



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Lake Michigan Pathway (Route of the Badger)

Wisconsin



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The 13.5-mile Lake Michigan Pathway keeps you in close touch with the sixth-largest freshwater lake in the world as it links rail-trails



The 13.5-mile Lake Michigan Pathway keeps you in close touch with the sixth-largest freshwater lake in the world as it links rail-trails north and south of the port city of Racine. Along the way, the trail visits such attractions as beaches, marinas, parks, the zoo, and museums, as well as the revitalized downtown district.

The Root River splits the Lake Michigan Pathway where it empties into the lake, marking the location of a settlement that came to be known as Racine, French for "root," in 1841. Danish immigrants who began arriving after the Civil War influenced the city's culture and cuisine, specifically in its bakeries serving fruit- and nut-filled pastries called kringle.

Using the paved path alongside the lake as well as city

streets, the Lake Michigan Pathway serves commuters as well as sightseers. In the north, it connects to the [MRK Trail](#) (named for the Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha Electric Railway) at South Street and 3 Mile Road. In the south it connects to the [North Shore Trail](#) at Chicory Road.

The highlight for visitors is the 3.3 miles of off-street paved trail that runs alongside Lake Michigan. Beginning at Samuel Myers Park (parking is available here and along the lakeshore), you can hop on the pathway and follow it north toward downtown, passing Pershing Park on the left. In 0.6 mile, you'll pass the Civic Centre and Festival Park concert and event venues. Together with the 900-slip marina, they make up part of the harbor revitalization project that got under way in the 1980s.

The pathway heads up Root River to the Main Street bridge. A left turn onto Main Street leads to a four-block side trip to the Racine Art Museum. A right turn crosses the bridge, where you can take another side trip upstream on the 4-mile Root River Pathway to a bird sanctuary. To stay on the Lake Michigan Pathway, follow the signs. Back on the off-road trail, you'll pass a 0.5-mile gravel trail atop a breakwater that juts into the lake.

The white sands of North Beach, a popular spot for swimming, sunbathing, and trout and salmon fishing, stretch for a half mile along the lakefront north of the breakwater. The beach ends at the entrance to the Racine Zoo. About 0.3 mile north, the off-road portion of the pathway ends and continues as an on-street or sidewalk route marked by lake michigan pathway signs.

To explore southern Racine from Samuel Myers Park, take the Lake Michigan Pathway west as it becomes an on-street and sidewalk route on 11th Street. Turn left onto Main Street to head south. (About 0.3 mile south, you can take a side trip west on 14th Street for 0.4 mile to see the SC Johnson headquarters designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.) In 1 mile,



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States: Wisconsin

Counties: Racine

Length: 14 miles

Trail end points: 3 Mile Rd/MRK Trail & Douglas Ave to Chicory Rd/North Shore Trail between Lathrop Ave & S Memorial Dr (Racine)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Concrete, Crushed Stone

Trail category: Greenway/Non-RT

Trail activities: Bike, Wheelchair Accessible, Mountain Biking, Walking, Cross

Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available at a number of locations along the trail. View the [TrailLink map](#) for all options and detailed directions.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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