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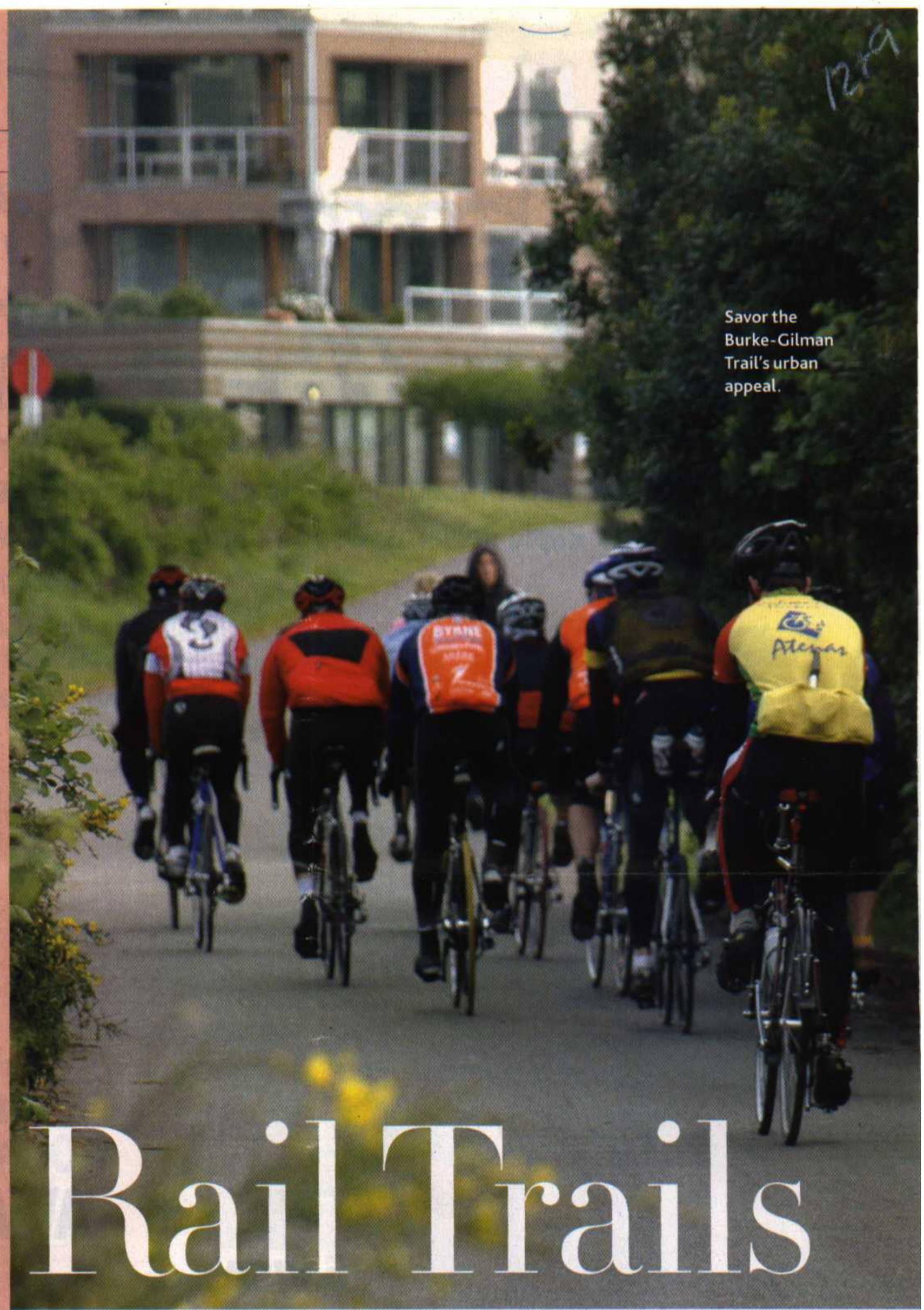
SOUTHWEST AIRLINES SPIRIT

THE LIST



Savor the Burke-Gilman Trail's urban appeal.

THE EXPERT

Jennifer Kaleba

She is the director of communications for the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and has edited the quarterly *Rails to Trails* magazine for the last four years. So far she's visited 34 rail trails around the country and hopes to add even more to the list in 2007.

Rail Trails

Hike like a hobo on these refashioned thoroughfares.

