

Lake Accotink Park

Lake Accotink is a large public lake in Northern Virginia that's close-in to Washington. The only one of similar size that's closer is the private Lake Barcroft. The unpaved trail around Lake Accotink connects to an elaborate yet relatively unknown trail system. Mountain bikers have discovered much of it along with the nearby Wakefield Park. They along with runners and walkers regularly go back and forth between the two parks. Lake Accotink Park has picnic areas, boat rentals, and refreshment stands. People fish near the dam and in the free flowing parts of Accotink Creek. It's not unusual to sight wildlife such as waterfowl and deer. In 1999 however, people were surprised to find and later capture a 3 foot alligator, presumed to have been a pet that someone set free.

Getting There

From the Capital Beltway

Take Rte. I-95 south for 0.9 miles to Old Keene Mill Rd., Rte. 644, and head west. After 0.75 miles, turn right on Hanover Ave. Go 1.1 miles, then turn left at Highland St. Turn right after 0.25 miles on Accotink Park Rd. That road ends at an industrial park, so turn left before it does on Lake Accotink Access Rd. After 0.65 miles, turn left into the parking lot before going under the railroad bridge. Routes start from the parking lot entrance.

Area Routes

Lake Accotink (3.95, 7.95 or 5.15 miles, IV, VII or V)

The basic loop around Lake Accotink is 3.81 miles. Though much of the trail is flat, there are some hills to negotiate. The hardest is right at the beginning, just after crossing the creek below the dam. The nice thing about the hills is that they get you high enough for good views of the lake and the nearby wetlands. After the initial hills near the dam, the trail is on an abandoned railroad grade. The route is mostly surfaced with bluestone. There are short paved sections and a third of a mile on suburban sidewalks. After the sidewalks, there are stairs to go down. The lake trail rolls for the last mile-and-a-half back to the start. Mile markers are posted going both directions around the lake.

Two extensions use different portions of the Long Branch Trail. The short one requires crossing Braddock Rd. at a traffic light. This part of the Long Branch Trail is not the best part of that trail. It's poorly maintained but passable. It returns back to the basic loop on the east side of Accotink Creek and Lake. The long extension follows the railroad grade all the way to Rolling Rd. After one-and-a half miles on sidewalks, it returns on a very pleasant part of the Long Branch Trail north of Braddock Rd.

Carrleigh (4.8 miles, V)

A variant of the Lake Accotink Loop is to turn left off the lake loop trail to go up to the Carrleigh Parkway. Despite climbing the hill at the dam earlier, the paved trail to Carrleigh leaves the lake loop climbing steeply with switchbacks. On the way, it crosses one of the many dirt trails in the area used for mountain biking, hiking and running. It also crosses over the Southern Railroad.

The way outside the park on the Carrleigh Parkway and Forrester Blvd. is slightly rolling. Cross over Rolling Road to use a paved trail along it before heading back into Lake Accotink Park. The way back in is not marked but not hard to find. It comes just after crossing the railroad tracks again. It's paved at first but soon turns to dirt. The unpaved portion was previously a railroad grade. The gentle downhill grade continues approximately a mile-and-a-half almost uninterrupted—most of the way back.

Springfield (9.15, 2.65 or 3.6 miles, IX, II, III)

Besides its suburban neighborhoods, Springfield is known for its shopping mall and the infamous mixing-bowl—the Capital Beltway and I-95 South highway interchange. On this route, you'll skip that mess and get as far south as the Springfield/Fairfax County Parkway and bike trail. The adventurous should enjoy the dirt trails along Accotink Creek south of the lake. They can be a little daunting to remember when looking at the number of turns on the que sheet and realizing that many are unmarked. Red blazes do mark a dirt main trail however, the blazes aren't always prominent or everywhere that you'd hope they would be. There are several turns to take to stay on the main trail. If you try this route and continue on a generally downhill path paralleling the creek as you go out, you should find your way. Another discouraging factor of this route is that much of the trail is on a flood plain. In wetter months, it stays wet. Mountain bike cyclists use the trails as do people fishing or walking. After leaving the lake area however, you will likely encounter only few of them.

Two short options leave the woods and flood plain earlier to return through neighborhoods. After passing them, the route is under telephone lines on one segment, and along a flat pipeline for the next. After passing through Byron Avenue Park and crossing Old Keene Mill Rd., a partially paved and partially bluestone trail on the west side of Accotink Creek lets you climb to the Fairfax County Parkway Trail (FCPT). Use the FCPT to cross back to the east side of the creek and climb the long hill on the other side. Pass through some more neighborhoods, and a small paved trail back down to the Accotink Creek valley before going up a steep dirt scramble to Oriole Avenue; an awkward but short part of the route. The rest of the way is back through neighborhoods, on streets or sidewalks; roughly the same route described to drive in on.

