



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Long Prairie
Trail**
Illinois



Long Prairie Trail

Illinois

The Long Prairie Trail journeys across the width of agricultural Boone County for nearly 14 miles on the railroad corridor



The Long Prairie Trail journeys across the width of agricultural Boone County for nearly 14 miles on the railroad corridor previously used by the Kenosha and Rockford Railroad, later known as the Kenosha Division, or KD Line. Formed in the 1860s, the railroad served many small communities in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin as it connected Rockford, Illinois, and Kenosha, Wisconsin. Offering passenger service and hauling milk and ice from dairies and lakes in the region, the railroad ceased most operations in 1939 due to the growing use of cars and trucks.

The old KD Line still serves the rural communities of Capron, Poplar Grove, and Caledonia in its new life as the asphalt and crushed limestone Long Prairie Trail, part of the 500-mile Grand Illinois Trail. Three other trails also

follow the old rail line: the connecting [Stone Bridge Trail](#) in the west and the [Stone Mill Trail](#) and [Hebron Trail](#) in the east.

At the trailhead about 2 miles east of Capron, the first of many interpretive signs greets visitors. This one explains the history of the Potawatomi tribe in the area. Other signs inform users about the local flora, fauna, and geology.

Bring water! 14 miles and there is only 1 drinking fountain near the west end of the trail. Heading toward Capron, you'll likely be thankful on hot summer days for the shady leaf canopy that arches over the trail for miles. You'll see farm crops and cattle ranches through breaks in the trailside growth, though some native prairie survives. Reportedly, rail cars on the KD Line sparked periodic blazes in the adjacent grasslands. Woody species couldn't tolerate the frequent burns, enabling the preservation of some native grasses.

The small town of Capron dates to the same year as the railroad: 1861. Leaving town, you'll parallel IL 173 for 2.5 miles. Gazing across the countryside, you're reminded that this is one of the most rural areas of Boone County.

You'll arrive in Poplar Grove 5 miles past Capron. The small business district offers restaurants and cafés to slake your thirst or curb your appetite. About 2.5 miles west of town, you might be surprised at the sight of mowed fairways and manicured greens. You're passing the golf course for the Candlewick Lake Association, a private community for more than 4,000 residents.

The last village on the Long Prairie Trail is Caledonia, less than a mile from the golf course. While the main KD Line headed west from here through Rock Cut State Park, the trail follows a spur line toward Beloit, Wisconsin. Nearly 4 miles past Caledonia, the trail ends at McMichael Road, where it meets the Stone Bridge Trail, a crushed-stone pathway that continues on into Winnebago County to a shopping district in Roscoe IL.



Long Prairie Trail

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States: Illinois

Counties: Boone

Length: 13.9miles

Trail end points: Boone McHenry County Line Rd., 0.5 mile north of IL 173 (E. of Capron) to McMichael Rd., 0.25 mile east of The Reserve Dr. (Caledonia)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Crushed Stone

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Inline Skating, Wheelchair Accessible, Walking, Cross

