

Rock Creek Park, MD - Ken-Gar Palisades

Ken-Garr Palisades, in Rock Creek Park off of Beach Drive, is a regular training site of the largest running club in the area. The Montgomery County Road Runners Club runs from there at 8:00AM, on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The runners of all abilities and levels take to the Rock Creek Trail headed toward the D.C. border or headed in the other direction to Lake Needwood. So large is the running club that if you're on the trail at the same time as a training run, you might find yourself like the protagonist in the movie *Midnight Express*, as he fought off madness in a Turkish jail by purposefully heading in the "wrong direction." The hundreds of club members who sometimes show-up are however much more fair, courteous and pleasant with their trail-side manners. Take the trail at other times, and you will find quiet surroundings with families cycling and walking through the many smaller parks that the trail links together. Presumably, the name of the starting area is derived from the names of the nearby towns of Kensington and Garrett Park. The two towns are separated by Rock Creek and the cliffs on the hillsides along it.

Getting There

From the Capital Beltway (I-495)

Take Rockville Pike (Rte. 355) northbound to the first light. Turn right on the access road, the immediately left onto Beach Dr. Just after Cedar Ave. and after passing under the arched railroad bridge 1 1/3 mile later, turn right into the Ken-Gar Palisades parking lot.

By Metro Rail

The Grosvenor metro rail station is approximately 1.7 miles from the Ken-Gar Palisades parking lot. Exit from the station, heading uphill on Tuckerman La. Turn right on Rockville Pike. Turn right again at the Strathmore Hall Arts Center. In front of the mansion, a paved footpath leads downhill away from the mansion to Strathmore Ave. Cross Strathmore Ave, then turn right on it to utilize the sidewalk. Where the walkway runs-out, cross Strathmore Ave. again and descend to Rock Creek Park. Cross Beach Drive, then turn left on the Rock Creek hiker-biker trail to the Ken-Gar Palisades parking area.

Area Routes

Kensington (6.1 miles, IV)

Kensington is a mostly suburban area wrapped around by Rock Creek Park on its west and south ends. From the Ken-Gar Palisades, head toward D.C, then almost immediately turn left to climb toward Plyers Mill Rd. Cross the busy Connecticut Ave at the traffic light making your way past the antique shops in the downtown area. As quickly as it got busy, the level of traffic slows again as you head down a long gentle grade toward Rock Creek park along the Kensington Parkway. At the Rock Creek hiker-biker trail, turn right following the trail very gradually uphill back to Ken-Gar Palisades. The Rock Creek trail along this part at first stays near the creek itself and Beach Drive. After crossing Cedar Lane, it veers away from the creek and the road for a quiet section known to have good autumn color. Most of the trail from Kensington Parkway to Ken-Gar Palisades is tree covered and flat. Water is available along the Kensington Parkway and

at Cedar La. during warm seasons.

Lake Frank, South Shores (13.85 miles, X)

This lollipop route takes the Rock Creek trail out to one of the main tributaries of the namesake creek. Passing through many small parks and crossing a few major roads, the route climbs gradually and is rolling until the loop portion. One hill is encountered early on the way to Dewey Park. Another larger one must be negotiated a half mile past the Randolph Rd. intersection, after crossing over the Rock Creek. A small one is also on the way to Aspen Hill park. The trail is mostly wooded with several water and restroom stops. After Aspen Hill Park, it is increasingly rural in character. While running it late in the day in the fall, flashes of white continued to appear in the woods as the tails of herds of deer dashed and crashed away from me. After crossing under Norbeck Rd. (Rte. 28), a spur trail climbs gradually at first along a small tributary. It gets increasingly steep until right at the very end when you think it can't get any tougher. The trail ends at the top suddenly on a suburban street. A little over a mile later, after passing through the Manor Lake development, the waters of Lake Frank become visible below. Turning left, follow the closed road around the shores. It later becomes a paved trail. At the dam, take a dirt trail down a steep hill back to the Rock Creek trail, intersecting near the cable suspension bridge. Turn left on the trail and head back to Ken-Gar Palisades. An alternate starting point is from Aspen Hill Park, which when starting from there makes a 6.6 mile route.

