

## **Fort Dupont Park**

It's unfortunate that few people not already living in Anacostia in southeast Washington D.C., venture there to explore it. Though basic unfamiliarity and concerns about crime are voiced, there are nice places to see.

Start with Fort Dupont Park. The hilly wooded park has trails, golf, picnic facilities, and summertime outdoor theater. The park can give you an idea of what the other hills around the river looked like before they were developed. The 1.25 mile long rectangular shaped park is under 50ft. in elevation near the river and over 300ft. in elevation at the other end near Prince Georges County. In one large area the mature trees on the hillside are complemented with one of the most profuse growths of mountain laurel anywhere near Washington D.C.; including the Shenandoah National Park. In fact, in some parts, you'd hardly know the difference.

Fort Dupont was part of the circle of fortifications built around Washington D.C. during the Civil War. Several other circle forts, now parks, are in Anacostia. A greenway and the Fort Circle hiker-biker trail connect them all. They are maintained by the National Park Service just as the Rock Creek, Prince William Forest, Manassas Battlefield Fort Washington and Greenbelt parks are, though it is in a little more disrepair. Exhibits of the history are limited too.

The Fort Circle trail is primarily surfaced with cinder and gravel. It is well suited to running or mountain biking as well as walking. The middle of the trail is located inside Fort Dupont. Both ends of the trail stop near enough to the Anacostia River to allow you to make looping routes to it. A series of other parks line the river. Some of these are used considerably, and some are more solitary.

### **Getting There**

From the Capital Beltway (I-295) from either the north or south end to Pennsylvania Ave. headed east. At the next stoplight, turn left onto Minnesota Ave. After just over half a mile turn right onto, instead of passing through the middle of, Randle Circle, then leave the circle on Fort Dupont Dr. Turn left into the parking area after 0.2 miles.

### **Area Routes**

#### Dupont Loop (3.4 miles, IV)

For an introduction to Fort Dupont Park, this counter-clockwise loop climbs a steep nature trail, then returns on easier paved and unpaved trails. In the middle, after the climb and on a segment of the Fort Circle hiker-biker trail inside Fort Dupont Park, the route almost follows contour lines bending left and right around small ridges in the hill, gaining or losing only small amounts in elevation. Running or riding that part is a little like driving a sport car on a twisty mountain road. The most impressive views of the forest and the mountain laurel are best in the middle section also. May is an excellent time to go to catch the blooms but it's pretty even in winter.

### Kenilworth Park (7.85, 4.4 or 8.25 miles; VII, V or VII)

Climbing to the Fort Circle trail in reverse relative to the Dupont Loop, this route breaks off, leaving Fort Dupont Park to go up and down hills on the way north to Fort Mahan Park. The Fort Circle trail is not always well maintained in this section but it is easy to follow. Often ruts carve the trail and other debris including gumballs, small branches and even glass are not uncommon on the gravel and cinder trail. Upon reaching Fort Mahan, one option is to loop the hill and return as you came.

Continuing on after Fort Mahan for longer options, cross under Kenilworth Ave into the more open and quiet Kenilworth Park. As you near the river on a broken and crumbled road, you will pass a few large fields. In one, I saw spring wildflowers cover most of the ground and large budding willows in the background. In another, a game of rugby was being played right beside the Anacostia river and across from the National Arboretum. Continuing through Kenilworth Park, the road becomes dirt after passing through a gate which closes it to cars. It curves back through a desolate area toward Kenilworth Ave. Go clockwise around the power plant on the roads and sidewalks until you reach River Terrace Park. Another option to cross the river through the Robert F. Kennedy stadium parking lot to Pennsylvania Avenue is available here. Skipping the option take an old weathered asphalt trail through River Terrace Park. The trail is clearly visible from the Orange and Blue metro lines as they pass above near the power plant. River Terrace Park is a good place to watch snowy egrets or great blue heron as they hunt or sleep on a muddy sandbar in the river. The trail runs out at Whitney Young Memorial Bridge (East Capital St.), but another dirt road continues on. This one too passes a desolate section between the river and the Anacostia Freeway. The tree lined road is obscured from view of the freeway but is used by those unloading items from the freight rail stop ahead. I saw the Ringling Brothers's Circus offloading items there. After crossing the tracks, the surroundings change suddenly again. Anacostia Park is relatively manicured and used by many athletic groups. Several Ultimate (flying disc) games were being played in earnest when I passed by. Return on Pennsylvania Ave., and a back-road that is designated a bike route to Fort Dupont Park. Apartments and houses are on the road but it is off the beaten path.

