

## Bethesda

Bethesda is well known for its many small restaurants, the National Institute of Health and the National Naval Medical Center. It's even written in as the scene of many X-Files episodes. It's an example of what works in urban planning. As any good city is, it's built with foot traffic in mind. Besides the sidewalks, several trails accommodate that. Most notably, and most popular, is the Capital Crescent Trail. The trail literally runs right through the center of the downtown by utilizing a tunnel. The trail was the result of a rails-to-trails project. The easy grade makes it very popular with runners, cyclists, in-line skaters, walkers and strollers. The trail gets so popular that police wanting to raise awareness for safety, once made local television news by using radar guns to check the speed of passers by. No tickets were issued though many using various forms of human power, were clocked over the recommended speed limits.

### Getting There

From the Capital Beltway (I-495), take Old Georgetown Rd. (Rte. 187) southbound for 2.5 miles. Turn right onto Woodmont Ave. Just after Bethesda Ave. 1/3 mile later, turn right into the parking lot. Parking is free on weekends but metered during the weekday.

The Bethesda metro rail station is very near the parking lot and the trail. From the station, turn left at the top of the first and long escalator. Walk through the Kiss-and-Ride to Woodmont Ave and turn left. The parking lot and the Capital Crescent Trail are just on the other side of Bethesda Ave.

### Area Routes

#### Cedar Lane (8.8 miles, VII)

This loop combines the Rock Creek Trail with the Capital Crescent Trail for a no nonsense route with good distance and surroundings. It's an easy one to maintain a rhythm on. Start from the intersection of the Capital Crescent Trail and Bethesda Ave. Pass the shops and pedestrians carefully, then turn up Arlington Rd. to Old Georgetown Rd. The Old Georgetown Rd. segment is not very pleasant. However, as you turn down West Cedar Lane the surroundings improve as will your speed. It's gradually downhill for nearly 1.25 miles to Rock Creek Park. Once in Rock Creek Park, you continue a downward slope but the trail is relatively flat. Round the bends of Rock Creek's partly tree covered paved trail with only a few road crossings to slow you. The towering Mormon Temple will eventually be visible on your left. A small hill is encountered after turning off the Rock Creek Trail onto the Capital Crescent Trail. After that, the railroad grade makes the rest of the return trip back up fairly easy. The grade after crossing Jones Bridge Rd., is currently cinder but it is planned to be paved with asphalt. The fenced-in trail at one point passes through the middle of a posh golf course. Note that the two-tenth of a mile tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue near the end of the route is open from 6AM to 10PM.

### Loopy Way to Brookmont (10.45 or 7.27 or 9.5 miles, IX or VI or VIII)

Brookmont is a sleepy little town off of MacArthur Blvd., above the Potomac River. Following trails, spin and trace figure eight's to get to and from there. First take the Capital Crescent Trail. The wide paved trail is easy and almost completely downhill with a very gentle grade. Bridges get you over the worst intersections at Bradely Rd. and River Rd. Along the side of the trail, runners have worn a single track in the grass for much of the way. Turn left, then right just before the 6 mile marker of the Capital Crescent Trail to the unmarked but paved Little Falls Trail. The Little Falls Trail, passes back under the Capital Crescent Trail, then takes a short hilly and circuitous route to the intersection of MacArthur Blvd. and Sangamore Rd. Note that a popular dirt short cut from the Capital Crescent Trail, on the right, after the overpass of the Little Falls Trail, just after the bench, saves you 0.09 miles and one hill but continues the erosion of the hillside.

