

# WALKING TRAILS NEAR LAWRENCE

**Baker Wetlands Trails (up to 6 miles).** Earth-packed trails on top of the levees and gravel access roads in the wetlands provide good walking opportunities. The primary trailhead is located South of 31st Street, one-half mile East of Louisiana Street. This national natural landmark, containing 573 acres of undisturbed examples of wetland prairie, provides breeding grounds for pintails, mallards and Canada geese. Fifty acres are in virgin condition while the remainder is being restored. Trees include eastern cottonwood, red mulberry, silver maple, rough-leaved dogwood, American elm and red elm. Numerous migrant birds frequent this area, e.g. warblers, vireos, and thrushes. Other birds seen include eastern blue birds, great crested flycatcher, yellow rumped warbler and swamp sparrows. Plantlife includes switchgrass, side oats, big bluestem, sunflower and aster. Turtles can be seen sunning on logs. A well-built and lengthy boardwalk over the water serves as a self-guided nature trail. Beaver dams can be observed by going East along the Leech Creek Canal levee. Other mammals on the preserve include coyote and possum. By going West along the levee one crosses the Oregon-California National Historic Trail. There is a boardwalk and a birdwatching blind. Any alignment for the Eastern leg of the South Lawrence Trafficway, other than South of the Wakarusa River, would have severe environmental impacts upon the Baker Wetlands.

**Burcham-Constance Parks Trail (1 mile one way).** Although this trail is just a couple of blocks from downtown Lawrence, it is worlds away in terms of leaving the hustle and bustle of the city behind for a lush forest along the Kaw River. Trailheads are located in Burcham Park at 2nd and Indiana Streets and Contant Park at 6th and Kentucky Streets. Many people walk or jog along the trail in the early morning before they go to work and others have lunch along the riverbank under a willow. This trail is great for those who do not wish to travel far to enjoy nature. The trail traverses through a natural floodplain forest containing huge specimens of eastern cottonwood and sandbar willow trees. An interesting “swamp” is hidden two hundred yards West of the trail. Evidence of beaver can be seen along the river and, in winter, bald eagles are often seen flying above the river near the Mass. Street bridge. Giant wild grapevines climb profusely up the cottonwoods while several varieties of mushrooms spring up in the sandy soil after spring rains. Although the trail disappears in Burcham Park, it resumes at the Northwestern end of the park along a waterworks access road to the Kansas Turnpike.

**Fitch Nature Trail (1.3 mi. loop).** This tree-lined nature trail is located on KU’s 590-acre Fitch Natural History Reservation. Go North 2.5 miles from U.S. 40-24 (just past the airport) on 1600 E Rd (Grant School Road). Turn right and go onto the reservation for several hundred yards. The trailhead is located next to the kiosk abutting a small parking area. The treadway is packed earth. A variety of trees, such as black walnut, paw-paw, bur oak, plains cottonwood, sycamore and hackberry are labeled. There is a resident herd of deer and eastern wood rat and fox squirrels may be seen as well. The trail was established in 1997 in honor of Dr. Henry S. Fitch, KU professor emeritus, who has worked and lived on the preserve for 50 years. A new tract has been purchased just across the road (west) from the Fitch Reserve. Trails are planned for this restored prairie.

**Burroughs Creek Trail (3 mi. one way).** This trail extends from Hobb's Park at 11th and Delaware to 23rd and Learnard Ave. where it joins the Haskell Rail-Trail. The latter was the first rail-trail in Kansas, established in 1991. Concrete surface for the first two miles and crushed limestone from 23rd to 29th St. which is suitable for walkers, joggers and road bicyclists. Terminating at 29th Street, it is surprisingly scenic for being in the middle of a city. Common trees include green ash, hackberry, and red cedar. Red fox and a variety of birds have been seen. To visit the noted Medicine Wheel or the Haskell-Baker Wetlands take a side trail just South of the KP & L workyard and go West past the Haskell Cemetery to Perimeter Road East. Then go South until reaching a gravel road and follow it South. The trail is not recommended after sunset. ECO2 plans call for extending the trail south to the Wakarusa River and calling the trail the Two Rivers or River to River Trail.

**Kansas River Levee Trail (11 miles).** This trail overlooks both floodplain forest and open fields along the Kansas River. There are various trailheads, including just East of the Kansas River Bridge, 8th Street Boat Ramp (North Lawrence), and Riverfront Park (West of Teepee Junction, where U.S. 40 joins U.S. 24 in North Lawrence). The eastern route to Mud Creek Access Area is about 4.5 miles one way. This is the most scenic route. Northwest from the bridge, the levee lasts about 7.5 miles. The surface is crushed rock suitable for walking and road bikes. The forest contains large specimens of eastern cottonwood, hackberry, and sandbar willows. White-tailed deer and skunks may be seen at dusk occasionally. Fox and gray squirrels and river gulls are very common. Bald eagles may also be seen in winter. Some may choose to use the levee to travel to the Kaw River Trail or the Riverfront Trails. On the East side, a loop may be made by using the streets of North Lawrence for your return. Mosquitos and gnats can be a problem in late spring to fall. However, walks in late evening or early morning can be enjoyable when insect repellent is used. There are mountain biking and hiking trails along the riverbank going east from the 8th Street boat ramp. It has been said that these are some of the best mt. biking trails in the Midwest.

