

WELCOME TO JAMES RIVER STATE PARK.

To make your visit safe and more pleasant, we ask that you observe the following:

Take only pictures, leave only footprints. Park in designated areas only. Please note there is a parking fee charged year-round at all Virginia State Parks. Self-pay parking information is available at the contact station.

PRESERVE – Help preserve your park. Please don't cut or mar any plants or trees. Collecting animal or plant life is allowed only for scientific purposes by permit from the Richmond headquarters. Don't feed any wild animals.

ALCOHOL - State law permits alcohol use only in private areas (inside your cabin or camping unit) or in areas designated on permits issued by the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

PETS - Pets are permitted in enclosed areas or on a leash no longer than 6 feet. Please clean up after your pet. Pets must be attended at all times.

DRONES AND OTHER AIRCRAFT - Drones, other unmanned aerial vehicles, including remote control aircraft, and aircraft in general may not be flown in state parks pursuant to 4VAC5-30-400.

LITTER - Please help us keep the park clean by placing litter and recyclables in the proper receptacles and recycle centers or carrying out your trash. The releasing of balloons is not allowed. Decorative balloons must be deflated and disposed of as trash.

FIRE - Help prevent wildfires. Fires must be confined to grills, camp stoves or designated fire rings. Fires must be attended at all times and extinguished when left. Firewood is generally available for purchase at the park. Campers and guests may collect only downed and dead firewood. We enforce all seasonal and emergency bans on open fires.

POLLUTION - Help reduce pollution. Dump stations, laundry sinks and slop sinks, where available, are for the disposal of wastewater. No boat, RV or car washing.

SWIMMING - There are no designated swimming areas in the park. Swimming or wading may be hazardous due to swift currents, sudden drop offs and unseen obstructions.

FISHING - A Virginia freshwater fishing license is required.

PARKING - All vehicles must be parked in designated areas. Lock valuables in your trunk and keep your vehicle locked when unattended.

GROUP EVENTS - A special Use Permit is required for all group events that involve amplified sound, catering, equipment rentals and vendor deliveries.

PARK ACCESSIBILITY - We strive to make each park as

barrier-free as possible. Universally accessible facilities are available throughout Virginia State Parks.

EMERGENCY - Emergency phone numbers are posted at contact stations and other places in the park. For more information, visit www.virginiastateparks.gov or contact the park office.

INFORMATION - For more information on Virginia State Parks or to make a cabin or campsite reservation, call **800-933-PARK** or visit www.virginiastateparks.gov. The Customer Service Center is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on all state holidays.

TRAIL INFORMATION DIFFICULTY SCALE

EASY ● - From .5 to 1 mile; grades are short, typically fewer than 100 feet and less than 10 percent of the trail length; easily accomplished by all users, including the elderly and those with physical or mental disabilities, with little risk of injury or fatigue.

MODERATE ■ - From 1 to 5 miles; steepness and grade lengths vary; at least 60 percent of the length is fairly flat; healthy people can accomplish the trail with little risk of injury or fatigue.



FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY, PLEASE FOLLOW TRAIL ETIQUETTE ON MULTI-USE TRAILS IN THE PARK. HIKERS YIELD TO HORSES. BIKERS YIELD TO HORSES AND HIKERS.

TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

CONNECTOR TRAILS - Connector trails offer easy access to extend hikes throughout the park. They are short, and blazes are not used.

BRANCH TRAIL ■ - The trail is diverse in geography and plant life. It goes over rolling hills, through hardwood forests, past hillsides full of mountain laurel and through a planted pine forest. Branch Pond and the contact station have access points to the trail.

BRANCH POND LOOP ■ - This short but challenging trail goes around the secluded Branch Pond. This single-track trail offers fishing access and a picnic shelter at the trailhead. It's ideal for those wanting a true nature experience.

BURNSIDE LOOP ■ - For mountain bikers, it falls between beginner and intermediate. Hikers will find it a well-maintained but narrow trail.

