

Description: This is a relatively easy 5.2 mile circuit around Great Falls National Park, VA. Like it's sister park across the river, it has a lot to offer in the way of scenery and history for an area so close to Washington, D.C. Try to plan your visit for early in the day.

Directions from I-495 (Washington Beltway):

1. Take exit 13, Georgetown Pike, VA 193.
2. Follow Georgetown Pike for 4 miles.
3. Turn right onto Old Dominion Dr.
4. Pay \$4.00/car entrance fee. Turn right immediately after passing the entrance gate and park in the lot closest to the Comfort Station.

Trail Notes:

From the comfort station begin walking down Matildaville Tr. Soon turn right onto the Old Carriage Road. In about 0.2 mile turn right onto gated Swamp Tr. (Note: As the name implies, this trail may be ... swampy ... during and after wet spells.)

In another 0.5 miles the Swamp Trail ends at a wide horse trail. Turn right here and climb to the top of the hill.

At 0.3 miles from the last trail junction turn left onto Ridge Tr. A fenced in area will be to your left.

In another 0.2 miles come to the intersection of an old horse trail on the right. The junction with the Old Carriage and Matildaville trail will be close by on the left. Turn right onto the horse trail and follow it to Georgetown Pike (0.2 miles from the last trail junction).

Cross Georgetown Pike. Take Care! This is a heavily traveled road. Climb over the guard rail and locate an un-named spur trail that leads down to Difficult Run.

Turn left onto Difficult Run Trail. Go under Georgetown Pike. The footpath joins a wider woods road. You can stay on this all the way down to "the Beach" on the Potomac. A more picturesque way is to look for a footpath along the run that weaves in and out of the boulders. Some great photo ops can be had here. At one point there is on 4 foot boulder that you have to climb over but the footpath continues on the other side.

In about 0.8 miles after crossing Georgetown Pike pass the Ridge Trail on the left and descend to "The Beach". This is a great lunch spot.

After lunch retrace your steps and turn right onto the Ridge Tr. Reach the top of the Ridge in about 0.5 miles. The trail will turn left onto a wide path. Soon turn right onto a blue blazed footpath. In about 0.4 miles cross a stream on a wooden bridge and turn left. Cross an asphalt road and pick up the River Trail North. Turning right on the trail goes down to the river.

In another 0.3 miles, pass the entrance to the Powtowmack Canal and the ruins of Matildaville on the left. Continue up the River Trail for another 0.6 to a couple of great overlooks of the falls. Check out the Visitor's Center and return to your cars on the main park path.

