

Patapsco Valley SP – Orange Grove Area Trail Notes

Description: The Patapsco Valley State Park is a long narrow park that stretches from the southern part of the Baltimore Beltway and north along the river, almost to Liberty Reservoir. Portions of the park are well developed with picnic pavilions, restrooms and well-maintained trail systems. The Orange Grove Area is one such section. This is a good place to introduce your family to nature. The labyrinth of trails allows one to hike as little as 1/4 mile to view a water fall or walk more than 8 miles while hardly retracing a step. The trails are well groomed, blazed and signed, for the most part. There is one or 2 junctions that might leave you scratching your head so please take a map.

The hike described here is an easy 5.6 mile trek which can be expanded by adding an out and back on the south fork of the Morning Choice Tr and/or a one mile loop along the Rockburn Branch Tr.

Two notes of caution:

1) Most of the trails are open to and heavily utilized by mountain bikers. Keep a sharp eye and ear out for them.

2) These same bikers have created other trails that crisscross the official trail network. These are not signed or blazed. Avoid these trails as it is an easy way to get lost.

Directions from US1, Washington Blvd, in Elkridge, MD:

1. If heading south turn right onto South St.
2. Almost immediately turn left onto Park Entrance Rd.
3. Turn Left onto Gun Road and cross the river.
4. Turn right onto River Rd. Drive 1.7 miles to rest rooms and parking on the left. The Cascade Falls Tr is directly across from the swinging Bridge.

Trail Notes: Proceed up blue blazed Cascade Falls Tr. Almost immediately the trail will split. (This trail has multiple components that can be used to make short loops.) Bear to the left, following the split rail fence.

Soon reach Cascade Falls. Cross the stream on huge boulders and climb to the top of the falls. Orange blazed Ridge Tr comes in on the left. (This is your return route.) Stay straight on the Cascade Falls Trail. You'll cross the stream three more times. Twice other components of the Cascade Falls Tr will come in from the right. Ignore them.

In about 0.6 miles from the falls and shortly after the last stream crossing turn left onto yellow blazed Morning Choice Tr. Cross gravel Norris Lane in 0.15 more miles.

In another 0.19 miles the trail joins the red blazed Old Track Tr. Bear right here, following the dual blazes for a few yards. Where the trails separate bear to the right to stay on yellow blazed Morning Choice Tr.

In another 0.18 miles Come to an unsigned trail junction. The trail in all directions at this point is blazed yellow. For this hike make a sharp left turn.

Soon reconnect and, nearly as quickly, disconnect from the east end of the red Old Track Tr. In another 0.29 miles (after skirting the western boundary of the Belmont Research Conference Center arrive at the junction of the Connector Tr (Marked in both yellow and orange). Turn right to stay on yellow blazed Morning Choice Tr.

You'll walk along the edge of the Belmont Research Conference Center some more before re-entering the woods. This is a good place to spot grazing deer at dusk. In 0.86 miles from the last trail junction arrive at purple blazed Rockburn Branch Trail (Right, Straight and to the left). Turn left and in a short distance come to a junction with orange blazed. Bear right, downhill on an old woods road.

After passing a trail shelter bear left onto white blazed Valley View Tr. This is a narrow sidehill footpath closed to all but foot traffic. For the next 0.75 miles you need not be concerned with mountain bikers. As you weave in and out of shallow but steep coves you'll pass the ruins of some old rental cabins that were used prior to Hurricane Agnes which greatly changed to shape and functionality of the park.

The Valley View Tr will temporarily "kiss" the orange blazed Ridge Tr. From this point follow the Ridge trail for about 1 mile to its terminus with the Cascade Falls Tr. Ignore any false trails or old roads. At the falls, descend, recross the stream and retrace your initial steps back to the car.