



2024

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



## Hop River State Park Trail

*Connecticut*



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It's hard to pick a favorite season to experience the Hop River State Park Trail, set amid the dense forests of Eastern Connecticut. Sections of the 20-mile rail-trail dive through steep rock cuts that seep moisture, supplying air-conditioning in summer and freezing into glistening icefalls in winter. Maples and oaks bring fiery autumn hues, and in the spring, trilliums and other wild-flowers speckle the ground with color. Three tunnels and a covered bridge complete the trail's picturesque backdrop.

Following the former Hartford, Providence and Fishkill Railroad, the rail-trail feels like it's transporting visitors to the days when rail was the predominant mode of transportation. The telegraph poles from days gone by still jut out of the hillside, and a few miles into the trail from the western side, you can see a turnabout that was

used to reverse the direction of the train.

After beginning your ride in Manchester, you'll have the opportunity to connect to another trail in 2.6 miles. At Church and Phoenix Streets in Vernon, a trail called the [Rockville Spur](#) (sometimes known as Vernon Rails-to-Trails) branches north. If you have time, the scenic 4.2-mile pathway is definitely worth exploring.

From that trail intersection continuing east on the Hop River State Park Trail, you'll climb gradually for a few miles past rock outcrops. Along the way, you'll pass Valley Falls Park, then Bolton Notch State Park, both of which are accessible via hiking paths that spin off from the rail-trail. Just south of Bolton Notch, you'll also have the opportunity to connect to the [Charter Oak Greenway](#), which heads west to Hartford.

Beyond the Bolton Notch parking lot, the trail passes beneath US 44 and US 6, threading through a narrow rock cut and then descending several miles among thick woodlands. Past Steeles Crossing Road in Bolton, US 6 comes into view on your left, but not so close as to disrupt the tranquil experience. Keep watch for small waterfalls like the one near Burnap Brook Road, and enjoy the covered bridge over CT 316.

In another mile, you pass beneath US 6 through a 100-foot lighted tunnel. The route continues along the river to its end at Columbia Avenue in Willimantic. Here, a bridge over the Willimantic River connects the trail to the [Air Line State Park Trail](#), which spans more than 50 miles, running northeast to the Massachusetts border and southwest to East Hampton.



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**States:** Connecticut

**Counties:** Hartford, Tolland

Length: 20 miles

**Trail end points:** Colonial Rd. and Parker St. (Manchester) to Columbia Ave./CT 66 at the Willimantic River bridge (Willimantic)

**Trail surfaces:** Crushed Stone

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Bike, Wheelchair

Accessible, Horseback Riding, Mountain

Biking, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

## Parking & Trail Access

**Vernon:** The Church Street trailhead is just 1 mile south of Interstate 84 and located between Phoenix and Washington streets. To reach the Church Street trailhead from I-84 east, take Exit 65 and follow signs to State Route 30 north. Turn right at the first traffic signal on Dobson Road and cross beneath the interstate. Dobson becomes Washington Street. A mile south, turn left on Church Street. Trailhead parking is ahead on the left. To reach the trailhead from Exit 66, bear right on Frontage Road, then turn left on Tunnel Road. After 0.25 mile, turn right on Warren Avenue. Drive 0.5 mile, take a left on Phoenix Street, then an immediate right on Church. Trailhead parking is on the right.

**Bolton:** Bolton Notch State Park; entrance is just west of where US 44 becomes Route 44/ I-384. Enter the park at the end of the guard rail heading west. Parking is also available at Steele's Crossing Road, about 0.3 mile west of US 6.

**Andover:** Park at Burnap Brook Road about 0.2 mile west of US 6 and on Wales Road about 0.2 mile west of US 6. From US 6 west, enter Andover, turn left onto Lake Road then right onto Merritt Valley Road. The road will intersect with the trail after about 0.2 mile.

