



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Dismal  
Swamp Canal  
Trail (VA)**  
*Virginia*



## Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (VA)

Virginia

*Formerly part of US 17, the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail offers users a remote experience as it runs alongside the Dismal Swamp Canal*



Formerly part of US 17, the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail offers users a remote experience as it runs alongside the Dismal Swamp Canal and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. On this wide, flat, linear trail, you can experience the feeling of standing in the middle of a roadway without needing to worry about passing cars, as gates close the path to vehicular traffic. Horseback riding is allowed along the entire trail.

As you travel along the trail, benches provide places to enjoy the scenery and wildlife and to reflect on the history of the trail and its namesake canal. Interpretive signage explains the location's past as the site of Civil War raids, as well as how the canal was built by the labor of enslaved people and how the surrounding area served as a refuge for runaway slaves as part of the Underground Railroad.

A statue of Ches A. Peake (aka Chessie the Bear) welcomes visitors to the northern trailhead of the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail, the recommended starting point for your trip. Signs remind users to be "bear aware" due to the number of bear sightings reported in the area. But bears are not the only wildlife you may see on the trail, as more than 210 bird species have been identified in the Dismal Swamp.

As you head south, the surrounding trees give you the feeling of traveling through a tunnel. Enjoy the unique ecology as you pass markers explaining the history of the trail. At the 3.5-mile marker, you will find bathrooms, picnic benches, a dock, and bike racks. At the dock, you can take a closer look at the color of the Dismal Swamp, which has been dyed by peat, a layer of soil created over thousands of years by the decomposition of fallen twigs and leaves.

Continuing south past the 5-mile marker, you will find additional trail access at Glencoe Street. This is also the site of the Superintendent's House, the last standing vestige of the Dismal Swamp Canal Company and the place where tolls for using the Dismal Swamp Canal were collected. Across the street you will find the future site of a historical village.

After a quarter mile, the trail opens to a field on the left side, and you may start to hear cars traveling along the nearby highway. After the 5.75-mile mark, you will pass a gate, the last parking area for the trail, a boat ramp, and accessible portable toilets. After this point, the trail continues briefly on a road that is open to cars until a gate blocks vehicular traffic just past Ballahack Road.

Past this gate, you will continue straight, with open fields to your left and the Dismal Swamp Canal and trees to your right. The trail ends somewhat abruptly at a turnaround surrounded by trees where a sign lists the rules of the trail. To head back to parking, simply turn around at this point.



# Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (VA)

Virginia

**States:** Virginia

**Counties:** Chesapeake

Length: 8.5miles

**Trail end points:** Old Route 17 and George Washington Hwy. (Chesapeake) to US 17 (near the North Carolina state line)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt

**Trail category:** Greenway/Non-RT

**Trail activities:** Bike,Inline Skating,Wheelchair Accessible,Horseback Riding,Walking

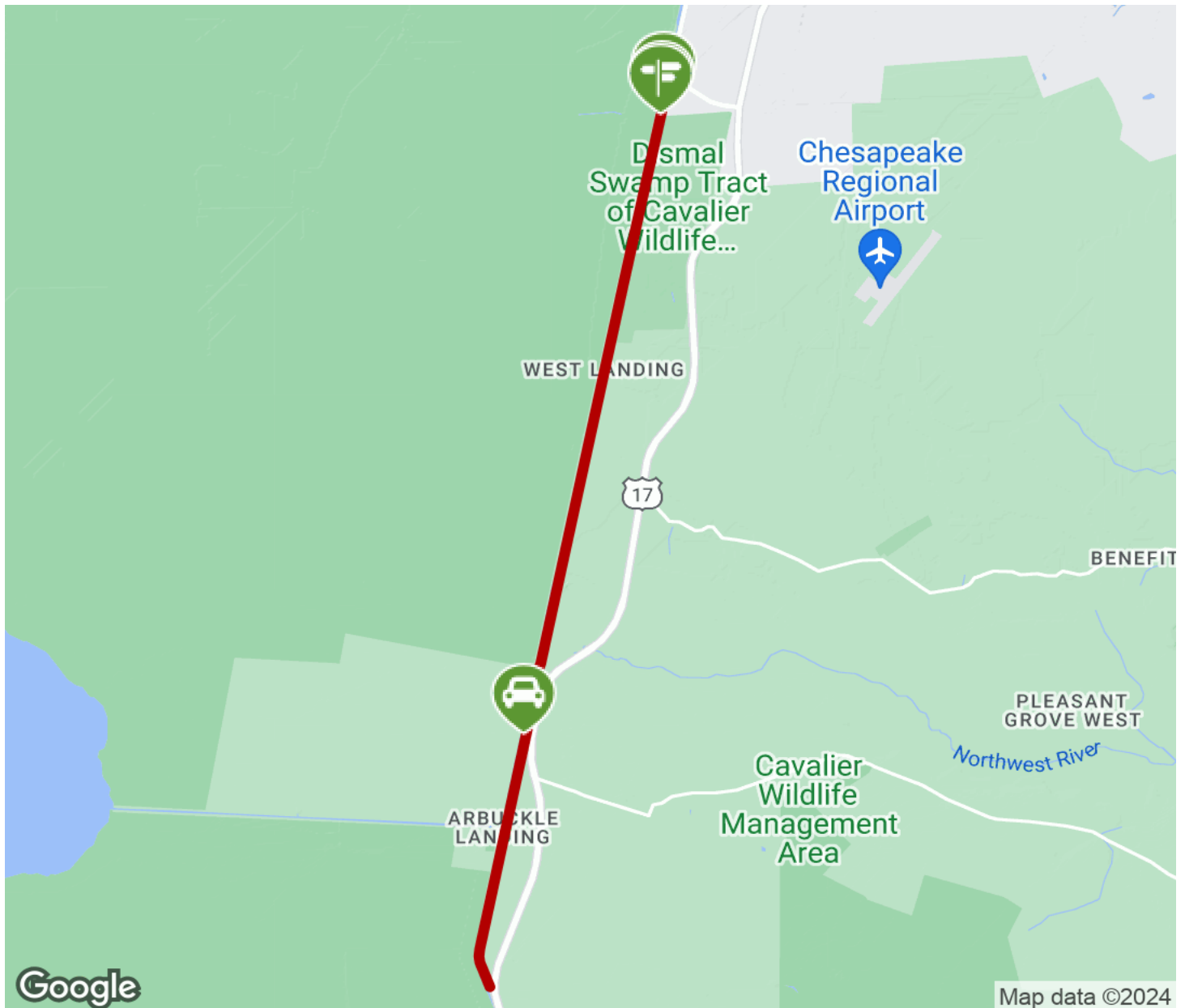
## Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available at 1246 Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (just south of the intersection of George Washington Hwy and Whedbee Carroll Lane) and at 1200 Dismal Swamp Canal Trail.



# Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (VA)

Virginia



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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