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The abandonment of thousands of miles of rail line over last 50 years gave rise to a new term and recreational outlet: the rail trail. Though the word "trail" brings to mind rugged terrain, rail trails are anything but. Because trains can't go up steep inclines or make sharp turns, railroad builders created long sustained grades and tunneled through the steepest mountains. Today's rail trails follow the same easy-to-walk routes. And on the ones listed below, no matter how hard you try, you can't get lost.

Spot the great blue heron on the Springwater Corridor.

Transforming an old rail line into a new trail takes politicking, money, and lots of asphalt. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has spearheaded this effort for more than a decade. "We serve as community educators, holding workshops and conferences on the benefits and possibilities of trails," says Jennifer Kaleba, editor of *Rails to Trails*, the magazine for Conservancy members. "We provide expert technical assistance, guiding communities through each step of the trail-building process. And we serve as the voice for this national movement, bringing together 100,000 members and support the friends of more than 1,400 rail trails across the country."

Rail trails can even provide an economic boost. Attracting people to the area can generate millions of dollars every year in revenue. Houses located near trails often sell faster and for higher prices than their far-from-trail counterparts. But Kaleba says rail trails do more than lift the local economy. "Converting these public assets into trails," she says, "helps bring communities together."

You can probably find a rail trail nearby, since tracks connect population centers. The United States already boasts 13,500 miles of rail trails, with another 14,000 miles currently under construction. Start by strolling down a few of Kaleba's favorites.

PORTLAND, ORE.
Springwater Corridor

Trail location: Gresham, Ore., to Boring, Ore.
Trail length: 17 miles
Activities: walking, biking, horseback riding, in-line skating, wheelchair accessible
Trail surface: gravel and asphalt

This top-notch trail looks gorgeous, attracts crowds, and has the distinction of being a rail-with-trail. That means a trail and an active rail line share the corridor, separated by a fence for safety. A highlight of the trail is the section that crosses the Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge, a 140-acre floodplain along the Willamette River. Bird watchers flock to the area to spot hawks, quail, pintails, mallards, coots, woodpeckers, kestrels, and widgeons. But the key species to look for is the great blue heron; one of its favorite rookeries sits on an island near the Refuge. *40mileloop.org/trail_springwater-corridor.htm*

SEATTLE/TACOMA

The Burke-Gilman Trail

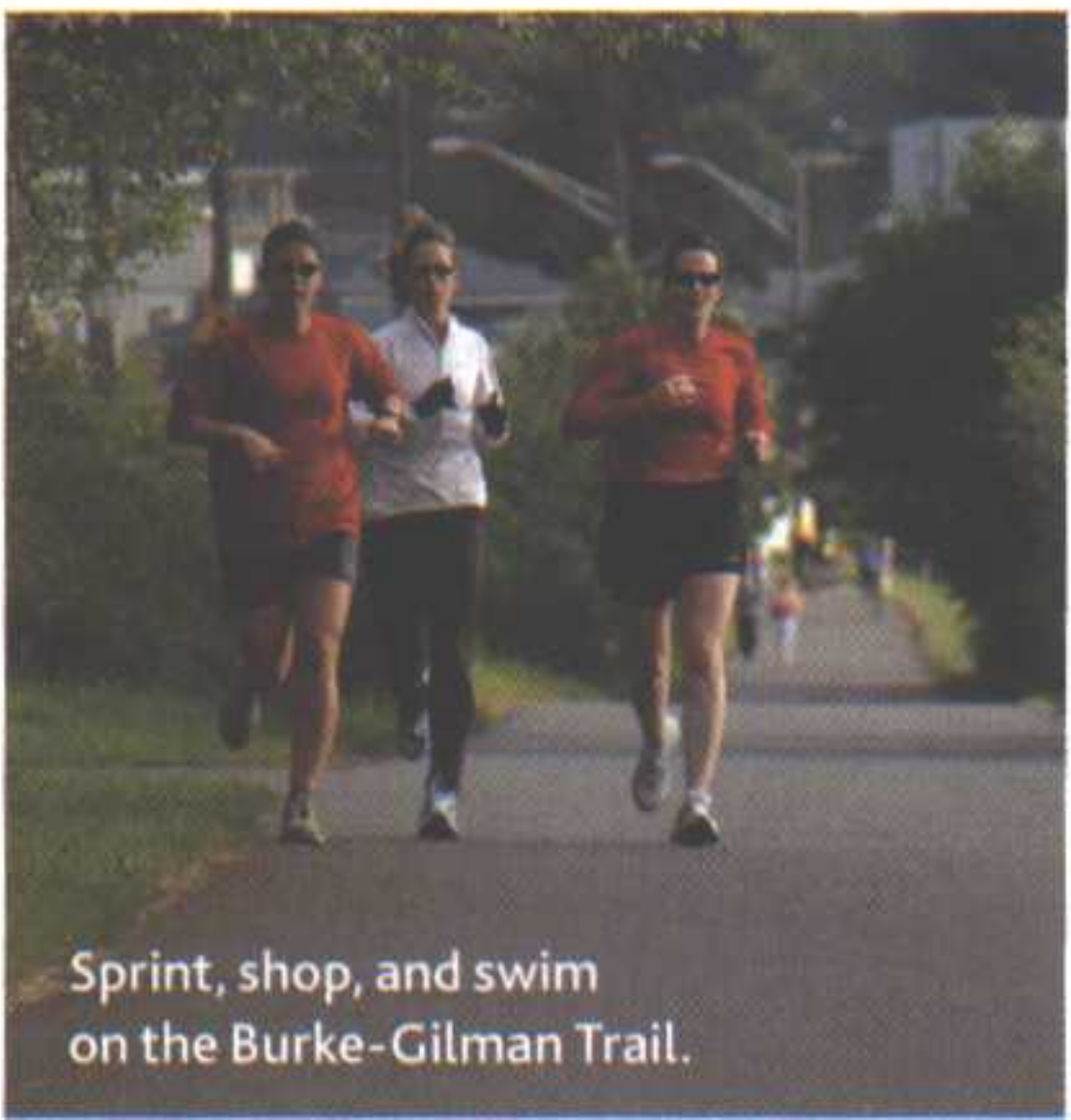
Trail location: Seattle to Bothell, Wash.
Trail length: 14 miles
Activities: walking, biking, in-line skating, fishing, wheelchair accessible
Trail surface: asphalt

