Paul Bunyan & Heartland State Trails
Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard & Crow Wing Counties

Paul Bunyan State Trail
Crow Wing State Park to Lake Bemidji State Park

The Paul Bunyan State Trail is a 123 mile long multi-use trail between Crow Wing State Park and Lake Bemidji State Park, including 8 miles shared with the Heartland State Trail.

Primarily located on a former Burlington Northern Railroad grade, the trail is generally level and is wheelchair accessible with the exception of the 9 mile segment through the Chippewa National Forest. This segment may be challenging to some users as there are many rolling hills and curves with grades reaching 8%.

The region is rich in history, having been inhabited for centuries before French explorers came to the area. Thirteen recorded prehistoric sites have been identified near the Paul Bunyan State Trail alone.

The Ojibwe and Dakota were present in the area until explorers entered the region and the logging and railroad industries began to dominate.

Most towns along the trail have a rich railroad and logging history. Today, they are popular vacation destinations and provide trail access points, rest areas and services. They also provide a major part of the regional identity and sites of historic interest.

Main summer uses of Paul Bunyan State Trail include hiking, bicycling, and in-line skating.

Snowmobiling is the primary winter use along the trail. Studded tracks are allowed on the Paul Bunyan State Trail. The trail provides connections to many miles of groomed snowmobile trails in the Grant-in-Aid trail system.

At Lake Bemidji State Park, the Paul Bunyan State Trail connects to the Blue Ox Trail, and together these trails form one of the longest rail-to-trail conversions in North America for a total distance of 213 miles. The Blue Ox Trail is primarily an unpaved motorized trail for snowmobiling and off-highway vehicle riding and extends northeast to International Falls.

Heartland State Trail

Park Rapids to Cass Lake

The Heartland State Trail was one of the first rail-to-trail projects in the country. It is a 49 mile paved multiple-use trail between Park Rapids and Cass Lake. The trail is located entirely on a level abandoned railroad grade, except for a four mile segment north of Walker which is on sharply rolling terrain for snowmobilies. Bicyclers can follow level road shoulders along Steamboat Loop NW and Cove Lane as marked.

The 30 mile segment between Park Rapids and Walker has a second, natural surface roadway for horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking.

The Heartland State Trail also provides connections to many miles of groomed snowmobile trails in the Hubbard County Grant-in-Aid trail system.

Views of lakes, rivers and streams are numerous and many are accessible from the trail. The trail passes through northern hardwood forests and stands of jack, red, and white pine, as well as the spruce fir forest community. The occasional majestic white pine can be seen towering over the trail.

Common mammals noticed along the trail include whitetail deer, raccoon, red fox, porcupine, beaver and muskrat. The observant trail user may spot coyote, weasel, mink, bobcat, black squirrel or black bear.

Many varieties of birds can be seen along the trail including the bald eagle, which has a large population in the Chippewa National Forest and surrounding area.

For additional copies of this map or other state trail maps, contact the DNR Information Center.

DNR Information Center
500 Lafayette Road
Saint Paul, MN 55155-4040
(651) 296-6157 (metro area)
1-888-646-6367 (MN toll free)

Minnesota Department of Tourism
100 Metro Square
121 7th Place East
Saint Paul, MN 55101-2112
(651) 296-5029 (metro area)
1-888-TOURISM (868-7476) (toll free)

Minnesota Bikeway Maps
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Room 110
Saint Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-2216

You can also check out our website at:
mndnr.gov/state_trails

This information is available in alternative format by request

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is an equal opportunity employer.

© 2018 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources