



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Indian Head Rail Trail

Maryland



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Although located within easy reach of the Washington, D.C., metro area, the Indian Head Rail Trail in southern Maryland seems far removed from the hectic pace of urban life. The 13-mile paved rail-trail travels alongside creeks and through woods halfway across Charles County from the town of Indian Head on the Potomac River to the inland community of White Plains.

The trail follows a former railroad line built in 1918 to transport supplies to the U.S. Navy's weapons facility built on the Indian Head peninsula overlooking the Potomac River. The facility, whose name and mission has changed over the years, still exists, but the railroad corridor is no longer needed and was transferred to Charles County under the Department of the Interior's Federal Lands to Parks Program. The eastern end of the trail opened in

2009.

The trail starts on Mattingly Avenue near the gates of the Naval Surface Warfare Center, a facility that got its start in 1890 as a weapons base. The town of Indian Head grew up around the base and was incorporated in 1920. Local leaders say the town's name is most likely derived from the peninsula where the town sits (known as the Indian Headlands) and the Algonquian peoples who once lived here. The area's Indigenous community has petitioned for the name to be changed, however, asserting that it alludes to violence inflicted on them in years past.

There's no parking at the trailhead on Mattingly Way. Trail users can park at Charlie Wright Park or Village Green Park, about 0.3 mile north of the trailhead, and follow signs across Indian Head Highway/MD 210 to the trailhead.

Heading eastward, the trail leaves the town and passes a wide-open view of the wetlands surrounding Mattawoman Creek, a tributary of the Potomac River and a productive breeding estuary for migratory fish. The trail also passes two other tributaries, Old Woman Run and Tobacco Creek, as well as three wildlife management and environmental areas. Sharp-eyed visitors may spot wild turkeys, deer, herons, bald eagles, egrets, and a variety of waterfowl from the trail. Bird-watchers have identified nearly 150 different species of birds along the corridor.

The trail makes a flat and often straight run to White Plains on a 10-foot-wide paved path with grassy shoulders regularly maintained by the county. You'll pass a lily pond at Bumpy Oak Road about 5.5 miles out from Indian Head, but most of the route is bordered by forests and farm-land. Except for parking at crossroads and occasional portable toilets, there are no services (such as food) until you reach White Plains, where there is parking at the trailhead.

County officials are currently planning an extension east to



Indian Head Rail Trail

Maryland

States: Maryland

Counties: Charles

Length: 13.4miles

Trail end points: Mattingly Ave. near Naval Station (Indian Head) to Theodore Green Blvd. west of US 301 (White Plains)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Inline

Skating, Wheelchair Accessible, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

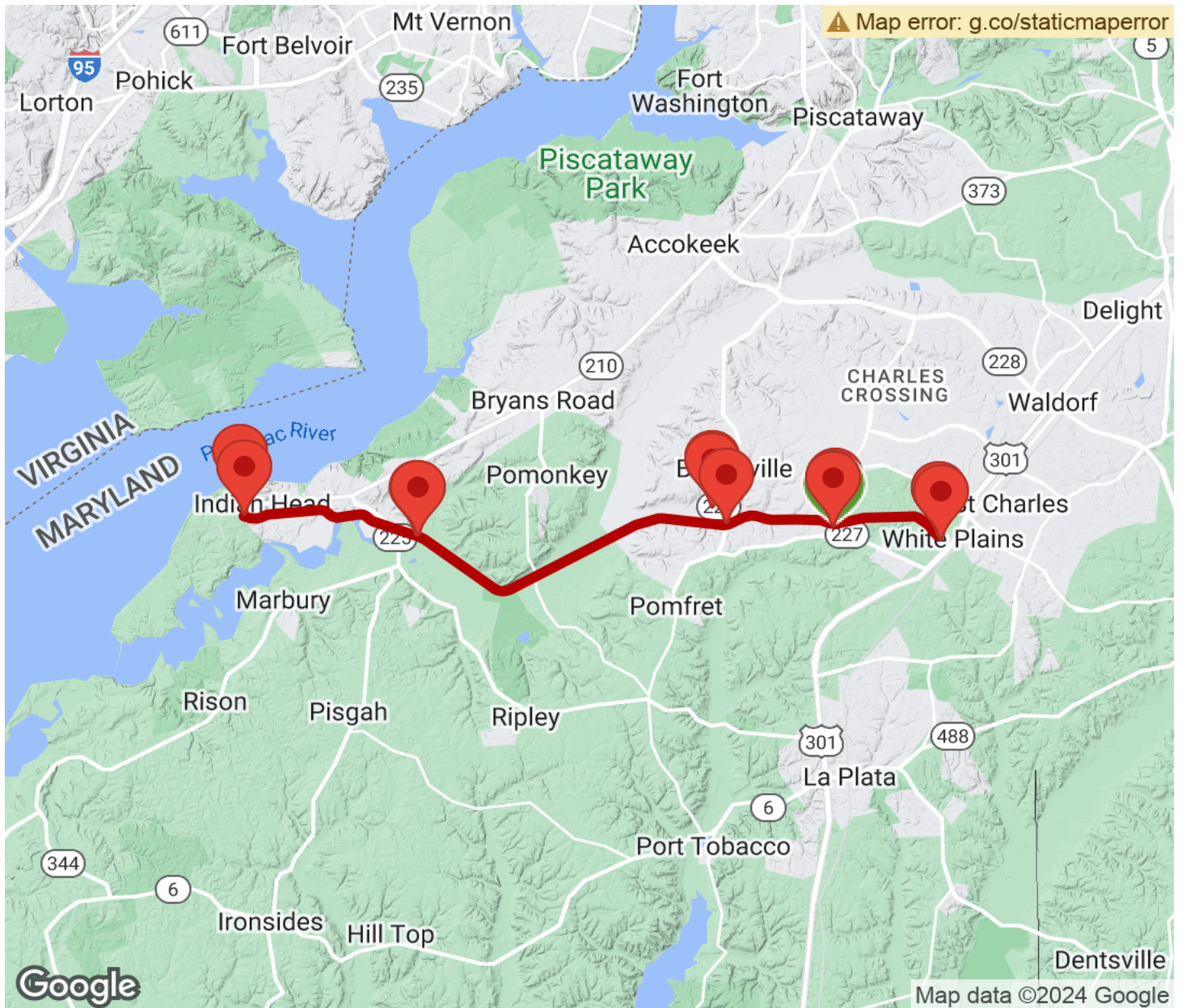
There is no parking at the Mattingly Avenue trailhead in Indian Head, but there is ample parking across State Route 210 at either the Village Green Town Park or Charlie Wright Park (101 Doctor Mitchell Lane). To access this parking lot, take Indian Head Highway/SR 210 south from Fort Washington, Maryland, turn right onto Lackey Drive and then left onto Doctor Mitchell Lane. Additional Indian Head parking is on Livingston Rd/MD 224, 0.4 mile east of Hawthorne Road/MD 225.

Parking is also available off Bensville Road/SR 229 south of Bensville, on Turkey Hill Road north of Marshall Corner Road and in White Plains, there is parking by the Indian Head Trailhead (10410 Theodore Green Blvd, between Austin Ln and Charles Crossing Dr), on Middletown Rd (0.2 mile north of Marshall Corner Rd/MD 227), and by Bensville Park (6980 Bensville Rd by Robie Manor Dr). The park is 0.5 mile north of the trail along Bensville Rd.



Indian Head Rail Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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