

RED CEDAR STATE TRAIL

Menomonie to County Y

Main Attractions

Scenic rock formations, views of the Red Cedar River, several trestle crossings, Downsville Cut historical site, forest, and unglaciated terrain.

Distance

Menomonie to County Y,
12.8 miles, point-2-point (one-way).

Pedaling Time

12 mph average: 1 hour, 15 minutes
16 mph average: 50 minutes

Trail Surface

Hard-packed crushed stone.

Tire Tread

Studded tires recommended.

Trail Terrain

Flat

Total Elevation Gain

Less than 100 feet.

Grade

Average: Less than 5%
Maximum: Negligible

Assurance Markers

Yes, along with mile markers & distance signs

Trail Management / Ownership

The trail is part of the Wisconsin DNR's State Park System, and is also a segment of the Chippewa Valley Trail System, which includes the Old Abe, and Chippewa River State Trails.

Trail Access Fee \$

A Wisconsin State Trail Pass is required, daily or annual (good for all WI State Trails). Available @ Menomonie trailhead.

Hours / Season

The trail is open for bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the warm-weather season.
Summer hours (Memorial Day through Labor Day):
Monday – Friday; 10am – 4pm, weekends & holidays; 9am – 5pm.
Spring and fall hours (May, September, & October):
Saturdays, Sundays & holidays; 9am – 5pm.

Trail Facilities

Staffed visitor center at the Menominee Depot trailhead, (seasonal hours). Drinking water, restrooms, and picnic area at the Depot, and at nearby Riverside Park in Menominee. Drinking water, restrooms (summer only!), and parking at Downsville. Several more trail-access parking areas are scattered along the trail, as are picnic tables.

Pets

Pets are allowed on the trail but must be kept under control on a leash no longer than 8 feet long. You must clean up after your pet.

Directions

The main trailhead is in Menomonie on Hwy 29, just west of the Red Cedar River. Other main trail access points are at Irvington, Dunnsville, and County Y.

Camping

No State or National Forest campgrounds are nearby. A privately owned campground is near the trail @ Irvington Campground & RV Park.

Nearby Trails and Parks

Hoffman Hills State Recreation Area, Devils Punchbowl County Park.

Trail Notes

One of Wisconsin's first 'Rail-Trails', the Red Cedar State Trail from Menominee to County Y offers a pleasant ride through a rural countryside along the scenic Red Cedar River. Bicyclists, walkers, and joggers will find scenic river views, numerous minor rock formations, several railroad trestles, lots of wildlife, and a pair of historical sites. The grade is flat, there are no hill climbs, making this an excellent ride for "seasoned citizens" and families with kids.

The trail is often shaded; oak, birch, elm, aspen are most common with occasional red and white pines, and maple trees. Thick patches of ferns are common, frequently found wherever there's shade. Several different species of wildflowers grow along the trail as well. Occasionally the trail passes corn fields and open prairie. Look past the fields and you'll have good views of unglaciated hills in the distance. Dense forest covers their steep-sloping flanks which rise suddenly from the surrounding landscape. If you're riding in the morning or late afternoon you'll likely see an abundance of wildlife including: white-tailed deer, raccoons, chipmunks, and many different species of birds. Wherever there are open fields you'll hear plenty of crickets.

You'll often have unobstructed views of the Red Cedar River,

which frequently flows within a few feet of the trail. A large trestle over the river, just north of Downsville, is a scenic highlight. Another scenic highlight is a miniature waterfall near the southern end of the trail. If you're doing an "out-n-back" from Menominee, this is a nice location to stop, rest, and turn around.

The former rail line was used to transport stone from local quarries that operated in the area from 1880 through the 1950's. Today, visitors will find two historical sites along the trail south of Downsville that detail some of the work that went on here. One site is named the 'Downsville Cut', and features a 40-foot high wooden derrick that was used to load cut stones onto railroad cars. A little farther south, a second site features a pile of 'cut' stones stacked to form a small arch. A nearby info-kiosk displays pictures and articles about some of the history of the local area.