After crossing MacArthur Blvd., turn right on the MacArthur Blvd. Trail. This trail continues most of the way to Great Falls National Park. After only a short way however, at the bottom of the hill turn left on Maryland Ave into Brookmont. The avenue intersects Broad St. a two lane road with what used to be a railroad grade trail in the middle of it. Now there's a dirt trail there. As you are on Broad St., look to the left. If the leaves are gone from the trees you'll see an impressive bend in the fast flowing Little Falls Branch visible below. At the end of the dirt trail, is the short loop option turnoff (this short loop option is not for everyone—see below) that continues on the single remaining lane of Broad St. Turn right for the regular loop onto 61<sup>st</sup> St. At its end and to the left, is a small unmarked asphalt path that goes down toward Lock 5 of the C&O Canal. The trail is somewhat steep and it switches back before crossing the Clara Barton Parkway. A spiral ramp lowers you further to a footpath and finally Lock 5. Water is available here. Turn left on the C&O Canal Towpath to continue. The gravel surface of the towpath is soft on feet and tires but can get muddy too. After the Chain Bridge overpass, a heavy trestle bridge once used for trains now carries the Capital Crescent Trail. The second short option goes up the stairs onto it. Continue on to Fletecher's Boathouse (water and restrooms) for the regular route, then turn around onto the Capital Crescent Trail. The trestle bridge marks the joining of the second short route. Well past the trestle bridge, just after the second dirt trail on the right that goes to Potomac Avenue (see Washington Palisades, Battery Kemble Park), and before the D.C./Montgomery Co. line sign, the first short route joins back via an inconspicuous dirt trail on the left. Continue up the Capital Crescent Trail, through the tunnel under MacArthur Blvd. and back up to Bethesda.

The first short route option, which breaks off at Broad St. in Brookmont, cuts significant distance off the other routes. At the end of Broad St., is another dirt trail. Dropping quickly, the trail goes over a concrete bridge that is without rails and crosses the Little Falls Branch. Do not cross if you are afraid of heights or if surfaces are slippery from leaves, water or ice. The concrete bridge is wide and high enough to cause serious harm or drowning if you fall! After crossing, the dirt trail climbs steeply at first, then more gradually to the Capital Crescent Trail, just inside the Washington D.C. border.

### Little Falls Trail (6.7 or 5.4 miles, VI or IV)

The Little Falls Trail is a stream valley trail that parallels the Capital Crescent Trail. Part of it is a more pleasant alternative to the busier Capital Crescent Trail and when combined with the Capital Crescent Trail, they together make a good loop. The drawback to using the Little Falls Trail is that it is a little hillier than the Crescent Trail and the paved portion of it discontinuous.

Start by taking the Capital Crescent Trail toward Washington D.C. just as the Loopy Way to Brookmont route does. Turn left before mile mark 6 onto the unmarked but paved connector trail, then left again on the unmarked Little Falls Trail. The Little Falls Trail is smooth enough to in-line skate on, up to Massachusetts Ave. but only recommended if you are well beyond beginner ability. It is not recommended for skating-on beyond Massachusetts Ave., necessitating an awkward scamper up a dirt embankment back to the Crescent trail, or a return the way you came. Along the way to Massachusetts Ave., a turn off up a short steep hill to the right, leads to Battery Bailey (1862), one of the circle fort defenses of Washington D.C. At Massachusetts Ave. the short route breaks off to return on the Capital Crescent Trail up the dirt embankment. After Massachusetts Ave. the regular route and the Little Falls Trail are on shoulder of the Little Falls Parkway. It is much less pleasant but only for a short way. Bear right off the parkway onto a grass and dirt trail that parallels along a small tributary stream. It soon leads you to a ball field in the back of Westbrook Elementary School. Stay to the left side of the field, where an opening and a bridge take you to Little Falls Dr. Another few turns and intersections lead you to the Willard Avenue Park and paved fitness trail. This small trail first continues along the tributary, then leaves it to Willard Ave. Turn left, then left again on Park Ave. Passing in-between the buildings, the even shorter Page Park trail leads back to the tributary and crosses it to Warwick Place. Turn right, up the hill past homes to Dorset Ave and turn left. At the bottom of Dorset Ave., the Little Falls Trail starts again. Follow it up, past Norwood Park to Bethesda Pool, and the Capital Crescent Trail at the intersection with Little Falls Parkway. Finish the short stretch on the Capital Crescent Trail to the downtown at Bethesda Ave.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