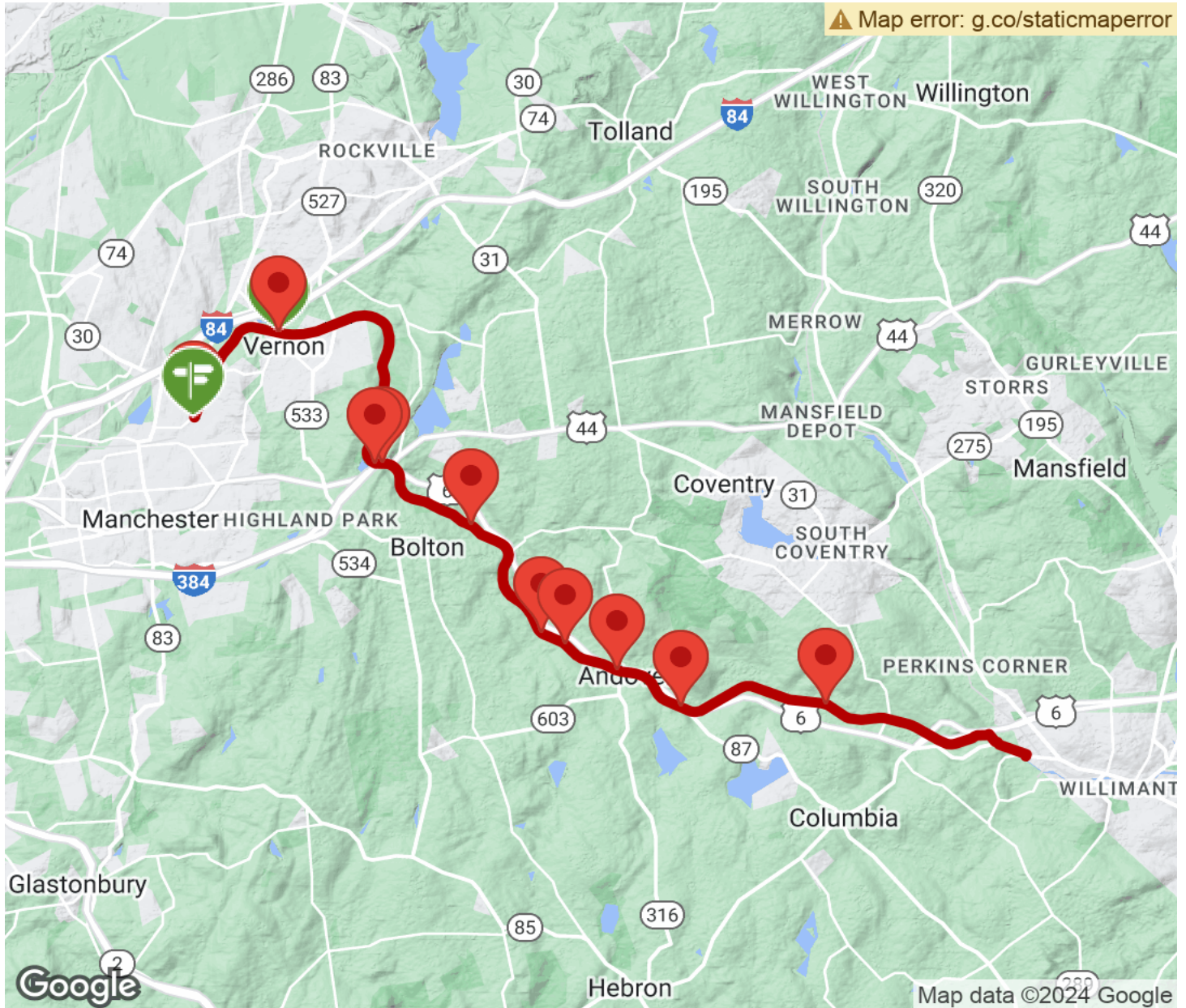
**Columbia:** Take I-384 to US 6, and continue east on US 6 for 9.3 miles. Turn left onto Hop River Road. The parking lot will appear on your left in 0.4 mile.

**Manchester:** From I-84, take Exit 63 for CT 30/Windsor. Head southeast (left if you took I-84 E and right if you took I-84 W) on CT 30 N. In 0.2 mile (0.4 mile if you took I-84 W), turn right onto Parker St. Follow Parker 0.9 mile, then turn left onto Colonial Road. Look for the trailhead parking lot immediately to your left.



# Hop River State Park Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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