Nearby and Connecting Zones

South Run District Park
Wakefield Park

What to do Afterward

Food and Drink

Silver Diner - 703 924-1701
Austin Grill - 703-644-3111
Hard Times Café - 703 913-5600

Dairy Queen - 703 866-2253
HomeGrown Markets - Thursdays 9am-1pm,
May–October; Mason District Park -
703 642-5173

Entertainment and Edification

Lake Accotink Park - 703 569-3464

Wakefield RECenter - 703 321-7081
Patriot Center - 703 993-3000

Lake Accotink

Distance: 3.95, 7.95 or 5.15 miles

Rating: IV, VII or V; mostly bluestone trails; some short steep hills; shady

3.95 Mile Route

		<***	
L	0.0	from parking lot, head on the trail, under the RR tracks toward the dam	R 1.9 over wooden bridge to stay on loop; Long Branch Trail goes S (unmarked)
L	0.1	at trail X to cross the creek; begin loop trail	R 1.95 at T; Lake Accotink Trail
	0.15	bridge over creek below the dam	>***
	0.45	paved trail on L to Carrleigh Pkwy	2.4 Mile Marker 2.5
	0.55	trail X; blue blazed	2.9 Mile Marker 3
	1.15	trail X on L before upper dam/marsh on L	BR 3.1 at trail X on L with blue blaze (goes to Hatteras La) to stay on loop trail
	1.4	Mile Marker 1.5; trail X on L	
	<*		
R	1.45	down to the road; follow sign for Accotink Park Trail	BL 3.2 at trail X on R to stay on loop trail
	1.5	trail ends; use Danbury Forest Dr	R 3.75 around the marina; (portable outhouse)
BR	1.8	after Lonsdale Dr on R; down stairs (!) to trail	BL 3.9 at RR underpass; loop trail goes S 3.95 parking

