

Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park

Fredericksburg's location between Washington D.C. and Richmond made it of strategic importance during the Civil War. Four battles were fought nearby including the one fought just south of the city. Park materials report that in the four battles, nearly 110,000 people lost their lives. One of those was General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, shot by mistake by his own troops after leading a charge that repulsed a Federal initiative. Spending time today on the Fredericksburg Battlefield, you can see the trenches used by the defending southerners. The trenches are labeled for the different southern generals, McLaw, Hood, Pickett, Jackson and Lee, who's commanded them. When you're there, you may spot as I did, park employees or other people in full regalia, as if ready for a Civil War re-enactment.

The park covers the long line of defense. Lee Drive is the main way through. Though there is not much shoulder to it, traffic on the drive is light and it is ideal for running. Cycling is allowed on it also however, in-line skating is not. Also running through the length of the park is the natural surfaced Lee Drive Trail. It too is ideal for running on.

Getting There

From the Capital Beltway

Take Exit 1, for Interstate 95 headed south. Go approximately 44 miles, then take Exit 130 for Plank Rd., Rte. 3 into Fredericksburg. Pass the first exit for Route 1 (Jefferson Davis Hwy.) And turn right onto Lafayette Blvd., Rte. 1 Business. Turn left onto Lee Drive and into Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park. After 1.5 miles, turn left at Pickett Circle and park. Routes start from the circle.

Area Routes

Howison Hill (2.25 or 3.6 miles, II, or IV)

Start by going out Lee Drive toward Lafayette Blvd. The first half mile is flat, followed by a climb up Howison Hill. The hill was used by southerners to fire 30 pound shot at union forces who were coming up from the river. The artillery was destroyed during fighting but the Confederates won the battle anyway. Extend the route from here by going out and back to Lafayette Dr., Route 1, or begin the Lee Drive Trail by turning left near the Howison Hill exhibit. On the out and back to Lafayette Dr, you'll pass another trail on the west side of the road that goes to Lee's command post (fee required). From the top, which is higher than Howison Hill, you can see what General Lee saw out across the fields toward the river. Turning left at Howison Hill, the trail is paved initially. Almost immediately, just behind the artillery location, the trail becomes unpaved. It is occasionally marked by dark blue blazes. It rises and drops, but mostly drops back to Lee Drive and crosses it. Going along McLaw's Division trenches, the trail returns to Pickett Circle.

Prospect Hill (7.05 or 7.75 miles, VI or VII)

From Pickett Circle, go across the circle to the northeast and take the trail head toward the Lee Drive Trail. Turning right on the Lee Drive Trail, go around the circle and then cross Lee Drive. After a modest hill, the trail returns to Lee Drive and remains on it until crossing Landsdowne Rd., Rte 638. Back in the woods again, several wet spots in the trail were improved with small wooden bridges in 1999. Staying well away from the road, the trail eventually climbs Prospect Hill in more or less steady steps past some false “summits”. The footing is generally good and the hill is not difficult. A long descent will take you to a parking lot at the end of Lee Drive. To extend, turn right on an out and back dirt trail to Hamilton’s Crossing. Hamilton’s Crossing was a railroad stop used by the Confederates to safely unload supplies. They used Hamilton’s Crossing instead of having trains going into Fredericksburg, where the train station was within striking distance of union artillery located across the river in what is now John Pratt Lee Memorial Park. Return on Lee Drive. On the right, not far from the parking area when headed back, Meade Pyramid is visible across the railroad tracks. The 30 foot high, 23 foot square stone pyramid was erected in 1903 by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad (RF&P) as a memorial. The location represents the Federals southernmost point of penetration during battle on December 13, 1863. Union forces were soundly defeated during the encounters of that battle with few southern losses. A trail further ahead on the right (not on the route) goes toward the pyramid through the woods as far as the railroad tracks. The rest of the way back on Lee Drive is pleasant. Trees provide shade as the road rolls a little. Lee Drive flattens out altogether for the last 1.75 miles.

Nearby and Connecting Zones

John Pratt Lee Memorial Park & Fredericksburg

What to do Afterward

Food and Drink

Carl’s - soft ice cream on Princess Anne St.

Goolricks Modern Pharmacy - sandwiches and milkshakes - 540 373-3411

Old Towne Wine and Cheese - 540 373-7877

Hyperion - biscotti/coffee/expresso - 540 373-4882

Entertainment and Edification

Fredericksburg National Cemetery/Battlefield Visitor Center - 540-373-6122

Jackson Shrine - 804 633-6076

Chancellorsville Visitor Center - 540 373-6122

Gari Melcher’s Art Museum

Howison Hill

Distance: 2.25 or 3.6 miles

Rating: II, or IV; paved road and natural trails; shady; one major hill

2.25 Mile Route

0.0 from Pickett Circle

R 0.05 Lee Drive

0.55 Lee Drive Trail crosses the road

0.7 Lloyd La on L (unmarked)

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L 0.85 Lee Drive Trail; (paved initially) at Howison Hill Battery parking

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0.9 enter woods behind the cannon; dark blue blazes; unpaved

1.05 wooden bridge over gully

1.3 trail on R merges (unmarked)

1.6 Lee Drive

2.15 trail X on R

R 2.15 trail X on R to parking

BR 2.2 at Pickett Circle

2.25 Pickett Circle X

***3.6 Mile Route**

S 0.85 Lee Drive Trail on L (paved) at Howison Hill Battery parking

1.35 Lee's Command Post Trail on L (fee)

BL 1.5 at road X (triangle)

