

John Pratt Lee Memorial Park & Fredericksburg

Stafford Heights overlooking the Rappahanock River and Fredericksburg was a Federal stronghold during the Civil War. The nearby Chatham Mansion (according to park materials already 90 years old in 1862–228 years old in 2000) was used as a field hospital and command post. It was donated by John Pratt Lee to the National Park Service in 1975. Apart from the mansion grounds today, wide open athletic fields dominates much of the park today. In 1999, several dirt trails already existed but paved trails were being built to better connect the park with the City of Fredericksburg. Fredericksburg has a varied history. Famed for the many nearby Civil War battles and Mary Washington College, it also earned infamy in the slave trade. Passers by are reminded of this injustice today by a stone auction block is still visible on one of its street corners. The city has boomed through the 1980's and 1990's. A red bricked historic section is full of restaurants, antique shops and places to hear music.

Getting There

From the Capital Beltway

Take Exit 1, for Interstate 95 headed south. Go approximately 41 miles, then take Exit 133 for Warrenton Rd., Rte. 17 Business toward Falmouth/Fredericksburg. Turn right onto Jefferson Davis Hwy/Cambridge St., Rte. 1 headed south. Turn right again immediately onto River Rd. before crossing the Rappahanock River. At a T intersection, turn left on King Street, crossing under Jefferson Davis Hwy. Finally, turn left into John Lee Pratt Park and park at the top of the hill. Start at the paved trail just ahead.

Area Routes

Rappahanock Canal (6.2 miles, VI)

This is one of the most varied routes you may come across. Combining paved trails, dirt trails, canal towpath, suburban and city streets, it takes you on a tour of Fredericksburg. Begin on the paved path in John Lee Pratt Memorial Park. Break off it following a dirt trail down into the woods. Though the crisscrossing trails are at times confusing, by following a general direction, you should arrive in St. Clair Brooks Memorial Park. Drop down to King St. by the Rappahanock river using part of the Chatham & Olde Towne Falmouth Historical Trail. Stay on the sometimes busy King St. only long enough to get on the bridge over the Rappahanock. There are good views of the lively river below. Continue keeping your eye on it by using Riverside Dr., heading west and upstream. Soon you'll reach the Rappahanock Canal which carried river traffic around the rapids, and to what is today above the Embrey Dam. A paved towpath along the canal brings you back into the heart of Fredericksburg, passing the Snowden Wetlands along the way. You'll pass by Mary Washington College before the trail ends on Princess Anne St. As you aim for the Chatham Bridge, you'll pass the site of one of the two pontoon bridges built in 1862, during Civil War fighting. The last stretch back was in flux in 1999. A paved trail was being built to get back to John Lee Pratt Memorial Park, but in absence of it, use Park Rd. to Chatham Manor, then trails to get back to the start.

Nearby and Connecting Zones

Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park

What to do Afterward

Food and Drink

Carl's - soft ice cream on Princess Anne St

Caroline Street Café - 540-374-1136

Orbits Downtown Eatery - 540-371-2003

Almans Barbeque - near Mary Washington University - 540 373-9881

Entertainment and Edification

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

Chatham Manor - 540 654-5121

Gari Melcher's Art Museum

Rappahanock Canal

Distance: 6.2 miles

Rating: VI; paved and natural trails; sidewalks; mostly sunny; moderate hills

L	0.0	from parking on the paved trail	R	2.1	Hanson Ave
	0.3	gravel road crosses trail			
			R/L	2.2	Wooford St/Riverside Rd
L	0.55	trail X on L (dirt & unmarked) going down to wooden bridge	CR	2.65	Fall Hill Ave, Rte 639
BL	0.65	trail X; follow blue blaze	BL	3.05	wooden bridge over Rappahanock Canal
L	0.7	gravel trail			
	0.8	wooden bridge over stream and trail X's on L	L	3.05	paved towpath
				3.35	trail X on R; Snowden Wetland
				3.7	trail X on R to Rte 1
S	0.85	S after wooden bridge over small steep hill to continue trail		3.95	trail X on R to ponds
				4.2	Mary Washington St; college
L	0.9	at T; trail X to wooden bridge	L/R	4.4	wooden bridge crosses canal
R	1.0	paved park road; St Clair Brooks Memorial Park	R	4.6	Princess Anne St
	1.1	Winterberry Dr; park entrance/exit on R (unmarked)	L	4.85	Pitt St
				4.95	becomes Sophia St at bend
				5.05	Upper Pontoon Site (1862)
BL	1.25	for Loop Trail			
			L	5.35	William St (bridge over river)
BL	1.3	Chatham & Olde Towne Falmouth Historical Trail; gravel; toward Shelton Cottage	L	5.55	King St (! no shoulder)
			R	5.65	Park Rd (unmarked, gravel w/red brick gate); up hill
R	1.45	King St (! no shoulder)			
R	1.65	River Rd; after underpass	L	5.95	at T; Chatham Manor parking
				6.1	wood fence gate to park
R	1.75	Cambridge St, Rte 1; go on bridge over the Rappahanock	R	6.15	paved trail
				6.2	parking on L

Rappahanock Canal