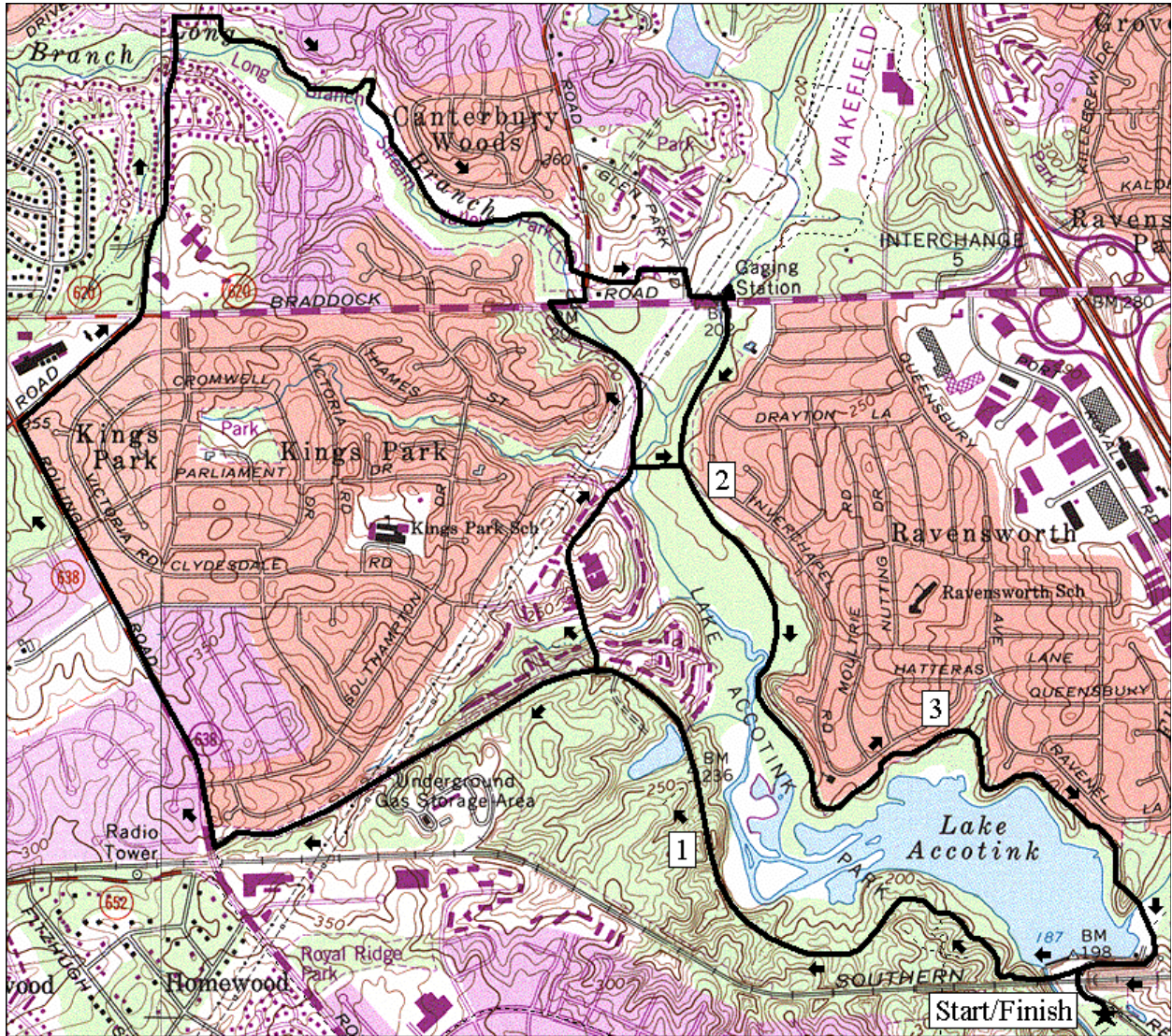
*7.95 Mile Route

			R 4.0 Queen Elizabeth Blvd
S	1.45	TR X on R to road is lake loop trail	R 4.1 Long Branch Trail (unmarked); near Candace Ln on L
	1.85	pass through/around gate	4.65 TR X on R at wooden bridge
R	2.25	Rolling Rd (use sidewalk)	
			S 5.15 cross Wakefield Chapel Rd (pickup cues at mile 2.45 on 5.15 mile route)
R	3.15	Burke Lake Rd	
BL	3.45	onto Woodland Way at Braddock Rd	

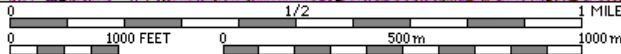
**5.15 Mile Route

			Oak Hill Park
S	1.9	Long Branch Trail (unmarked); wooden bridge on R	R 2.55 Glen Park Rd
			L 2.6 Braddock Rd., Rte 620
CR	2.25	Braddock Rd., Rte 620, TL	
			L 2.7 after crossing over Accotink Creek
L/R	2.3	L on Wakefield Chapel Rd; R on trail	
	>*		L 2.75 Accotink Creek Trail; go under Braddock Rd., Rte 620; (pickup cues at mile 2.4 on 3.95 mile route)
R	2.45	go between ball fields and parking lot in	

Lake Accotink



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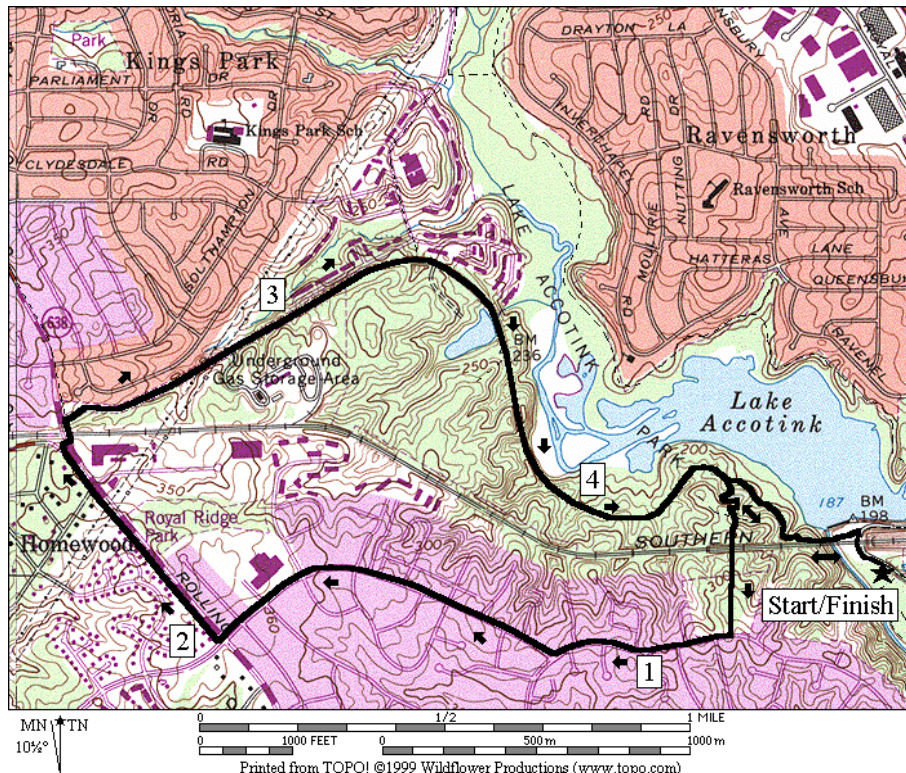
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Carrleigh