Rock Creek Park, District of Columbia/Maryland Border  
Rock Creek Park, Ken-Garr Palisades  
Battery Kemble Park  
Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, Lock 7

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

California Tortilla - try the burritos - 301 654-8226  
Thyme Square - mostly vegetarian - 301 657-9077  
Red Tomato Café - pizza, pasta and romance - 301 652-4499

#### Entertainment and Edification

Bethesda Theatre Café - drink or have dinner and watch movies at the same time- 301 656-3377  
McCrillis Gardens - 5 acre shade garden - 301 949-8230

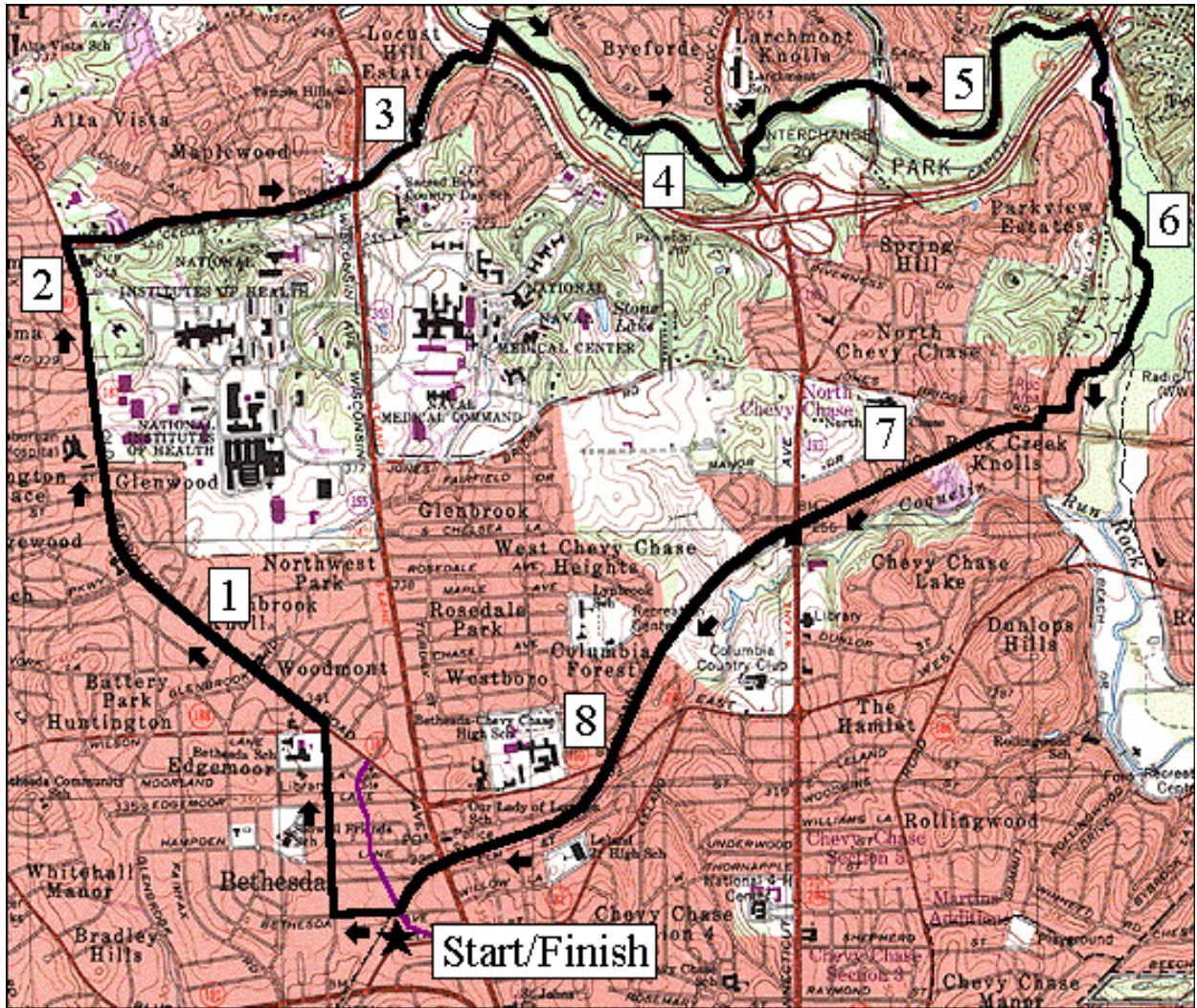
## Cedar Lane

Distance: 8.8 miles

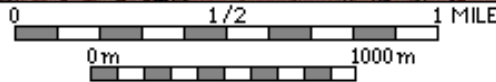
Rating: VII; paved and unpaved hiker-biker trails, sidewalks; graded hills

- |         |   |          |   |
|---------|---|----------|---|
| L 0.0   | from the parking lot at Bethesda Ave  | XS 6.6   | at X with Jones Bridge Rd;<br>crosswalk                                       |
| R 0.2   | Arlington Rd  |          |   |
| CL 0.65 | Old Georgetown Rd (Rte 187)   | R 6.65   | Georgetown Branch Trail (Crescent<br>Trail)                                   |
| CR 2.05 | W. Cedar Ln   | L/R 7.3  | at Conn Ave to cross Conn Ave at<br>Chevy Chase Lake Dr                       |
|         | 2.75 Rockville Pike (Rte 355); becomes<br>Cedar Ln  |          |   |
| BL 2.95 | following trail onto Elmhirst Pkwy  | R/L 7.35 | after crossing Conn Ave; R on<br>sidewalk/trail then L on trail into<br>woods |