Parking & Trail Access

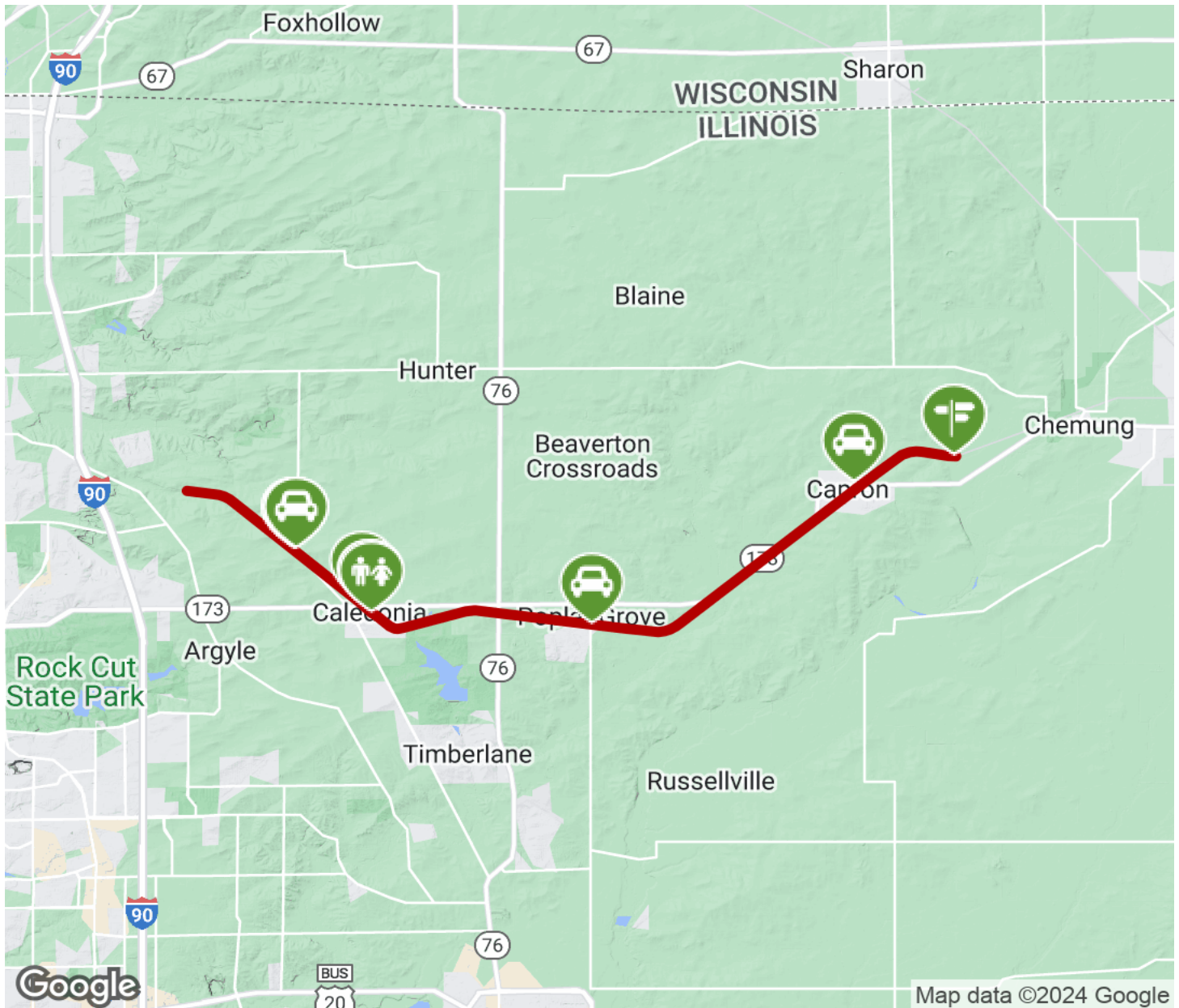
Each village has trail parking and access. To reach the County Line Road trailhead near Capron from Interstate 90, take US 20 (Grant Highway) north for approximately 10 miles to Marengo. Turn right onto State Street (County Road 23) and go north for 10 miles. Turn left onto S. Division Street (US 14) and drive for just over a mile. Turn left on Brink Street (County Road 173), go 5 miles and turn right on County Line Road. The trailhead is 0.5 mile ahead on the left.

To reach the Randolph Street trailhead (3.75 miles before the trail's end at Wyman School Road) in Caledonia, take I-90 to Riverside Boulevard and go east for 1.25 miles. Turn left onto Argyle Road and go north for 2.8 miles. Turn left onto Belvidere Road. After 0.75 mile, turn right onto W. Lane Road (County Road 173) and continue for 2.4 miles. Turn right onto Caledonia Road and go 0.4 mile. Turn left on Randolph Street and look for the trailhead in two blocks.



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- Trailhead
- Restroom
- Parking
- Water Fountain
- Tunnel