Easily a top recommendation. This beautiful urban trail starts in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood, goes past the University of Washington campus, and runs along the shore of Lake Washington. Stop at Matthews Beach for a swim and check out the art and the butterfly garden at Magnuson Park. *seattle.gov/parks/BurkeGilman/bgtrail.htm*

CHICAGO

Illinois Prairie Path

Trail location: Maywood, Ill., to Wheaton, Ill.
Trail length: 61 miles
Activities: walking, horseback riding, biking, cross-country skiing



Sprint, shop, and swim on the Burke-Gilman Trail.

Provo River: canoeing allowed

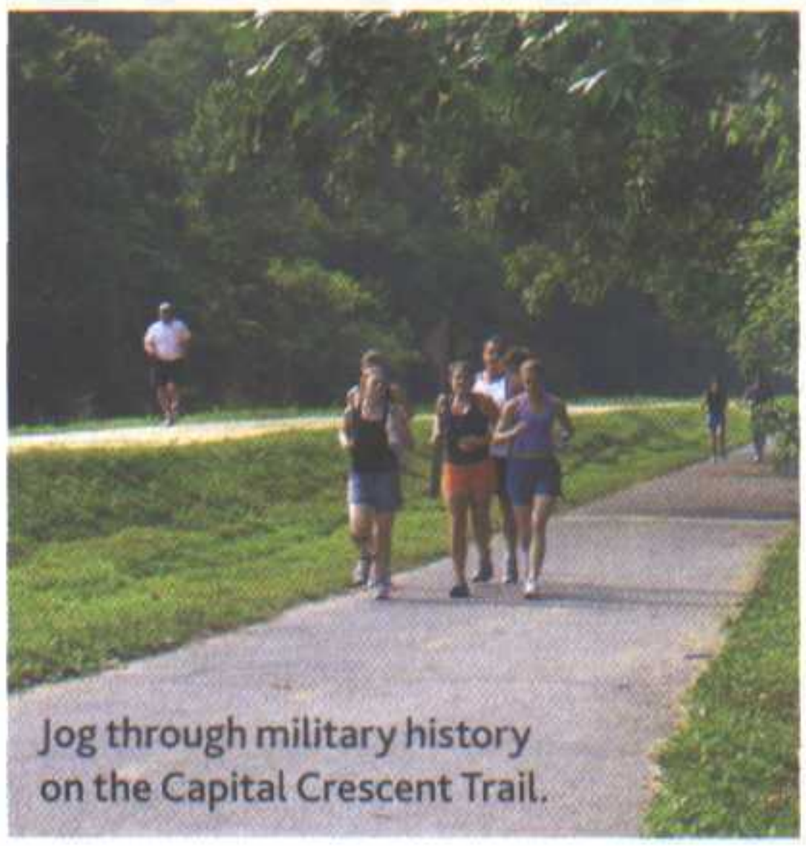
Trail surface: crushed stone
This trail follows the route of the defunct Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin electric railroad through urban areas and forest preserves. The West Chicago Prairie section of the trail sits between two rail lines and was never developed. Look for remnants of the original tall grass of the region. At least 572 species of native plants also live in the preserve. The Prairie also has the distinction of being the nation's first rail-to-trail conversion. *ipp.org/GUI/index.html*