The Red Cedar State Trail is managed by the Wisconsin DNR and is part of the Chippewa Valley Trail System. The CVTS includes three interconnecting trails totaling almost sixty miles: the Old Abe State Trail, the Chippewa River State Trail, and the Red Cedar State Trail. The trails connect the communities of Cornell, Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, and Menominee, and several small towns.

RED CEDAR STATE TRAIL

Menomonie to County Y

Trail Surface and Grade

Most of the trail is hard-packed, crushed stone. The trail surface is mostly hard and level. It will almost feel like it's paved with a few bumps here and there, but pretty smooth riding for the most part. The trail has long, flat, straight stretches. Hills and steep gradients are completely absent.

Menominee Trailhead

The train depot building in Menominee serves as the visitor center and northern trailhead for the Red Cedar State Trail. The indoor visitor center is staffed during seasonal hours (May through October) and offers trail information, trail passes, an exhibit area, and restrooms. Next to the depot building are a gazebo, shaded picnic tables, an information kiosk with paper trail maps, and a notice board which displays: general rules for the trail, the cost of trail passes, and how to register at the self-registration station, when the depot visitor center is closed. Keep your pass with you when you ride. A large trail map sign sits at the trailhead.

Riverside Park in Menominee

Riverside Park in Menominee sits between the Depot visitor center and the Red Cedar River. The park features a large shaded lawn with picnic tables, a few bbq grills, a children's play area, restrooms with running water, and a drinking fountain. Use the restrooms here when the visitor center is closed.

Riding south from Menominee

About 0.25 miles south of trailhead, the trail passes over a wooden bridge over a tiny narrow gorge. A clear, sandy-bottomed creek flows beneath the bridge and into the nearby Red Cedar. The creek can be fun to wade in on hot days.

Ride slow for the first couple of miles. There are frequently walkers and joggers on the northern part of the trail.

1 Mile marker

There is very little development along the river and the trail after the first half-mile. The first scenic rock formations occur along the west side of the trail, just south of the 1 mile marker. They often rise up from the edge of the trail with the river directly on your left (pedaling south).

The river is almost always within site of the trail, and there are occasional riverside benches in the first two miles. The Red Cedar is frequently riffly in this stretch, with a number of small ledges, and minor rapids. You'll often hear rushing water which creates a nice effect. Often, a thin screen of trees sits between the trail and the river with frequent openings to give you clear views. Looking across the river, the opposite shore is often high, forested banks. Look for deer and other wildlife at the river's edge. There are several different species of wildflowers along the trail. Overall, very scenic.

Irvington

Irvington features a small paved parking area, a shaded picnic table, a bike rack, and a trail-map sign. There is no self-registration kiosk. The trail is paved for a short distance as it passes under the County D bridge.

South of the County D bridge, at the 3 mile marker, the trail

passes over a short wooden trestle with an excellent view of the river. The trestle crosses a small stream that feeds into the Red Cedar. A few hundred yards south, you'll ride between more rock formations and the river. You may notice a drop in the air temperature when you're riding past the rock walls.

3.5 Miles

The river meanders away from the trail and the trail runs through forest. The ground tends to be sandy and the trees often arch their upper foliage overhead to provide a shady canopy. Large patches of ferns often surround the trail wherever there's shade. As you continue south you'll occasionally ride past corn fields, and open prairie with tall grasses and brush. Listen for song birds and crickets.

4 Mile marker

Wherever an open field borders the trail, you'll likely see the steep-sided hills of Wisconsin's driftless region, usually to the west. One of these is located near the 4 mile marker - within site of the trail - and is named 'The Pinnacle'. There is plenty of birdlife in this area.

6 Mile Marker

Occasional cornfields surround the trail with views of forest-covered hills in the distance.

Red Cedar Trestle

The trail crosses the Red Cedar River over a tall wooden trestle which provides excellent views of the river. From here, traveling south, the trail runs east of the river.

Downsville

The Downsville trail access features a paved parking area, restrooms with running water, drinking water, a picnic table (no grill) and a self-registration kiosk, with a trail map sign, and a box of paper maps. Another sign gives directions to nearby convenience store, historical museum, and lodging. Downsville is unincorporated.

