

The Official Rails-to-Trails  
Conservancy Guidebook

# Rail-Trail *Hall of Fame*

A selection of America's premier rail-trails



2nd Edition

WILDERNESS PRESS



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*Dramatic columnar basalt lines California's Bizz Johnson National Recreation Trail (see page 132).*





## RHODE ISLAND

### 1 East Bay Bike Path

**F**eaturing picturesque bay views replete with seabirds flying overhead and marinas full of ships displaying a panoply of colorful sails, the 14.3-mile East Bay Bike Path (EBBP) offers the quintessential New England experience. This was the first bike trail constructed by the state of Rhode Island, and since the first few miles opened in 1987, it has proven to be an immensely popular route for visitors and locals alike.

Begin in Providence at historical India Point Park. In the 1700s, this was a major port for trade ships traveling between the West Indies and east Asia. Later, the port was an entry point for waves of immigrants, including many Irish, Cape Verdeans, Azoreans, and Portuguese, whose impact on the culture of the region can still be felt today.



*The waterfront pathway offers one beautiful scene after another.*



#### Counties

Bristol, Providence

#### Endpoints

Tockwotton St. and India St. at India Point Park (Providence) to Thames St. and Oliver St. in Independence Park (Bristol)

#### Mileage

14.3

#### Roughness Index

1

#### Surface

Asphalt



*The East Bay Bike Path has a distinct maritime flavor; you'll see marinas and boats of every size along the water.*

Cross over the I-195 bridge and head south while enjoying stunning views of the Providence River. See tugboats and sailboats cruising along, spot swans and cormorants bobbing on the waves, and take in the fresh salty air on a leisurely ride along this well-maintained and well-used route.

In Riverside, take a detour to see the Looff carousel in Crescent Park. A National Historic Landmark, this hand-carved structure was built in 1895 by famed carousel maker Charles I. D. Looff, whose works were featured in amusement parks throughout the country. To reach the park, turn right onto Beach Road and take a left onto Bullocks Point Avenue.

As you continue along, the trail travels inland for a while, passing behind neighborhoods, wetlands, wooded areas, and parks, before skirting back along Narragansett Bay. Just south of Warren, look for an intersecting trail that will take you to the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium (bike racks along the trail mark the spot). This state-of-the-art natural history museum and aquarium is the ideal place to acquaint yourself more fully with the marine environment of the region. Meander trails that wind through fresh and saltwater marshes, look inside a 33-foot life-size right whale, visit the center's rare blue lobster and orange lobster, and explore a number of interactive exhibits.

A little farther along, the trail ends at Independence Park near the Bristol Waterfront Historic District. Here you will find many shops and restaurants,

as well as old buildings, churches, mills, and shipbuilding facilities that tell the history of this port town, which was founded in 1680.

## RAIL-TRAIL HALL OF FAME SELECTION

With spectacular maritime views and an abundance of coastal wildlife, the EBBP offers a quintessential New England experience. Inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009, the route is one of the most popular multiuse trails in Rhode Island.

## RAILROAD HISTORY

Constructed in the mid-1800s, the corridor the EBBP follows was once the domain of one of New England's largest and most recognized railroads, the New York, New Haven & Hartford (the New Haven). The route carried freight and passengers before shutting down passenger service in 1937. Eventually the Penn Central Transportation Company took over the route due to a merger that subsumed The New Haven, but then the line was discontinued in 1973. In 1994 the R.I. Department of Transportation considered restoring the line for commuter service, but the value of the route as a multiuse trail and the expense of restoring the tracks curtailed this idea.

**CONTACT:** [riparks.com/locations/locationeastbay.html](http://riparks.com/locations/locationeastbay.html)

## DIRECTIONS

To reach the Providence trailhead, take I-95 to Exit 19 and merge onto I-195 E. Take Exit 2 for India St. to Gano St. Turn left into India Point Park. The trailhead is on the right; ramps lead up to the bridge, where the path begins as a separated corridor alongside traffic.

