



2024

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



## Military Ridge State Trail

*Wisconsin*



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The Military Ridge State Trail finds the high ground as it rolls across 40 miles of idyllic farmland from the outskirts of Madison to the historic mining town of Dodgeville. It follows an American Indian footpath later used by pioneers and railroaders. Travelers will pass the base of the highest point in southern Wisconsin and find opportunities to explore small towns, state parks, and natural areas.

The trail was built on a branch of the Chicago and North

Western Railway, which started service on the line in 1881 but stopped using it by 1982. Work on the trail started in 1983.

Beginning in the Madison suburb of Fitchburg, you'll start on a paved trail that parallels the busy US 18/151 for the first few miles. Just south of McKee Road, you'll find the junction for the [Cannonball Path](#), which heads 3.9 miles northeast toward the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum. After you cross the first of nearly 50 bridges on the route, that paved trail becomes screened limestone as you leave behind the noisy highway and enter the town of Verona. A park, coffeehouse, and brewpub are all within a block of the trail here. In Verona, the Military Ridge State Trail also meets the Ice Age Trail, a 1,200-mile hiking route across the state.

The trail crosses the Sugar River Wetlands as it leaves town, and then enters farmland on its way to Riley. In a couple of miles, you'll pass through Klevenville and notice that the grade increases on the way to Mount Horeb, which celebrates its Norwegian settlers' heritage as the self-described "Troll Capital of the World." Located at about the trail's halfway point, the town offers plenty of cafés, bakeries, and brewpubs just a block or two north of the trail's visitor center.

From Mount Horeb, the trail traverses the top of Military Ridge, whose name comes from its use by the US Army and militias during the Black Hawk War in 1832. Local militia built a fort at the nearby town of Moundville (now Blue Mounds) during that war, sparked when American Indian followers of Sauk war chief Black Hawk attempted to resettle lands lost in a disputed treaty.

The entrance road to Cave of the Mounds is about 3.8 miles past Mount Horeb. The limestone caverns are known for colorful patterns left by minerals underground. Another 1.5 miles past the road to the cave is the town of Blue Mounds and Blue Mound State Park. The trail passes the southern border of the park, but you can hike 435 feet to the summit at 1,716 feet. Observation towers provide views of the surrounding



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**States:** Wisconsin

**Counties:** Dane, Iowa

Length: 39.1miles

**Trail end points:** to County Road YZ at WI 23 (Dodgeville) to Cottonwood Dr. (Fitchburg)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt, Crushed Stone

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Bike, Inline

Skating, Fishing, Wheelchair

Accessible, Snowmobiling, Walking, Cross  
Country Skiing

## Parking & Trail Access

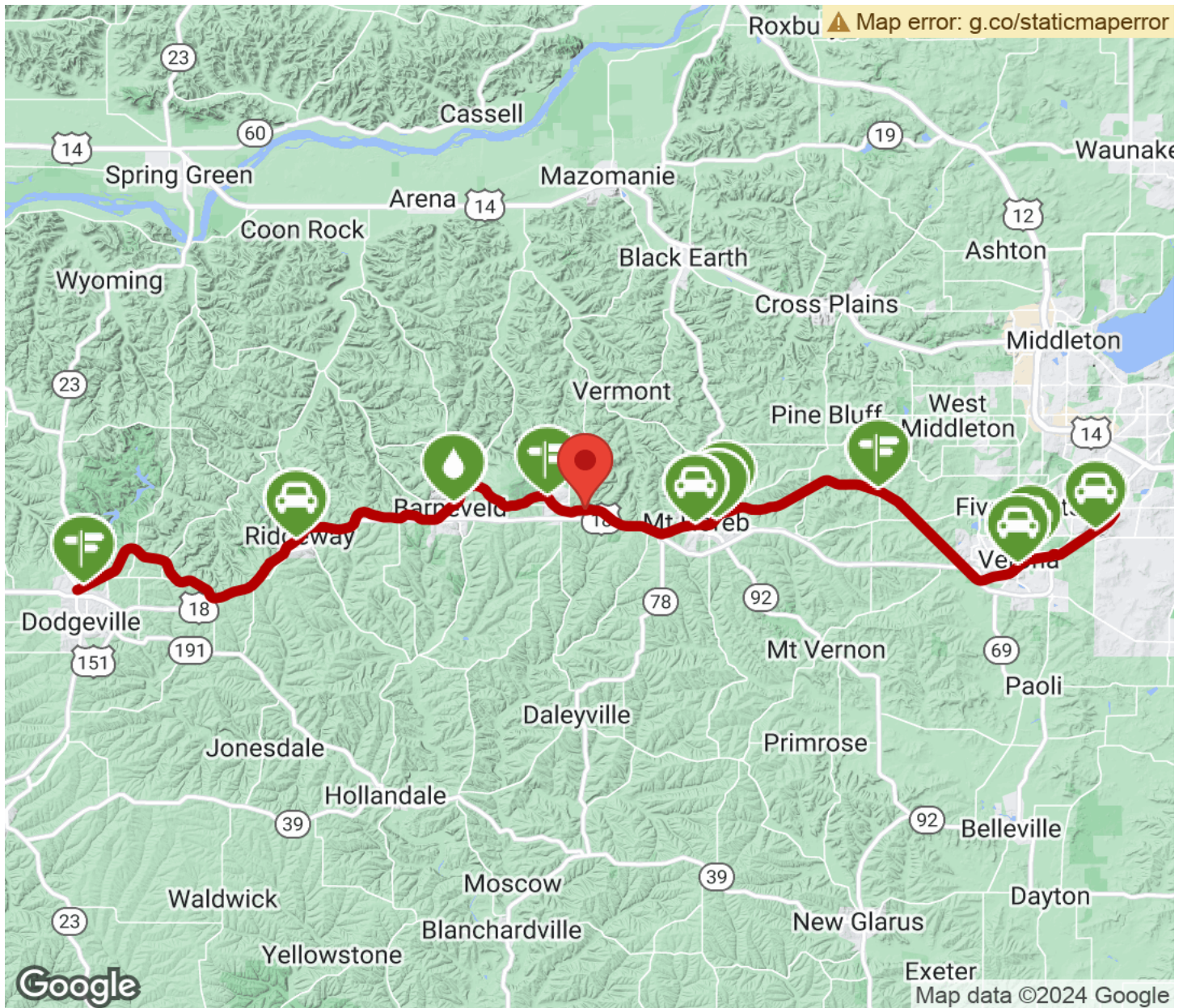
There are numerous parking options available along the trail including at the trails western endpoint in Dodgeville at the corner of N Johns St. and County Road YZ, in Ridgeway at 502 Main St, in Mt. Horeb at 1201 Cox Dr, in Verona at Hometown Community USA Park (451 E Verona Ave), and near the trail's northern endpoint at Quarry Ridge Reservation Area (2740 Fitchrona Rd).

See [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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

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