



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Patuxent
Branch Trail**
Maryland



Patuxent Branch Trail

Maryland

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Whether by wheel or foot, many off-road trips in southern Howard County involve the Patuxent Branch Trail. Opened in 1997, the 4.5-mile regional trail connects to an extensive network of local trails that serve neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas, making it ideal for recreation or commuting.

The trail takes a generally flat route, following the Little Patuxent River from Lake Elkhorn reservoir south of Columbia to the athletic fields at Savage Park near Laurel. It is currently surfaced with crushed stone for 1.3 miles—from Old Guilford Road to Vollmerhausen Road—and asphalt for the remainder, but Howard County plans to completely pave the trail in 2023. The trail passes under several major highways. Horseback riding is prohibited.

A 2-mile segment follows the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad's (B&O's) Patuxent Branch, which at one time served a major granite quarry in Guilford and a cotton mill complex in Savage. Built in the 1880s from the main B&O line passing through nearby Savage Station, the Guilford section was closed in 1928, leaving Savage Mill as the end of the line.

Park at either lot near the reservoir, and take the Lake Elkhorn Loop trail to an intersection with the Patuxent Branch Trail just west of the dam. As the trail enters the wooded valley alongside the Little Patuxent River, remember to consult trail markings at frequent junctions to stay on the correct path.

After 2 miles, the trail comes to the Guilford Road parking lot at the beginning of the former B&O branch line. Signs along the trail explain the historical significance of the B&O and the quarry that operated here until 1928. Leaving the trailhead, you'll cross the picturesque 83-foot Pratt Truss Bridge, installed in 1902.

The trail follows a wooded area alongside the Little Patuxent River for 1.3 miles until it emerges at Vollmerhausen Road. Cross the road and take the sidewalk or bike lane for 0.2 mile, and then make a sharp right back onto the trail at Patuxent Valley Middle School. (To visit 4 miles of mountain biking trails, turn right at Vollmerhausen Road, go 0.1 mile, and turn left into the Wincopin Loop trailhead parking lot.) The Patuxent Branch Trail ends in 0.7 mile at the sports complex at Savage Park, which has restrooms, drinking water, and parking, as well as 3 miles of hiking or mountain biking trails.

About 0.5 mile south, the historic Savage textile mill complex, which dates to the early 1800s, is now a tourist spot housing restaurants and shops. Follow the signs from Savage Park for street access. The mile-long [Savage Mill Trail](#) starts there and offers scenic views of the Little Patuxent rapids.



Patuxent Branch Trail

Maryland

States: Maryland

Counties: Howard

Length: 4.5miles

Trail end points: Lake Elkhorn Loop at Broken Land Pkwy (Columbia) to Savage Park north of Fair St & Baltimore St (Savage)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Inline

Skating,Fishing,Wheelchair

Accessible,Horseback Riding,Mountain

Parking & Trail Access

To access the Savage Park entrance from Interstate 95, take State Route 32/Patuxent Parkway east and turn right on US 1/ Baltimore Washington Boulevard, heading south toward Laurel. Turn right on Gorman Road and right again on Foundry Street. Turn left onto Washington Street and follow it to the end, where you take a right onto Fair Street, which ends at the park. Take the road in the parking lot to the right until it ends at a smaller parking lot at the trailhead.