**Kaw River Trail (2.25 mi. one way).** This is the longest and "wildest" trail in the city. It takes about 2.5 hours to hike. Unfortunately, this scenic river trail is difficult to follow and even disappears altogether. The main trailhead was located West of Teepee Junction (junction of U.S. 24-40) in Riverfront Park. Another trailhead is located in the Lawrence Riverfront Park Wildlife Area, located 1.5 miles West of Midland Junction on 2000N and South on the levee. The trail traverses floodplain forest along the Kansas River. Several types of trees are encountered, including large eastern cottonwood, American sycamore and sandbar willow. Blue heron, white-tail deer, bald eagle, and beaver may be sighted. This national recreation trail is no longer maintained to national standards by the Lawrence Parks and Recreation Department. The surface is usually hard-packed earth, except after flooding when it becomes mud. Several wooden bridges have been washed out and have not been replaced by more permanent steel bridges. During high water, the trail is virtually unusable. It may be used for overnight camping if a permit is obtained. An interesting side trip is crossing a causeway to a large wooded island. This is one of the largest islands in the Kansas River and is open to the public for exploring, sunbathing, picnicking, camping and fishing. The KP&L power plant 150 feet downstream from the island makes some noise. Due to mosquitoes, the trail is not recommended in late spring and summer.

**Landon Nature Trail (37 miles).** This is perhaps the most scenic rail-trail in the Sunflower State. Now under development by the Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy ([www.kanzatrails.org](http://www.kanzatrails.org)), it stretches Southeast between 15th near Monroe in Topeka to Lomax, near Pomona Lake. The recreational trail follows the former Missouri Pacific Railroad corridor through the village of Berryton, crosses the Wakarusa River, follows scenic Camp Creek before intersecting the Santa Fe National Historic Trail near Overbrook and passes through Michigan Valley near Pomona Lake. The Landon Nature Trail forms a segment of the American Discovery Trail, the nation's first coast-to-coast trail. The rail-trail, railbanked in 1989 by the Sunflower Recreational Trails ([www.sunflowertrails.org](http://www.sunflowertrails.org)), is a good trail to take in the summer months due to its width and surface. For a map go to [www.landontrails.org](http://www.landontrails.org). The City of Topeka is developing the portion (4.6 miles) it leases from KRTC. The trail is completely developed from 15th & Monroe to 37th St. and from Sanneman Drive to the village of Berryton and on to the Clinton Wildlife Area. Crushed limestone surface suitable for touring bicycles. One block east of 20th and Kansas Ave. it intersects with the Shunga Trail at Kansas' first bike roundabout. Below are two undeveloped sections:

Swissvale (4 mi.). Located 3.5 miles North of Overbrook on Shawnee Heights Road and West 1.25 miles on 129th St. Park on the shoulder of the road at Swissvale, the site of an old water stop for steam trains (now a field). Hike North .5 mile to the old railroad bridge over Camp Creek. Off to the left is a lovely waterfall (in season) which is open to the public. Retrace your steps, cross the road and go South along Camp Creek. Continuing for about 1.5 miles you will pass through oak-hickory forest and patches of tallgrass prairie. There is a small low-water beaver dam and variety of wildlife. At the gravel road, retrace your steps back to Swissvale.

Clinton Wildlife Area (2+ mi.). Go 3.5 miles South of Stull ( U.S. 40 West, then DG 442 West) on DG 1023 (E 250 Rd.). Then go West (right) on DG 458 (N 1250 Rd.) until it runs into SE 89th in Shawnee County. Follow this one mile past Shaddon Rd. (Richland Corners with Don's Steakhouse) and turn South on Green Road. Proceed about .7 mile and park. Following the old railroad bed East you will cross the Wakarusa River on the longest bridge on the trail. Eventually you will pass by wetlands re-created by the Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks and pass under the Shaddon Road Overpass. Continue on or retrace your steps.