South of Downsville

As you ride south, the river tends to meander away from the trail and out of sight. Forest often surrounds the trail, providing shade as you ride. Oak, elm, birch, and aspen are common, with occasional maple and pines.

8 and 9 Mile Markers

The trail runs through a thin screen of trees past several agricultural fields. The foliage often arches overhead to shade the trail. This is a very scenic stretch as densely forested, non-glaciated hills are visible from the trail.

Downsville Cut "The Spar"

At the Downsville Cut historical site, a short side trail leads to a 40 foot-high derrick called "The Spar". At this location, sandstone from a local quarry was loaded onto railroad cars. Quarries in the area operated from about 1880 to the 1950's.

A sign for visitors reads; *"This standing spar is the mast portion of a pulley-operated derrick which was used to remove soil strippings and weathered rock as the quarry wall was worked..."*

RED CEDAR STATE TRAIL

Menomonie to County Y

Continuing south, the trail bends to the east and the surrounding landscape (not the trail!) becomes noticeably more hilly. The forest once again closes in, leaving the corn fields and meadows behind. Red and white pines become more common. Bottomland forest surrounds the river, which occasionally meanders close to the trail.

11 Mile Marker

The southern-most picnic area of the trail sits near the 11 mile marker. A beautiful spot in an open clearing with excellent views of the river. Sandy banks and marshy, bottomland forest surrounds the river which flows through a narrow valley. Steep sloping, heavily forested hills surround the river valley and the trail. Look up, and you may see a bald eagle gliding about 30-40 feet overhead - down the middle of the river – searching the water for a meal. If you're fortunate enough to see an eagle this close, you'll begin to appreciate how big they are. This is a very scenic spot. Picnic table, no grill.

An historical site is located just a few yards down the trail from the picnic table, to the east and opposite the river. Several large "cut" stones are stacked in an arch formation next to an info-kiosk which displays old photos and newspaper stories about the history of quarrying in the local area.

South of the 11 mile marker is a tiny waterfall that flows in a trickle over a small scenic rock formation under a canopy of dense forest. An opening in the foliage between the trail and the river, opposite the waterfall gives a clear view of the river. There are 2 benches for you to sit and soak up the scene. This peaceful spot is a highlight of the trail.

12 Mile Marker

The trail bends south, then southeast through forest as you approach the County Y trailhead. The river often runs right next to the trail in this stretch with numerous openings providing excellent views. Meanwhile, on the other side of the trail, the ground slopes sharply up with frequent, minor rock formations beneath a dense canopy of oak, elm, and birch. You may find these final two miles to be the most scenic of the Red Cedar State Trail.

County Y Trailhead

The trailhead is next to the northeast corner of the County Y bridge. A sign next to the road marks the Red Cedar State Trail. A large paved parking area is across the bridge to the west, on the south side of the road. This parking area is mainly used as a boat landing. There are wide bike lanes on the bridge, which you'll have to ride across to get from the parking area to the trailhead. There are no facilities at the Parking Area or trailhead.

The Red Cedar State Trail continues south –across County Y - for another two miles through the Dunnville Wildlife Area, crossing the Chippewa River and intersecting with the Chippewa River State Trail, another scenic rail-trail. Most who ride the Red Cedar State Trail do not venture south of County Y. But if you do you'll find more forest and open, dry sandy fields all the way the Chippewa River.

GPS - NAD83 / WGS84

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|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Menomonie Trailhead | 44.87493,-91.93993 |
| Irvington Trail Access | 44.83663,-91.95465 |
| 420th Street Trail Access | 44.81569,-91.94818 |
| Downsville Trail Access | 44.77454,-91.93491 |
| Downsville Cut | 44.74335,-91.91755 |
| Mini-Waterfall | 44.73338,-91.91148 |
| County Y Trailhead | 44.71719,-91.89668 |
| County Y Parking | 44.71604,-91.89755 |

For best results, set waypoint arrival radius to a minimum of 50 feet

Driving Directions (Google Maps)



Menomonie Trailhead



Irvington Trail Access



Downsville Trail Access



County Y Parking