Garrett Park (2.7 miles, III)

Garrett Park is a kind of sleepy railroad town that had a city grow-up around it. Unlike other small towns around Washington however, it retained its sense of identity and community. Many of the roads leading to and from it are closed off to through auto traffic. Tall mature trees bless the town with a cooling shade. The residents of Garrett Park gather and run into each other as they pick-up their mail from the post office at the town center—mail is not delivered door to door. About the only noise usually heard, remarkable with it being right off of Rockville Pike and within walking distance of White Flint Mall, are the diesel trains which pass by. The trains in fact are somewhat responsible for the towns existence. According to a plaque near the town center, the town was laid out in 1889 by the Metropolitan Investment and Building Co. and named after W. Garrett, once president of the B. & O. Railroad.

The route takes the Rock Creek trail to Cedar La., then follows a path along it up and into the town limits. Once up the initial hill, the course is mostly flat. It passes by many older but well kept houses and also many newly re-designed ones. Where sidewalks are lacking, the route is in the streets. At the small town center, turn left across the train tracks and down through Schuykill Park. Garret Park Rd. returns you to the Rock Creek Trail for completion of the loop.

Tuckerman Lane (5.9 or 4.4 miles, VI or IV)

Head south on the Rock Creek Trail to where it separates, then merges again with Beach Dr. Turn right, up Beach Drive and then very briefly go along Rockville Pike to Tuckerman Lane. Climb the hill up Tuckerman Lane past the Grosvenor metro station. The short route breaks off here to pass through the grounds of the Strathmore Hall Arts Center. A few modern sculptures grace the Center's lawn, distracting the eyes and teasing the mind. Otherwise, the longer route crosses Rockville Pike. A commuter convenient hiker-biker trail head on the right side of the

road is located across from the Marriott Brighton Gardens and Nursing Assisted Living facility, before Kings Riding Way. The trail skirts along the borders of the grassy Georgetown Prep campus and golf course and is bordered on the other side by town homes. At the trail end, begin a long down hill section by turning right to get to Rockville Pike, then right again once on Rockville Pike. After turning left onto Strathmore Ave, the short route joins in. Some unavoidable parts of Strathmore Ave are unpleasant for foot or bicycle traffic due to a lack of a sidewalk in some places. Proceed through Garrett Park on side streets back to the Rock Creek trail, then back to the Ken-Gar Palisades

Nearby and Connecting Zones

Bethesda

Rock Creek Park, District of Columbia/Maryland Border

Rock Creek Park, Aspen Hill

Rock Creek Park, Lake Needwood

Cabin John Regional Park

What to do Afterward

Food and Drink

The Garrett Park Café - 301 929-0486

Lebanese Taverna Café - 301 468-9086

Bagel City - 301 231-8080

The Cactus Grill - 301 460-2928

Entertainment and Edification

Strathmore Arts Center Gallery (Saturday 10AM-3PM, closed Sunday) 301 530-0540

Strathmore Hall Music in the Mansion 301 530-0540

Kensington

Distance: 6.1 miles

Rating: IV; paved trails, roads and a short section of an unpaved trail, mostly graded hills

R 0.0 on the Rock Creek trail (south) from the parking lot at Ken-Gar

L 0.05 paved trail to Plyers Mill Rd

S 0.2 Plyers Mill Rd

CR 0.6 Connecticut Ave

L 0.65 Howard Av

L 0.95 Kensington Pkwy (water at 1.75)

L/R 1.8 L on Littledale Rd; R onto unpaved trail after crossing the creek
2.15 trail becomes paved after crossing Saul Rd

R 2.55 Rock Creek Trail at Beach Dr
2.85 cross Beach Dr

BL 2.9 trail X; before Connecticut Ave
3.0 Connecticut Ave underpass
3.2 trail X; merges from R, from Connecticut Ave
3.8 Cedar Ln (water)