| BR 3.05 | to continue paved trail   | 8.05     | East-West Hwy underpass   |
| L 3.3   | Cedar Ln  | 8.5      | tunnel begins (open 6AM-10PM)   |
|         |   | 8.7      | tunnel ends   |
| R 3.4   | Rock Creek hiker-biker trail; paved   | CR 8.75  | Bethesda Ave at Woodmont Ave  |
|         | 4.0 trail X on L to Connecticut Ave   |          |   |
|         | 4.15 Connecticut Ave underpass  | L 8.8    | Capital Crescent Trail; parking   |
|         | 4.35 cross Beach Dr   |          |   |
|         | 4.65 Kensington Pkwy Trail on L   |          |   |
|         | 5.15 cross Beach Dr (water)   |          |   |
| R 5.45  | at T ; Jones Mill Rd and<br>Stoneybrook Dr to stay on trail<br>(underpass I-495)                    |          |   |
|         | 5.65 trail crosses Jones Mill Rd  |          |   |
|         | 6.1 trail X; Audubon Naturalist Society<br>Nature Preserve on R                                     |          |   |
| R 6.25  | Georgetown Branch Trail (Capital<br>Crescent Trail; before the wooden<br>bridge crossing Rock Creek |          |   |
| L 6.4   | Susanna La (unmarked)   |          |   |
| L 6.6   | Jones Mill Rd   |          |   |

# Cedar Lane



MN | TN  
10 1/2°



Printed from TOPO! ©1999 Wildflower Productions (www.topo.com)

## Loopy Way to Brookmont

Distance: 10.45 or 7.3 miles or 9.5 miles

Rating: IX or VI or VIII; mostly paved trails; some crushed gravel on the towpath