There are many other places to park along the trail. The closest parking lots to the northern terminus are on Veterans Memorial Pkwy. in East Providence. Traveling east on I-195 from Providence, take Exit 4 to Riverside. In 0.3 mile, near Mercer St., you'll find two parking lots on the right.

To reach the Colt State Park trailhead in Bristol, take I-195 E into Massachusetts and take Exit 2. Follow MA 136 S 1.2 miles to Rhode Island, and continue on RI 136 S another 2.5 miles. Turn right onto Vernon St. in Warren, and then in 0.6 mile, turn left onto RI 114 S and go 2.3 miles toward Bristol. In Bristol, turn right onto Asylum Road and go 0.5 mile.

## 11 George S. Mickelson Trail

**E**xperience a piece of Wild West history along the 109-mile George S. Mickelson Trail (GMT) as it travels from the former gold-mining boomtown of Deadwood south over old railroad bridges, through rock tunnels, and into the heart of the Black Hills. Named after the late South Dakota governor who was instrumental in getting the trail built, this spectacular rail-trail delivers an unparalleled opportunity to immerse yourself in a stunning landscape while reliving a bit of the Old West.

Founded illegally in the 1870s on land that had been granted to the Lakota, Deadwood once epitomized a lawless frontier town. At the trailhead, stop by the railroad history museum, located in a restored engine house, to learn more about the town (the building also houses a bike shop). Note that a permit is required to use the GMT. This



### Counties

Custer, Fall River,  
Lawrence, Pennington

### Endpoints

US 85 near Cedar Lane  
at the old railroad depot  
(Deadwood) to E St. near  
SD 471 (Edgemont)

