



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Medicine Bow Rail Trail

Wyoming



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The Medicine Bow Rail Trail snakes through the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest from the Wyoming-Colorado border in the south to near the forest boundary at SR 11. The trail is open to non-motorized use only, but occasionally dirt bike riders break the rules.

Along the 21-mile gravel trail you'll get a glimpse of the Old West—and a portal into the New West—while winding through rugged national forest land of southeastern Wyoming. But come prepared; even though parts of the West are no longer so wild, the trail corridor is far from tame. The nearest city, Laramie, is 30 miles away, and moose on the trail may outnumber the people using it on any given day.

Among other attributes, the pathway has a rich history.

Although the Medicine Bow Rail Trail was opened in 2007, the story of the Medicine Bow goes back more than 100 years. "Medicine Bow" is derived from local Native American lore, when Arapahoe, Cheyenne and other First Nations came to this area regularly to conduct ceremonies to ward off disease, and to cut varieties of trees that made strong bows for hunting. Over time, early European settlers melded these historical uses into the moniker "Medicine Bow."

The trail occupies a segment of an abandoned right-of-way along the old Laramie, Hahns Peak and Pacific Railroad, which was built at the turn of the 20th century to accommodate a second gold rush (the first one began in the 1870s). The rails also carried coal, timber and livestock and eventually became part of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1951.

Among some of the treasures you'll find along the trail today are remains of former tie-hacker camps and mining communities and an old caboose parked along the trail near its northern end. Interpretive signs help elucidate this history. (The Nici Self museum, housed in a restored LHP&P depot in Centennial, a few miles north of the northern trailhead, includes much more local lore.)

The Medicine Bow Rail Trail passes through large stands of lodgepole, spruce, fir and aspen; traverses meadows of grass and sagebrush; crosses numerous streams; and skirts dozens of swamps, bogs, ponds and lakes. Among the creatures you can glimpse along or on the trail are moose, beaver, mule deer, elk, pronghorn, porcupine and black bear. In the warm months, throngs of butterflies flutter through the air, lured by the lupine, penstemon, potentilla and other flowers growing along the trail. Unfortunately, you'll also encounter large swaths of dead pine, killed by a severe epidemic of mountain pine beetle sweeping across the Western states.

The gravel surface is not recommended for road tires, but mountain bikes and cyclocross bikes will have no problem.



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Wyoming

States: Wyoming

Counties: Albany

Length: 21miles

Trail end points: Pelton Creek Rd./FS 898 (nr. WY-CO border) to Dry Park Rd./FS 517 (Routt National Forest)

Trail surfaces: Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Fishing, Horseback Riding, Mountain Biking, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

You can access the Medicine Bow Rail Trail from six different trailheads:

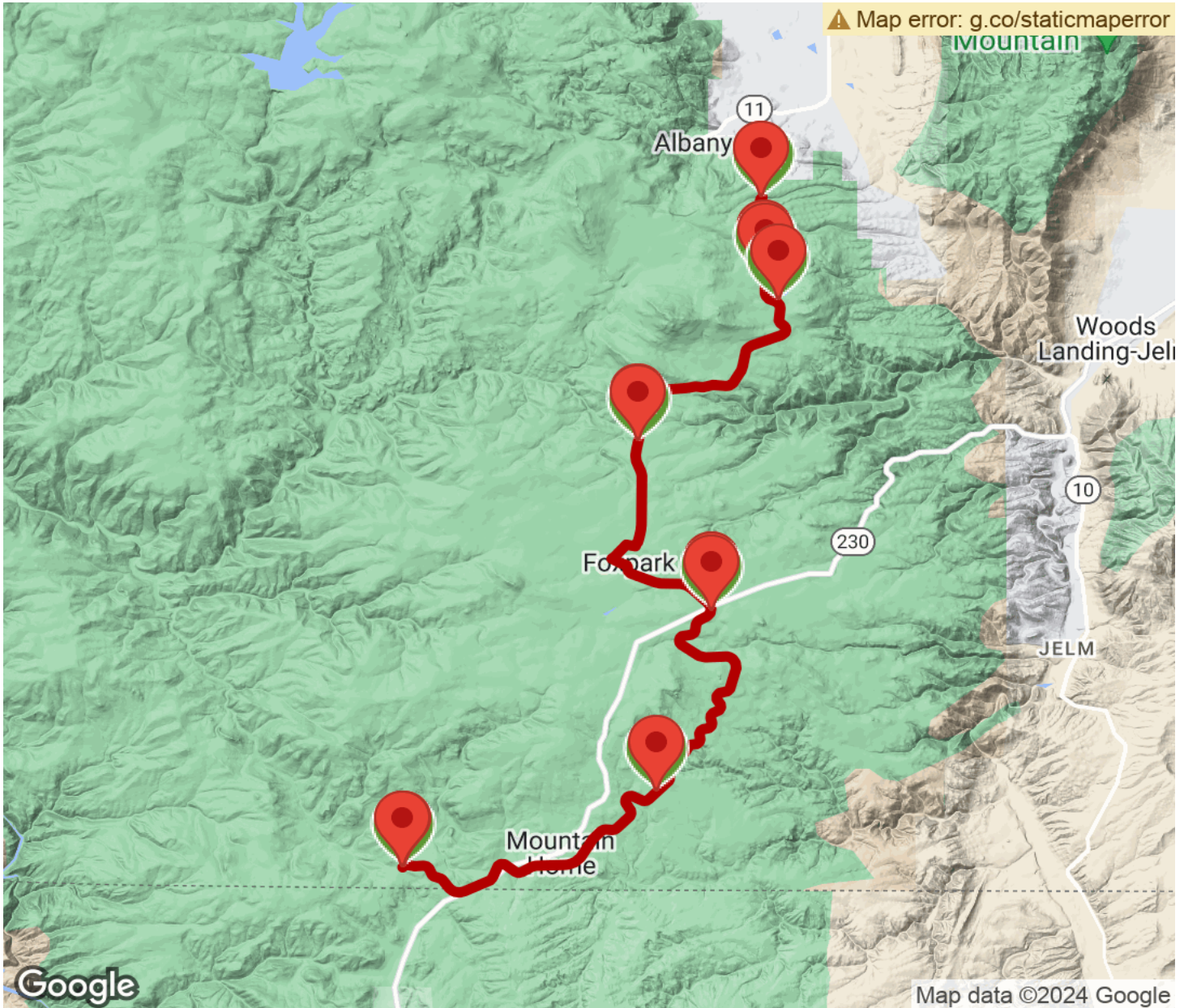
Dry Park (at the northern end)
Pelton Creek (at the southern end)
Vienna
Woods Creek
Lincoln Gulch
Lake Owen

For directions and more information, visit the local website (under "Related Links" to the right).



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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