



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Reformatory  
Branch Trail**  
*Massachusetts*



## Reformatory Branch Trail

Massachusetts

*The Reformatory Branch Trail connects the historical towns of Bedford and Concord along a nearly 4-mile dirt path through*



The Reformatory Branch Trail connects the historical towns of Bedford and Concord along a nearly 4-mile dirt path through wildlife refuges that ends a short distance from the North Bridge, the location of “the shot heard round the world”, where the patriot militia stood down British soldiers in 1775.

The trail follows a rail line built between Bedford and Concord in 1873 by the Boston & Lowell Railroad, later acquired by the Boston and Maine Railroad. Locals dubbed it the Reformatory Branch after it extended to Reformatory Station, next to a state prison, in 1879. Bedford and Concord bought the line in 1962.

Bedford Depot Park is a good place for services and connections to the [Minuteman Bikeway](#) and the [Narrow-](#)

[Gauge Rail-Trail](#). The Bedford Freight House features railroad exhibits and photos and tours of a vintage railcar. The Reformatory Branch Trail starts at a gravel parking lot and a trailhead 0.3 mile west from the park on Railroad Avenue.

Traversing the trail by foot or mountain bike is recommended because of rough conditions. Soon after getting under way you’ll reach the 19-acre Elm Brook Conservation Area and then the 20-acre Mary Putnam Webber Wildlife Preserve. Both wetlands serve as wildlife corridors for animals in the area. The trail emerges into a small gravel parking lot about 1.7 miles from the trailhead. Use caution crossing busy Concord Road/MA 62 here.

You’ll enter the 3,850-acre Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge after crossing the road. Birders flock to this freshwater wetland along the Concord and Sudbury Rivers as it’s visited by 220 species of birds annually. It also shelters white-tailed deer, muskrats, red fox, raccoons, cottontail rabbits, weasels, amphibians, and several nonpoisonous snake species. Bicycles are not permitted on trails within the refuge, but you can lock your bike to one of several trailside benches and explore by foot.

Look for a Trail of the Colonial Militia stone marker about 0.9 mile past the refuge. A side path leads to Author’s Ridge at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, where you’ll find the burial sites of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Louisa May Alcott, among others.

Another 0.1 mile down the path you’ll cross Monument Street in Concord. A side trip to the right leads 0.2 mile to the North Bridge, site of the “shot heard round the world,” the Minute Man Statue, and a visitor center. Bicycles are allowed throughout the Minute Man National Historical Park, although cyclists must dismount on the North Bridge and in many crowded locations.

The trail ends on Lowell Road. Take the crosswalk to Keyes



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**States:** Massachusetts

**Counties:** Middlesex

Length: 3.9miles

**Trail end points:** Depot Park (Bedford) to SR 62  
at Keyes Rd (Concord)

**Trail surfaces:** Dirt

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Mountain

Biking, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

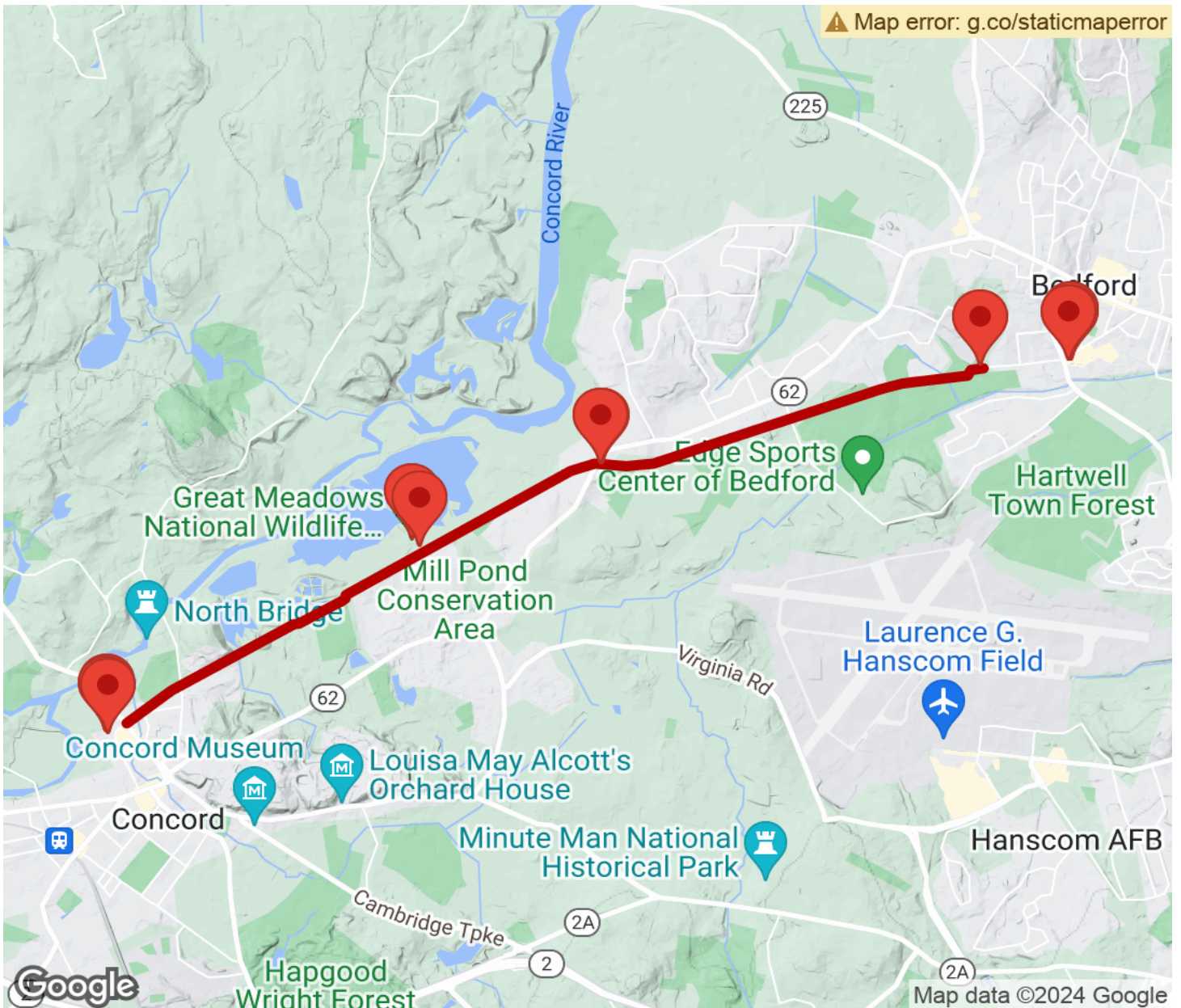
## Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available at a number of locations along the trail.  
Visit the [TrailLink map](#) for all options and detailed directions.



# Reformatory Branch Trail

Massachusetts



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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

**TrailLink.com**