### Mileage

109.0

### Roughness Index

2

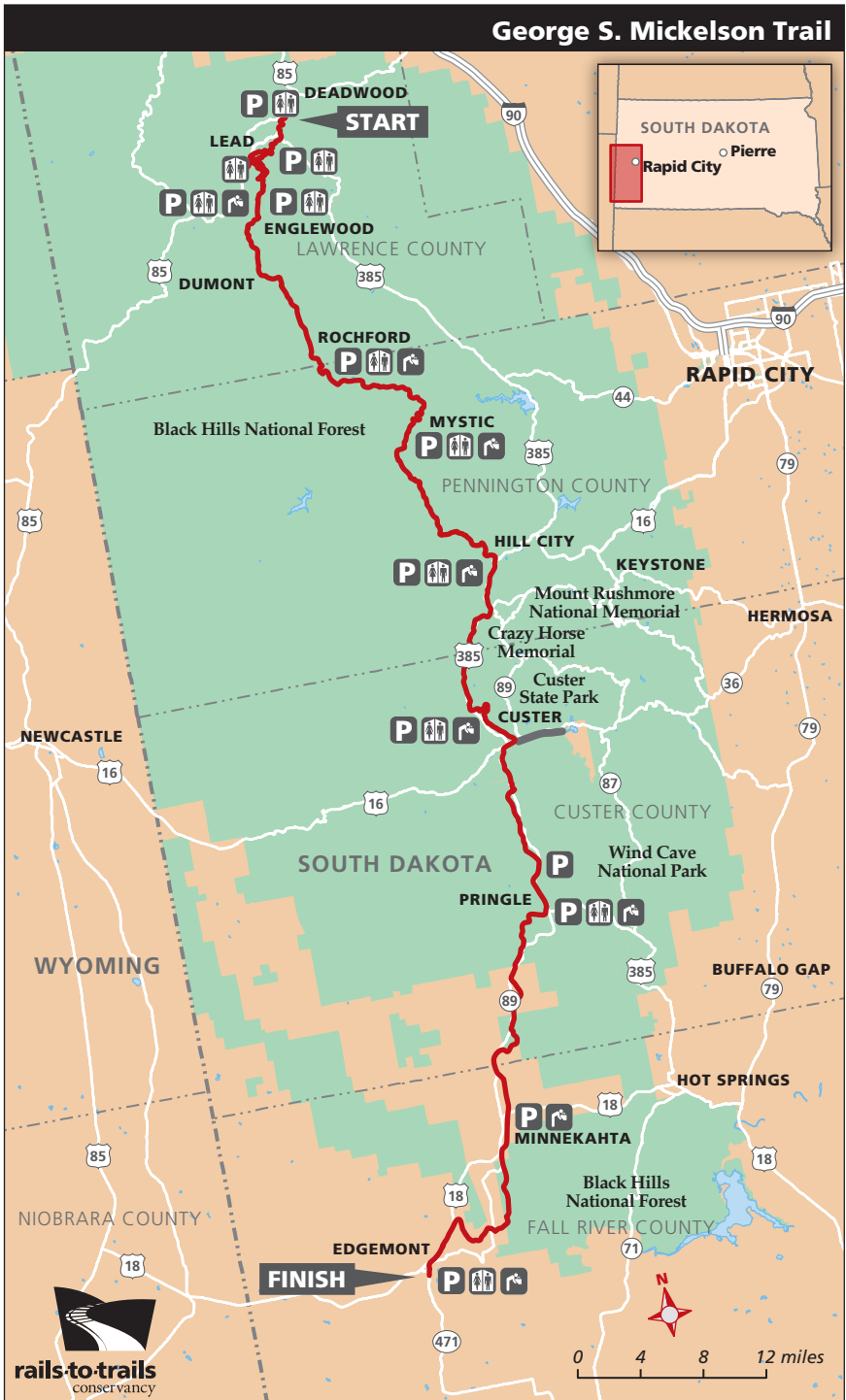
### Surface

Crushed Stone



*The trail winds through a variety of beautiful landscapes, such as this high mountain meadow near Mystic.*







*The path is a popular tourist destination in all seasons.*

can be purchased (\$4 per day) at self-pay stations located at trailheads. Several vendors offer shuttle services along the route. See the website on page 60 for information about fees, shuttles, and more.

Head south from Deadwood to take advantage of the downhill, which includes sections with a 4 percent grade. The GMT winds its way through a variety of landscapes, from dense forests of ponderosa pine, through narrow valleys, to high mountain meadows and open prairie. Reach the highest point, at just over 5,700 feet, north of the town of Dumont. Pass through historical mining towns such as Lead and Englewood, visit the ghost towns of Rochford and Mystic, and at mile marker 49.6 (markers start at the southern end) take in a beautiful view of the Crazy Horse Memorial. All along the route, see remnants from the railroad, travel more than 100 converted railway bridges, traverse four dramatic tunnels that burrow through rock, see an old caboose in Custer, and spot pieces of railroad bed in several locations.

Wildlife abounds in the Black Hills. Keep alert for bighorn sheep, mountain goats, elk, jackrabbits, and pronghorn antelope, as well as the occasional cattle that may wander into your path on sections that are along private property. In Custer, take a 3-mile spur to Custer State Park, which is home to bison, coyotes, and prairie dogs. Pass through a couple more former mining towns, as well as

the town of Minnekahta, which in the 1890s attracted tourists to its hot springs. Continue another 16 miles to Edgemont, where the trail ends next to an operational railroad.

## **RAIL-TRAIL HALL OF FAME SELECTION**

Completed in 1998, the George S. Mickelson Trail is an exceptional recreational route that offers fascinating Wild West folklore; is rich in railroad, mining, and American Indian history; and travels through some of the most spectacular landscapes in the country. It was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2010.