**Latham Trail (4.5 mi loop).** The Latham Trail offers a near-wilderness experience close to Lawrence and meanders through forest and open fields above the shore of Clinton Lake. Located in Woodridge Park on the West side of the lake. Go 3.5 miles South of Stull ( U.S. 40 West, then DG 442 West) on DG 1023 (E 250 Rd.). Then go East (left) one mile on DG 2 and then North for .5 mi. The primary trailhead is located in the southeast corner of the main parking area. The national recreation trail can be hiked in about 2.5 hours. The trail is mainly packed earth and is maintained by the Kansas Trails Council and Corps of Engineers. Chestnut oak, black walnut, red cedar, hackberry, and shagbark hickory provide shelter for many birds. The trail can be backpacked and primitive camping is permitted 100 feet away from the trail and water sources. Blue blazes on trees mark the trail. Just off the trail is a grove of fruit trees and in the middle of the park lies a hill where one can enjoy a magnificent view of the lake.

**Naismith Valley Park Trail/Multipurpose Path (1.5 mi. one way).** There is a surprising variety of plant and wildlife along this trail in the heart of suburbia. The primary trailhead lies one-half block West of the intersection of 25th and Arkansas street. The trail is maintained by Lawrence Parks and Recreation Dept. and follows the creek South from 23rd Street through both woodlands and fields. Green ash, American sycamore, wild black cherry, honey locust and shagbark hickory line the banks of the creek. Wild raspberry and riverbank grape hide cottontail rabbits and red squirrels. There is a rare green heron nest and bobwhite and cardinals are commonly seen. There is a paved multipurpose path on the western boundary of the park which starts just south of Dillon's on 23rd St. at 24th Street and Naismith Dr. and goes to 29th Terr.

**Heatherwood Trail (.5 mi. one way).** This short paved path goes from just east of Heathewood Dr. at Clinton Parkway north for one-half mile. It meanders through woods along a scenic creek. Eventually, the trail will be extended to the west campus of KU. Many families use this trail on weekends.

**Northshore Trail (10 miles one way).** The Northshore Trail can be classified as a superior hiking trail because of its length, scenery and proximity to Lawrence. Trailheads at Clinton Overlook area and Lake Henry (south of the Clinton Park Headquarters on a gravel road). The latter trailhead (going West) is the most scenic, but one must buy a park pass first. Hikers and mountain bicyclists alike will enjoy the rolling wooded terrain along the shores of Clinton Lake. Follow the blue blazes (the white blazes wind back and forth off the blue trail). The trail ranges from smooth, easy grades to steep climbs and rocky stream crossings. The wooded hillside helps provide protection from the elements and a sense of solitude to hikers and birdwatchers. Watch out for fast mountain bikes—to ensure your safety step out of their way. There are lovely stands of oak-hickory upland forest. Other trees include American sycamore, red cedar, black walnut, and Osage orange. Bluebirds, bald eagle, and waterfowl can be seen on occasion. There is a resident herd of deer, and gray fox, beaver, and bobcat may also be seen at dusk. The well-used, earth-packed trail is maintained by the Kansas Trails Council and Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks. Backpacking with primitive camping is permitted in all but the first mile. This trail forms a leg of the American Discovery Trail, the nation's first coast-to-coast trail. There is a Skills Loop for bicycles at the far western end of the state park just north of the boat ramp. There is a daily or annual fee for cars entering Clinton State Park.

**Perry Lake Trail (30-mile loop).** This national recreation trail, primarily maintained by the Kansas Trails Council, traverses some of the most scenic and rugged territory in the area. Much of it meanders through oak-hickory forest containing a mixture of chestnut oak, shagbark hickory, black walnut, red cedar and Osage orange trees. Colorful redbuds along with dogwood are numerous underneath the canopy of trees. Small native animals such as rabbits and fox squirrels are seen almost with every hike. White-tailed deer, wild turkey and raccoons may be seen around sundown. Four excellent trailheads are listed below.

Little Slough Creek (2.9 mi.). Go 12 miles North of Perry on Ferguson Rd. (FAS 328). At the bottom of the hill, turn East (right) on 94th and go about 170 yards. On the left (North) will be blue blazes and/or ribbon on trees. This is the trailhead. Park on the road's shoulder. This is perhaps the most scenic stretch

of the Perry Lake Trail. It winds high above Little Slough Creek along a heavily wooded ridge. After about 1.5 miles it crosses a small stream below the dam of a lake (private) nestled in the forested hills. There is evidence of beaver in this area. This is a good place to turn around or continue on to Kiowa Rd. (Co Rd 1029) and then re-trace your steps. There may be some noise from Ferguson Road and airplanes (on a flight pattern).

Slough Creek (5.5 mi.). Go 7 miles North of Perry on Ferguson Rd (FAS 328) and turn off left to the Slough Creek Public Use Area. This is the main trailhead. Hike North through a scenic valley to Old Parker Place Rd. Continue on to the Table Rocks area. These rocks are large, flat limestone boulders and make excellent benches for resting or having lunch. You can exit at the east Longview Entrance road, just South of Apple Valley Farm.