A note on crime in the area: Travel in groups and with sufficient time to return before dark. If your uneasy with going ahead on the route, turn back. Plan ahead and trust your own instincts on how much exploration you are up to. There are other good places to go. This route is mostly on open park land but the Anacostia River has a reputation almost as bad New York City's East River. Studies show that crime is lower where there are eyes on the streets, and this route passes through several isolated areas.

### Fort Stanton (9.7 miles, IX)

Climbing to the Fort Circle trail as does the Kenilworth Park route, this route breaks off, leaving Fort Dupont Park to go east to Fort Stanton Park. It has some sections on the Fort Circle trail that are nicer than those inside Fort Dupont, but it also has some that are worse. First of all, it's hillier. As you leave Fort Dupont Park, it winds up and down ridges; not as much around them as the trail did inside Fort Dupont Park. Some of the beautiful houses bordering the park along the way look like those found in Tenleytown, with large sheltering roofs, A-frames, and balconies. Daffodils or blooming trees can be found lining the way too. Crossing a road

however, the park can change suddenly with trash piled along the trail or even a homeless person's cardboard shelter. In one spot just before reaching Fort Stanton, an orange rusty puddle, deeper than I thought, almost made it impossible to get past without getting wet. At the end of the trail, the Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, part of the Smithsonian Institution, houses first class art as well as cultural exhibits. In spite of my own disheveled appearance from the trail, and while they gave me a drink of water there, the very friendly museum employees greeted and chatted with me about Anacostia, the museum and about the then current exhibit, *Locating the Spirit: Religion and Spirituality in African American Art*.

Leaving the museum, the route heads steeply down the increasingly urban Morris Rd. on sidewalks. Pass a hub of activity, colorful shops along Nichols Ave., and the Anacostia metro station before crossing under I-295 on Howard Rd. The way back from there is through Anacostia Park, along the river. Almost immediately upon entering it, you are likely to get a view of a destroyer ship, such as the U.S.S. Barry, docked in the Washington Navy Yard across the river. A sidewalk is available part of the way through the park but unless you use the grass, it is necessary to use the road a little. The park is sunny and flat up until you turn out of it at Pennsylvania Ave., to go back toward Fort Dupont Park on the bike route used in the Kenilworth Park route.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