CABELL ■ - This is the longest loop trail in the park. It covers the park's variety of terrain and vegetation. Upland hardwoods dominate most of the trail, but it also borders wetlands. It is the easiest and most direct route to the Tye River Overlook.

CABIN LOOP ● - This short, easy trail is a great opportunity for cabin guests to stretch their legs. The trail winds through warm season grasses from which quail can often be heard. Deer are also common.

DIXON ■ - This is a beginner trail that accesses Cabell Trail from a trailhead parking area. This wide, easy trail has something for everyone.

GREEN HILL POND ● - This ADA-compliant paved trail is perfect for kids and those with disabilities. About half the trail is a boardwalk over water, allowing guests to fish and enjoy nature from a different perspective. The trail has an ADA-accessible floating fishing dock. Bass, catfish and bluegill live in the pond.

KERR LOOP ■ - This single-track hiking and mountain bike trail is a great entry-level mountain bike trail. Use this trail to warm up then try the more challenging Burnside Loop.

RIDGELINE LOOP ■ - A single-track hiking and mountain bike trail, this "flow trail" has few technical sections. It's a great entry-level mountain bike trail and traverses beautiful hardwoods.

RIVER ● - This trail, beside the James River, offers views of the river and runs between the river and a wetland. Deer, rabbits, beavers, muskrats, otters and various waterfowl may be encountered.

RUNNING CREEK ■ - Moderately rolling hills through mature forests make this trail popular. It's not too long or short, making it perfect for a family stroll. Part of the trail runs along a small creek.

TAYLOR POND LOOP ● - With a trailhead parking area and easy access from cabins and the Red Oak Campground, this short loop around Taylor Pond offers fishing access and a chance to observe wildlife.

TAYLOR ■ - Multiple access points to Taylor make it a great way to extend hikes from Cabell, Cabin or River trails. Fall and winter views of the river's bottom make this hike especially appealing in cooler months.

TYE RIVER OVERLOOK ● - This trail leads to the park's most iconic view. It's ADA-accessible and covered in smooth, crushed gravel. Use Cabell to access this trail. Those with disabilities should contact a park ranger for permission to drive to the start of the Tye Overlook Trail. This is the park's "must see" trail, so be sure to enjoy the view.

Virginia State Parks

James River State Park

TRAIL GUIDE

VIRGINIA STATE PARKS ARE A TONIC FOR THE MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT.

Museums, visitor centers and nearby historic sites make state parks cultural treasures.








The recreational opportunities in state parks are endless and easy to see – from swimming and boating to horseshoes and hiking, there's always something to do in a Virginia State Park.

