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.
**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 riffley 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...”
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.