



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Whistle Stop Rail-Trail

Maine



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A former Maine Central Railroad line provides a year-round playground for motorized and nonmotorized trail users to explore



A former Maine Central Railroad line provides a year-round playground for motorized and nonmotorized trail users to explore the western hills of Maine. The long, flat, mostly straight stretches of the Whistle Stop Rail-Trail, running from Farmington to Livermore Falls, primarily serve ATVs and off-road vehicles in warmer months and snowmobiles in winter, but the trail is also accessible to mountain bikers, hikers, dog walkers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, and snowshoers. Hybrid cyclists will find sandy sections passable but difficult.

Trees shade the trail as it passes through wetlands and rural farmland. Several small towns with services stand along the trail, but most interactions with civilization are limited to the occasional road crossing or the backyards of scattered houses or industrial buildings, including some

remnants of rock quarrying from years gone by.

The trail follows the historic corridor of the Androscoggin Railroad, which served mill industry and agricultural centers on the Sandy and Androscoggin Rivers. The railroad reached Livermore Falls in 1852 and Farmington in 1859, becoming part of the Maine Central Railroad in 1871. Guilford Transportation, which has become Pan Am Railways, acquired the railroad in the 1980s. While much of the original line is not in use, the trail follows still-active tracks for a very short distance in Livermore Falls.

From the community of West Farmington on the Sandy River, the packed dirt and gravel trail surface is easier for bicyclists to traverse than sections farther south. In 6.5 miles the trail arrives in Wilton, formerly a booming manufacturing center where Bass shoes and boots were made for 122 years until the factory closed in 1998. A mile or two south of town, the trail surface turns to deeper sand that poses more of a challenge to bicyclists.

You'll pass marshy lowlands to the east along the middle section of the trail from Wilton to North Jay. At 3.7 miles past Wilton, you can take a 1-mile side trip on Old Jay Hill Road to Woodman Hill Road to visit the North Jay White Granite Park. A hiking trail goes to the edge of a lookout over the quarry, where desirable white granite was mined for many uses, such as monuments in Washington, D.C.

The sandier surface continues south to the town of Jay, where the trail comes into view of the Androscoggin River. On the final 2.5 miles to Livermore Falls, you'll see signs for the French Falls Recreation Area, which can serve as another trailhead with bathrooms and parking closer to the southern end. At this point, sand yields to a harder-packed—albeit somewhat rutted and potholed—surface.

You'll have scenic views of the Androscoggin River and a railroad trestle that carries tracks across the river for the final



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States: Maine

Counties: Franklin

Length: 15.8 miles

Trail end points: Oak St. between Bridge St. and Thomas McClellan Road (Farmington) to Bridge St. and Water St. (Livermore Falls)

