
Zim Smith Trail

The Zim Smith is a paved 11.5-mile multi-use trail that runs from Ballston Spa to Mechanicville. The trail passes through the towns of Ballston, Malta, and Clifton Park, and the village of Round Lake. The Zim Smith Trail has the distinction of being the only trail in New York State that is designated as a National Recreation Trail by the U.S. Department of Interior and National Park Service. Those seeking accessible features will appreciate the Shenantaha Creek Park trailhead, which has a number of accessible parking spaces, accessible restrooms in the park and benches along the trail for those hiking south from the trailhead. The width of the trail complements the multi-use designation.

Directions: The Shenantaha Creek Park entrance is located on Eastline Road in the town of Malta. From the Northway (I-87) take Exit 12. From Exit 12 drive west on Route 67, continuing 1.5 miles to Eastline Road. Turn left and drive 0.5 miles to the entrance of Shenantaha Creek Park. The entrance is on the left and the main parking area is through a gate and down a slight hill.

Parking: There are five designated accessible parking spaces at the Shenantaha Creek Park entrance to the trail.

Distance: The trail descriptions cover 2.5 miles of the trail.

Trailhead: Trailhead with accessible parking is located right off the parking lot at Shenantaha Creek Park

Surface: Firm and stable asphalt.

Width: 10 feet wide.

Slope: Entire assessed portions were less than 5% except for the 35-foot-long path to the entrance at Shenantaha Creek Park which had a short section over 8%, 100 feet of an 8% grade at 1.6 miles from the Shenantaha Creek Park trailhead, and 200 feet of a 7-8% slope at 4.1 miles from the Round Lake parking area.

Cross slope: The majority of the trail is under 2%, except for a 200-foot section of 4% cross slope at 4,400 feet from Shenantaha Creek Park.

Features: Benches are located from the Shenantaha Creek Park trailhead at 1,621 feet, 2,351 feet, and 4,890 feet.

Park Information: Hours of operation are 7:30 a.m. to sunset daily with bathrooms available from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. seasonally. The park contains a balance of recreation, historical features, and protected open space. There is no alcohol, no littering, and no hunting allowed in the park. The park follows a "Leave No Trace" policy and asks that visitors leave it as they find it. Leashed pets are allowed on the trails but they are not allowed in protected open spaces of the park. Groups of 15 or more people using the pavilion require a permit to reserve the space.

Description: The trail follows the old corridor for the Rensselaer and Saratoga Railroad, which ran between Ballston Spa and Troy and was completed in 1836. Shenantaha Creek Park traces its history back to 1993, when the Town Board commissioned a park committee to plan a new park that would cover more than 56 acres of land along the Ballston Creek. After four years of planning, the park opened to the public in 1997. Shenantaha is an Iroquois word for "deep water."

Shenantaha Creek Park is full of historical significance. Rocks left from glacial periods helped carve the local landscape as ice receded. The fields of the recreational area were once farmlands and there are remains of an old mill along the creek that was used to press flaxseed oil. The wooded areas surrounding the fields have massive oaks, maples, pines, hemlocks, and shade trees.

The parking lot for Shenantaha Creek Park is large, with room for 20 cars. There is direct access to the Zim Smith Trail via the parking lot from a sloped paved path. Turn left from the parking lot to access the section from Shenantaha Creek Park to Round Lake, which is three miles in length. The trail is paved and approximately 10 feet wide as it passes through mostly wooded areas providing shade with periodic openings.

The first 0.25 miles passes along the park area with views of the fields and recreational areas. For the next quarter mile to half mile, the Shenantaha Creek passes closer to the trail and you may be able to view the creek at times. After another quarter mile the trail crosses Ruhle Road at 0.75 miles. Near the one-mile mark from Shenantaha Creek Park, there is a slight drainage tributary that leads from the trail to the creek.

Over the next half mile there are two side trails that lead to a housing development off of Ruhle Road. At 1.5 miles, the trail goes under the Northway (I-87). Just after passing under the overpass, the trail splits with the primary trail continuing straight and a side trail heading to the left. Continue on the primary trail and the trail passes over the Round Lake Bypass at 1.7 miles via a bridge.

The trail is shaded over the next half mile. The trail has two road crosses, one at 2.1 miles (Morris Road) and one at 2.3 miles (Goldfoot Road). The trail has now entered



the Village of Round Lake. The village recreational fields are down the street on Goldfoot Road and include two baseball fields. Just past the recreational area is Round Lake. After 0.2 miles on the trail there is a small parking lot. The total length from the parking lot at Shenantaha Creek Park to this lot is 2.5 miles.

Owner: Saratoga County in cooperation with Saratoga PLAN

For more information: Contact the Town of Malta, (518) 899-4411, commctr@malta-town.org, www.malta-town.org/facilities

TRAILS FOR ALL IN SARATOGA COUNTY

This trail report is part of a series of documents describing outdoor spaces with accessible features in Saratoga County. It was created by ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse, a regional environmental organization. For more information, or to find more descriptions of trails for users of different ability levels, go to ecosny.org. ECOS also publishes a series of guides describing natural areas in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties.