2024

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Guides

TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Keuka Outlet Trail
New York

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The Keuka Outlet Trail offers a sinuous route of nearly 7 miles between Penn Yan and Dresden in New York's Finger Lakes region. The rail-trail follows a railroad corridor that traced a former canal dug along the natural drainage of Keuka (KYOO-ka) Lake Outlet from Seneca Lake to Keuka Lake. Today, the millsite ruins along the watercourse add another dimension to the natural beauty of cascading waterfalls and rocky ravines.

Settlers moved into the area in the late 1780s, and by 1790 the first mill began operation on Crooked Lake Outlet, as it was then called, based on the "crooked" shape of Keuka Lake. By 1820 more than 20 mills operated along the stream. New York's canal-building boom led to construction in 1833 of the Crooked Lake Canal, which required 27 locks along its course. The canal never made

money and was abandoned in 1873.

The Penn Yan and New York Railway Company opened a branch in 1884 that used the towpath as its corridor. Later becoming part of the Fall Brook Railway Company, it was acquired by New York Central, which stopped using the route after extensive damage from Tropical Storm Agnes in 1972.

From Penn Yan, the trail descends at an easy grade to Dresden. Both towns are tourist destinations with plenty of services. The first 1.3 miles in Penn Yan is paved, and the remainder of the Keuka Outlet Trail is gravel, ballast, and dirt. The Friends of the Outlet have installed numerous interpretive signs along the route. Snowmobiling is allowed east of Penn Yan.

Penn Yan is named for its early transplants from Pennsylvania (PENN) and New England (YAN-kees). The trail begins at a sports complex at Keuka Lake's northern tip and joins the Keuka Outlet in 0.4 mile. Crossing under Main Street at 0.7 mile, one of the area's first mills—Birkett Mills—still operates across the stream. After Cherry Street, you'll soon be on the unpaved portion of the trail.

You'll pass nearly a dozen old lock sites along the canal, as well as seven former millsites, some deteriorated to crumbling brick walls or a set of rusty gears. At 3.5 miles, you'll likely hear the roar of Seneca Mills Falls before you see it, as it drops more than 40 feet in three cascades at the former paper mill site, now a popular picnic area. This is the only spot where you'll leave the old towpath and drop into the former canal channel as you pass through Lock 17.

The trail follows the creek through a narrow glacier-cut gorge for the next 3 miles. Cascade Mill Falls appears 1.3 miles past Seneca Mills Falls and is one of the few millsites on the eastern half of the trail. A covered picnic pavilion here features interpretive displays.

