



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail

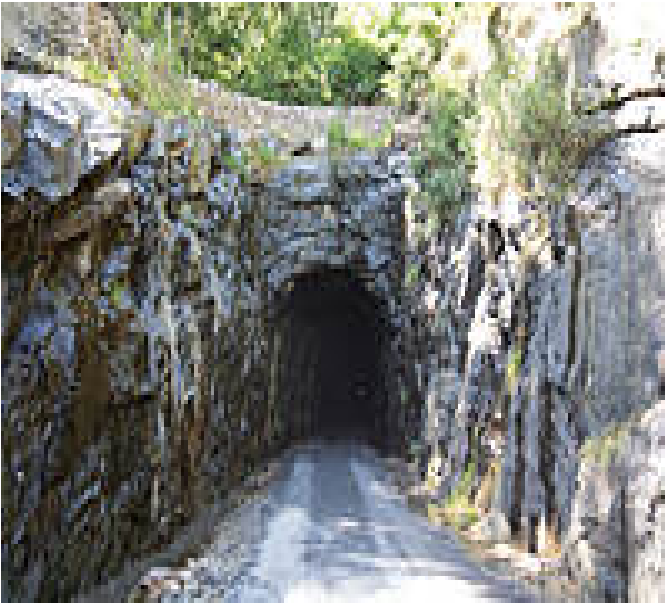
Virginia



Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail

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Overview

The Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail is located below Rockfish Gap, with a 2.3 mile crushed-stone trail that leads to the tunnel between the community of Afton on its eastern side and the city of Waynesboro near its western end.

About the Route

It is often recommended to begin the trail in Afton for a more gradual grade. From the Afton trailhead, it's a 0.6-mile hike to the eastern tunnel entrance. This section of the trail parallels active rail tracks and overlooks Rockfish Valley. Despite the light visible at the end of the tunnel, you should come prepared with a flashlight or headlamp as the tunnel is not lit.

On the Waynesboro end, the route gets steep, with an average grade of 6.5% and a maximum grade of 19%. Although bikes are permitted on the trail, it's advisable to walk your bike in the tunnel due to foot traffic and the uneven surface of the tunnel floor.

Be sure to note the beautiful elliptical stone portal located on the western entrance of the tunnel, which contrasts with the rocky entrance of the eastern portal. Beyond the tunnel, the western portion of the trail becomes a series of steep switchbacks until it reaches the parking lot at its western terminus in Waynesboro. For an easier walk, you may wish to turn around and head back to Afton after experiencing the tunnel.

Trail History

The impressive Blue Ridge Tunnel was originally designed by French engineer Claudius Crozet to allow the Blue Ridge Railroad to pass through the mountains to reach the Shenandoah Valley.

Construction of the Blue Ridge Tunnel began in 1850 using only hand drills, pickaxes, and black powder. The work, done mostly by Irish laborers and enslaved African Americans, was completed in 1858; you can still see the drill holes in the stone. Stretching nearly a mile, it was the longest tunnel in the country at the time and was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1976. It was abandoned during World War II when a new tunnel was bored to accommodate larger trains. In 2007, CSX Transportation donated the tunnel and trail right-of-way to Nelson County. The trail and tunnel were opened to the public in 2020. As you walk along the trail, look for interpretive signage that details its storied past.



Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail

Virginia

States: Virginia

Counties: Augusta, Nelson

Length: 2.16 miles

Trail end points: 483 Three Notched Mountain Hwy (Waynesboro) to 215 Afton Depot Ln (Afton)

Trail surfaces: Crushed Stone

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Mountain Biking, Walking

Parking & Trail Access

Notice: The trail is popular, and it is recommended to visit during the week in the morning or late afternoon to avoid the crowds. Please respect the private property around the area and only park in designated spots.

