

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Rock Creek Park
Washington, DC



Highlighted Hikes in Rock Creek Park



Emergency

U. S. Park Police: (202) 610-7500

Information

Rock Creek Nature Center: (202) 895-6070

To report hazardous trail conditions, call the
Rock Creek Nature Center.

Boulder Bridge Hike

3.5 Miles (Pink Blazes)



Overview: This 3.1 - mile loop hike travels through the forest and along the creek. President Theodore Roosevelt frequented this area of the park 100 years ago.

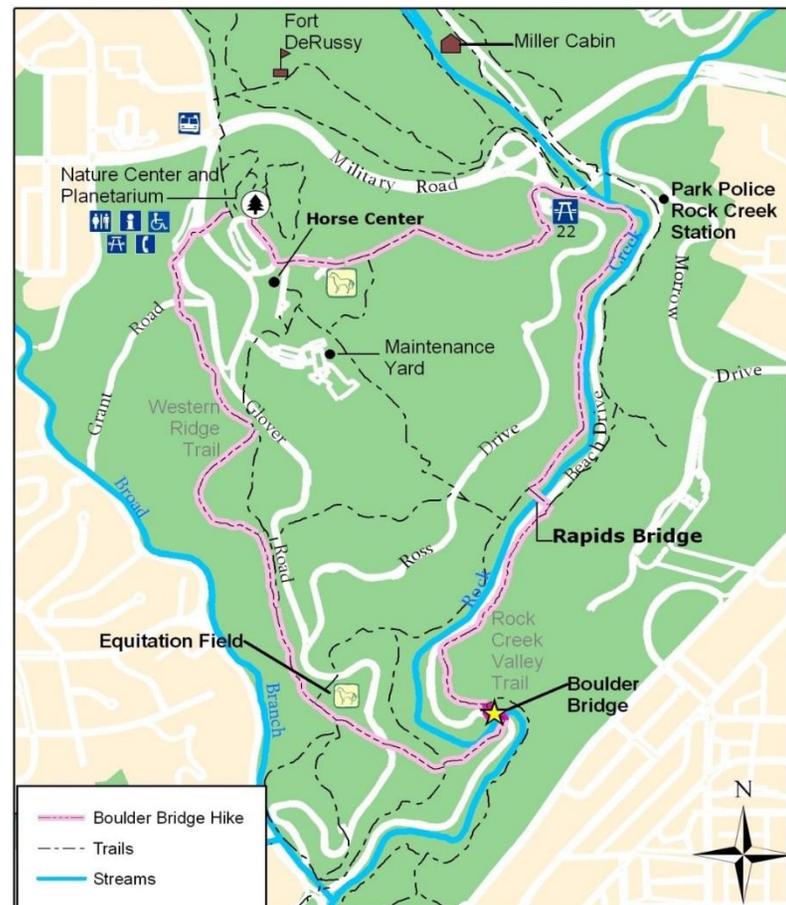
Follow the route identified by pink tape wrapped around wooden posts and along the trail.

Directions:

- From the Nature Center, walk south/back through the parking lot toward the Horse Center.
- Take a sharp left into the Horse Center and keep left. Head past the small parking lot towards the corral. Look for the dirt trail to the left of the corral. Walk to the creek.
- Heading downstream/right, listen to the fast- flowing water—i.e., rapids. This is the fall zone, a geologic transition zone where the Piedmont Plateau (harder rock) meets the Atlantic Coastal Plain (softer, sedimentary rock).
- After hiking along the creek for a ½ - mile, enjoy the view from the center of Rapids Bridge
- **CROSS RAPIDS BRIDGE.**
- Carefully cross Beach Drive and turn right onto the Valley Trail.
- Continue walking parallel with the creek for ½ - mile.
- At Boulder Bridge, cross the bridge. **There will be traffic on weekdays.** Go up the trail in front of you.
- Cross Ridge Road. Walk past the fenced horse corral.
- Follow the pink tape and green blazes of the Western Ridge Trail to go north. Follow the “foot-traffic only” signs.
- After ¾- mile, the trail seems to end at Picnic Grove 13 and a grassy field. Cross the field and the two roads. Hike up the hill to the Nature Center.

How to have a safe hike in the park...

1. Use this map and guide. *(There aren't many signs along trails in the park.)*
2. Stay hydrated—bring and drink water. *(Water is available at the Nature Center when open.)*
3. Stay on the trail to avoid poison ivy and ticks.
4. Keep your dog on a leash at all times. *(This protects both your pet and park wildlife. Many park users are afraid of dogs.)*
5. Dress appropriately (wear sturdy shoes, dress in layers and anticipate cold and wet weather).



Milkhouse Ford Hike (Fort DeRussy)

1.75 Miles (Yellow Blazes)

Overview: This 1.75- mile loop hike offers a glimpse into Washington, DC's past. Hike past a Civil War fort, poet's cabin, and historic creek crossing (ford).

Directions:

- Exit the Nature Center front door and walk 300 feet.
- Turn right onto the Western Ridge Trail towards Boundary Bridge.
- Cross Military Road. Continue straight for 250 feet.
- At the outdoor exhibit about Fort DeRussy, turn right.
- In 100 feet, take a slight left onto the dirt trail. The earthen walls of Fort DeRussy will soon be on your left.
- After the fort, continue down the trail to a "T" intersection near Rock Creek, and turn left.
- Hike along the creek for ¼ - mile, and look for a two- room log cabin across Rock Creek. Joaquin Miller, an eccentric poet, lived in this cabin in another part of the city—Meridian Hill—in the 1880s.
- Just north of the cabin, a roadway travels straight into the creek. This is Milkhouse Ford. First paved in 1904, people used to drive through the creek—a major thoroughfare at one time—until the 1950s.
- Take the trail that leads west up the hill.
- Turn left on the Western Ridge Trail, marked by green blazes. Follow the trail back across Military Road and up to the Nature Center.

Rapids Bridge Hike 2 Miles

(Orange Blazes)

Overview: This 2- mile loop hike takes you through the forest and then parallels the scenic whitewater section of Rock Creek before heading back uphill. The trail is identified by orange tape on wooden posts.

Directions:

- From the Nature Center, walk south/back through the parking lot toward the Horse Center.
- Take a sharp left into the Horse Center and head straight towards the corral. The dirt trail begins to the left of the corral.
- Follow the trail for ½ - mile to Rock Creek. Follow the creek south along the fast- flowing water, i.e., rapids. This is the fall zone—the geologic transition zone where the harder rock of the Piedmont Plateau meets the softer, sedimentary rock of the Atlantic Coastal Plain.



- After 3/5- mile, you will see Rapids Bridge. Be sure and enjoy the view from the footbridge, **but DO NOT CROSS IT.** *It is closed for safety reasons due to road rehabilitation on Beach Drive.* Although Rock Creek is 33 miles in length, natural rapids only occur in this 1- mile section around Rapids Bridge.
- Continue hiking approximately 165- feet south, and take the unmarked trail to the right uphill.
- In ¼ - mile, at the trail fork, keep right and go under the bridge.
- In ¼- mile, the dirt trail ends at the Horse Center. Turn right on the access road. Walk straight ahead to the road and bear to the right to the Nature Center parking lot.