



2024

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



## Path of the Flood Trail/ Staple Bend Tunnel Trail

*Pennsylvania*



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The Path of the Flood Trail might be unique among rail-trails for being named after a tragedy, the Johnstown Flood of 1889, considered the nation's worst catastrophe of the 19th century. Some 2,200 people lost their lives when the South Fork Dam failed and 20 million tons of water washed down the narrow Little Conemaugh River Valley for 14 miles to Johnstown, destroying everything in its path.

The trail is paired with the Staple Bend Tunnel Trail, which preserves a tunnel finished in 1833 as the nation's first railroad tunnel. The National Park Service operates the 901-foot-long tunnel and associated trail. Both trails are part of the Trans Allegheny Trail System, comprised of several trails in western Pennsylvania. The Path of the Flood Trail is also part of the September 11th National

Memorial Trail that connects the 9/11, Flight 93, and Pentagon Memorials, as well as the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition's developing 1,500-mile trail network through Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, and New York.

Together, they follow the course of the Allegheny Portage Railroad. Built in the 1830s, the railroad carried barges across Allegheny highlands, connecting the eastern and western segments of the Pennsylvania Canal. Eventually becoming obsolete, the portage railroad was acquired in 1857 by the Pennsylvania Railroad, which discontinued using some segments (it never used the tunnel) and upgraded others.

Including on-road sections, the two trails run 11.8 miles along the Little Conemaugh River. Given the nature of the Allegheny Portage Railroad—level sections paired with steep inclines, rather than the gradual slopes associated with most railroads—the Staple Bend Tunnel Trail has a short, steep grade in each direction. The off-road trail comprises mostly crushed stone, with a 0.5 mile of aggregate stone surfacing near the Staple Bend Tunnel.

The route starts at the Johnstown Flood Museum ([jaha.org](http://jaha.org)) at 304 Washington St. The trail is mostly on sidewalks and city streets in this 4.2-mile segment to the Staple Bend Tunnel Trail. Follow the bike route signs on Washington and Clinton Streets; turn left on the Phoebe Court Bridge, then use the tunnel under the railroad tracks. The trail continues right on Plum Street to a short trail that follows switchbacks on an old trolley line. Emerging in East Conemaugh, turn right onto Cambria Street and left onto East Railroad Street. You'll then need to make a series of three lefts onto Davis, Greeve, and Main Streets, respectively. Take the SR 271/Main Street bridge across the river to Franklin, and then turn left onto Main Street for 0.5 mile.

Turn left onto Pershing Street, and take the right fork to the parking area at Franklin Borough Ball Field. In about 1 mile, the surface changes to a bikeable aggregate stone surface for



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## Pennsylvania

**States:** Pennsylvania

**Counties:** Cambria

Length: 11.8 miles

**Trail end points:** Johnstown Flood Museum at Washington St. and Walnut St. (Johnstown) to Ehrenfeld Park at Penn St. and Mt. Carmel St. (Ehrenfeld)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt, Ballast, Crushed Stone

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Fishing, Wheelchair Accessible, Mountain Biking, Walking, Cross

