

One of the best kept secrets around is Lisbon and the surrounding area being part of the North Country Trail.

The North Country Trail is more than a local hiking path. It is a 4700 mile trail that crosses eight states from Vermont to North Dakota.

It was designated a National Trail by Congress in 1980 and is now believed to be the longest trail in the country.

It winds through 160 federal, state, and public lands. It includes trails through 10 National Parks and over 100 state parks, forests and game areas.

It winds along three Great Lakes, farmlands, prairies, and cities. It travels by rivers and streams.

It shares routes with other national trails like Superior Hiking Trail in Minnesota, the Buckeye Trail in Ohio, the Finger Lakes Trail in New York, and the Iron Belle Trail in Michigan.

Now it also includes the city Lisbon and beyond.

In southeastern North Dakota the route passes Lake , through Valley City, Fort Ransom State Park, Sheyenne State Forest and into Lisbon. It follows along the Sheyenne River and Dead Colt Creek and continues through the Ekre Grassland Preserve and the Sheyenne National Grassland before entering Minnesota near the Fort Abercrombie Historical site.

Lisbon and Abercrombie were the first two communities in North Dakota to be designated as part of the trail by the North Country Trail Association

In North Dakota the trail stretches as far west as Lake Sakakawea and as far north as the New Rockford Canal.

There is a good mixture of road and off road paths as it travels through southeastern North Dakota and Ransom County.

During Happy Days, a group of 16 hikers dedicated the local portion of the trail. They gathered just inside the Rose Street entrance of the Lisbon Veteran's Home where a sign marks the local beginning of the trail.

Lisbon just didn't get to be part of the Trail by just asking. There is a process.

Gerry Berg and Kristina Dick of Lisbon did a lot of work to get this accomplished. Gerry explains the process Lisbon went through to accomplish this.

1. Establish a Trail Town committee consisting of members from the local Dakota Prairie Chapter of the NCT and Lisbon.
2. Obtain a resolution support from the city council.
3. Letters of support from Park board and Star committee.
4. Letter of support from the Dakota Prairie Chapter of NCT
5. Demonstrate that the city of Lisbon can meet the needs of trail users with goods, services and trail information. The city is in the process of installing a down town Kiosk with Lisbon and trail information.
6. A signed Memorandum of Understanding between the NCT and the City of Lisbon
7. Promote the trail with at least one event per year.

Rennae Gruchalla is the Hikes and Outreach coordinator for the Dakota Prairie Chapter of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Her column "From the Trail" appears frequently in the Gazette. This week (see inside) she talks about her trip to Lisbon for the dedication.

One Lisbon resident, Dr Barbara Sheets Olson, has travelled on many miles of the trail and has walked in six of the eight states. She has only missed New York and Vermont.

During various trips back to her home in Pennsylvania she and her sister would walk the trail which was close to her childhood home. "I didn't even know it was there until she told me," Barb laughed. "Judy" (her usual walking companion Judy Devitt) "and I have been walking the trail for a long time."

It may be one of the best kept secrets around here, but hopes are it isn't a best kept secret much longer.