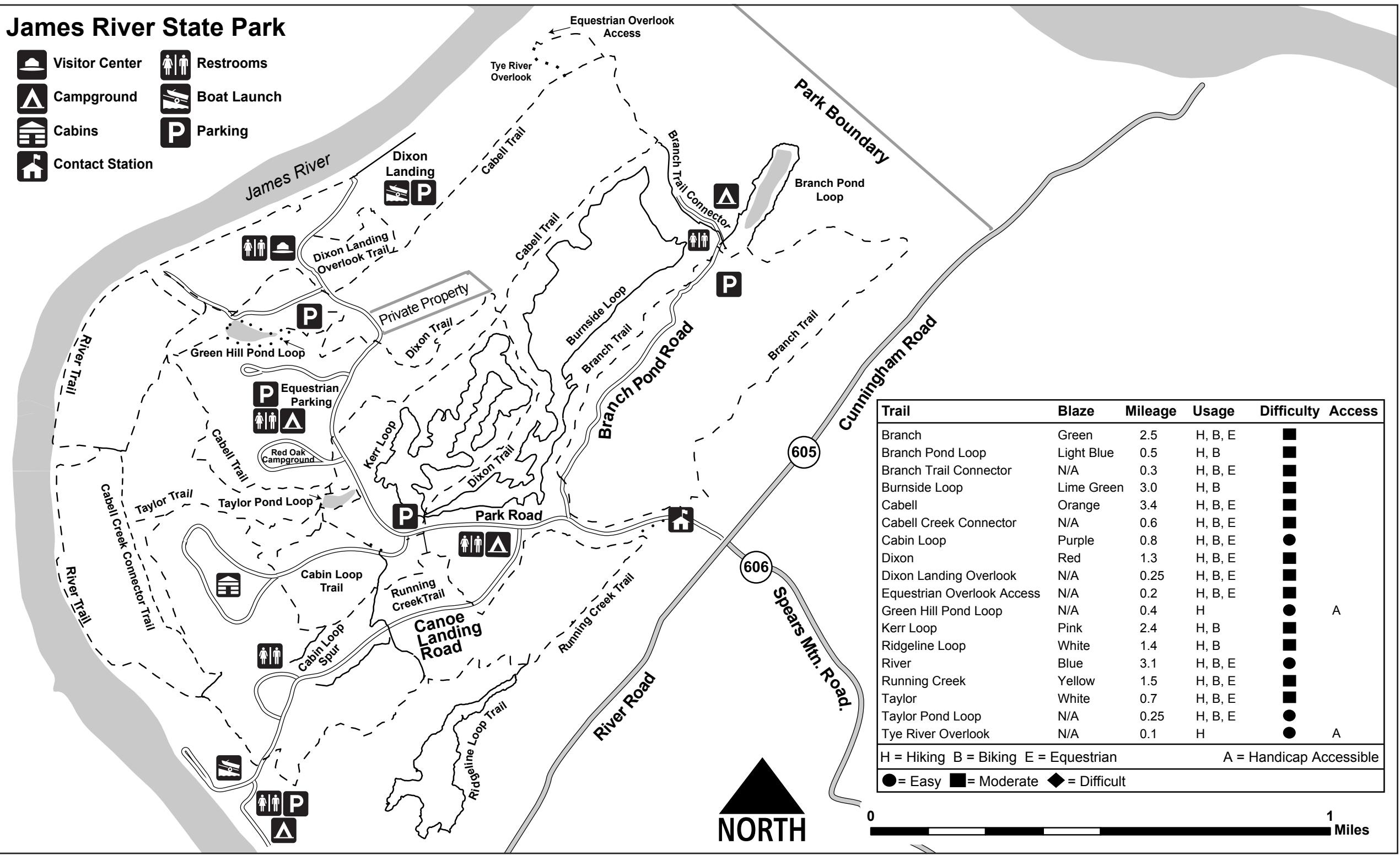
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Jamesriver@dcr.virginia.gov



WWW.VIRGINIASTATEPARKS.GOV
800-933-PARK

James River State Park

-  Visitor Center
-  Restrooms
-  Campground
-  Boat Launch
-  Cabins
-  Parking
-  Contact Station



Trail	Blaze	Mileage	Usage	Difficulty	Access
Branch	Green	2.5	H, B, E	■	
Branch Pond Loop	Light Blue	0.5	H, B	■	
Branch Trail Connector	N/A	0.3	H, B, E	■	
Burnside Loop	Lime Green	3.0	H, B	■	
Cabell	Orange	3.4	H, B, E	■	
Cabell Creek Connector	N/A	0.6	H, B, E	■	
Cabin Loop	Purple	0.8	H, B, E	●	
Dixon	Red	1.3	H, B, E	■	
Dixon Landing Overlook	N/A	0.25	H, B, E	■	
Equestrian Overlook Access	N/A	0.2	H, B, E	■	
Green Hill Pond Loop	N/A	0.4	H	●	A
Kerr Loop	Pink	2.4	H, B	■	
Ridgeline Loop	White	1.4	H, B	■	
River	Blue	3.1	H, B, E	●	
Running Creek	Yellow	1.5	H, B, E	■	
Taylor	White	0.7	H, B, E	■	
Taylor Pond Loop	N/A	0.25	H, B, E	●	
Tye River Overlook	N/A	0.1	H	●	A