## **RAILROAD HISTORY**

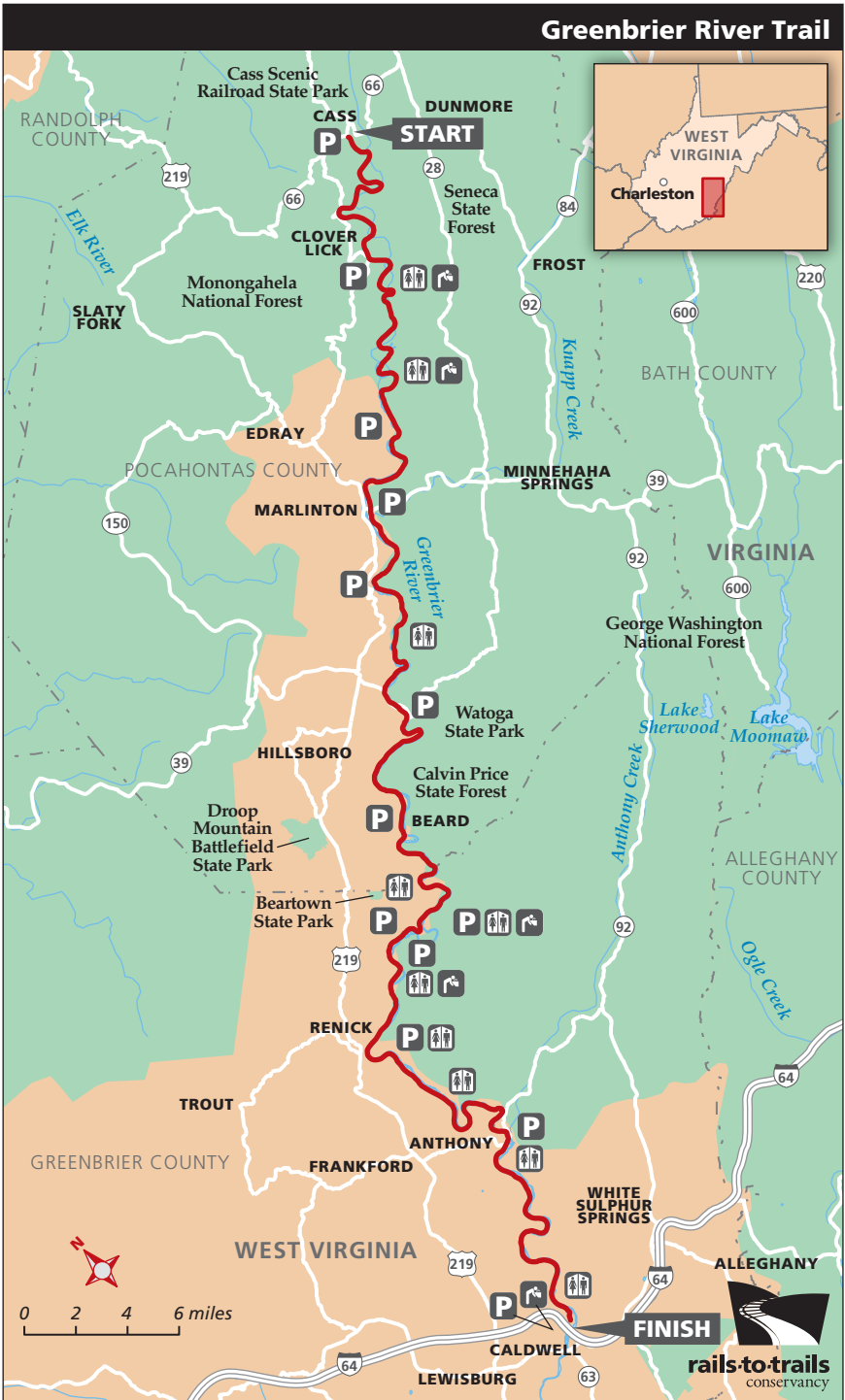
Once gold was discovered in the region in 1874, numerous towns and railroads sprang up in the Black Hills, seemingly overnight. While sections of the GMT were established earlier, in the 1890s the route from Deadwood to Edgemont was built by the Grand Island & Wyoming Central Railroad and became known as the High Line. This line became part of the Chicago & North Western in 1903 and remained successful until the Great Depression. Passenger service was eliminated in 1949, but a portion of the route remained operational until as late as 1986.

