



2024

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Glacial Drumlin State Trail (Route of the Badger)

Wisconsin



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The 52-mile Glacial Drumlin State Trail between Cottage Grove and Waukesha provides a glimpse into the past when glaciers bore



The 52-mile Glacial Drumlin State Trail between Cottage Grove and Waukesha provides a glimpse into the past when glaciers bore down on southeastern Wisconsin in the last Ice Age. Those gigantic sheets of ice created wetlands, ponds, and rivers, as well as hundreds of low, cigar-shaped hills called drumlins. The rail-trail in fact runs concurrently with the Ice Age Trail, a 1,200-mile hiking path across Wisconsin, for about 2 miles near Wales.

The landscape challenged the Chicago and North Western Railway's builders as they established the rail line between Madison and Milwaukee in the 1880s. The wooden pilings that supported bridges sank in the deep muck of extensive wetlands, creating dangerous passages for trains. Declining rail traffic forced the railroad to stop

using the route in 1983, and it was transformed into a rail-trail in 1986.

Those wood-planked bridges now provide popular features on the trail as viewpoints for the wetlands, where a host of wildlife thrives. You may spot large sandhill cranes, graceful birds with bright red caps on their heads, or hear spring peepers and a chorus of frogs. Deer, wild turkeys, foxes, and other critters are often seen.

Although the trail stops short of the railroad's original destinations, plans are afoot to link with Madison via the [Capital City State Trail](#) and with Milwaukee via the [New Berlin Recreation Trail](#). The trail connects with the New Berlin Trail via the [Barstow to Frederick Street Connector](#). A 5-mile extension to Madison is in development.

Beginning in Cottage Grove, you'll head east for about 40 miles on a crushed-stone surface until you hit pavement in Dousman, one of many small towns along the trail providing rest, refreshment, and exploration. After leaving Cottage Grove, you'll pass through miles of open country before reaching Deerfield and London. At around mile 14, you'll sail over a 0.25-mile-long bridge that separates upper and lower Rock Lake, just before you reach Lake Mills. A restored 1895 train depot provides exhibits on local nature and railroad history, as well as other visitor services. Camping is available at Sandhill Station State Campground, 1.3 miles south of the depot on Mud Lake Road.

In the 5-mile stretch between Lake Mills and Jefferson, the trail tunnels under a thick tree canopy in the summer and crosses Crawfish River and Rock River (a fishing haven for locals). In Jefferson, at about 22 miles, signs guide you through a 1.5-mile on-road section before reconnecting with the trail. While you journey through small towns and the communities of Helenville, Sullivan, Dousman, and Wales, you'll find nearby restaurants and grocery stores.



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States: Wisconsin

Counties: Dane, Jefferson, Waukesha

Length: 52 miles

Trail end points: S Main St & Clark St (Cottage Grove) to Fox River Sanctuary at W College Ave & Sentry Dr (Waukesha)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Crushed Stone, Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Inline

Skating, Wheelchair

Accessible, Snowmobiling, Walking, Cross

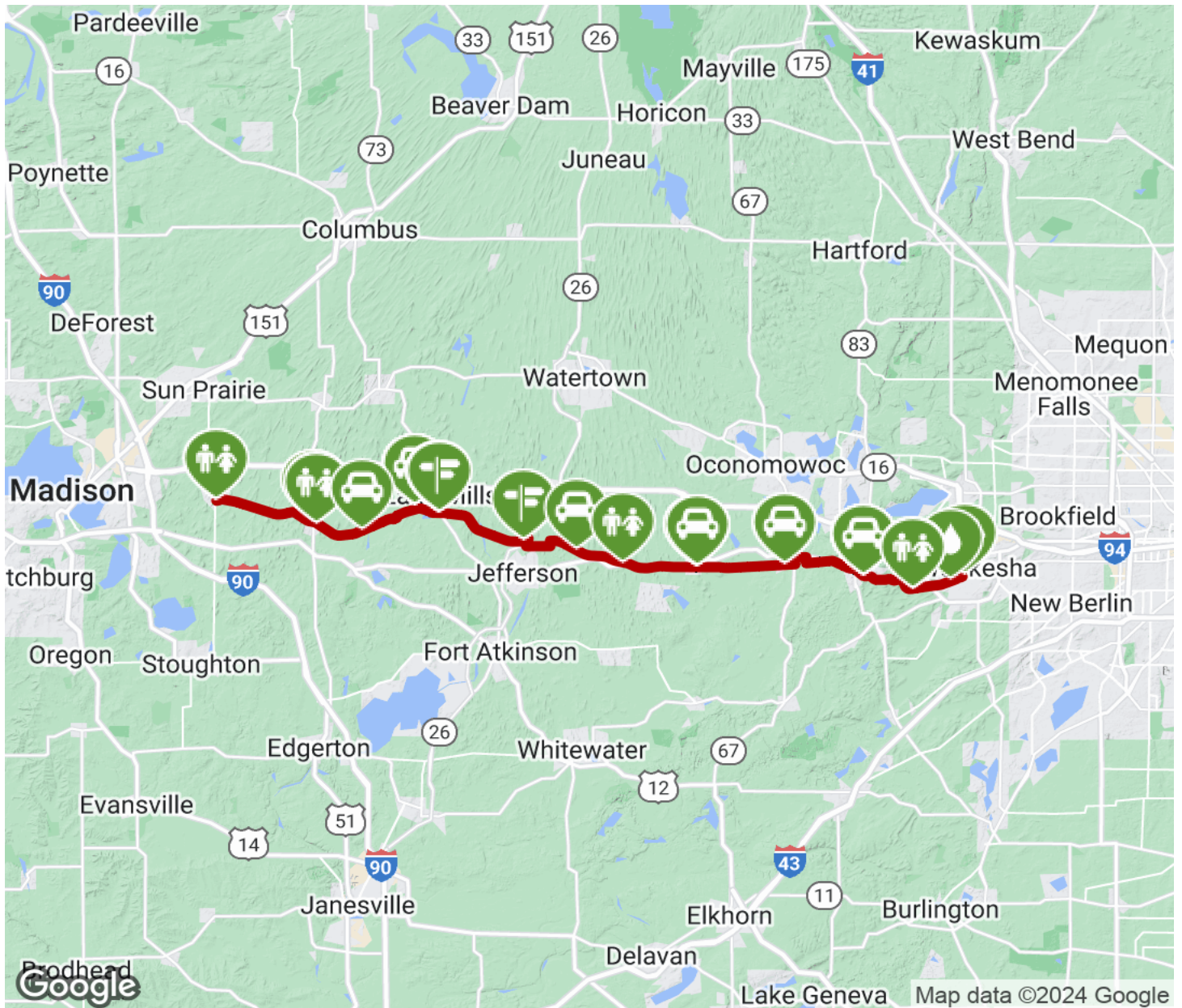
Parking & Trail Access

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



Glacial Drumlin State Trail (Route of the Badger)

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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