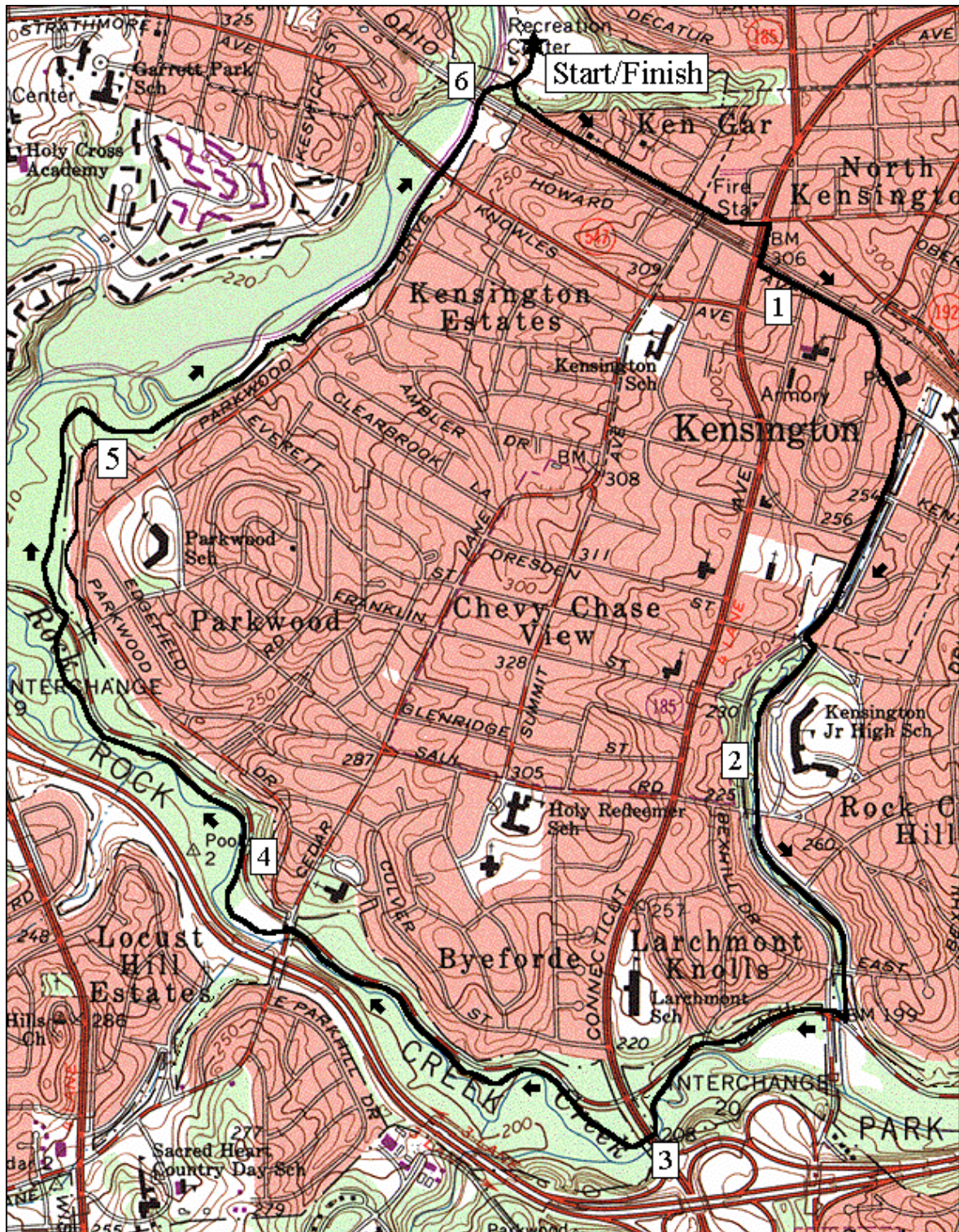
L/R 4.6 to cross Beach Dr

L 5.45 to stay on the Rock Creek Trail 0.25 miles past mile marker 6

R 5.85 Knowles Ave
5.95 railroad underpass
6.05 trail X on R to Plyers Mill Rd