**CONTACT:** [gfp.sd.gov/parks/detail/george-s--mickelson-trail](http://gfp.sd.gov/parks/detail/george-s--mickelson-trail)

## **DIRECTIONS**

There are 15 trailheads along the route. To reach the Deadwood trailhead and parking lot: Take I-90 to Exit 17 (US 85). Follow US 85 S for 8.7 miles toward Deadwood. Turn left onto Deadwood St. and take an immediate right onto Sherman St.; in town, the road becomes Charles St. In 0.3 mile look for the red historical CB&Q Engine House with a large parking lot on your right (just before the Cedar Lane intersection); this is the trailhead.

To reach the trailhead in Edgemont: From Rapid City, take SD 79 S for 51.9 miles. Turn right onto US 18 and follow it 5 miles into Hot Springs. Turn left to continue on US 18 another 24.1 miles. Turn left onto 10th Ave. and then make an immediate left onto SD 471, heading south to downtown Edgemont. Follow the highway 0.6 mile to Second Ave., and turn right. Go 0.3 mile to E St., and turn left. Continue until the street ends at the railroad tracks; an unpaved parking lot will be on your right.





## 23 Greenbrier River Trail

In a state with many fabulous rail-trails offering spectacular views and an abundance of natural wonders, the 77-mile-long Greenbrier River Trail (GRT) is the crown jewel of West Virginia's impressive trail selection. The gravel-surfaced route travels from Cass in the north to Caldwell in the south, following the Greenbrier River for most of the trip. Throughout the route, you will find yourself immersed in the serenity and solitude of this quiet corner of the state.

Begin at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park and enjoy a slight downhill slope on your route south. Cass draws large crowds for its spectacular train excursions. Located here is the world's largest fleet of geared Shay locomotives, including one turn-of-the-20th-century class C-80 Shay that has



*The scenic route winds along the Greenbrier River.*



### Counties

Greenbrier, Pocahontas

### Endpoints

Deer Creek Road near Back Mountain Road (Cass Scenic Railroad State Park in Cass) to Stonehouse Road near I-64 (North Caldwell)

### Mileage

77.0

### Roughness Index

2

### Surface

Gravel

been traveling its route for almost 100 years. Follow the Greenbrier River and take advantage of the many opportunities to jump in for a quick cooldown or just wander along the riverbank. This is a popular fishing spot for smallmouth bass, and you are likely to see many people along the banks as you travel.

About 20 miles along is the town of Marlinton, which offers the perfect rest stop with several trailside restaurants. As you approach town, see the only remaining water tank from the former railway. Built in 1923, this tank has been restored. Here you will also find the remains of a railway turntable about 50 feet from the trail. Farther south in Watoga, at milepost 48 (the mile markers begin at the southern end of the trail), see the ruins of an old company store, the only reminder that this was once a booming logging town in the early 1900s. Other traces of the route's past you will come across include two dramatic tunnels and railroad bridges, as well as numerous whistle posts and historical mile markers.

As you travel the GRT, look for some of the colorful native flowering plants, such as common joe-pye, wild columbine, black-eyed Susan, and fall phlox, as well as for some of the numerous native and transient birds, such as yellow-throated warblers, northern flickers, and ruby-throated hummingbirds. You will find several campsites and additional trailheads as you continue south, but no other towns. This section is popular with horseback riders, however, so be cautious when approaching horses. The trail ends in Caldwell, where there is a parking area and water fountain.

## **RAIL-TRAIL HALL OF FAME SELECTION**

The Greenbrier River Trail travels through one of the most beautiful and remote areas of West Virginia as it follows alongside its namesake river. In 2000 the trail was designated as one of only 52 Millennium Legacy Trails in the country in recognition of its significance; the trails were selected by the White House Millennium Council in partnership with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the American Hiking Society. Rich in wildlife and railroad history, this is one of the country's premier rail-trails, joining the Hall of Fame ranks in 2012.