## Parking & Trail Access

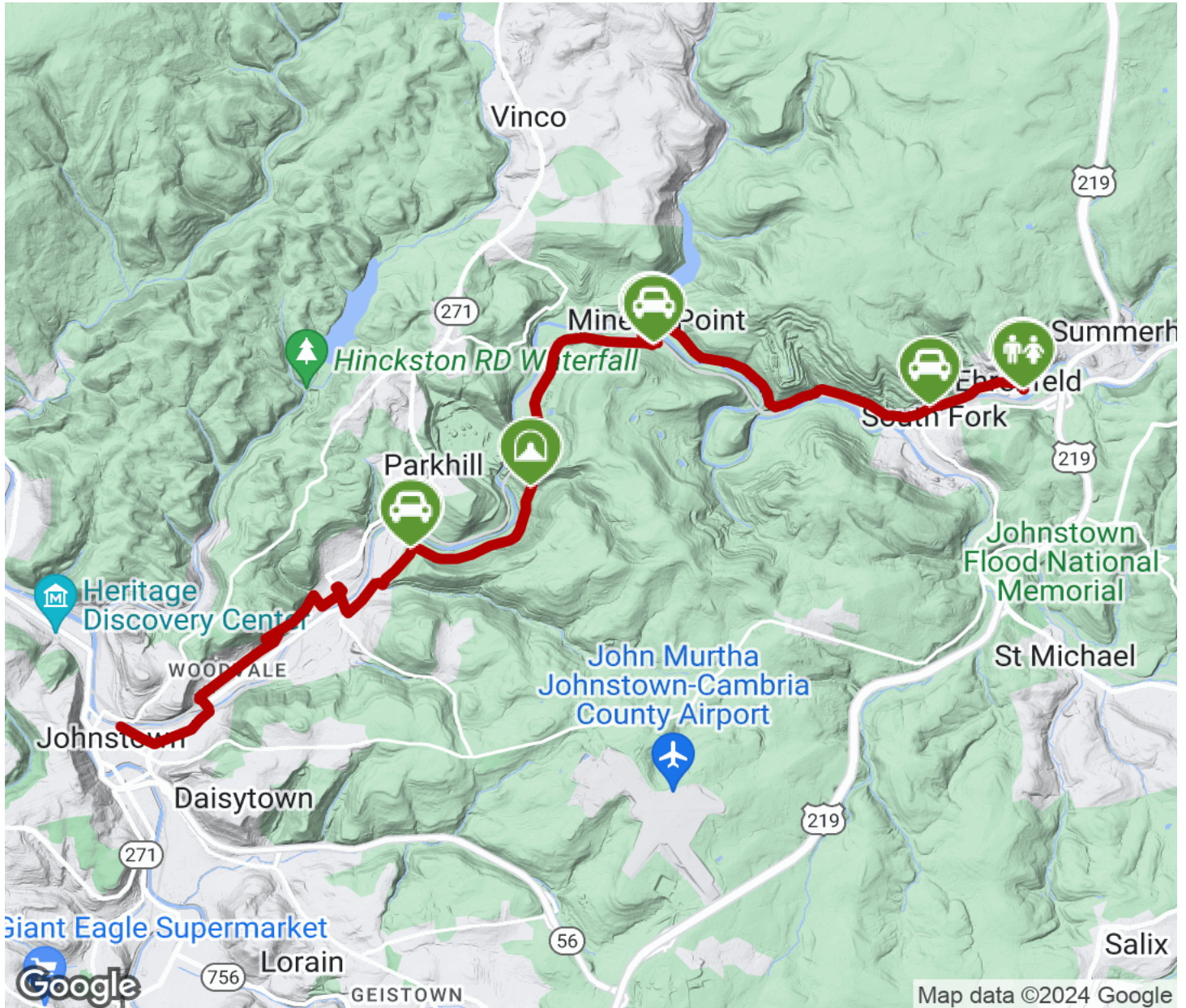
To reach the western endpoint at the Johnstown Flood Museum from I-76, take Exit 110 toward US 219/Somerset/Johnstown. Continue on PA Turnpike Access Road for 0.3 mile, and then continue on N. Pleasant Ave. 0.4 mile. Turn left onto SR 281/Stoystown Road, go 1.9 miles, and exit right onto US 219. Go 23.8 miles, and take the SR 56/Johnstown Expy. exit. Go 5.3 miles, and turn right onto Walnut St. Then go 0.3 mile, and turn right onto Washington St. The museum is located at this intersection at 304 Washington St. Look for on-street parking.

To reach the eastern trailhead at Ehrenfeld Park from I-76, follow the directions above to US 219. Go 31 miles, and exit toward South Fork, turning left onto SR 53 N/Railroad St. Go 0.8 mile, and turn right onto Oak St. Then go 0.1 mile, turn right onto Portage St., and go 0.1 mile. Take a slight right onto Second St., and go 0.4 mile. Turn right onto Penn St., and then turn right onto Mt. Carmel St. Look for parking immediately to your left at Ehrenfeld Park.



# Path of the Flood Trail/Staple Bend Tunnel Trail

Pennsylvania



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



**TrailLink**  
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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