### 10.45 Mile Route

0.0	south from the parking lot at Bethesda Ave	L	3.8	C&O Towpath at Lock 5 (water & restroom)
0.2	bridge over Bradley Rd		4.65	Chain Bridge Rd underpass
0.6	Little Falls Pkwy	<***		
0.9	Dorset Ave		5.15	trestle bridge underpass; Cap Cr Tr
1.15	bridge over River Rd; mile mark 4.5	UR	5.6	onto Cap Cr Tr at ramp to Fletcher's Boathouse (water, restroom, snacks)
1.75	bridge over Massachusetts Ave		6.1	trestle bridge over C&O canal
L/R 2.6	paved TR X on L to Little Falls Trail just before mile marker 6; R on Little Falls Trail to underpass Cap Cr TR	>***	7.05	TR X on R unmarked to Norton St
			7.1	TR X on L unmarked to Brookmont
		>*		
BL 2.9	Sangamore Rd		7.15	Montgomery Co/DC border
			7.5	tunnel begins; under MacArthur Ave
CR 2.95	at MacArthur Blvd onto paved trail		7.8	paved TR X on R to Little Falls Trail
			8.65	bridge over Massachusetts Ave
L 3.15	Maryland Ave		9.1	begin bridge over River Rd
			9.5	Dorset Ave
L 3.25	unpaved RR grade at Broad St		9.85	Little Falls Pkwy
<*			10.25	end bridge over Bradley Rd
R 3.55	61 <sup>st</sup> StL/R		10.45	Bethesda Ave
L/R 3.6	at T; L on Ridge Rd; R on paved footpath to towpath (spiral bridge)			

---

### \*7.3 Mile Route

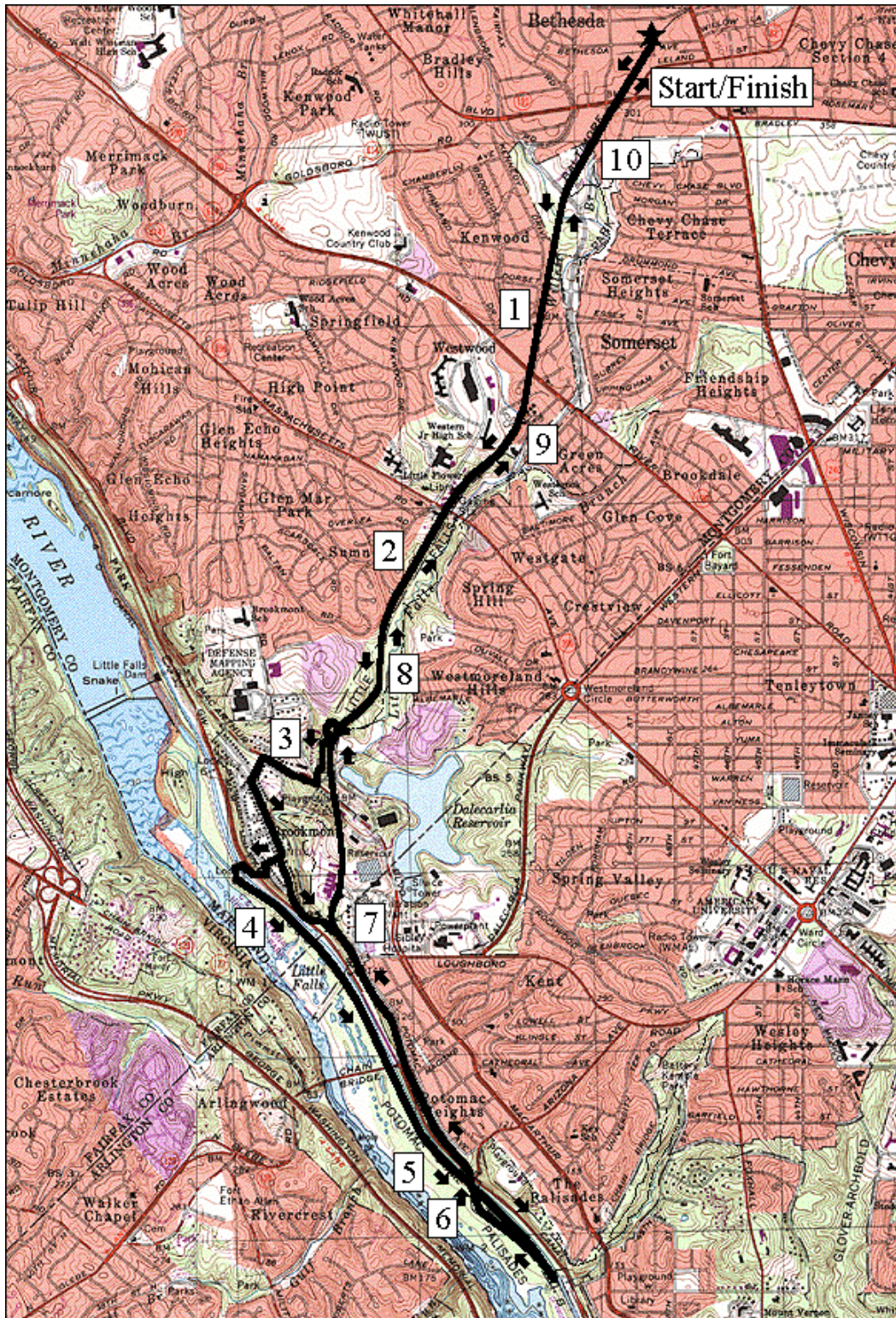
R/L 3.55	continue on pavement on Broad St		3.95	TR X on R
S 3.7	trail head at end of Broad St;(! CAUTION no rails on bridge at 3.8)	L	3.95	Cap Cr Trail (pickup cues at mile 7.15 on 10.45 mile route)
	3.85 TR X on L			