L 6.1 Ken-Gar parking

Kensington



MN TN
10 1/2°

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

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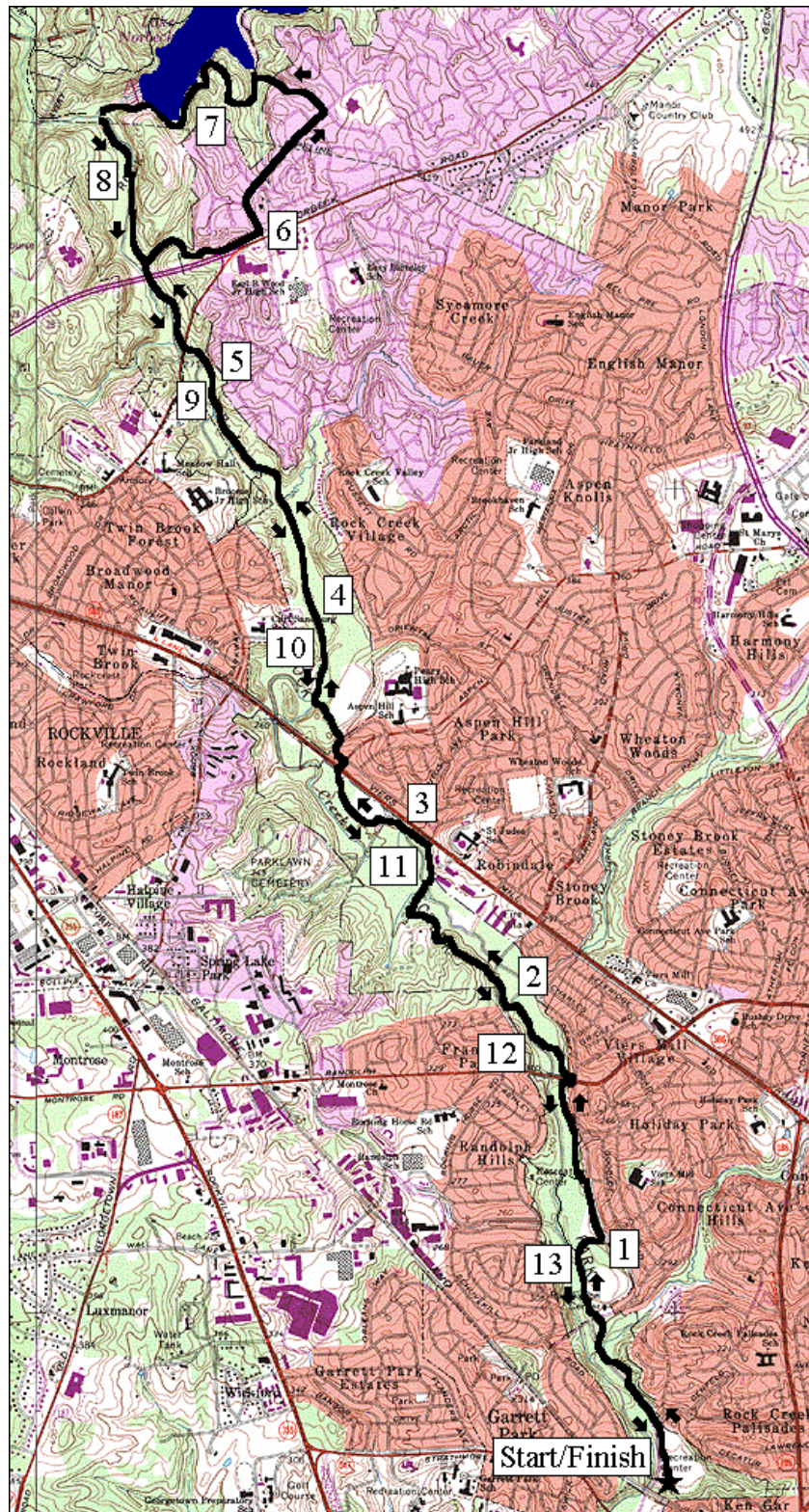
Lake Frank, South Shores