Trail surfaces: Dirt, Gravel, Sand

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: ATV, Fishing, Horseback

Riding, Mountain

Biking, Snowmobiling, Walking, Cross Country

Parking & Trail Access

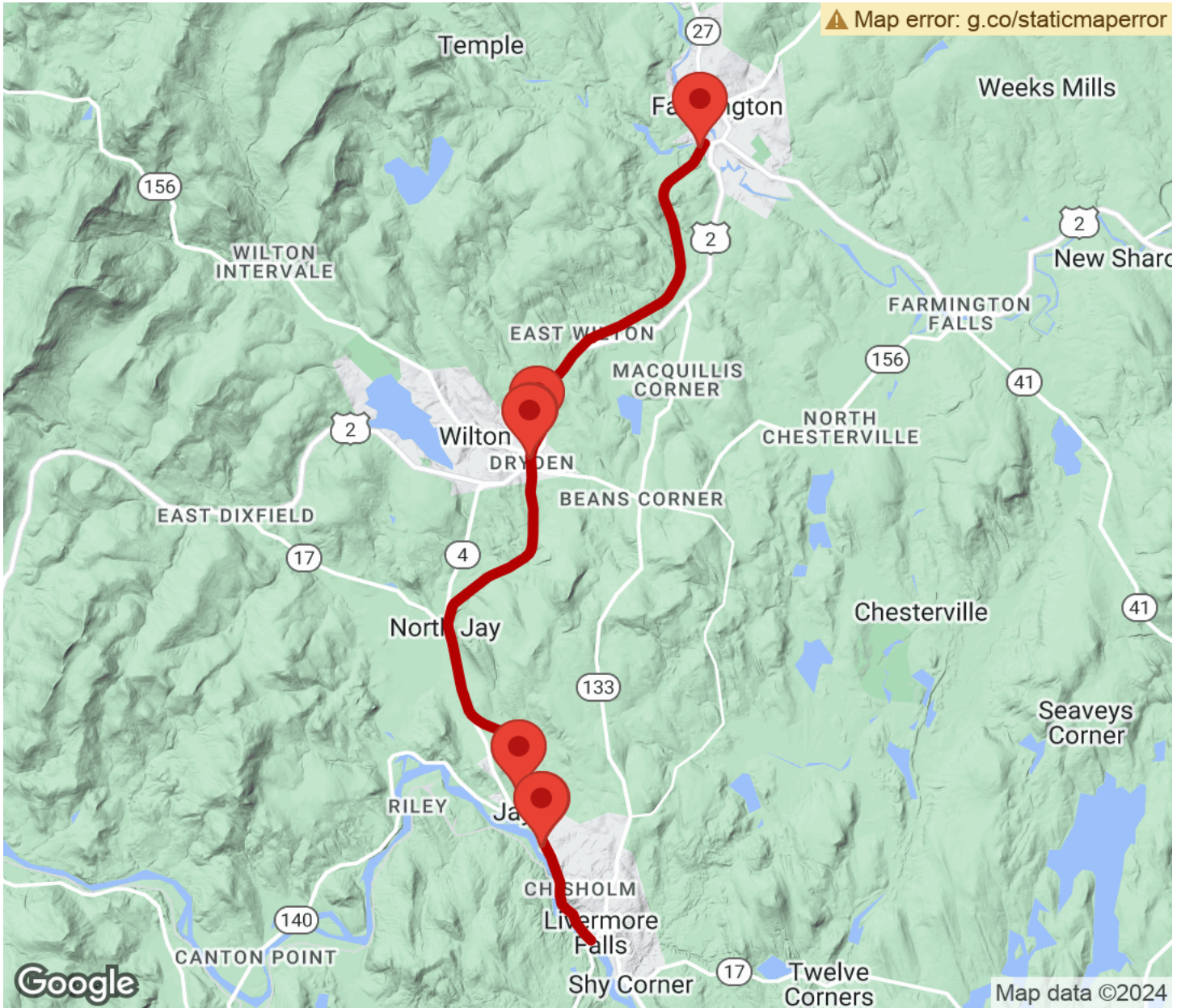
To reach the trailhead in West Farmington from I-95, take Exit 113 toward Belgrade on SR 3. Head north on SR 3, go 1.4 miles, and turn right onto SR 8/SR 27/New Belgrade Road. Go 22.4 miles, and turn left to join US 2/SR 27. Go 9.6 miles, turn left onto Intervale Road/US 2, and almost immediately after crossing the Sandy River, turn right onto Bridge St. Go 0.2 mile, turn left onto Oak St., and look for parking in 300 feet.

To reach the trailhead at the French Falls Recreation Area in Jay from US 202 and SR 41/SR 133 in Winthrop, turn onto northbound SR 133/SR 41 in Winthrop. Go 1.5 miles, and bear left to stay on SR 133/Wayne Road. Go 15.8 miles, and turn left onto SR 133/SR 17/Depot St. Go 0.2 mile, and turn right onto SR 4/SR 17/Main St. Go 1.7 miles, and turn left onto French Falls Lane. Go 0.2 mile, and look for parking straight ahead. The southern endpoint is 1.7 miles south along the trail.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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