PROVO, UTAH
Provo River Parkway

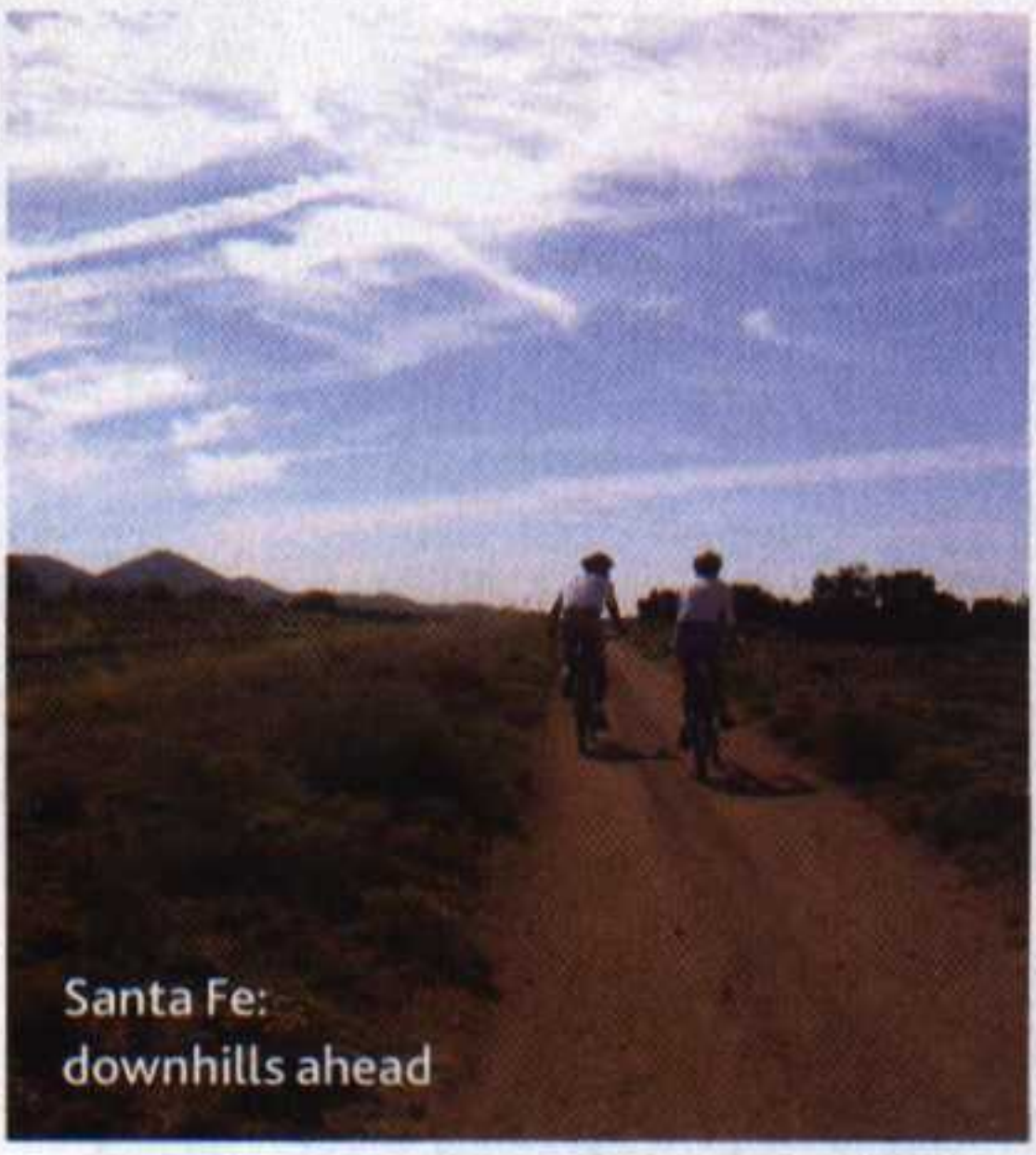
Trail location: Vivian Park to Utah Lake
Trail length: 15 miles
Activities: walking, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, canoeing, fishing, wheelchair accessible
Trail Surface: Asphalt and dirt
This multi-purpose trail follows the Provo River, winding through wetlands favored by foxes and a variety of birds. If you get tired of hiking or biking, rent a canoe at Oxbow Park. In the winter, strap on your skis and go. *nps.gov/archive/lame/hikerr.htm*