Distance: 13.85 miles

Rating: X; mostly paved trails; some sidewalks and unpaved paths

- | | |
|--|--|
| L 0.0 north from the parking lot
0.65 Garrett Rd; Viers Mill Park
(restrooms, phone) | R 7.7 before suspension bridge (if used,
subtract 0.08 miles) |
| L/R 1.3 leaving Dewy Park after water to stay
on Rock Creek Trail | L 7.75 Rock Cr Trail (paved, unmarked)
near mile marker 13 |
| R/L 1.65 Randolph Rd; to stay on trail | 7.8 suspension bridge on L |
| L/R 2.0 at water fountain to cross Rock Cr
and stay on trail (unmarked) | 8.35 trail X on L(unmarked) to
Norbeck Rd |
| 3.1 Park Lawn Cemetery road | 8.4 underpass Norbeck Rd (Rte 28) |
| 3.4 cross Viers Mill Rd to Aspen Hill Rd | 8.7 Baltimore Rd |
| L 3.45 Adrian St; to stay on trail | 9.25 trail X on R to bridge over Rock Cr |
| CR 3.5 Baltic Ave; to stay on trail | 10.25 Aspen Hill Park; trail head (water,
portable restroom) |
| L 3.55 Aspen Hill Park; trail head on L at
3.65 (water, portable restroom) | R 10.3 Baltic Ave; to stay on trail |
| 4.6 trail X on L to bridge over Rock Cr | CL10.4 Adrian St; to stay on trail |
| 5.15 Baltimore Rd | CR10.45 Aspen Hill Rd; cross Viers Mill to
trail head |
| 5.45 underpass Norbeck Rd (Rte 28)
(unmarked) | 10.75 Park Lawn Cemetery road |
| R 5.5 trail X (unmarked, paved) to
Norbeck Rd | L/R11.8 cross Rock Cr to water fountain |
| S 5.8 trail ends at Norbeck Rd | R/L12.2 Randolph Rd; to stay on trail |
| CL 6.0 Bauer Dr | L/R12.6 in Dewey Park to stay on trail (water) |
| L 6.55 Trailway Dr | 13.2 Garrett Rd; Viers Mill Park
(restrooms, phone) |
| L 6.85 at T; old park road (closed to autos) | R 13.85 Ken-Gar Palisades parking |
| 7.0 sharp bend in road to the R | |
| 7.15 paved trail head at end of old parking | |
| L 7.6 trail X; unpaved trail at top of dam
(! unmarked, down steep hill) | |

Lake Frank, South Shores



MN TN
10 1/2°

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Garrett Park

Distance: 2.7 miles

Rating: III; paved trails with some sidewalks and light traffic roads

R 0.0 on the Rock Creek trail (south) from the parking lot at Ken-Gar Palisades
0.05 paved trail to Plyers Mill Rd on L
0.15 railroad underpass

CR 0.25 paved trail along Knowles Ave

L 0.45 Weymouth St

R 0.5 Oxford St

R/L 0.75 at Montrose Av to stay on Oxford St

CR 0.8 Kenilworth Ave
0.9 Strathmore Av (!)

