



## Billy Goat Trail - Potomac, MD

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
7.8 mls	★	6	★	0	N/A
<b>Hiking Time:</b> 4.5 hours plus a half hour for lunch <b>Elev. Gain:</b> 280 ft <b>Parking:</b> Park at the Great Falls parking area. 39.00224, -77.2466					

The Billy Goat Trail is one of the most well known hikes in the Metro D.C. area, and for good reason. With nearly a mile of fun rock-hopping, and spectacular views of the Potomac River along the way, this circuit is loads of fun with plenty to see. We have the circuit rated as only a ★ for difficulty, but be prepared to jump from rock to rock.

The Billy Goat Trail is very busy on nice days anytime of the year, however if you get on the trail by 8:00 a.m. you can miss all the crowds. The entire Billy Goat Trail is made up of 3 separate sections A, B, & C, that start and finish on the C&O Canal. The 7.8 mile circuit we have mapped here follows the rock-hopping section A, the more casual hike on section B, with a return back to the Great Falls parking area using the Berma Rd. Trail and Overlook Trail.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – From the parking area at Great Falls Park follow the path past the Great Falls Tavern and Visitors Center, cross over to the C&O Canal at Lock 19, then follow the C&O canal down to the entrance for the Billy Goat A Trail 50 yards before the covered Stop Gate.
- ▶ **Mile 0.9** - Turn right onto the Billy Goat A Trail where shortly it starts paralleling the Potomac River. The Potomac River is approximately 50ft below at this point. From here the trail becomes more of a rock-hop then arrives at Trail Marker 1.
- ▶ **Mile 1.4** - Trail Marker 1 is the point where the rock-hopping becomes more intense. There is a National Park sign warning hikers that *'Many hikers are injured every year on this section of the Billy Goat A Trail'* so be prepared for a little more scrambling. Between Markers 1 and 2 you also need to climb the 50ft traverse mentioned on the Trail Marker 1 sign. Although this might look slightly intimidating to some people, once on the traverse it's not that difficult.
- ▶ **Mile 1.9** - From Trail Marker 2 the scrambling diminishes, and the trail descends to the river bank where there is a nice beach area. DO NOT be tempted to wade into the water as the currents are deceptively strong, and you can be quickly washed down stream. Continue along the trail passing a wetland, small pond, then crossing a small log bridge. On the opposite side of the log bridge is Trail Marker 3.
- ▶ **Mile 2.2** - From Trail Marker 3 there is one more spectacular panorama of the Potomac River before the trail becomes more gentle passing by Sherwin Island and arriving back at the C&O Canal.
- ▶ **Mile 2.5** - Turn right on the C&O Canal following it for 0.6 miles to the entrance of the Billy Goat B Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 2.8** - Turn right on the Billy Boat B Trail. The trail is considerably more leisurely than the Billy Goat A Trail, with only a small section of rock-hopping where the trail passes Hermit Island. Where the Potomac River passes Hermit Island is a favorite spot for Paddle Boarders surfing the river wakes. Continue on the trail passing the Marsden Tract Campground, then arrive back at the C&O Canal.
- ▶ **Mile 4.4** - Now turn left on the C&O Canal heading back towards Great Falls. In 1.1 miles reach the Anglers Parking Area bridge over the C&O Canal.
- ▶ **Mile 5.5** - Cross the Anglers parking area bridge and ascend the wooden steps to the Berma Rd Trail. Turn left on the Berma Rd Trail for 1.4 miles to the intersection of the white blazed Overlook Spur Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 6.9** - Turn right uphill on the Overlook Spur Trail for 120 yards to the intersection of the yellow blazed Overlook Trail. Turn Left on the Overlook Trail. You will pass a unmarked side trail to an overlook of Great Falls, then continue to the main overlook at a switchback on the trail. Continue now downhill to the Lock 19 Trail intersection.
- ▶ **Mile 7.5** - Turn left at the Lock 19 Trail and follow it back down to the main Great Falls Park area. Continue past the Great Falls Tavern and Visitors Center back to the parking area.
- ▶ **Mile 7.8** - Arrive back at the parking area.