

Grant's Trail-Trail Guide

Grant's Trail is an 8 mile paved trail running through South County. The trail was once a railroad line for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. In 1991 Trailnet, a not-for-profit organization purchased the corridor with funds from St. Louis County and the Missouri Department of Transportation. The trail is relatively flat and is utilized by bikers, hikers, joggers, and roller blades. The trail is quite busy during the warm weekend months.

Grant's Trail was originally a spur of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The north to south run was to relieve rail traffic coming into St. Louis from the main line in Kirkwood. Trains could leave the main line and go south on the spur and hit another line coming into St. Louis from the south. The line was abandoned in the 1980's.

Grant's Trail is a key component in the Great Rivers Greenway attempt to link with the Meramec Greenway Trails and the River Des Peres trail system. Some of the trail links will be on dedicated roadways due to the lack of open space.

Grant's Trail

8 miles Paved Treadway Flat Hiker-Biker-Roller Blade

The southern terminus of the trail is accessed at Orlando Gardens off of Hoffmeister Road. The parking area is part of the Orlando Gardens banquet parking so there is plenty of room for trail users. No support facilities exist at this trailhead.

The trail begins along a bottomland woodland that parallels Gravois Creek. The woods are typical with cottonwood and box elder as the two dominant tree species. The understory is not well developed as a result of honeysuckle infestation. A small tributary of Gravois Creek is crossed as the trail user heads to the north. The creek has relatively clear water and supports a fish population along with aquatic invertebrates. Inside the wooded area is a series of off-road bicycle trails. This BMX Bike Park is only open when there is proper supervision. St. Louis Bike Park is a not for profit organization.

The trail leaves the shady woods and continues with residential backyards to the right and still some woodland to the left. The trail comes into a light industrial area and parallels a small pond. Seasonally turtles and ducks can be seen at the pond. Light industry stays with the trail as it crosses Reavis Barracks Road. Stop lights at Reavis assist with the street crossing. Modern restrooms are located at the Reavis Barracks crossing. A small spring feeds a wetland along the trail near the restroom facility.

After crossing Green Park Road, the trail begins to leave the industrial sites behind and picks up more residential areas; backyards to the right and woods to the left. After ¼ of a mile further the trail opens up into a large field. Here it is not uncommon to see a red-tailed hawk perched in a tree looking for prey. Deer and wild turkeys frequent the field at dusk and dawn. This large open space is owned by the Metropolitan Sewer District and was at one time leased to St. Louis County Parks.

The trail continues across Union Road at the traffic light and under I-55. A trailhead with parking is located under I-55 but does not have water. After leaving the trailhead the trail user gets the feel of being in the country. An undeveloped truck farm is to the right and wooded areas are to the left. The Weinreich Farm was just one of many "truck farms" in the area before World War II. Truck farms were called such as they raised vegetables and had to be trucked to market.

Continuing on past an industrial park on the left, Clydesdale County Park borders the trail on the left. This 117 acre park has picnic sites, shelters, ballfields and many multi-purpose trails. Bottomland Trail a .6 mile trail connects to Grant's Trail. This trail will take the trail user right to the banks of Gravois Creek. Gravois Creek is French meaning the creek with gravel. The creek begins in Webster Groves and flows 6.5 miles before entering River des Peres. The creek like most urban streams suffers from storm surges during times of intense rainfall. The creek is a series of pools and riffles. Gravel bars make it easy to get close to the stream edge. But before you jump in the water you

should know that the water has a high e-coli level. Sculpins and darters can be found in the rich oxygen laden riffles. Carp some of which have some size can be found in the deep and mysterious pools. Don't be surprised if you see a few large goldfish swimming about escapees from previous floods. Bluegill and even large-mouth bass patrol the waters. Shiners and minnows can be seen in abundance. A small spring can be found on the north leg of Bottomland Trail just inside the woodline where the trail intersects with Grant's Trail.

A small parking lot exists off of Tesson and Teshire Roads and serves as a trailhead. Access to the Clydesdale trail system can be gained by taking the Clydesdale Connector Trail. This scenic trail crosses over Gravois Creek and goes past a steep rocky hillside. A number of areas in Clydesdale Park have been planted with native prairie grasses and wildflowers.

Continuing the journey to the north the trail goes under Tesson Ferry Road and continues along an apartment complex and Affton Athletic Field. At Gravois the trail is parallel to Grant's Farm.

Grant's Farm is the ancestral home of the Busch family. The 281 acre "farm" is home to over 900 animals representing over 100 different species. The farm represents the commitment to wildlife conservation and preservation by the Busch family. Admission to Grant's Farm is free. The four room two story log cabin was built 3 days by Ulysses Grant in 1855. Today the cabin faces Gravois Road but its original location was to the south about one mile. The cabin and farm were named "Hardscrabble."

Across from Grant's Farm is White Haven operated by the National Park Service. This was the plantation home of the Dent family. Frederick Dent amassed nearly 1,000 acres of land. Dent was an attorney, businessman and gentleman farmer. The original house was built in 1818. Julia Dent and Ulysses Grant were married in 1848. Grant resigned from the army in 1854 and returned to White Haven. Frederick Dent gave the Grants' 80 acres to farm. It is on this 80 acres that log cabin was built. Upon the death of Julia's mother the Grants' left Hardscrabble and moved in to White Haven. Ulysses farmed and ran the plantation until 1860 when he moved the family to Galena, Illinois to work at his father's leather shop. Grant sold the last of White Haven to the Vanderbilt's to settle a debt in 1884. He died the following year. Julia Grant last visit to White Haven was in 1894.

Moving on down the trail from White Haven is the stable and pasture of the Clydesdales. The Busch family purchased their first Clydesdales in 1933 with the repeal of prohibition. The breed Clydesdales originated in Scotland.

Whitecliff Park maintained by the City of Crestwood is the next public land that adjoins Grant's Trail. Whitecliff is an 85 acre park that contains an outdoor aqua-center and community center. Over half of the park is wooded accessed by one hiking trail. No trail access to Grant's Trail exists at Whitecliff.

After leaving Whitecliff Park the trail continues up to Watson Road. Here two old cemeteries can be found. Sappington Cemetery just to the west off of Watson Road was established in 1811. Father Dickson Cemetery is located along the trail and also dates back to the 1800's.

Grant's Trail terminates just north of Interstate 44. Two trailheads are located both immediately to the north and south of the interstate. An old railroad bridge is used to cross over the interstate. Now there is nothing left to do but turn around and head back to Orlando Gardens. Grant's Trail is one of the most popular trails in the St. Louis area. The trail is a nice blend of urban and open space.