BL 1.0 to stay on Kenilworth Ave

R 1.4 Clyde Ave

R 1.45 Rokeby Ave

L 1.6 Argyle

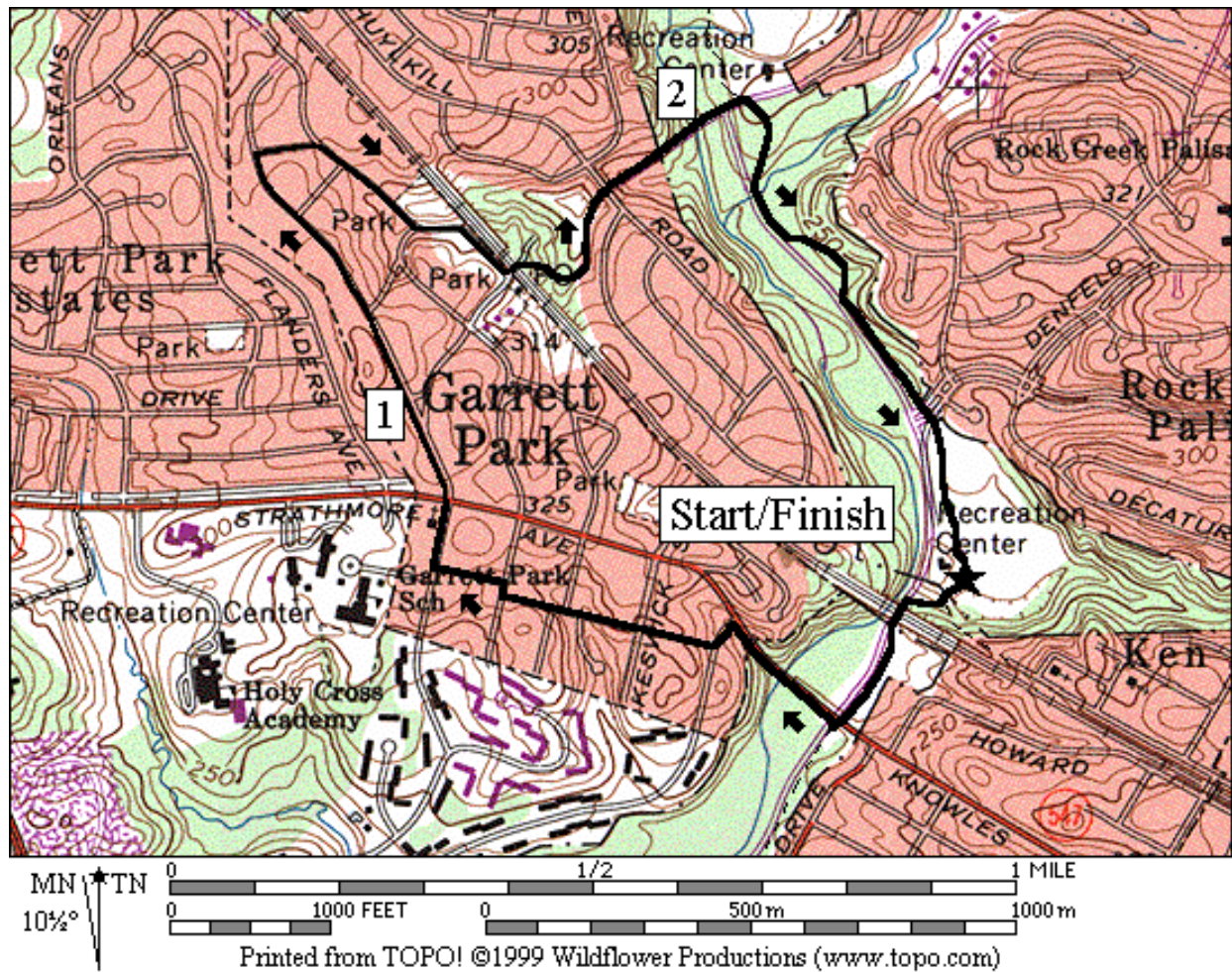
L 1.75 cross the railroad tracks at the town center; downhill into Schuykill Park

S 1.9 on L side of Garrett Rd

R 2.05 Rock Creek hiker-biker trail
2.55 Wexford Rd

R 2.7 Ken-Gar Palisades parking

Garrett Park



Tuckerman Road

Distance: 5.9 or 4.4 miles

Rating: VI or IV; mostly paved trails with some sidewalks and street shoulders

5.9 Mile Route

R 0.0	on the Rock Creek trail (south) from the parking lot at Ken-Gar	R 3.95	Rockville Pike
0.05	paved trail to Plyers Mill Rd on L	CL 4.33	Srathmore Rd (! narrow shoulder)
0.25	Knowles Ave	4.55	trail to Strathmore Hall on R
		>*	
R 0.65	at T to stay on Rock Cr Trail	R 5.0	Kenilworth Ave
R 1.5	Beach Dr (protected shoulder)	L 5.1	Oxford St
CL 1.8	toward Rockville Pike	R/L 5.15	at Montrose to stay on Oxford St
R 1.85	Rockville Pike (gravel path)	L 5.4	Weymouth St
R 2.0	Tuckerman Rd (sidewalk)	R 5.45	trail toward Rock Creek
<*		CL 5.65	Beach Dr; Rock Creek hiker-biker trail
2.6	Rockville Pike	5.75	railroad underpass
R 3.05	paved trail before Kings Riding Way and across the street from Brighton Gardens Nursing Assisted Living	5.85	paved trail on R to Plyers Mill Rd
		L 5.9	Ken-Gar Palisades parking
L/R 3.45	corner of Georgetown Prep grounds		
R 3.75	Edson La at Woodglen Dr		

*4.4 Mile Route

R 2.6	Rockville Pike
R 2.7	Strathmore Hall parking
L 2.8	trail head in front of mansion
3.05	Strathmore Ave on shoulder (!) (pickup cues after 0.4 miles at mile 5.0 on 5.9 mile route)

Tuckerman Road

