

The Ancient Cedars Trail

Step back in time

Back in the late 1870s, before the founding of Tower-Soudan, fire burned the area you're about to enter. A forest dominated by northern white cedar grew back in the wake of the fire and this forest has stood, undisturbed, ever since, making this area the only known example of a primary forest site (never logged) found within the limits of a Minnesota city.

This site is not just extraordinary, it is a reminder of an ecological period that no longer exists in Minnesota. Had this site burned in recent years, the regeneration of white cedar would likely not have occurred due to the presence of whitetail deer, which browse heavily on white cedar. But when these trees grew up in the late 1880s, the forests of this area were populated by woodland caribou and moose, which subsisted mostly on other foods of the forest. That makes this forest unique as a relic of a bygone era in Minnesota.

As you explore this trail, you will find the forest to be quite open under the thick canopy above, which can make it difficult to follow the trail unless you're paying attention. Watch for the painted blazes on trees along the way, which are designed to keep you on the right path. You'll also find maps at key intersections to help you navigate along the way. Blazes along alternate trails and spurs will be made with other colors.

Please keep in mind that this is a wilderness-type trail, which means you assume some risks inherent with wilderness travel. Watch for loose rocks, roots, and steep and slippery slopes that could pose hazards along the way.

Enjoy the trail!

This trail is a joint project built by volunteers from the Tower Economic Development Authority, the Wagoner Trails Club, and the Friends of Vermilion Country School and was funded by grants from the North St. Louis Task Force and Lake Country Power's Operation Round Up. If you're interested in becoming a trail volunteer, please contact TEDA.



Left: Watch for painted blazes that will keep you on the trail.

Be aware as well that a portion of this trail is located on private land, generously made available for public use by the owners. Please be respectful of their generosity by remaining on the trail and leaving this remarkable area as clean as you found it.