The Billy Goat Trail

Comprised of three separate trails accessible from the towpath. The Billy Goat Trails offer beautiful views of the Potomac River. Please choose the appropriate trail by its difficulty level.

Section A - 1.75 miles one way - Strenuous

- The hike involves scrambling over angled rocks, boulders and climbing. Visitors in less than optimal health, with small children, those not experienced or properly outfitted should consider other trail options.
- The 1.7 mile hike takes most visitors 2-3 hours to complete.
- Section A starts below Great Falls near the Stop Gate and ends on the towpath just upstream from the park's Anglers access point.
- One way hiker traffic (going downstream or south) is strongly encouraged on this section
- Along the trail are views of Mather Gorge and Potomac River.
- Section A follows the cliff along the river and rejoins towpath 0.7 miles north of Anglers.
- Trail makes a 3.7 mile loop via towpath.
- No shortcuts around rocks.
- Pets are not permitted.
- This trail can close due to flooding from the river.

Section B - 1.4 miles one way - Moderate

-Temporarily closed

- Access trail from towpath near Anglers or Carderock.
- Trail passes through a floodplain forest and continues along the river.
- Located just downstream from Anglers, in the Marsden Tract area.
- Section B contains a few small rock scrambles and provides a quieter atmosphere than Section A.
- Section B is the best of the three trails for birding, especially in the spring.

Section C - 1.6 miles one way - Easy

- River views and a small waterfall are encountered on this trail.
- Although there are still a few rock outcroppings, most of the trail is wooded.
- It is located just downstream from Section A and Section B
- Access from Carderock Area.

Special Note About Bear Island

Section A of the Billy Goat Trail traverses one of the most biologically diverse areas in the country, Bear Island. Topography, geography and regular flood events have created some of the rarest and most sensitive habitats. Help protect these habitats by remaining on the blazed trail and staying off the island when the trail is closed. This will help preserve the uniqueness of the island and the trail for future generations of hikers.

Park Regulations

These regulations are enforced to protect resources and provide safety.

- Do not disturb, damage, or collect any of the park's natural and cultural features or objects
- Take your trash with you when you leave. Trash cans are not provided in the park.
- Pets must be leashed
- Bicycles are only allowed on the towpath and Berma Road, not on trails
- Do not enter the Potomac River
- Alcohol is prohibited
- Do not feed or harass wildlife
- Camping and fires are prohibited in the area
- Hunting and use of firearms are prohibited
- Park closes at dark

Trail Safety Recommendations

- **Allow enough time to finish your entire hike before sunset.** Trails are difficult to follow and distinguish after dark. Hiking trails after dark greatly increases your risk of being lost, injured or stranded.
- **Be prepared for environmental extremes.** Rocky outcroppings tend to amplify extreme weather conditions. Lack of adequate shade and protection from the elements can also greatly increase hikers' exposure.
- **Bring water.** Drink water regularly in summer months. Dehydration and heat stress can lead to heat stroke and death.
- **Wear appropriate footwear.** Adequate soles and ankle support can prevent injuries.
- **Be aware of your surroundings and locations.** Knowing your location on the trail will help in an emergency situation. Because of the difficult terrain, most rescues, even for a hurt ankle, often involve dispatching boats or a helicopter.

For Emergencies

CALL 911 or 1(866)677-6677

Other Trails

- Anglers Spur - 0.5 miles - Moderate
Trail connects Gold Mine Loop to Berma Road 0.1 miles from Anglers parking area.

- Berma Road - 1.5 miles - Easy
Views of Widewater. Old conduit road parallels canal from Stop Gate to Anglers parking lot. Connects to the towpath at either end, creating a 2.8 mile loop. Also connects to the Gold Mine Loop from Overlook Spur, Lock 16 Spur, and Anglers Spur.

- Falls Road Spur - 0.2 miles - Easy
Short spur trail connects Gold Mine Loop to Falls Road. Trail passes directly beside remains of the Maryland Mine.

- Ford Mine Trail - 2.1 miles (roundtrip) - Moderate
Trail leads over streams and up into the hills, passing the remains of the Ford Mine (1880s-1921) gold mining operations. Access is located at the end of Great Falls parking lot.

- Gold Mine Loop - 1.6 miles - Easy
The Maryland Mine (1867-1939) processed gold. Situated in the heart of the gold mining tract, the loop can be accessed from the Gold Mine Spur, the VFW Spur, the Falls Road Spur, the Rockwood Spur, the Valley Trail, Anglers Spur, Woodland Trail and Overlook Trail.

- Gold Mine Spur - 0.8 miles - Moderate
Connects Great Falls Tavern area to Gold Mine Loop.

- Lock 19 Spur - 0.3 miles - Moderate
Connects to Gold Mine Spur and Overlook Trail. Connecting Gold Mine Spur and Lock 19 makes an easy 1 mile loop.

- Lock 16 Spur - 0.3 miles - Moderate
Connects Berma Road and Gold Mine Loop. From towpath, cross footbridge to Berma Road.

- Olmsted Island Bridges - 0.25 miles - Easy
Series of bridges and boardwalks traverse a unique floodplain terrace environment and end at the Great Falls Overlook. Spectacular view of the Falls and Mather Gorge. Handicap accessible. Pets are not permitted.

- Overlook Trail - 0.7 miles - Moderate
Scenic, uphill hike overlooking Potomac River. Access through the Lock 19 Trail located 400 feet downstream of the Great Falls Tavern. Connects with Overlook Spur and Gold Mine Spur.

- Overlook Spur - 0.1 miles - Easy
Trail connects Overlook Trail to Berma Road.

- River Trail - 1 mile - Easy
Walk along river's edge and through a rich floodplain forest. Access the trail from the towpath just upstream of Washington Aqueduct observation deck. 2 mile loop can be made by walking towpath back.

- Rockwood Spur - 0.5 miles - Easy
Trail connects Rockwood Manor Park to Gold Mine Loop and Valley Trail. Easy 1 mile loop can be made. No parking available on MacArthur Blvd.

- Valley Trail - 0.6 miles - Moderate
Trail follows creek through open valley to connect Anglers Spur to Gold Mine Loop. Moderate 1.4 mile loop can be made by getting on the Gold Mine Loop and taking it back to the Anglers Spur.

- Woodland Trail - 0.7 miles - Moderate
Trail connects Gold Mine Loop and Anglers Spur, passes prospectors' trenches and overgrown Civil War earthworks.