## **RAILROAD HISTORY**

Back in the late 1800s, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway built a rail line along the Greenbrier River in order to haul timber. Later, the route became a vital link for passenger service between the Midwest and the East Coast. For nearly 100 years, this line carried passengers and freight, before finally being discontinued in 1978. While the route has seen a new life as the longest rail-trail in the state of West Virginia, many of the small towns that served the timber trade are long gone or a fraction of the size they were in their heyday.



*On the route's northern end, the trailhead in Cass offers a welcoming start to the trail.*

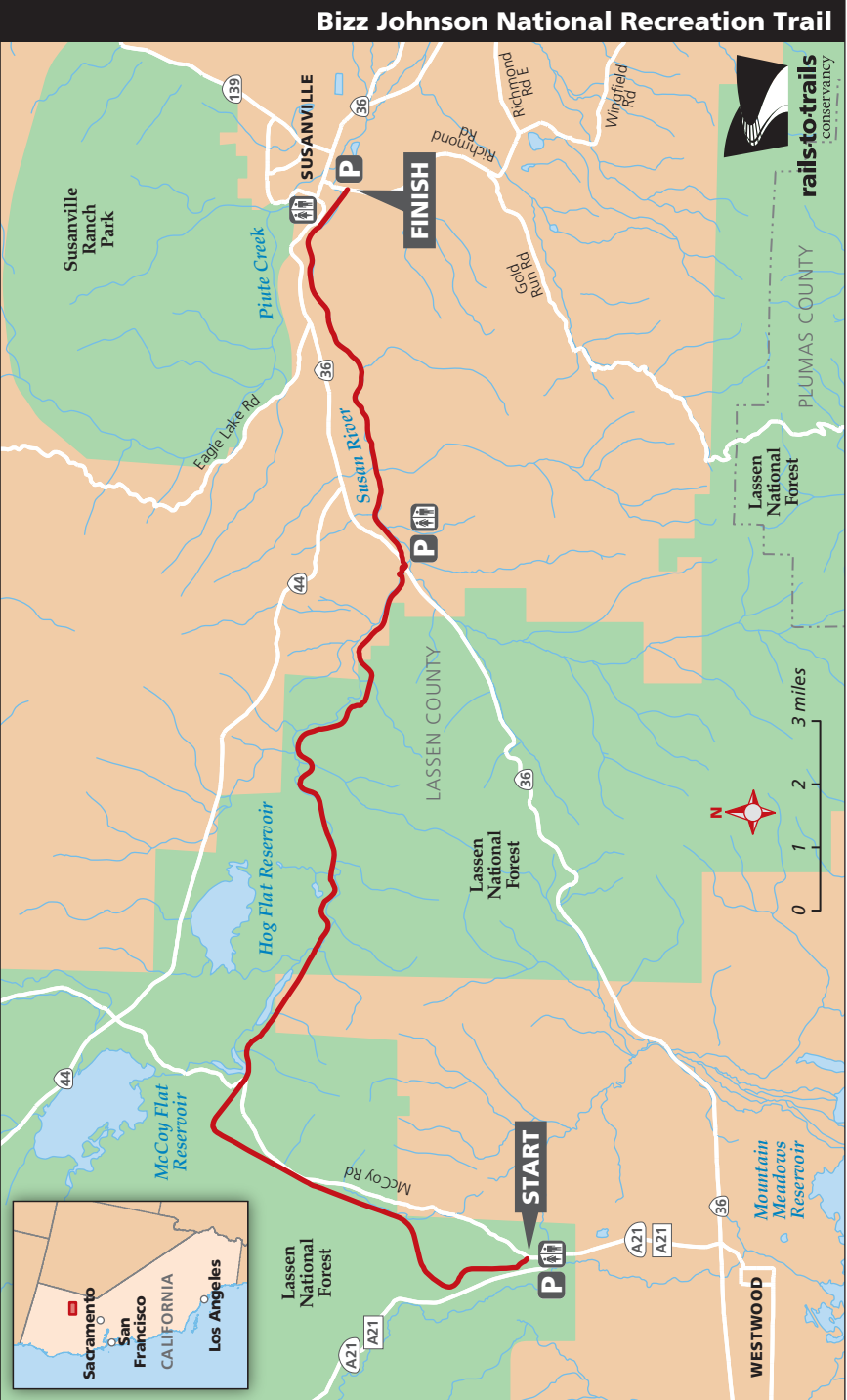
**CONTACT:** [greenbrierrailtrailstatepark.com](http://greenbrierrailtrailstatepark.com)