U.S. National Arboretum  
College Park/Riverdale  
East Potomac Park & The Mall

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

picnic

#### Entertainment and Edification

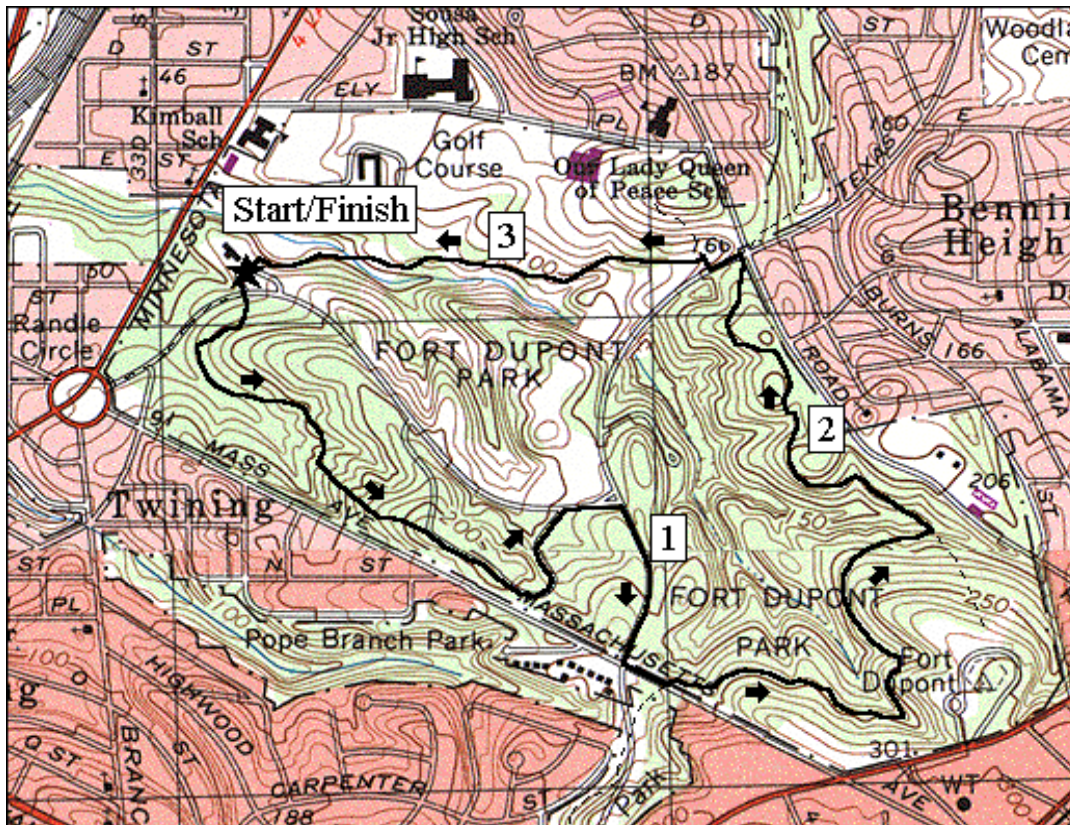
Frederick Douglas National Historic Site - 202 690-5185/202 426-5960  
Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture -  
202 287-2060  
Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens - 202 426-6905  
National Arboretum - 202 -245-2726  
Fort Dupont Summer Theater - 202 426-7723

## Dupont Loop

Distance: 3.4 miles

Rating: IV; hilly gravel blazed trails, some roads and paved hiker-biker trails

- |         |  |         |  |
|---------|--|---------|--|
| 0.0     | from the Activity Center, exit the parking lot, to the trail across Fort Dupont Dr | L 1.2   | Mass Ave on shoulder   |
|         |  | L 1.25  | Fort Circle Trail head   |
| L 0.25  | trail X; wooden bridge on R  | L 1.8   | at T to stay on Fort Circle Trail; L is to wooden bridge; uphill is on R |
| BR 0.3  | trail X (fork) at Nature 8; cross the wooden bridge and climb (steep)              | L/R 2.7 | Fort Davis Dr; leave Fort Circle Trail to paved trail on other side      |
| S 0.6   | at parking   | L 2.75  | trail X on L   |
| R 0.9   | Fort Dupont Dr   | L 3.4   | at T after stage   |
| CR 0.95 | Fort Davis Dr at T   | 3.4     | parking and Activity Center  |



