



Front Runners' Guide to Rock Creek Park

by Lennie Carter, DC Front Runners

Rock Creek Park is a DC Front Runners' favorite. This vast national park in the heart of the city provides spectacular vistas, interesting trails and good shade for those hot summer days, making this course a great training route. For those who want to run or walk longer distances—even up to 22 miles—you may be pleased to know that you can start and end at 23rd and P for a complete loop: traversing Rock Creek Park, cutting through the heart of Bethesda, and eventually working your way back along the C&O Canal. Another option is to turn around at any point in Rock Creek for an out-and-back run.

The distances in the guide are one-way and our special route map focuses on the 10-mile portion within Rock Creek Park. Water stops and restrooms are identified. To complete the loop, please refer to the links below. It is always best to carry a water bottle for the long runs, especially during the winter when many fountains are turned off. Please note that road closures (including Beach Drive) for part of this loop are only during Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.



Saturday Fun Run in Rock Creek Park

Map location – Going Out - <http://www.nps.gov/rocr/planyourvisit/upload/ROCRmap1.pdf>

Return Route - http://www.cctrail.org/CCT_Maps.htm

About Rock Creek Park

Rock Creek Park was founded in 1890 as one of the first federal government owned and managed parks. When the park was established, it was on the edge of the growing city and was already a favorite area for recreation. In the establishing legislation, Rock Creek Park was “dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States.”

General Nathaniel Michler, the head of the US Army Corps of Engineers in the mid-1800s, proposed what he termed a “national park” in the picturesque serpentine canyon of Washington DC’s Rock Creek. It was one of the most enduring contributions to the physical development of the city. His proposal laid the groundwork for the acquisition of land that would forever protect a unique natural resource and wilderness zone in the midst of a major city.

The main section of the park contains 1754 acres along the Rock Creek Valley—more than twice the size of Central Park in New York City. The major portion of the area lies north of the National Zoo, and was established by act of Congress made law by President Benjamin Harrison on

September 27, 1890, the same year that Yosemite National Park was established. A later addition of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway extended the park along a narrow corridor from the zoo to the mouth of Rock Creek at the Potomac River. In 1933, Rock Creek Park, along with other National Capital Parks, was transferred to the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.



Recreation facilities include equestrian trails; sport venues, including a tennis stadium which hosts major events; a nature center and planetarium; an outdoor concert venue; and picnic and playground facilities. Rock Creek Park also maintains cultural assets, including the Peirce Mill and Civil War fortifications, such as Fort Stevens. Rock Creek is a popular venue for running and cycling, especially on the long, winding “Beach Drive,” a multitude of dirt trails, and the path along the Rock

Creek and Potomac Parkway just south of the National Zoo.

The parklands follow the course of Rock Creek across the DC-Maryland border to connect with Rock Creek Stream Valley Park and Rock Creek Regional Park in Montgomery County. ♡



Run Rock Creek

★Start

Begin run at 23rd/P St. NW.

Mile 2

Zoo-Amazonia. The turnaround point for our four mile Saturday morning runs.



Mile 2.5

Make a right at the Amazonia sign and curve around to the zoo gates on Beach Drive.

There is a water fountain before leaving the zoo on the left at the bridge. If you make a left at the water fountain and go up the hill a short way into the zoo, you will find a restroom.

Mile 3

Make a left out of the zoo gates onto Beach Drive following Rock Creek and run over the Cantilevered Bridge. Turn right after the bridge. Go to the yield sign (3 miles). Continue on the trail, under an overpass, up the hill, over the foot bridge, and take a sharp left to continue on the trail.

Mile 3.5

You will see Peirce Mill ahead (3.5 miles from 23rd and P). There is a restroom and water stop. Continue past Peirce Mill (either on the trail or cross Tilden Road to the end of the parking lot). Peirce Mill and Barn are located at the corner of Tilden



Street (same as Park Road). The end of the next parking lot along the trail is 4 miles.

Mile 4.5

Cross the road (Broad Branch Rd.) past the parking lot and continue on the closed portion of Beach Drive roadway to the Stone Bridge.

For the more adventuresome runner/walker, make a sharp left after crossing Broad Branch Rd. and follow the steep hill up Ridge Road to Ross Drive. Turn right onto Ross Dr. and follow it to Joyce Rd. and Beach Drive, make a right and

follow to the intersection at the Ranger Station (Park Police). It is hilly but scenic! Make a right at the end and it brings you to the Ranger Station. It adds 0.4 miles to the Ranger Station route. From 23rd and P, up Ross Drive, and returning from the Ranger Station to 23rd and P is about 11.6 miles.



Mile 5

After the Stone Bridge, continue on the closed Beach Drive roadway to the foot bridge on the left (which is easy to miss if you're not looking for it). For a 10 mile run, turn around, coming back the same way.



Mile 5.7

Past the foot bridge is the Ranger Station. The water fountain on the left does not always work.

Mile 6

After the Ranger Station (Park Police), continue on the Beach Drive roadway (this section is not completely closed to traffic but the traffic is limited on the weekends) go under the Military Road overpass to the next bridge, past the restroom on the right.

Mile 6.25

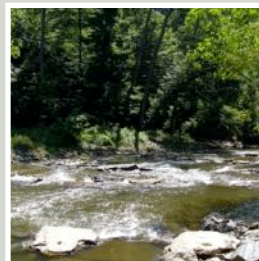
Continue on the roadway to Bingham Road on the left.

