There's nothing like enjoying a trail on horseback. There's a bond with the animal carrying you, which in turn helps you connect with your natural surroundings. Although some rail-trails prohibit equestrian use, plenty across the U.S. welcome riders, and they showcase some magnificent scenery and significant railroad history alike. Take a look at these 10 greats.

Washington

**JOHN WAYNE PIONEER TRAIL**

Spanning from Cedar Falls to the Washington-Idaho border, the iconic John Wayne Pioneer Trail gives riders a true taste of America's Old West. The corridor passes through many of the Pacific Northwest's biomes, ranging from dry scrubland to dense forests—and as it traverses the Cascade Mountains, it goes subterranean through the 2.3-mile Snoqualmie Tunnel (open May to October). Serious horseback riders may check out the John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders Association, which organizes an annual 18-day cross-state trail ride.

Washington State Parks manages the western portion (Iron Horse State Park, Cedar Falls to the Columbia River) and the unconnected segments between Lind and the Idaho border, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources oversees the portions between the Columbia River and Lind. Please note that the eastern side is unimproved, and water is scarce (do not attempt in excessive heat). Horse trailer parking is available at the Cedar Falls, Hyak, Easton, South Cie Elum, Thorp, Kittitas, and Yakima Training Center Army West and Army East trailheads.

Before riding on the John Wayne Pioneer Trail, check with the proper managing organization to ensure you have necessary permits, passes, gate codes and closure info!

To learn more about these and other trails, check out TrailLink.com.

Kentucky

**DAWKINS LINE RAIL TRAIL**

As the longest rail-trail in America's most horse-friendly state, it's no surprise that this corridor in eastern Kentucky welcomes trusty steeds and riders alike with open arms. Along its route, which travels through a national forest and a state park, the trail crosses 24 trestles and passes through the 662-foot Gun Creek Tunnel, all of which are open to equestrians. Horse trailer parking is available at Swamp Branch, Royalton and Jane Beshare trailheads. Eventually, the state will double the trail to span 36 miles and encompass the 1,556-foot-long Tip Top tunnel, which crews are working on to make safe for visitors. The full trail will also pass by Breathitt County's new elk-viewing gate codes and corrals, including water fountains for both, hitching posts, mounting blocks and corrales.

As the first portion of the trail only opened in June 2013, the worst is still getting out, so riders can often enjoy long stretches uninterrupted by other users. From Royalton, the trail gradually slopes downhill as it meanders northwest—something to keep in mind as you plan your round-trip or shuttle.

Length: 18 miles
Surface: Crushed stone
Other Uses: Biking, walking

Michigan

**Iron Ore Heritage Trail**

COUNTY: Marquette
ROUTE: Republic Township > Chocolay Township
LENGTH: 47 miles (asphalt, crushed stone, dirt)
OPEN FOR HORSEBACK: 20-miles between Ishpeming and Republic Township

California

**El Dorado Trail**

COUNTY: El Dorado
ROUTE: Camino > Sacramento County/El Dorado County Line
LENGTH: 35.9 miles (asphalt, dirt, gravel)
OPEN FOR HORSEBACK: Full trail
HIGHLIGHTS: El Dorado County Historical Museum, El Dorado Western Railroad, Placerville (historical gold rush town), Weber Creek trails

Florida

**NATURE COAST STATE TRAIL**

A lesser-known Florida gem, this rail-trail welcomes equestrians on the 20-mile segment between Old Town and Trenton and also includes a 4.5-mile sidepath between the Old Town and Fanning Springs trailheads, both of which offer limited horse trailer parking. Manatees and jumping sturgeon can often be seen from the Suwannee River treeline, and you might glimpse a tortoise or bobcat on the shore!

Length/Surface: 32 miles/Asphalt
Other Uses: Biking, walking, inline skating; wheelchair accessible

Virginia

**NEW RIVER TRAIL STATE PARK**

This National Recreation Trail features trestles, tunnels, a 210-year-old ammunition manufacturing tower and a caboose on its picturesque, remote route from Galax to Pulaski. Equestrians can park/ride from Clifftop to Pulaski/Dora Junction (54 miles) with additional horse trailer parking at the Fries, Ivantoe, Austinville, Foster Falls, Allsionia and Draper trailheads.

Length/Surface: 56 miles/Crushed stone
Other Uses: Biking, walking, fishing, cross-country skiing; wheelchair accessible

Pennsylvania

**PINE CREEK RAIL TRAIL**

This scenic trail travels through Pine Creek Gorge, a 1,450-foot-deep channel known as the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania. Those without horses can schedule a guided trail ride with a local stable or even book a horse-drawn wagon ride from May to October. Riders can park horse trailers at the Marsh Creek entrance (near Ansonia) and ride to Tiadaghton (9 miles).

Length/Surface: 62 miles/Crushed stone
Other Uses: Biking, fishing, walking, cross-country skiing; horse-drawn wagon riding; wheelchair accessible

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