

# FREE ACCESS RAIL TRAILS PENNSYLVANIA NEW JERSEY AND NEW YORK

## Rail Trails in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York

### Pennsylvania:

- **Lehigh Gorge State Park Trail:** 26-mile trail along the Lehigh River, featuring stunning scenery and historic rail tunnels.
- **D & L Trail:** 165-mile trail spanning three counties, connecting Wilkes-Barre to Bristol.
- **Great Allegheny Passage:** 150-mile trail from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland, offering breathtaking views of the Allegheny Mountains.

### New Jersey:

- **Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Trail:** 75-mile trail along the historic canal, passing through forests, wetlands, and quaint towns.
- **Cape May County Park and Zoo Trail:** 3.1-mile loop trail within a park filled with diverse wildlife.
- **Raritan Valley Line Rail Trail:** 13-mile trail connecting New Brunswick to High Bridge, featuring scenic river crossings and historic bridges.

### New York:

- **Empire State Trail:** Over 750-mile trail system spanning the state from New York City to Buffalo, including the **Hudson Valley Rail Trail** and **Erie Canalway Trail**.
- **Harlem Valley Rail Trail:** 10.9-mile paved trail along the Harlem Valley, connecting Katonah to Wassaic.
- **Maybrook Trailway:** 21-mile trail along the former New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad corridor, offering stunning mountain views.

# Rail Trails in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York: Exploring the Northeast's Scenic Trails

## History and Development

Rail trails are former railroad corridors that have been transformed into recreational paths for walking, biking, and other outdoor activities. The development of rail trails in the Northeast began in the late 20th century as railroads abandoned many of their branch lines due to declining freight traffic. Local communities recognized the potential of these corridors for recreation and began converting them into trails.

## Major Trail Networks

### 1. Pennsylvania:

- **D&L Trail:** A 165-mile trail following the former Delaware and Lehigh Valley Railroad, connecting Delaware Water Gap to Bristol.
- **Great Allegheny Passage:** Part of the Trans America Trail, this 150-mile trail runs from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland.

### 2. New Jersey:

- **Henry Hudson Trail:** A 25-mile trail along the former Pennsylvania Railroad, connecting Bayonne to South Amboy.
- **Sussex Branch Trail:** A 20-mile trail following the former Erie Railroad, running from Newton to Hampton.

### 3. New York:

- **Walkway Over the Hudson:** A unique 1.28-mile elevated park connecting Poughkeepsie, New York, to Highland, New York.
- **Empire State Trail:** A 750-mile trail system connecting New York City to Buffalo, following various former railroad lines.

## Benefits and Uses

Rail trails offer numerous benefits:

- **Recreation:** Trails provide opportunities for walking, biking, running, and inline skating.
- **Transportation:** They can serve as convenient commuting routes for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Historic Preservation:** Trails preserve remnants of the area's industrial past and connect communities along former railroad lines.
- **Economic Development:** Trails can boost tourism and support local businesses along their routes.

## Accessibility

Most rail trails are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, with gentle grades and paved or crushed stone surfaces. Many trails also feature picnic areas, restrooms, and other amenities.

## Tips for Exploring

- **Plan ahead:** Check trail websites or apps for trail maps, distances, and trail conditions.
- **Pack essentials:** Bring water, snacks, and appropriate clothing for the weather.
- **Stay safe:** Be aware of your surroundings and obey traffic regulations.
- **Respect the trails:** Keep trails clean by packing out what you pack in and respecting wildlife.
- **Have fun:** Explore these unique and beautiful trails that offer a glimpse into the region's history and culture.

## Trail Documents for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York

### Pennsylvania:

- **Official Website:** [Pennsylvania Trails Office](#)
- **Brochures and Maps:** [Pennsylvania Trail Maps and Brochures](#)

### New Jersey:

- **Official Website:** [New Jersey Bike and Pedestrian Resource Center](#)
- **Trail Guide:** [New Jersey State Bicycle & Pedestrian Trail Guide](#)
- **Interactive Trail Map:** [New Jersey TrailFinder](#)

### New York:

- **Official Website:** [New York State Department of Environmental Conservation](#)
- **Trail Guide:** [New York State Canalway Trail Guide](#)
- **Interactive Trail Map:** [New York State TrailFinder](#)

## Why You Should Read About Rail Trails in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York

### Exploring the Beauty and Accessibility of the Northeast

Rail trails, converted railroad lines repurposed for recreational use, offer a unique and scenic way to explore the diverse landscapes of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. Here's why you should consider reading about them:

- **Historical Significance:** These trails often follow the routes of historic railroads, providing insights into transportation and industrial development in the region.
- **Accessibility:** Rail trails are typically flat and paved, making them accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including those with disabilities.
- **Scenic Beauty:** The trails traverse a variety of terrains, from rolling hills and dense forests to picturesque riverbanks and urban areas.
- **Recreational Opportunities:** Rail trails are ideal for a wide range of activities, including walking, running, biking, and horseback riding.

- **Environmental Benefits:** By reusing abandoned railroad lines, rail trails promote environmental conservation and reduce urban sprawl.
- **Local Connections:** The trails connect communities, provide access to nature, and foster a sense of place.
- **Economic Stimulus:** Rail trails have been shown to boost local economies by attracting tourists and supporting businesses along the routes.
- **Inspiration and Adventure:** Reading about the experiences of others on rail trails can inspire you to embark on your own adventures and discover the hidden gems of the Northeast.