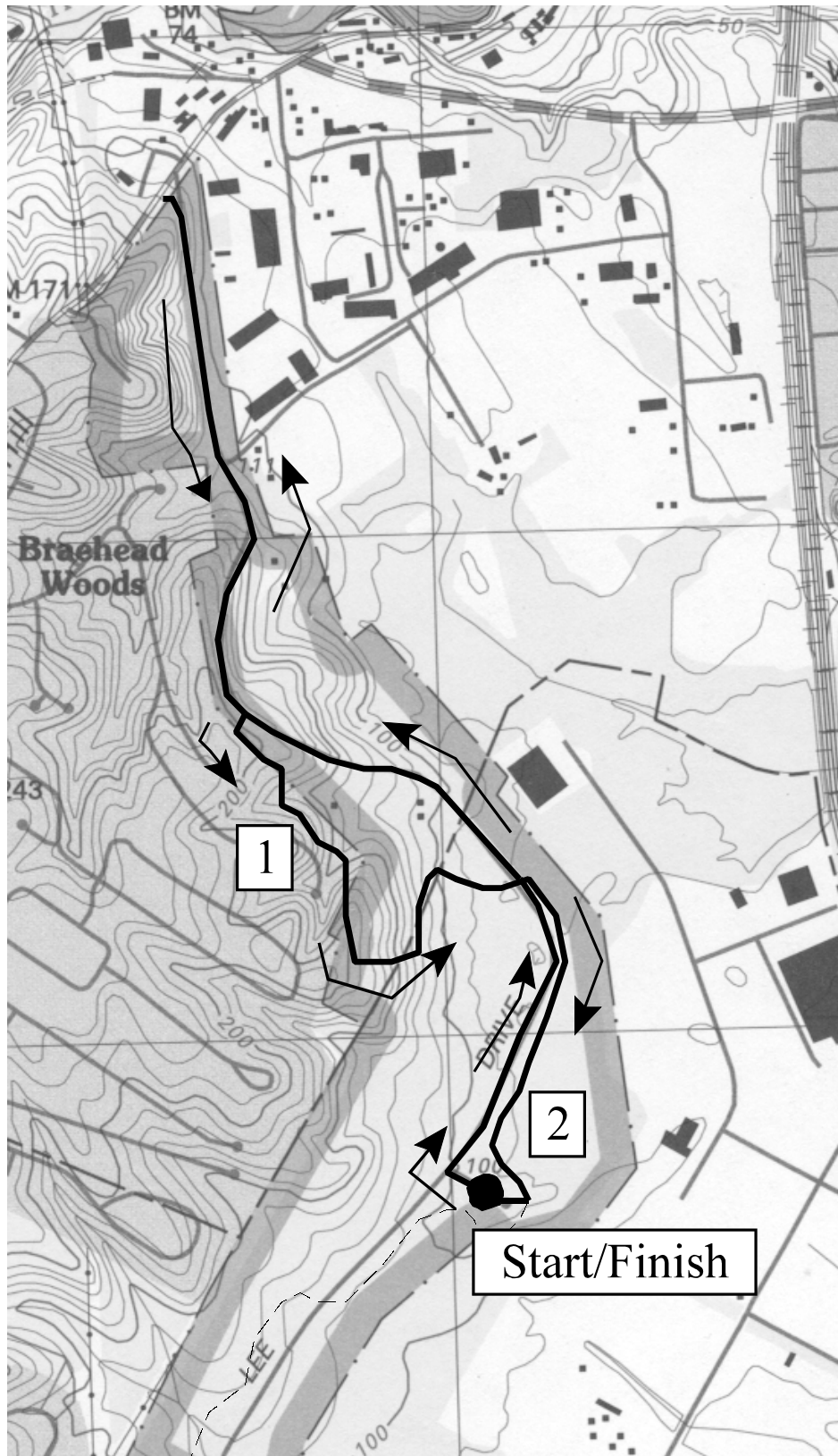
U 1.55 Lafayette Blvd, Rte 1 Business

BR 1.6 Lee Drive merges on L

1.75 Lee's Command Post Trail on R (fee)

R 2.25 Lee Drive Trail on R (paved) at Howison Hill Battery parking (pickup cues at mile 0.9 on 2.25 mile route)

Howison Hill



Prospect Hill

Distance: 7.05 or 7.75 miles

Rating: VI or VII; natural trails and quiet paved road; some moderate hills; shady

7.05 Mile Route

BL 0.0 from the X at Pickett Circle; your back should be to Lee Drive
0.05 trail head; near portable outhouse

R 0.05 at T: Lee Drive Trail
0.35 cross Lee Drive
0.45 trail X L & R (unmarked)
0.6 trail X L & R (unmarked)
0.65 wooden bridge over creek; begin hill

R 1.05 Lee Drive; trail is on the road (unmarked)
1.1 trail on R to Parkview Dr
1.15 bridge over creek
1.45 Landsdowne Rd, Rte 638 (!)

R 1.45 Lee Drive Trail goes into the woods
1.8 begin gradual hill
2.4 false hilltop

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L 3.8 parking at end of Lee Drive

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4.0 Meade Pyramid display; pyramid is visible on R across the RR tracks
4.1 trail X on R goes toward pyramid
5.25 Bernard Casin Trail on R
5.9 Lee Drive Trail joins road from the L
5.9 Landsdowne Rd, Rte 638 (!)
6.2 bridge over creek
6.3 Lee Drive Trail goes into woods on L
6.55 bridge over Deep Run Branch
6.85 Lee Drive Trail crosses road

R 7.0 Pickett Circle
7.05 circle; parking

*3.6 Mile Route

U 4.15 Mine Rd

BR 3.8 at parking

S 4.5 end of trail; begin Lee Drive (pickup
cues at mile 4.0 on 7.05 mile route)

R 3.85 trail toward Hamilton's Crossing

Prospect Hill