Audubon Preserve (1.3 mi.). Go 8.5 miles North of Perry on Ferguson Rd. (FAS 328) and turn right (East) at the fire station. Go about .5 mi to the preserve located on the North side of the road. Hike either North or South along the trail. Go South for rugged, wooded terrain. Waterfowl may be seen along the shore if you hike North through the preserve toward Jayhawk Boy Scout Camp. Re-trace your steps.

Old Military Road (3.8 mi.). 12 miles North of Perry on Ferguson Rd. (FAS 328). Near the bottom of the hill, turn West (left) to the parking area for the Old Military Road Campground. There is a trailhead on the Northern end of the parking area. Hike North about 75 yards to where the trail forks. Take the fork to the West toward the Old Quarry Road. This segment of the trail is quite scenic and rugged. There may be some noise from Ferguson Road and airplanes (on a flight pattern).

**Mary's Lake or Red Cedar Trail (1.5 mi. loop).** This network of trails meanders through mature stands of red cedar around Mary's Lake and through the native prairie in Lawrence Prairie Park. The trailhead is located at the nature center at 29th & Harper. The trail around Mary's Lake is paved which the paths in the prairie park are mowed paths on the native tallgrass prairie allow one to view the wildflowers (mid-June is peak) and native grasses. The 20-acre prairie contains plants uncommon to Kansas, including Michigan lily, wild camasia, and nodding lady (orchid). Bluestem tallgrass, wild indigo, and switch grass grow profusely on this never-been-plowed land. The paved trail meanders through willows and through groves of wild black cherry, Osage orange, green ash and honey locust along the East shore of Mary's Lake and . The Lawrence Prairie Park is the closest native prairie to Lawrence and provides the hiker with a nearby prairie experience.

**Riverfront Park Trails (4+ miles one way).** A canopy of cottonwood trees forming a riparian forest along river covers the well-worn earth-packed trail. The trailhead is located on East side of parking area for the Kaw River 8th Street boat ramp in North Lawrence. Watch out for fast mountain bikers. The hard-packed trail provides some of the best biking in the Midwest. Although hikers have the right-of-way, step out of their way to be safe. The trail goes to the Mud Creek Access Area, a former Kansas Dept. Wildlife and Parks boat access area. Unfortunately, a lovely sandbar with sand dunes has been turned into a "mudbar" with out-of-place vegetation due to a new sand dredging operation just upstream.

**Sanders Mound Trail (0.5 mi. one way).** This short paved trail takes one to panoramic Sanders Mound. Also known as Faerie Mound, Sanders Mound protrudes into Clinton Lake near the dam. The trailhead is at the Overlook at Clinton Lake. Sanders Mound is a good place to sit on the park bench provided and watch the reflection of a sunset shimmering on the water. Due to the almost constant wind, flying a kite can also be an enjoyable pursuit.

**Barber School Trail (.5 mil one way).** This path starts in Clinton State Park and meanders through tallgrass prairie to the top of the hill which overlooks Barber School (1860s stone ruins). An excellent view of the lake and surrounding lands can be had on top of the hill. It is also a good place to fly kites. There is a daily or annual fee for cars entering Clinton State Park.

**SLT Hike and Bike Path (11 mi.).** This paved path is officially known as the South Lawrence Trafficway Hike and Bike Path, but we prefer not to give any recognition to the "Road to Nowhere" which may destroy the Baker Wetlands. There are several trailheads along the path. One of the best trailheads is located at 33rd & Kasold. Another is by the Hollywood Theatres. There are three parking areas: just North of the trail, North a few hundred yards, and on the SE corner of 31st Kasold. Walk East and enjoy one of the more scenic portions of the path away from the roadway. Another good trailhead is located at a parking lot (under construction) at Wakarusa Dr. and 26th Street (adjacent to the Adult Soft Ball Complex and the Arboretum). Walk West to the Clinton Dam Road and the new Sanders Mound Trail. The path East from Clinton Dam could become part of the American Discovery Trail.

**Flint Hills Nature Trail (16 mi. one way).** This remarkable rail-trail stretches 117 miles between Osawatomie and Herington. Over 36 miles are now complete. The surface is crushed limestone suitable for touring bicycles, wheelchairs and horses. One of the most scenic completed sections is between Ottawa and Osawatomie (16 miles) which follows the Marias Des Cygnes River. There are wooded bluffs and a canopy of trees for much of the way. Other completed sections include: 10 miles between Admire and Bushong north of Emporia; a 7- mile section at Vassar south of Pomona Lake and a 3.5-mile segment between Council Grove and the Kaw Heritage Park. The western half of the trail follows the general route of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail and is the route of the American Discovery Trail, the nation's first coast-to-coast trail now under development. The Flint Hills Trail is the 7th longest rail-trail in America and the longest rail-trail being developed by a nonprofit organization (Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy). Go to [www.flinthillstrail.org](http://www.flinthillstrail.org) for a map and other information.