

Dismal Swamp Canal Trail

Open Sunrise to Sunset



Chesapeake, Virginia

The Dismal Swamp Canal Trail, a former section of Virginia State Route 17, is a multiuse trail open to bicycling, walking, running, horseback riding, and boating. The north trailhead is located at the intersection of US 17 and George Washington Highway and runs south for 8.3 miles along the Dismal Swamp Canal, which is also the eastern border of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

This multipurpose-linear nature trail threads through some of the most uniquely historic and ecologically-significant habitats in the United States. The Dismal Swamp Canal Trail is a historic, environmental and outdoor recreation delight. Open to pedestrian walkers, boaters, bicyclists, and horse-owners, the 8.3-mile trail is marked every 1/4-mile, and provides a 16-mile bike loop or a leisurely 2-mile-up-and-back nature walk. Spend a day or a couple of hours. It's perfect for a scenic family picnic and for people of all ages to bike, walk, or ride their horses.

The Ballahack Road/Great Dismal Swamp Boat Ramp provides easy access to launch your boat, canoe or kayak and is considered the South trailhead.

The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is home to a myriad species of wildlife. Parts of the Refuge were surveyed by George Washington's company, and the Swamp is nationally recognized as a stop on the "Underground Railroad." The Refuge is also a resting spot for thousands of migratory birds in the fall and spring.

The Dismal Swamp Canal Trail is the site of the popular "Paddle for the Border," which takes place in the spring. The event attracts paddlers from Maryland to Georgia, ages eight to eighty, fitness-buffs to historians, nature enthusiasts to families looking for a pleasant day's adventure. Additionally, a number of half marathons and 5K runs/walks are held on the Trail each year, including the Dismal Swamp Stomp Half Marathon and Cub Run.