## DIRECTIONS

Trailheads are available in Caldwell, Cass, and Marlinton, as well as at several other locations along the route.

To reach the northern trailhead at Cass, take I-64 to Exit 169/Lewisburg. Follow US 219 60.4 miles north to WV 66 E. Turn right onto WV 66/Back Mountain Road, and go 2.3 miles. The trailhead will be on your right, just off Deer Creek Road. Or take WV 28 to WV 66 W, and look for the trailhead just off WV 66 on your left after 5.2 miles.

To reach the southern trailhead at North Caldwell, take I-64 E to Exit 175/US 60. Turn left (west) onto US 60, and go 2.7 miles to County Road 38/Stonehouse Road. The trailhead will be on your right in 1.4 miles. If you're coming from I-64 W, take Exit 169 to US 219; travel north 0.5 mile to CR 30/Brush Road, and turn right. From here, drive another 0.5 mile to CR 38/Stonehouse Road. The trailhead will be on the left in 3 miles.





## 28 Bizz Johnson National Recreation Trail

**N**amed after former Congressman Harold T. “Bizz” Johnson, who was instrumental in its establishment, the 25-plus-mile Bizz Johnson Trail (BJT) travels through a remote and stunningly beautiful area of northeastern California. The trail follows the Susan River as it winds through a rugged canyon, crossing the river 12 times and passing through two tunnels. This high-elevation trail is a combination of semiarid canyon and upland evergreen forests and offers spectacular scenery, especially in autumn when the foliage is breathtaking.

The BJT follows an old logging route, and while the grade is not overly steep, the best way to tackle the trail is to begin in Westwood in order to enjoy the downhill. In a nod to the town’s long history in the timber industry, look for a 25-foot carved redwood statue of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox at the trailhead.



*Upland forests of pine and fir line the path.*

**County**

Lassen

**Endpoints**

Mason Station on County Road A-21, 3.3 miles north of CA 36 (Westwood), and Susanville Railroad Depot at Richmond Road and Cypress St. (Susanville)

**Mileage**

25.4

**Roughness Index**

2

**Surface**

Dirt, Gravel



*The trail's two tunnels are highlights of the route.*

Here, find thick pine-scented forests home to American kestrels and great horned owls. As the trail descends, pass through different landscapes, including oak woodlands, high desert, and grasslands, before reaching the Susan River. Follow the river—lined by picturesque boulder fields, meadows, and basalt cliffs—for the remaining 16 miles. This is a popular spot for anglers hoping to hook a rainbow trout, as well as campers, and it attracts wildlife, such as beavers, muskrats, porcupines, coyotes, and even black bears. Enjoy dramatic scenery and relics from the railroad's past in the form of bridges, trestles, and tunnels that are scattered all along this section of the route. Also keep alert for horseback riders, who frequent the BJT.

This is a rural rail-trail and, other than the trailheads at either end, the BJT does not pass through any towns. Be prepared and bring plenty of water, food, and anything else needed for the day. The route has a number of benches and scenic spots where you can stop for a picnic lunch, as well as easy access for a quick dip in the river on hot days. Mountain bikers will enjoy opportunities to connect to other trails, including the South Side Trail, which provides a challenging singletrack. Also note that the Bizz Johnson Marathon, a Boston Marathon qualifier, takes place here in October, so plan accordingly.