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Capital Crescent Trail

Trail location: Silver Spring, Md., to Washington, D.C.
Trail length: 11 miles
Activities: walking, biking, cross-country skiing, in-line skating, mountain biking, fishing, wheelchair accessible
Trail surface: asphalt, crushed stone, gravel, and ballast
This popular trail begins in D.C.'s



Jog through military history on the Capital Crescent Trail.



Santa Fe: downhills ahead

Georgetown neighborhood and then runs into the Maryland suburbs near Bethesda. It parallels the C&O Canal for a bit of its length and passes Rock Creek Park, home of the National Zoo. Look for the remains of the gun emplacements of Fort Sumner at mile 5.5 on the trail. *cctrail.org*

SANTA FE, N.M.

Santa Fe Rail Trail

Trail location: Santa Fe Southern Rail Depot to Lamy, N.M.
Trail length: 11 miles
Activities: walking, biking
Trail surface: dirt

There's a reason this route hosted last year's Rail Trail Fest. It runs alongside a beautiful stretch of the Santa Fe Southern Railway. Mountain bikers love the downhill stretches. So do families; a few handy pit stops keep little ones happy. The scenery always looks fantastic, but try to go in June when the cactus bloom.

PITTSBURGH

The Great Allegheny Passage

Trail length: 150 miles
Trail location: Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Md.
Activities: walking, biking, cross-country skiing
Trail surface: crushed stone

When workers complete the Montour branch of this 150-mile trail, you'll be able to hike, bike, and ski all the way from the Pittsburgh International Airport to the nation's capital—after connecting with the 185-mile C&O Canal Towpath. The terrain and scenery varies, but a constant presence

Off to see Vulcan in Birmingham.

on the trail are the vestiges of railroad engineering that made the region into an industrial powerhouse in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Stop to visit the Salisbury Viaduct, located near Meyersdale, Pa. The 100-foot-tall and 1,900-foot-long structure was a marvel when it first opening in 1912. It still is. The viaduct's deck offers trail users spectacular views of the valley below. The Big Savage Tunnel located near the Mason Dixon line in Somerset County, Pa., lets trail users cross the Eastern Continental Divide without making a steep hike. *atatrail.org/visit/about.cfm*

BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

Vulcan Trail

Trail location: Richard Arrington Boulevard to 11th Place South
Trail length: 1 mile
Activities: walking, biking, in-line skating, wheelchair accessible
Trail surface: asphalt

Sure, the trail won't take long to walk. But the scenery will charm you, and the route takes you to Vulcan Park, home of the world's largest cast iron statue. *vulcanpark.org*

MANCHESTER, N.H.

Rockingham Recreational Trail

Trail location: Manchester to Newfields, N.H.
Trail length: 25 miles
Activities: walking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, ATV riding, cross-country skiing, mountain biking
Trail surface: dirt, sand, and ballast

Since trail runs about a third of the way across New Hampshire, that tells you something about the width of the state. Not for the faint of heart, the trail can be mucky and buggy in the summer. But some users see muck and roughness as a plus; ATV riders love the Rockingham Rail Trail. Come in the fall, when the trail surface stays hard and dry and lovely foliage springs up. *nhtrails.org*

KANSAS CITY, MO.

Katy Trail State Park

Trail location: From St. Charles, Mo., to Clinton, Mo.
Trail Length: 225 miles
Activities: walking, biking, cross-country skiing, wheelchair accessible
Trail surface: crushed stone

The Katy hugs the banks of the Missouri River and passes some of the most picturesque landscapes in the state. The section between St. Charles and Booneville has been designated as an official segment of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. If you're nearby on June 18-22, pedal over to the annual Katy Trail Ride. *bikekatytrail.com*