



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Jackson River Scenic Trail

Virginia



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Waterfalls, river views, rugged rock formations, vibrant fall foliage, and delicate flowers in the spring: These are the sights that put the scenic in Jackson River Scenic Trail. This serene rail-trail, nestled in the Allegheny Highlands of western Virginia, traces the route of what was once the Hot Springs Branch of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway. Much of the route is wooded, and you might see deer, rabbits, groundhogs, and other wildlife along the way. In addition to walking and biking, horseback riding is permitted on all sections of the trail.

Jackson River Scenic Trail begins in Intervale, just north of the city of Covington, and heads both north and south. Heading north, the winding trail hugs the curves of its namesake river. Picnic benches along the water allow you to rest and take in the beautiful surroundings. For added

ad-venture, you can kayak or canoe in the river, also known for its excellent trout fishing. You'll find the Smith Bridge trailhead 7.2 miles north of Intervale and in another 6.5 miles reach the Natural Well trailhead, near the Alleghany-Bath county line.

The trail's crushed-gravel surface extends 3 miles north of the Natural Well Trailhead to a dead-end at the Turn Around Picnic Area. A 1.6-mile extension is planned for completion in late 2022 to the new Cedar Creek Trailhead at the trail intersection with VA 605 in Bath County.

If you're returning to the Intervale trailhead at the end of your journey, continue south another 0.6 mile toward Dry Run in Covington, the southern terminus of the trail. Round out your experience with a visit to the C&O Depot in Covington for a peek at the trail's railroad past. The re-stored 1908 structure now houses the Alleghany Historical Society and its exhibits on the history of the region.

Rail buffs may also want to head 11 miles east of Covington to the town of Clifton Forge, where historical railroad artifacts and equipment are on display at the C&O Railway Heritage Center. Another nearby and worthwhile side trip is the Falling Spring Falls overlook. The roadside attraction is a jaw-dropping 80-foot waterfall on Hot Springs Road/US 220, 8 miles north of Covington and just south of Hot Springs Road/US 220 and Falls Road/VA 640.



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States: Virginia

Counties: Alleghany

Length: 14.3miles

Trail end points: Jackson River Rd at Natural Well Rd (Natural Well) to Dressler Dr, off US 220 (just north of Covington)

Trail surfaces: Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Fishing,Horseback Riding,Mountain Biking,Walking,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

There are three parking areas for the trail:

- Just north of Covington at US 220 and Dressler Road (Intervale trailhead)
- In Clearwater Park on Jackson River Road across from Petticoat Junction
- At the Smith Bridge parking lot on State Route 721, a half-mile off Route 687 (Smith Bridge trailhead)
- Natural Well Road/VA 638 & Jackson River Road/VA 687 (Natural Well trailhead)



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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