Mile 6.5

Continue on the roadway to Sherrill Road on the right (takes you to 6900 16th St.).

Mile 7

Continue on the roadway to Picnic Area 10 on the right. Water fountain on the right and restroom on the left.



ROUTE MAP



- ① Mile Marker (one-way distance)
- R Restroom
- W Water Stop

Map: National Park Service
All miles are approximate from 23/P St NW.



This complimentary running and walking guide is provided by DC Front Runners, a running, walking and social club for gay people and friends in the Washington DC area. We welcome all runners and walkers to our club regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, pace or athletic ability.

Founded in 1981, the club boasts over 200 members. DC Front Runners belongs to a network of over 100 Front Runners clubs in the U.S. and throughout the world.

We invite all people to join us for one of our weekly runs and walks.

For further information or to become a member, please visit our website at www.dcfonrunners.org or e-mail info@dcfronrunners.org.

Weekly Runs & Walks

Meet at 23rd/P St NW or Union Station Main Lobby

SATURDAY @ 9:30AM
4 Mi. Fun Walk
23rd/P St NW

SATURDAY @ 10AM
3, 4 or 6 Mile Fun Run
23rd/P St NW

SUNDAY @ 9AM
10+ Mile Long Distance Run
23rd/P St NW

TUESDAY @ 7PM
6 Mi. Run/4 Mi. Walk
Union Station Main Lobby
(mid-Sep. through mid-Apr.)
23rd/P St NW
(mid-Apr. through mid-Sep.)

THURSDAY @ 7PM
5-9 Mile Run
23rd/P St NW

FEDERAL HOLIDAYS @ 10AM
5-6 Mi. Run or 4 Mi. Walk
23rd/P St NW

Mile 7.8

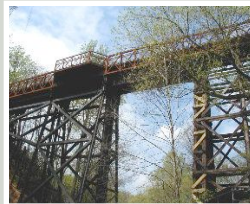
Wise Road. Continue on the roadway past Picnic Area 10, past the gates that will be closed during the weekend, and ascend the hill to Wise Road. This next part of Beach Drive is open to traffic.

Mile 8

To continue past 16 miles total, pass Wise Road going down the hill, and bear left to stay on Beach Drive (which again closes to traffic). There is not a clear marker for 8 miles, so just time yourself from Wise Road for the additional 0.2 miles before heading back if you're trying to run 16 miles.

Mile 8.5

Continue on the closed roadway up a slight hill to the MD/DC line. The gates will be closed during the weekend. To continue, go slightly to the right through a small parking area and pick up the paved trail, curving over the bridge around the tennis courts. Before turning right and continuing, there is a recreation building with a restroom and water fountain (not always open). Otherwise, continue to the right and follow the trail. You will see the horse barns on the left. Continue past the horse barns to East West Hwy.



Mile 9.5

East West Hwy. @ path intersection.

Mile 10

Cross East West Hwy. Continue on the path, there is a water fountain on the left and Port-A-John on the right. Go over the small foot bridge to the train trestle above. At this point turn around for a 20 mile run, or complete the loop for 21.5 to 22 miles.

Mile 10.25

Past the trestle, the trail branches and the Rock Creek trail sign points to the left. Bear to the left and continue until the trail ends. It gets a bit tricky here! The trail ends on a cul-de-sac. Follow Susanna Lane that curves to the right up a one block hill. At the corner, (Jones Bridge Rd. and Jones Mill Rd. intersection) you will want to make a left and then a right in less than 0.1 miles back to a trail. You are now on the Georgetown Trail, which is packed dirt. Follow the trail to Connecticut Avenue. It is best to



make a left on the sidewalk, going to the light to cross. The trail continues across the street. You will soon see mile markers, starting at mile 1. The Mile 10 marker is near the Key Bridge. The trail will snake around, taking you under a large underpass beneath Wisconsin Avenue. You will come out at the intersection of Woodmont and Bethesda



Avenue. There is a Barnes & Noble Bookstore on the right with a restroom on the second floor.

Mile 13.5

Cross the street and bear to the right. The paved trail continues at the Honda dealership. Make a left to continue on the trail. You are now on the Crescent Trail. You will be near mile marker 3.5. There is a water stop. There are mile markers through the rest of the trail at 1/2 mile intervals.

Mile 14.5

Follow the trail, cross the River Road Bridge. Continue on the trail.

Mile 16.5

Just past the tunnel is a water stop. This is the 6.5 mile marker. After crossing the bridge, you will re-enter D.C., leaving Md. (.2 miles from 6.5 mile marker).

Mile 18

Run over the Arizona Avenue Bridge/Trestle, crossing over Chain Bridge Road. Now the Capital Crescent Trail parallels the C&O Tow Path. Just past the 8 mile marker is Fletcher's boat house. The restroom is on the left and a water fountain on the ride side of the trail (go down the wooden stairs into the parking area).



Mile 20

Stay on the paved trail. The 10 mile marker is hard to see as it is usually overgrown (on the right), but it is slightly past the water fall. If you come to the end of the trail at the Key Bridge, you have passed it. You are now on Water, which becomes K Street. From this point back to 23rd and P St, the distance is 1.5 miles. You may continue to run or use this distance as a cool down. Continue on K Street, to 29th St. and make a left up the hill. Follow the streets back to 23rd and P. Congratulations! ♥