



Ride the newest section of the North Central State Trail near Otsego Lake State Park.

Photo by Sharon Curry

North Central State Trail

The 73-mile North Central State Trail races from Waters to Mackinaw City on the former Michigan Central Railroad. The trail offers a tour of the natural beauty and tranquility that draws people back to northern Michigan year after year. It was named Michigan's best example of the rails-to-trails system by the Mid-America Trails and Greenways Conference, and for many good reasons. You'll find the scenery complemented by evenly spaced towns with several shops, restaurants, camping and lodging choices along the way — making it an ideal trail for multiday bikepacking trips. The 10-foot-wide trail is surfaced with finely screened and compacted crushed limestone.

Waters to Indian River

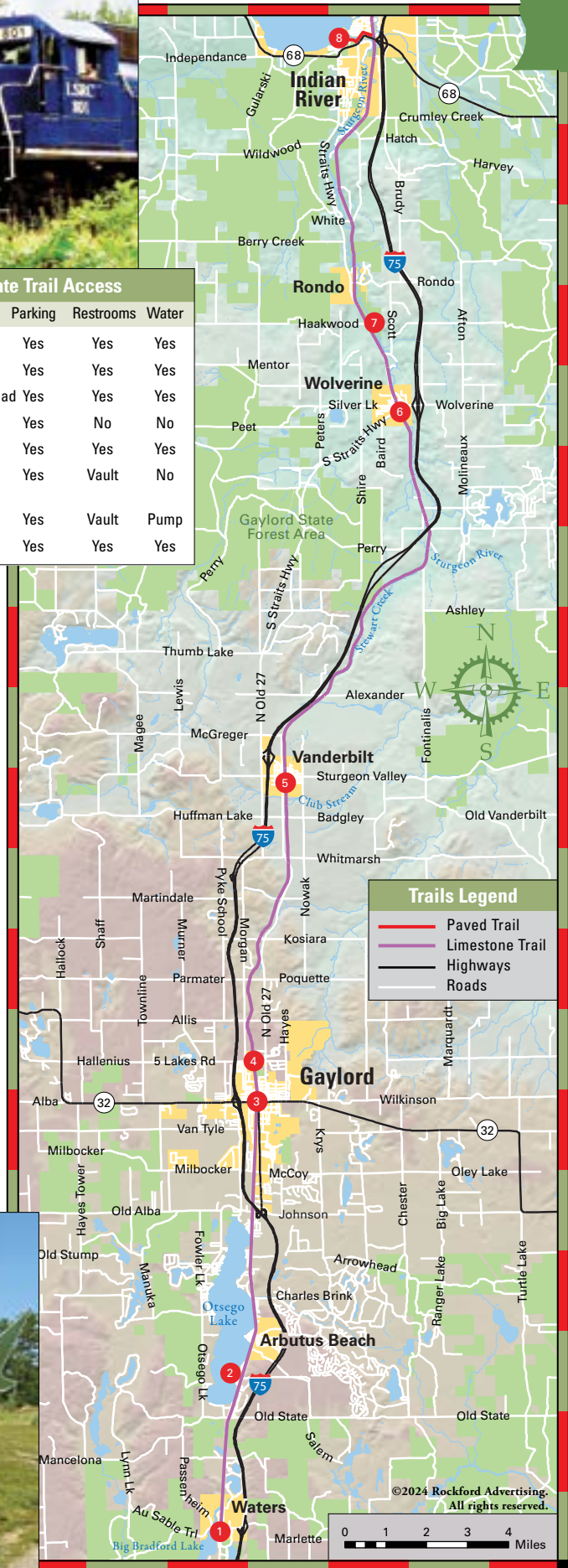
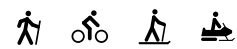
A new 11-mile Iron Belle section of the trail was opened in 2019, going south through Gaylord to the village of Waters. It was built along an active railroad right-of-way, passing by the edge of Otsego Lake with access to Otsego Lake State Park. You'll find a new trailhead conveniently located just east I-75 in downtown Gaylord near the railroad crossing.

Going north, the trail travels through forest and rolling farmland, and passes through two tunnels, before reaching the village of Vanderbilt. North of Vanderbilt, it settles into the Sturgeon River valley where it follows the edge of Stewart Creek and the Sturgeon River through Wolverine on its way to Indian River. This section of the trail is exceptionally scenic. Haakwood State Forest Campground, north of Wolverine, offers riverside camping along the edge of the trail.

When you reach Indian River, you've traveled 39.2 miles (from the village of Waters). Situated between Mullett and Burt lakes, Indian River offers several restaurants, shops and lodging options. A paved path along M-68 takes you from the North Central State Trail to the entrance of Burt Lake State Park.



See the world's largest sturgeon sculpture in Indian River.



North Central State Trail Access			
Access Site	Parking	Restrooms	Water
1 Waters Trailhead	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Otsego Lake State Park	Yes	Yes	Yes
3 Downtown Gaylord Trailhead	Yes	Yes	Yes
4 North Gaylord Trailhead	Yes	No	No
5 Vanderbilt Staging Area	Yes	Yes	Yes
6 Wolverine Village Park	Yes	Vault	No
7 Haakwood State Forest Campground	Yes	Vault	Pump
8 Burt Lake State Park	Yes	Yes	Yes