The BJT ends in Susanville, with an old caboose marking the trailhead. Here, you can visit the Susanville Railroad Depot, which serves as a historical museum and visitor center for the region's trails. From Susanville, it is possible to take a public bus back to Westwood. The bus drops passengers off at the intersection of CA 36 and County Road A-21; from here, you can bike about 3 miles to the trailhead.

## RAIL-TRAIL HALL OF FAME SELECTION

Featuring spectacular rural scenery, the BJT is truly a route that immerses travelers in their surroundings. Joining the Hall of Fame in 2008, this high-elevation rail-trail is one of the few places in the state of California to experience four distinct seasons, making it a popular destination year-round.

## RAILROAD HISTORY

The BJT follows the route of the Fernley and Lassen Branch Line of the Southern Pacific Railroad. This route began operations in 1914, carrying lumber, and a limited number of passengers, from Westwood to Fernley, Nevada. Lumber was transported until 1952, after which time passenger service continued until 1956. After a flood destroyed a major bridge, the structure was never repaired, and the section of the route from Westwood to Susanville fell into disuse, although the line east of Susanville remained active until 1979.

**CONTACT:** [blm.gov/visit/bizz-johnson](http://blm.gov/visit/bizz-johnson) or  
[lassenlandandtrailstrust.org/bizz-johnson-trail](http://lassenlandandtrailstrust.org/bizz-johnson-trail)

## DIRECTIONS

To reach the western end of the trail: From Reno, Nevada, take US 395 north for 80.6 miles. Continue straight on CA 36 for 25.6 miles to Westwood, and turn right (north) onto County Road A-21. Continue 3.3 miles to CR 101/McCoy Road (just before the railroad tracks). Follow CR 101 for 0.5 mile until you reach the Mason Station trailhead. The station has ample parking.

To reach the Susanville Railroad Depot on the eastern end of the trail: From Reno, Nevada, take US 395 north for 80.6 miles. Continue 4.5 miles on CA 36, which becomes Main St. in Susanville. Follow Main St. through Historic Uptown Susanville to Weatherlow St., at the base of the hill. Turn left (south) onto S. Weatherlow St. (which becomes Richmond Road), and continue 0.5 mile to the Susanville Railroad Depot Trailhead Visitor Center, where you can park.





# Explore premier rail-trails across America with this official guide

## In this book, you'll find:

- Detailed maps for every rail-trail, plus driving directions to trailheads
- Icons indicating the activities each trail can accommodate
- Succinct descriptions written by rail-trail experts
- A look at the fascinating railroad history behind each trail

*"You can now throw away all your self-help books on fighting depression, losing weight, toning muscles, finding something to do with your kids, and learning American history. Just use this guide, find a great trail—and enjoy!"*

—Peter Harnik, Director, Center for City Park Excellence, Trust for Public Land

All across the country, unused railroad corridors have been converted to public multiuse trails. In 2007 Rails-to-Trails Conservancy began recognizing exemplary rail-trails through its Rail-Trail Hall of Fame based on scenic value, amount of use, amenities, historical significance, excellence in management and maintenance, community connections, and geographic distribution.

These Hall of Fame rail-trails are found in 29 states and in nearly every environment—from downtown urban corridors to pathways stretching across wide-open prairies, along coastlines, or through mountain ranges. These rail-trails represent pioneers of the movement; they inspired trail development across the nation, or they've revolutionized how trails can impact communities along their routes.

*Rails-to-Trails Conservancy serves as the national voice for more than 160,000 members and supporters, more than 24,000 miles of open rail-trails across the country, and more than 8,000 miles of potential trails waiting to be built—with a goal of ensuring a better future for America made possible by trails and the connections they inspire.*



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