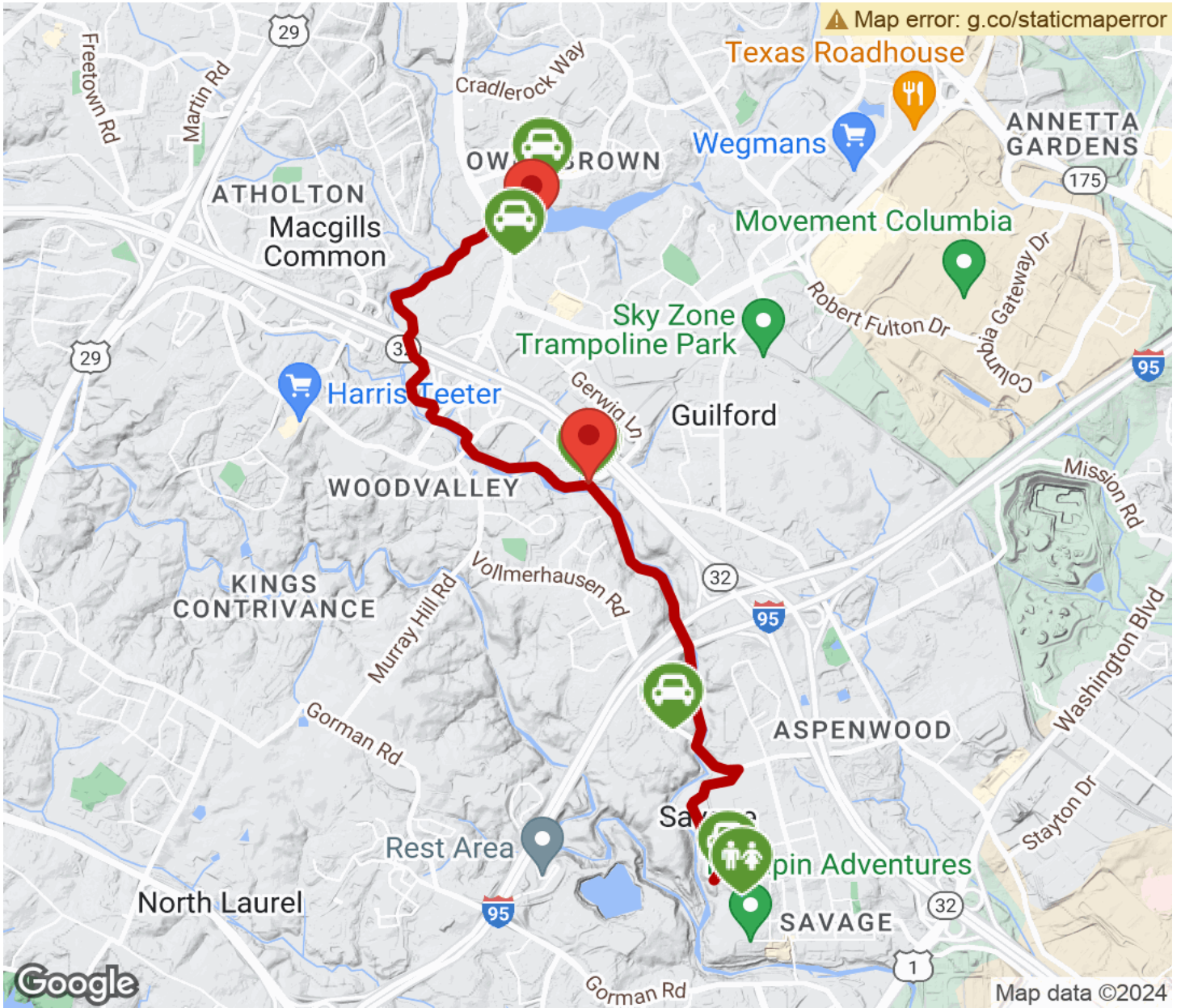
To access the Lake Elkhorn entrance from I-95, take SR 32/ Patuxent Parkway west then Broken Land Parkway north toward Owen Brown. The lake (and a parking lot next to the playground and boat slip) will be on your right.

In Columbia, parking is available by Lake Elkhorn Park (Dockside Ln & Cradlerock Way) and in the Lake Elkhorn parking lot (Broken Land Pkwy, between Snowden River Pkwy & Cradlerock Way), and by Old Guilford Rd & Guilford Rd. In Jessup, parking is available by the Wincopin Trailhead (9299 Vollmerhausen Rd between Spring Water Path & Savage Guilford Rd), 0.1 mile north of the Patuxent Branch Trail. In Savage, parking is available at 8400 Fair St., 0.1 mile north of Baltimore St.



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- Trailhead
- Restroom
- Parking
- Water Fountain
- Tunnel