



2026

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



High Trestle Trail

Iowa



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The High Trestle Trail, which spans 31.4 miles across Iowa, is one of the most pristine and highly trafficked trails in Iowa—even at night. The trail's popularity is largely due to its famous 130-foot-tall High Trestle Bridge, which boasts one of the most well-known rail-trail art installations in the country, *From Here to There*. Wrapped in 43 twisting, diamond-shaped steel ribs lined with LED lights, the bridge elicits the sensation of traveling down a mine shaft—a nod to the area's coal-mining history.

About the Route

For individuals strictly interested in viewing the high trestle bridge (note that the trail is open 24 hours a day), there are two ideal entrance points. One, with lots of

parking and a historic rail house, is located at the trail's northwest endpoint in Woodward. The other—significantly closer than the Woodward access point—is a small parking area just off the trail outside of Madrid.

If you're interested in traveling the entirety of the High Trestle Trail, a great place to start is at the northwest endpoint, located just west of Woodward. Exhibits inside the former rail house at this trailhead explore the history of the disused line the trail now inhabits, and art and local signage pay homage to both the trail and the area's railroad days.

Heading east, the route takes you down a wide concrete path with typical Iowa farmland on either side. As you get closer to the Des Moines River, the landscape becomes more wooded and then opens to the entrance of the trestle bridge, where you are welcomed by large concrete decorated columns—the beginnings of the art installation *From Here to There*.

Before entering the bridge, look to your left for a path that leads to an overlook; here you can see a breathtaking view of the trestle as it stretches out over the river. Entering the bridge itself, you'll be treated to another fantastic view as you are suspended higher and higher out over the river. The bridge's most notable feature is its collection of steel beams shaped and positioned to give the illusion of gliding movement if you're bike riding below them. At night, the beams are lined with glowing blue lights that create an otherworldly experience.

Past the bridge, the trail continues straight through forested areas and farmland before bending slightly and heading through the middle of the town of Madrid. Here, you'll find multiple spots for refreshment along the trail. Note the small tunnel decorated with trail- and railroad-themed paintings.

Leaving Madrid, you begin a long, straight stretch to Slater, passing by the backs of farmhouses, over small creeks, and—depending on the season—by expanses of wildflowers that



High Trestle Trail

Iowa

States: Iowa

Counties: Boone, Dallas, Polk, Story

Length: 31.74 miles

Trail end points: Quinlan Ave (Woodward) to
Gay Lea Wilson Trail Trail just south of
Southeast Oralabor Rd (Ankeny)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Concrete

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Horseback Riding, Inline
Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross
Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The High Trestle Trail runs between Quinlan Ave (Woodward) and the Gay Lea Wilson Trail just south of Southeast Oralabor Rd (Ankeny).

Parking is available at:

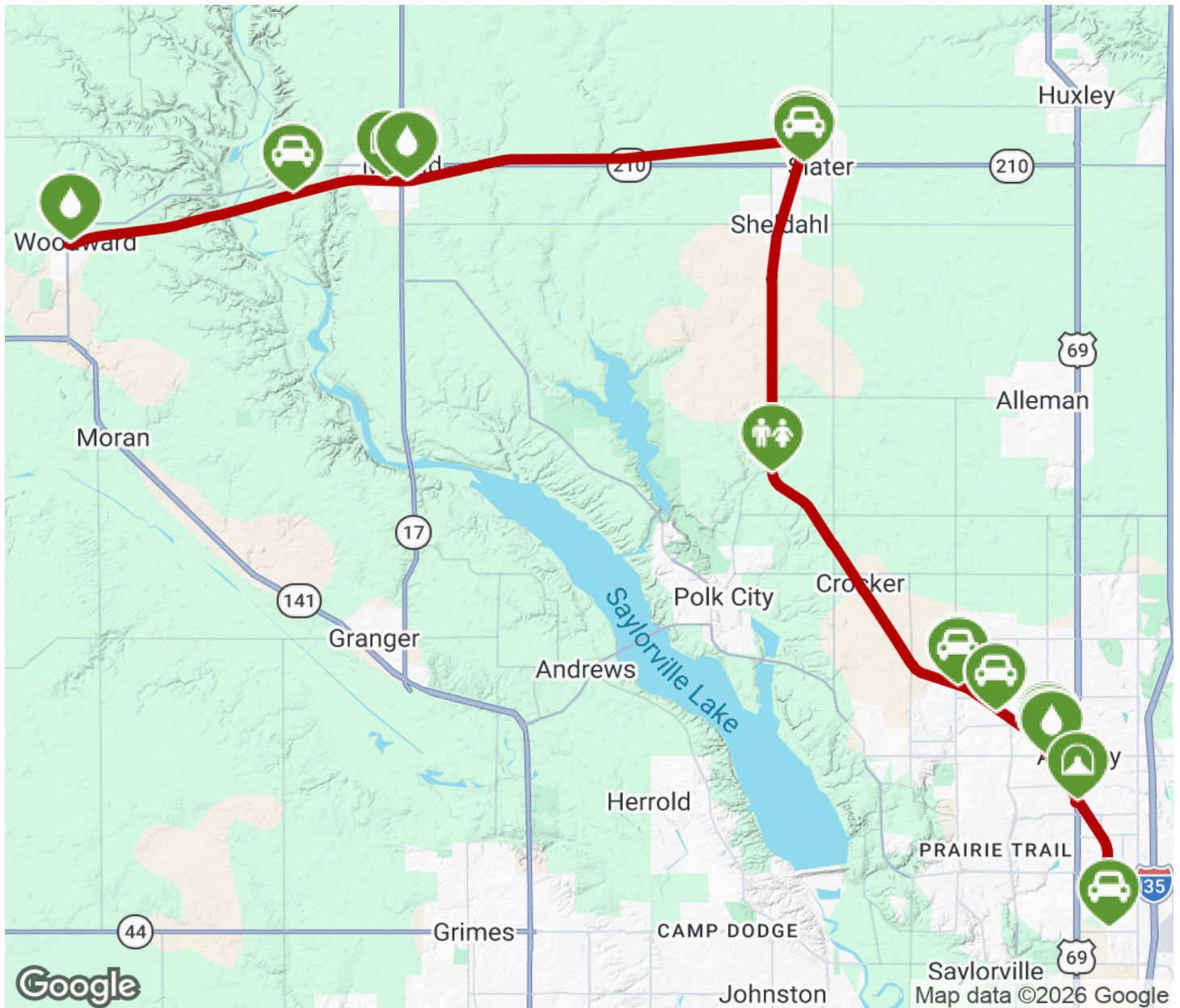
- 702 E 3rd St (Madrid)
- Greentree Park, 1914 NW Hickory Ln (Ankeny)

There are several parking options available for this trail, please see [TrailLink map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



High Trestle Trail

Iowa



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com