## Kenilworth Park

Distance: 7.85 or 4.4 or 8.25 miles

Rating: VII or V or VII

### 7.85 Mile Route

- 0.0 north through fence from the parking lot; downhill on asphalt trail toward the stage
- R 0.0 trail X on R
- R/L 0.65 trail X at T; onto Ft Davis Dr
- S 0.7 cross Ridge Rd onto the Fort Circle Trail
- R/L 1.15 at C St and Burbank St
- BL 1.35 at fork to stay on the Fort Circle Trail
- R 1.4 at T to stay on Fort Circle Trail
- L/R 1.5 East Capitol St (!)
- S/R 1.7 at paved trail onto Flint Pl (unmarked)
- R 1.8 cross Benning Rd; up the hill and R onto the paved portion of the Fort Mahan loop trail
- 2.0 gravel road X; L is to hilltop field; R to road
- <\*
- BR 2.05 trail X on L is gravel; stay on paved trail
- S 2.2 onto 42<sup>nd</sup> St at Grant St
- L/R 2.35 at T; L at Hunt Pl; R onto paved trail
- L 2.4 trail X on L in Lady Bird Park
- L 2.45 Burroughs Ave; underpass Rte 295
- BL 2.6 Dean Ave (unmarked) into Kenilworth Park
- 3.45 gate closes road to traffic at creek (dirt road)
- 3.95 gate; becomes Foote St (paved)
- R 4.2 Kenilworth Ave access road (sidewalk)
- BR 4.35 Benning Rd (sidewalk)
- <\*\*
- L 4.8 Anacostia Ave to River Terr Park Trail
- BL 4.85 trail X; L to parallel the river
- L/R 5.35 onto gravel rd; underpass E Capitol St
- R/L 5.9 at railroad tracks; Anacostia Park
- 6.15 paved road (Water St; unmarked)
- L 6.55 paved trail X on L to Penn Ave bridge
- L 6.65 Pennsylvania Ave
- >\*\*
- L 6.8 Fairlawn Ave; follow bike route sign
- R 7.3 K St
- L 7.45 Randle Circle (clockwise around)
- L 7.55 Fort Dupont Dr
- L 7.8 Activity Center parking
- 7.85 Activity Center

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### \*4.4 Mile Route

- L 2.05 trail X on L is gravel
- R 2.55 loop complete; R to cross Benning Rd onto Flint Pl; return to Fort Dupont Park and the Activity Center on the Fort Circle trail; reverse of the way you came (end 4.4 miles)

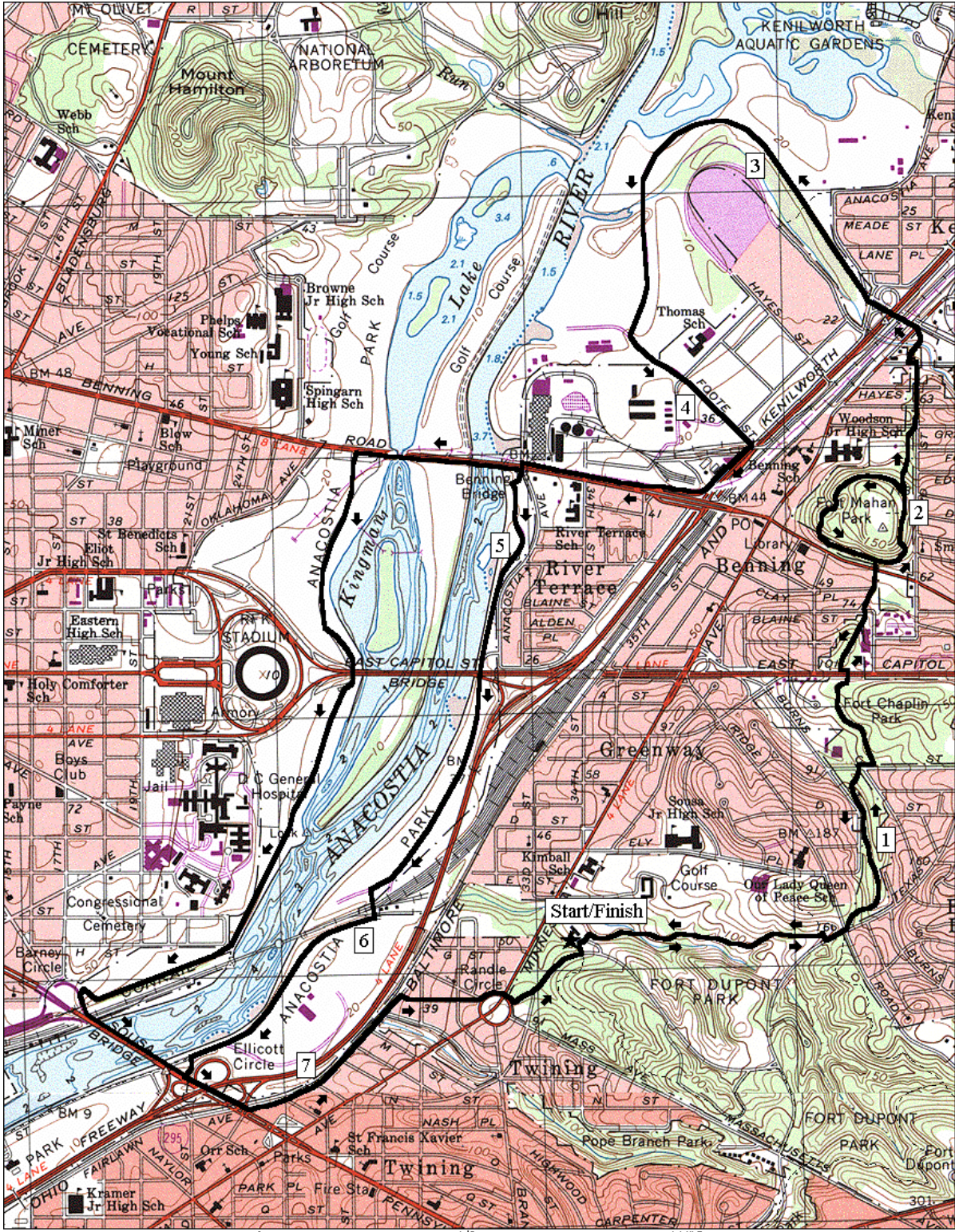
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### \*\*8.25 Mile Route

