

## **Watkins Regional Park**

Watkins Regional Park is a mostly wooded park with ball fields, a nature center, campgrounds, a carousel (by reservation), and an educational petting zoo. It's much like the better known Wheaton, and Cabin John Regional Parks maintained by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) as well as other regional parks in Virginia. A network of nature trails within it are well blazed and generally well maintained. An equestrian trail under high tension power lines bisects the park. The park brochures show that the park was created in 1964 and named after Robert M. Watkins, once a chairman of the M-NCPPC, in honor of his efforts to for establishing open space in Prince Georges County. Change in the park is underway. The size of it was doubled and a new entrance with a covered bridge off of Landover Road, Rte. 202, is planned. The park has a comfortable and relaxed feeling to it. Kids and their parents are found in most sections. Expect the park to get busier as more of Prince Georges County's farmland is converted to suburb.

### **Getting There**

From the Capital Beltway (I-95), take Central Avenue (Rte. 214) east and outside the Capital Beltway for 3.1 miles. Turn right on Watkins Park Drive (Rte 193) following it 0.85 miles. Turn right into the Park Entrance. Immediately, turn right again on Old Enterprise Road. Again immediately, turn left before the gate that closes Old Enterprise Road. Turn right at the first parking area which is for the Administration Building, then right again to the start at the end of the parking lot.

### **Area Route**

#### Spicebush Trail (3.05 or 3.55 miles, II or III)

The main nature trail through the park is the 2.9 mile Spicebush Trail. What's nice about this trail is that for a wooded trail in the Washington area, this one is very flat. The trail is marked with a blue blaze. The route initially is on the part of Old Enterprise Rd. that is closed to traffic. After crossing the power lines, it skirts along the park's western borders with the backyards of houses visible. A brief pass through a picnic parking lot marks the beginning of the wetland area. The Wetland Trail (yellow blaze) is concurrent with the Spicebush trail here. You may as I did, spy an owl or surprise a group of as many as 12 deer here in the middle of a spring day. You may also however, get bit through your clothes by occasional swarms of hungry mosquitoes. After leaving the wetland area, a group of intersecting trails is encountered near the Watkins Nature Center.

A half mile add-on loop option is available near the Nature Center. The Upland Trail (dark green blaze) climbs up a small bluff that overlooks wetlands of the Western Branch, a tributary to the Patuxent River. The complete and blazed Upland Trail actually goes back down the hill to the edge of the wetland and along it a ways but the described route skips that to stay on the hill. Additional out and back trails connect to the Upland trail. They could be connected to the Equestrian Trail for a longer add-on loop, but the Equestrian Trail goes through cultivated fields

and is not yet well defined in that portion of the park.

After the nature center, the Spicebush Trail crosses several streams on wooden bridges as it gradually climbs. After a detour around the campgrounds, it completes the loop and returns to Old Enterprise Rd. at the park entrance. The Spicebush Trail appears to be used relatively little compared to other regional parks. In springtime, apple acorns grow right in the middle of the trail in some places while occasionally gumball seeds cover the trail in others. Bicycling is not allowed on the trails.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

Patuxent River Park/Merkle Natural Resource Management Area  
Foxhill Park, Bowie, Maryland

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

picnic

#### Entertainment and Edification

Six Flags - water and amusement park - 301 249-1500

Merkle Natural Resource Management Area Visitor Center - 301 888-1410, TTY 410 974-3683

## Spicebush Trail

Distance: 3.05 or 3.55 miles

Rating: II or III; mostly unpaved blazed trails through parkland

### 3.05 Mile Route

- |    |      |  |    |     |      |  |
|----|------|--|----|-----|------|--|
| R  | 0.0  | east end of parking lot; wooden stairs& path toward the park entrance  | <* | R/L | 1.85 | R at T; L at trail X to stay on the Spicebush Trail; Nature Center   |
| L  | 0.05 | L at parking and L on Old Enterprise Rd; pass around the closed gate; Spicebush Trail is on the road; follow the blue blazes | >* | R   | 1.95 | at billboard and trail X to stay on Spicebush Trail; blue & red blazes                                       |
|    |      |  |    | L   | 2.05 | trail X; follow blue blaze   |
| BL | 0.35 | leave Old Enterprise Rd. onto trail  |    | BL  | 2.15 | at trail X on R just after power lines   |
|    | 0.4  | power lines; Equestrian Trail  |    |     |      |  |
|    | 1.0  | trail X on R to community park   |    | L   | 2.65 | after wooden bridge to go around campground; follow blue blazes  |
| R  | 1.2  | to stay on Spicebush Trail; toward wooden bridge and parking   |    | L   | 2.9  | Old Enterprise Rd. on shoulder   |
| R  | 1.25 | picnic parking (water & restrooms)   |    | L/R | 2.95 | L on park road completes loop; leave Spicebush Trail; R on paved path to Administration Building parking lot |
| R  | 1.3  | into woods to stay on Spicebush Trail; follow blue blazes  |    |     |      |  |
|    | 1.35 | Wetland Trail and Spicebush Trail are concurrent; blue & yellow blazes   |    |     | 3.05 | Administration Building parking lot  |

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### \*3.55 Mile Route

- |   |      |   |   |      |  |
|---|------|---|---|------|--|
| R | 1.85 | R at T; over the wooden bridge to the Upland Trail (dark green blazes); and up the hill | R | 2.3  | complete Upland Trail loop; to wooden bridge   |
| S | 1.95 | leave Upland Trail as it goes down the hill on the R                                    | R | 2.35 | Spicebush Trail toward the nature center (blue blazes) (pickup cues at mile 1.95 on 3.05 mile route; end 3.55 miles) |
| S | 2.05 | Upland Trail merges from the R; Beaver Pond Trail goes R                                |   |      |  |

# Spicebush Trail