H = Hiking B = Biking E = Equestrian A = Handicap Accessible

● = Easy ■ = Moderate ◆ = Difficult



James River State Park - Norwood, VA

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
7.0 mls	2	3	3	3	5
Hiking Time:	4.0 hours with time for stops				
Elev. Gain:	1,700 ft				
Parking:	Park along the side of Canoe Landing Road. 37.61558, -78.81527				

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)

By Trail Contributor: Jeff Monroe



James River State Park is one of the newer additions to Virginia's state park system, as it was only added in 1999. It is amazingly remote – truly one of those “you can't get there from here” kind of places! The best way to explore this park is to come for a couple of days and stay in a campsite at one of the wonderful campgrounds in the park – there are five different campgrounds! (The main campground, a group camp, an equestrian camping area, and two primitive tent camps: one open and near the river and another in the woods and located on this trail loop.) Or, you can rent one of the park's 18 cabins. This is not a backpacking trip, however, as all park camping is restricted to established campsites. Note that all Virginia State Parks require a fee to enter; as of this writing, that fee was \$5.00 for a regular vehicle.

The main attraction of James River State Park is its eponymous river, where visitors can rent watercraft, take a livery upstream, and float back downriver about 9 miles to the State Park. (Details can be found [here](#).) However the park also has a robust trail system, which continues to grow. The loop described here generally circles the park.

This is an easier hike than many we cover on [hikingupward.com](#), as it is further from the mountains. There isn't a lot of elevation gain in this one, so it is perfect for families. Especially great is the access to the James River near the beginning of this hike; there are some riverside spots ideal for dipping little toes in the water and those hikers need not complete the entire loop.

There are multiple parking areas along this loop. I chose to start at a trailhead along the side of Canoe Landing Road, which is easy walking distance from campsites at the park's Canoe Landing Campground. Look for the kiosk on the right just before the road splits.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Begin by following the blue blazed River Trail located behind the kiosk. Normally, I'm going to tell you to take a photo of the kiosk's map, however I did that on this hike and found out the hard way that the kiosk map is inaccurate. You are better off obtaining a paper map either online or at the entrance station. The park is still adding facilities and trails, and even the printed park map did not show the park's Group Campsite, which must be new.

This loop samples many different types of terrain. It starts out flat and straight, shaded from nearby trees, but next to a cattail swamp. It is sometimes very open.

- ▶ **Mile 0.2** – Reach the intersection with the end of the Cabell Creek Connector Trail. Stay to the left on the River Trail. The River Trail can be muddy at times in this area, and you will see multiple types of tracks, including deer, horse, bike and human foot tracks. The River Trail approaches close to the edge of the James River.
- ▶ **Mile 1.0** – Arrive at a T intersection marked by a trail sign. Continue on the River Trail, turning left.
- ▶ **Mile 1.3** – At three points in quick succession are short side trails to the James River, each marked by a “no horses” sign. The best of the three is the middle one, with a sandy beach and a section of shallow, gentle river. This is a great spot for families to experience the river close up.
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** – Travel through some wetlands before reaching an intersection with the Cabell Trail. Take a left here over a bridge and through a gate, and reach a gravel road. At this point, you leave the River Trail and follow the Cabell Trail uphill on the gravel road.
- ▶ **Mile 1.9** – On your left is a grass cut that the Cabell Trail follows. Either take this route, or you can continue up the gravel road to use facilities at the James River State Park Headquarters at the top of the hill. There is also a pavilion with picnic tables and a pond ahead on your right – great for stopping to snack. The Headquarters is also another place along this loop where you can park and start the hike.

The trail travels behind the Headquarters before turning right and crossing the entrance to the Headquarters Parking right near where it turns off of the main park road. If confused, follow signs for the Cabell Trail. It crosses the entrance road, cuts through a gravel parking area, then takes a left and crosses the main park road on a gravel road behind a sign that says, “Motor Vehicles Prohibited.” As you ascend on this gravel road, notice the Piedmont prairie ecosystem that is maintained by the State Park on your right.

