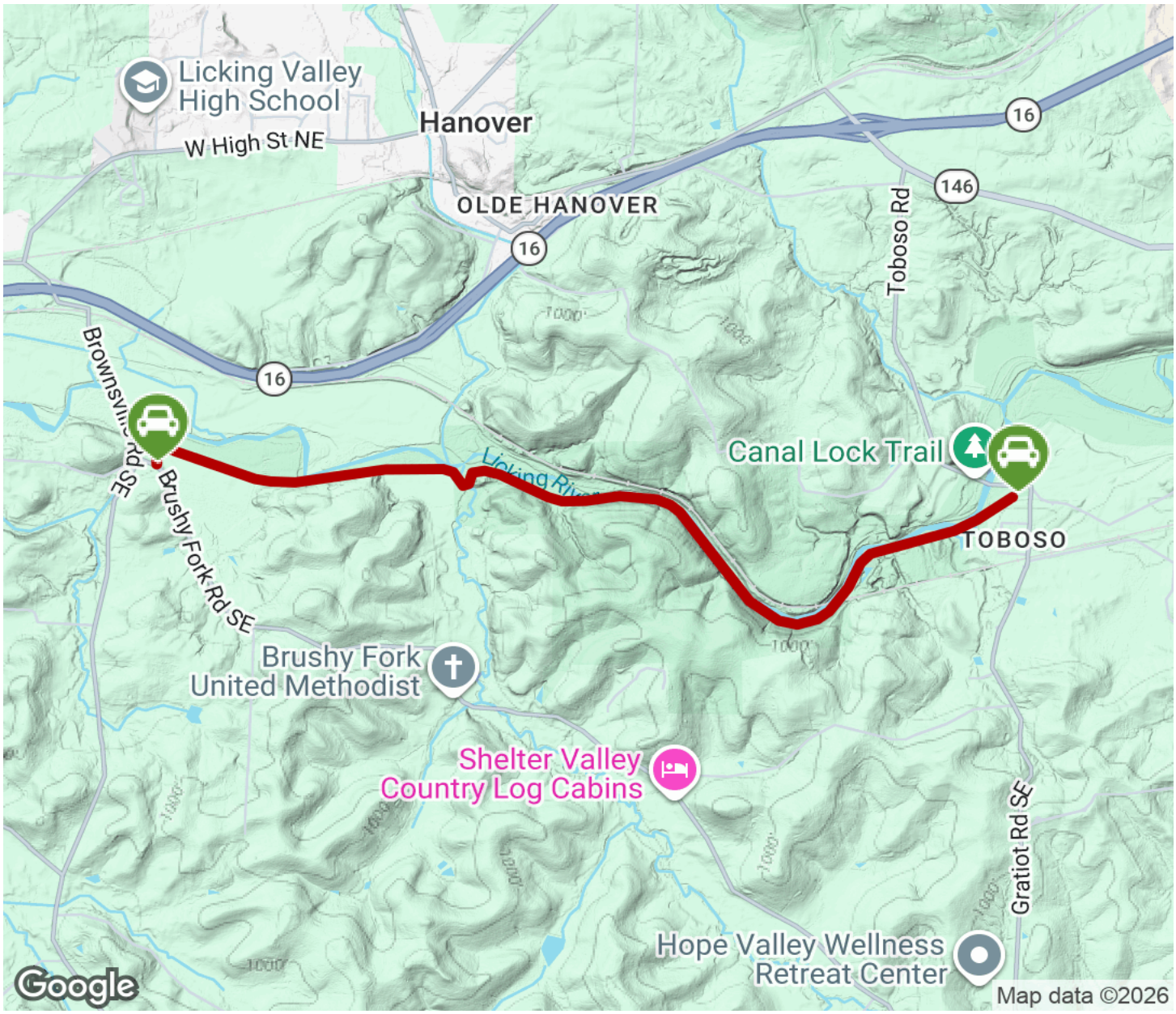

Trailhead | Restroom | Parking | Water Fountain | Tunnel

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