---

### \*\*9.5 Mile Route

R/L 5.15 steps to trestle bridge; Cap Cr Trail (pickup cues at mile 7.05 on 10.45 mile route)

# Loopy Way to Brookmont



## Little Falls Trail

Distance: 6.7 or 5.4 miles

Rating: VI or IV; mostly paved trails with some sidewalks and short unpaved sections

### 6.7 Mile Route

0.0	south from the parking lot at Bethesda Ave	CL	4.4	River Rd	
0.2	bridge over Bradley Rd	R	4.45	paved trail into Willard Ave park	
0.6	Little Falls Pkwy				
0.9	Dorset Ave	L	4.65	Willard Ave on sidewalk	
1.15	bridge over River Rd; mile mark 4.5				
1.75	bridge over Massachusetts Ave	L	4.75	N Park Ave	
L	2.6	paved TR X on L to Little Falls Trail just before mile marker 6; L on Little Falls Trail (unmarked)	L/R	4.8	Page Park Trail (between 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> bldg on N Park Ave; between bldg and creek)
	2.85	cross Little Falls Cr on wood bridge			
BL	2.9	at TR X to stay on Little Falls Trail; stay in the stream valley park w/creek on L	R	4.9	Warwick Pl
	3.2	wooden bridge over creek to stairs on L; TR X on R to Battery Bailey	L	5.1	Dorset Ave
<*			R	5.5	Little Falls Trail (unmarked) before Little Falls Pkwy
R/L	3.55	R at Mass Ave; L on Little Falls Pkwy; use R side shoulder	L	5.95	before trail ends in parking;
R	3.9	unpaved trail on R before bridge; stay along creek; at school field stay to the L side	L/R	6.0	cross Hillandale Rd, go L through Bethesda Pool parking lot; R toward the Capital Crescent Trail
L/R	4.1	concrete bridge to Little Falls Dr	R	6.1	Capital Crescent Trail at L.F. Pkwy
			>*		
R	4.35	Greenway Dr		6.5	bridge over Bradley Rd
				6.7	Bethesda Ave

---

### \*5.4 Mile Route

L	3.55	Massachusetts Ave		4.25	bridge over River Rd; mile mark 4.5
L	3.55	unpaved trail on L before underpass (unmarked); uphill to paved trail		4.45	Dorset Ave (pickup cues after 0.4 miles at mile 6.5 on 6.7 mile route)
R	3.6	Capital Crescent Trail			



# Little Falls Trail