- ▶ **Mile 2.3** - After passing a gate, there will be a signpost on your left for the Dixon Landing Overlook Trail. Continue on the gravel road.
- ▶ **Mile 2.9** - A fence is on your left and horse dismount on your right. Go through the gate in the fence and follow the limestone path to the Tye River Overlook. This is the best viewpoint of the entire hike, looking down on the confluence of the Tye and James Rivers. The Tye River is fed by streams from the Blue Ridge Mountains in the area of Three Ridges and The Priest wilderness areas. These mountains can be seen in the distance from the overlook, nearly 20 miles distant. There are benches here, so you may want to stop for a snack. After you have soaked in this view, use the steps up to the horse dismount area and follow the Equestrian Overlook Access trail back to the Cabell Trail. (Note: this trail is not found on the kiosk maps of the park, though the paper brochure shows its route.)
- ▶ **Mile 3.2** - At the end of the Equestrian Overlook Access Trail, turn left into an open turnaround area, then right following the Cabell Trail. This is also a wide gravel road.
- ▶ **Mile 3.4** - Reach an intersection where the Cabell Trail cuts right. Here, you leave the Cabell Trail and continue straight on the Branch Connector Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 3.7** - Pass through a gate, descend a hill, and pass several shaded and secluded campsites that are a part of the Branch Pond Campground. Campsites here are reservable online at reserveamerica.com, though individual sites cannot be reserved. You only obtain a permit to camp here, and it is first-come, first-served. At the bottom of the hill, a set of privies is on your right, and to the left you can see Branch Pond. There is a covered picnic shelter that overlooks the pond. This is a great spot to stop for lunch! Unfortunately, as of this writing the loop trail around Branch Pond was closed.
- ▶ **Mile 3.9** - Continue straight from the road you first arrived on, now on a trail marked with blue and black blazes. The trail crosses over streams on a couple of small bridges before reaching an intersection with the Branch Pond Loop Trail. Take a right here and follow the Branch Trail generally uphill until reaching a ridge, which it follows relatively straight, passing through an open field then into an area that was logged relatively recently.
- ▶ **Mile 5.3** - Reach an intersection marked by a trail post. Take a left and quickly cross the State Park Entrance Road. The entrance station you passed on the way into the park is visible uphill.
- ▶ **Mile 5.4** - Come to an intersection with the yellow blazed Running Creek Trail. Take a left here onto the Running Creek Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 5.8** - Reach a gate and a sign noting the Ridgeline Loop Trail. There is also a picnic table here. If you want to extend the length your hike, feel free to take the Ridgeline Loop. Full disclosure: because I was only in possession of a photo of the trail system taken at the trailhead kiosk, and because this Ridgeline Trail is not contained on the Kiosk map, I followed the Ridgeline Loop Trail thinking it looped around the park and would take me back to the trailhead. Instead, it loops back to the picnic table just described. As a consequence, I added a mile-and-a-half of wooded trail miles to my total and do not recommend the Ridgeline Loop Trail to others. Lesson learned! This trail was clearly built for mountain biking and contains no outstanding features. I recommend instead taking a right and following the Running Creek Trail down the slope.
- ▶ **Mile 6.2** - Reach an intersection with the beginning of the River Trail. This trail take you back to your vehicle in the most direct manner. When I hiked this loop, however, this portion of the River Trail was closed because a tree had recently come down on one of the pedestrian bridges between here and the trailhead. If open go this way to avoid a road walk. For this hike, I continued straight.
- ▶ **Mile 6.4** - Just before reaching the Canoe Landing Road, encounter a side trail to Equestrian Parking. Follow this for a short distance instead of walking on the road. You will come out on a small mowed area with two wonderful large trees, across the street from restrooms. Continue down the road.
- ▶ **Mile 6.8** - Pass a sign for the Group campsite. There is a mowed path to the left of this that leads to the Cabell Family Cemetery, if interested.
- ▶ **Mile 7.0** - Reach the trailhead where you parked your vehicle.