



Hit the Trails

Jump on your bike, strap on your helmet, and get geared up. With fantastic bike trails scattered throughout the Midwest—including the ones featured here—there's bound to be a great ride near you. **So what are you waiting for?**



Iowa

The Loess Hills are reason enough to haul your bike to western Iowa for a ride on the Wabash Trace Nature Trail. That's because the northern part of this 63-mile route runs through the tree-covered hills, which were formed by windblown silt deposits (called loess) found only here and in the Yellow River Valley of China. Pedal the entire route and you'll cross more than 70 bridges over small rivers and creeks and see plenty of native plants and wildlife (some found only in this part of Iowa). **Along the way:** Stop at Waubonsie State Park for more outdoor fun, and end your ride across the river from Council Bluffs in Omaha, where you can experience the Old Market, the Henry Doorly Zoo, and more.

Learn more: www.wabashtrace.org

Wisconsin

Bring a flashlight for a ride on the Elroy Sparta State Trail. Even if you tackle the 32-mile trail along the abandoned Chicago & North Western Railroad bed in daylight, you're going to need a light when you pass through the three rock tunnels this route is known for—particularly the third tunnel, which is almost three-quarters of a mile long. It's easy to reach the trail from several Midwestern cities, making this a popular spot for weekend riders. **Along the way:** Begin your route at the Kendall Depot, where you can peruse artifacts in the Railroad History Museum. And spend some time in Sparta, which calls itself the "Bicycling Capital of America" and is home to a 32-foot-tall sculpture of a cyclist riding an old high-wheel bike. **Learn more:** www.elroy-sparta-trail.com

Minnesota

Can you visit Lake Wobegon, the idyllic Minnesota town humorist Garrison Keillor talks about on his *Prairie Home Companion* radio show? Nope—it's not a real place. But near St. Cloud, you can bike the 46-mile-long Lake Wobegon Trail, which was named in honor of the town where, Keillor says, "all the women are strong, the men are good looking, and the children above average." The system includes two trails—one connects St. Joseph to Sauk Centre to the northwest; the other Albany and Holdingford to the northeast. **Along the way:** There's plenty to see along this trail, including the boyhood home of famed author Sinclair Lewis in Sauk Centre and the campus of St. John's University in Collegeville. (Be sure to check out the monastery and arboretum.) If it's a hot day, cool off with a drink at Charlie's Café in Freeport, where Keillor found inspiration for the people of Lake Wobegon. **Learn more:** www.lakewobegontrails.com

Missouri

Bicyclists from St. Louis, Kansas City, and beyond are drawn to the 225-mile Katy Trail, a bike path that stretches east to west across most of central Missouri. Regardless of where

you pick up the trail, you'll likely pass striking scenery, including towering bluffs, rolling farmland, forests, prairies, and small towns. Birds abound on this route too, thanks to its location along the Missouri River flyway. And of course, there's always the river: from St. Charles to Boonville, the Katy Trail follows Lewis and Clark's route up the mighty Missouri River. **Along the way:** Even if you're not up for a wine tour, the portion of the trail that cuts through Missouri wine country along Highway 94 (often called the "Missouri Weinstrasse," or wine road) is worth a ride. Need a rest? Stop in Rocheport, a town steeped in Civil War-era history that was named one of "America's 10 Coolest Small Towns" by *Budget Travel* magazine in 2006.

Learn more: www.bikekatytrail.com

Bike Safety Tip

Pack a bike safety kit. It's smart to pack safety supplies for every ride. The basics include a first-aid kit with bandages, gauze pads, adhesive tape, triple antibiotic ointment, tweezers, and a bite-relief stick. Pack identification, an emergency contact number, insurance information, and a map too. Water is important no matter the length of ride; longer rides may require snacks. If you're pedaling very far from home, a patch kit, air pump, and multitool that includes several types of wrenches and screwdrivers are handy for quick repairs. Finally, wear reflective gear, install a flashing light on your bike, and don't forget your cell phone!