- XS 4.8 Anacostia Ave; continue over the river
- L 5.05 RFK Stadium parking; stay to L along river
- 5.65 underpass E. Capitol St bridge
- R 6.65 Barney Circle (unmarked); leave parking
- L 6.7 trail X on L to Penn Ave bridge
- 7.05 trail X on L to Anacostia Park (pickup cues at mile 6.8 on 7.85 mile route)



# Kenilworth Park



MN 11° TN

0 1/2 1 MILE  
0 1000 FEET 0 500m 1000m

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## Fort Stanton

Distance: 9.7 miles

Rating: IX; hilly, shady, gravel trails going out; sunny flat roads and sidewalks returning

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 0.0 north through the fence from the Activity Center; toward stage on trail                                | R 6.15 Howard Rd                               |
|  | 6.2 Anacostia Metro Station                    |
|  | 6.35 underpass Anacostia Frwy (I-295)          |
| R 0.0 trail X on R   |  |
| R/L 0.65 R at T; L onto Ft Davis Dr  | BR 6.6 on paved bike trail into Anacostia Park |
|  | 6.75 trail X on L toward bridge                |
| R 0.7 Fort Circle Trail head; before Ridge Rd  | R 6.85 Water St at T (unmarked)                |
|  | 7.4 Good Hope Rd on R                          |
| R 1.4 to stay on Fort Circle Trail (unmarked); after long descent & after pipe bridge; before steep uphill | 7.6 underpass 11 <sup>th</sup> St bridges      |
| 1.6 trail X on L   | 8.3 Nicholson Rd on R                          |
| 1.65 trail X on L merges   | 8.3 Pennsylvania Ave underpass                 |
| 2.15 Massachusetts Ave   |  |
| 2.2 Fort Davis Dr  | R 8.45 paved trail X on R to Penn Ave bridge   |
| 2.8 Pennsylvania Ave   |  |
| 3.15 trail X   | L 8.5 Pennsylvania Ave                         |
|  | 8.55 underpass Anacostia Frwy (I-295)          |
| L/R 3.25 at Branch Ave onto Park Dr  | L 8.65 Fairlawn Ave; follow bike route sign    |
| R 3.3 Fort Circle Trail head   | R 9.15 K St                                    |
| 3.7 trail X on L   |  |
|  | L 9.35 Randle Circle (clockwise around)        |
| L/R 3.8 28 <sup>th</sup> Street  |  |
| 4.0 Naylor Rd  | L 9.45 Fort Dupont Dr                          |
| 4.4 Good Hope Rd   |  |
|  | L 9.65 Activity Center parking                 |
| R 4.9 trail X at T (unmarked) at top of steep hill   | 9.7 Activity Center                            |
|  |  |
| R 5.0 Erie St (across from Smithsonian African American museum)  |  |
|  |  |
| CL 5.95 Martin Luther King, Jr Ave at T after long downhill  |  |

# Fort Stanton