Keuka Outlet Trail
New York

States: New York

Counties: Yates

Length: 6.7miles

Trail end points: NY 54A/Elm St. between Burns Terr. and Lakeview Cemetery (Penn Yan) to Seneca St. between Main St. and Margaret St. (Dresden)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Ballast,Dirt,Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Inline Skating,Fishing,Wheelchair
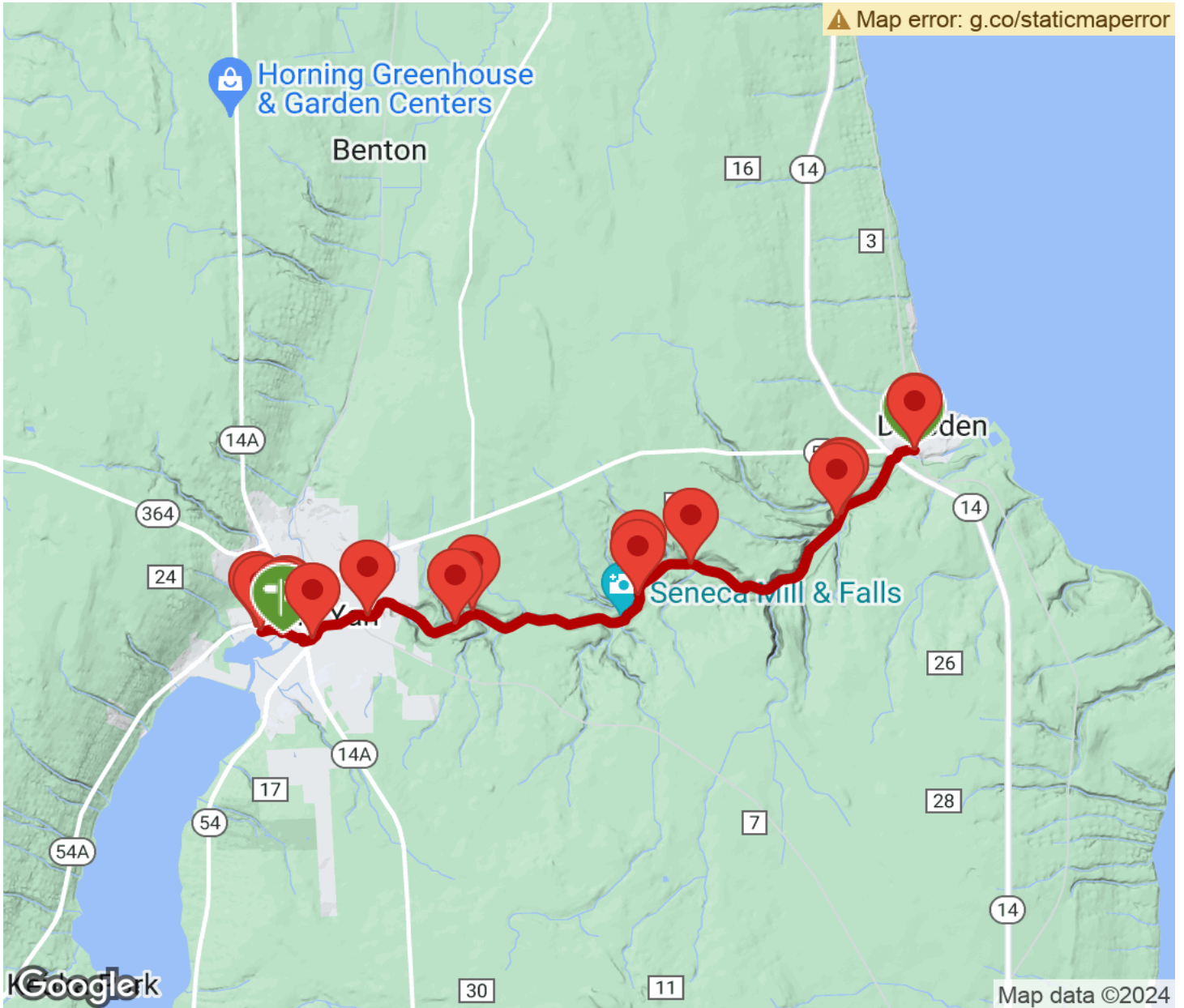
Parking & Trail Access

To reach the trailhead in Penn Yan from I-90, take Exit 42, and turn right onto NY 14 after passing through the tollbooth. Go 0.7 mile, and turn right onto Cross Road. Then go 1.8 miles, and turn left onto Pre-Emption St. Go 18.4 miles, and turn right onto NY 54/Clinton St. Go 1.5 miles, turn left onto Main St., and then go 0.2 mile. Turn right onto NY 54A/Elm St. Go 0.5 mile, and look for Penn Yan Sports Complex on the left. The trail starts at the rear of the parking lot.

To reach the trailhead in Dresden from I-90, take Exit 42, and turn right onto NY 14 after passing through the tollbooth. Go 5.4 miles, and turn right onto NY 14/Seneca St. Then go 0.2 mile, and turn left onto NY 14/S. Main St. Go 13.2 miles, and turn left onto Main St. Then go about 200 feet, and turn right onto Seneca St. After 0.2 mile look for parking and the trail on the right.

Keuka Outlet Trail

New York

⚠ Map error: g.co/staticmaperror

Horning Greenhouse & Garden Centers

Benton

Seneca Mill & Falls

Google

Map data ©2024

Trailhead	**Restroom**	**Parking**	**Water Fountain**	**Tunnel**