

Description: The Blockhouse Point Conservation Park operated by Montgomery County is only 630 acres in size. Still it hosts a nice trail system with a couple of grand views of the Potomac River at the Blockhouse Point and Paw-paw overlooks. Add an abandoned but frequently used trail and a 2.5 mile stroll along the scenic C&O Canal visiting Violet's and Pennyfield Lock and Lockhouse and you have a relatively pleasant 7.5 mile loop.

Note: None of the Blockhouse Point Park trails cross the canal.

Trail Notes: Walk around the gate and descend on the Cliff Trail, a double track road/utility right-of-way. In 0.2 miles turn right, crossing a small bridge over a stream, and climb the Upland Woods Trail. Turn left onto the Turkey Fan Trail in 0.3 miles. Arrive at the Blockhouse Trail in 0.3 miles. In 0.1 miles the trail splits. Straight ahead, across the bridge, is the quickest way to the vistas but I recommend turning left onto the Springhouse Trail. It will descend slightly before crossing the stream and climbing steeply to reach the continuation of the Blockhouse Trail in 0.4 miles. Turn left and in 0.1 miles arrive at Blockhouse Point. There are broken views of the canal and river here but some social trails on the right will lead to more wide open vistas.

Retrace your steps to the last trail junction and turn left. In 0.2 miles turn left onto the Paw-paw Overlook Trail. In 0.3 miles arrive at the overlook. Retrace your steps and turn left. The Alithia Farm Trail on the right. Continue straight on an un-named but blue blazed trail. Enter NPS land in 0.2 miles. The blue blazes will cease but the trail is easy to follow nonetheless. Occasional brown blazes mark the way. The trail will descend from the ridge and cross a small stream. In 0.4 miles from entering NPS land cross another stream and bear left onto a grassy lane of sorts. This section of trail is as straight as a ruler. In 0.3 miles the trail ends at a gravel road/drive. Continue straight to paved Violet's Lock Road. Turn left and in 0.2 miles arrive at the lock itself.

After taking in the views and the history turn left onto the towpath. Enjoy views of the river over the next 2.5 miles. Arrive at Pennyfield Lock. (It's my understanding that the Lockhouse can be rented for overnight stays.) Cross the canal and turn left onto Pennyfield Lack Road. In 0.4 miles turn left at a driveway to pick up the Muddy Branch. It will skirt a field and cross Muddy Branch on a well constructed NPS bridge. Turn right and follow a driveway that will eventually lead to River Road but in a few steps turn left onto a marked footpath. In 0.7 miles pass a defunct equestrian trail on the left. In another 0.2 miles arrive back at your cars.