Distance: 4.8 miles

Rating: V; unpaved and paved trails and sidewalks; rolling hills

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| <p>L 0.0 from parking lot head on the trail under the RR tracks and toward the dam</p> <p>L 0.1 at trail X to cross the creek; begin loop trail
0.15 bridge over creek below the dam</p> <p>L 0.45 paved trail on L to Carrleigh Pkwy
0.6 trail X; dirt
0.65 bridge over RR</p> <p>R 0.8 Carrleigh Pkwy</p> <p>R 1.2 Forrester Blvd</p> <p>CR 1.95 Rolling Rd; use paved trail</p> <p>XS 2.45 Burke Rd on L, TL</p> | <p>R 2.5 at 5701 Rolling Rd; unmarked paved road immediately after the bridge over the RR
2.9 gate; pavement ends
3.2 trail X on R</p> <p>S 3.3 trail X on L to Danbury Forrest Dr for lake loop
3.6 trail X on R after dam and marsh on R
4.25 trail X; blue blazed
4.35 paved trail on R to Carrleigh Pkwy
4.6 bridge over creek below the dam</p> <p>R 4.7 trail X on R goes under the RR bridge
4.8 parking</p> |
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Springfield

Distance: 9.15, 2.65, or 3.6 miles

Rating: IX, II or III; unpaved, paved trails, road sidewalks; rolling hills; two-thirds shady

9.15 Mile Route

		L	2.45	trail head (unpaved & unmarked)
			3.15	trail X on R (paved)
R	0.0		3.2	trail X on R (paved)
				on the trail while facing Lake Accotink Access Rd from the parking lot
R	0.05	R	3.25	trail X on R at wood bridge; up steep hill
	0.1	BL	3.35	Hunter Village Rd
				on the trail at the end of the parking lot
L	0.1	L	3.45	Fairfax County Pkwy Trail (unmarked)
			3.55	begin bridge over Accotink Creek
R	0.45			after wooden bridge to stay on blazed trail
		CL	4.3	Spring Village Dr
R	0.6			after wooden bridge to stay on blazed trail
	0.8	R/L	4.55	R on Hampton Creek/L at paved trail head
<*				trail X on R as trail bears L
	0.95	R	5.1	after paved trail ends; go up the steep hill
	1.0		5.3	begin Oriole Ave at its end (unmarked)
<***				cross stream on rocks; Brookfield Park is L
	1.15	L	5.7	Ridgeway Dr
S	1.25	R	5.9	Tanager St
		L	6.15	Spring St (use sidewalk)
	1.55	CL	6.4	Old Keene Mill Rd (TL)
				trail X on L to Mendotta Pl (unmarked)
L	1.6	CR	6.75	Hanover Ave
			7.34	Essex Ave
	1.8	>***		
		L	7.85	Highland St
L/R	1.85			BL at stream; then cross and bear R
	1.9	R	8.2	paved trail head on R into Accotink Park
R	1.95	>*		
			8.45	paved trail ends; Lake Accotink Access Rd
		L	9.15	parking lot
				gravel road; becomes Byron Ave
R	2.15			paved trail along Old Keene Mill Rd
L	2.4			Tiverton Dr/Hunter Village Dr (TL)

*2.65 Mile Route

			1.2	trail X on L (unpaved/unmarked)
L	0.95			trail X on L at top of bluff (unmarked)
	1.0	L	1.7	paved trail on L into Accotink Park (pickup cues at mile 8.45 on 9.15 mile route)
				trail ends; begin Highland St at Loretto St

**3.6 Mile Route

			1.2	trail ends; begin Essex Ave; up the hill
L	1.15	L	1.75	Hanover Ave at top of the hill (pickup cues at mile 7.85 on 9.15 mile route)
				trail X on L to Essex Rd (unmarked)

Springfield