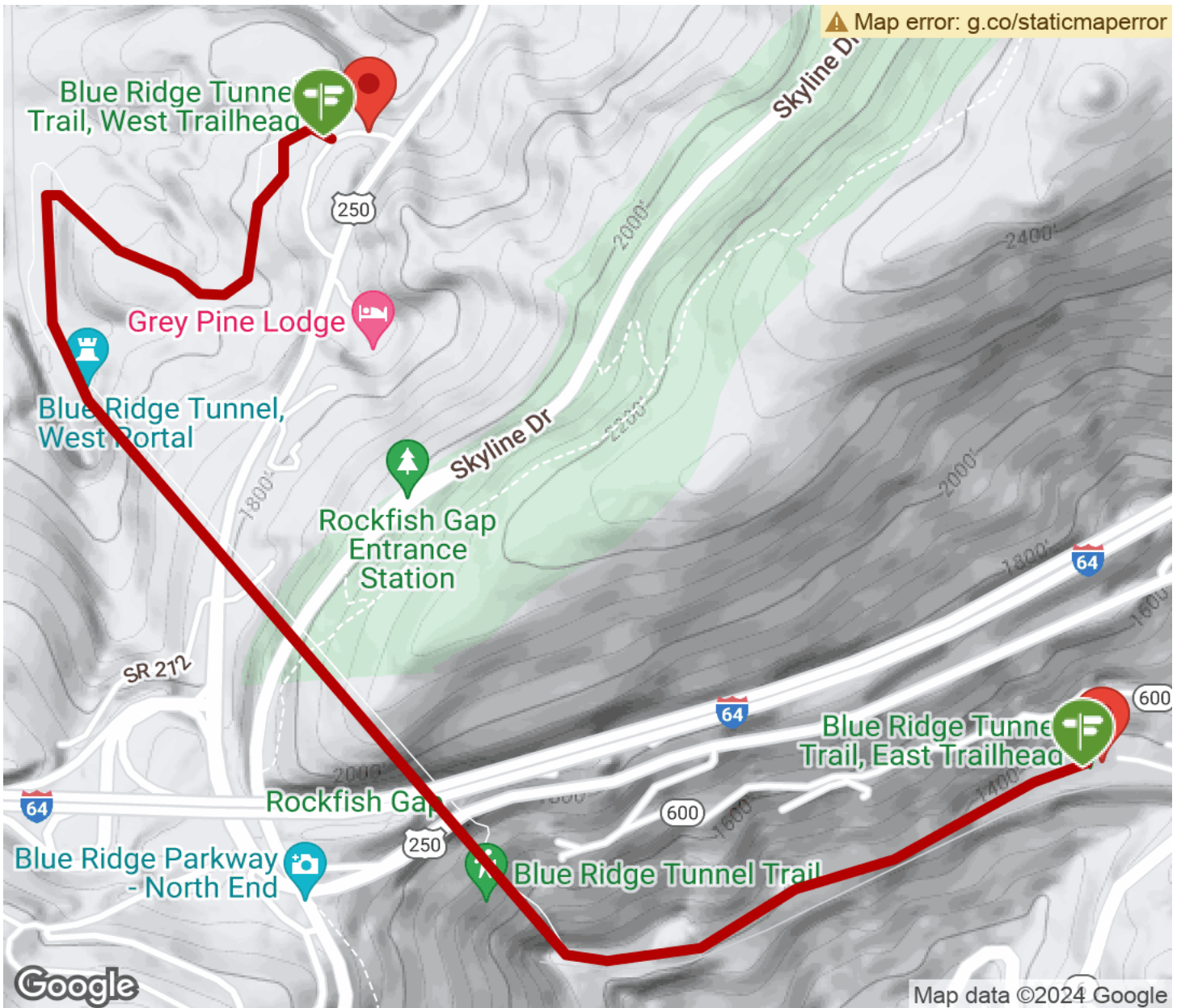
The Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail runs in between 483 Three Notched Mountain Hwy (Waynesboro) and 215 Afton Depot Ln (Afton), which both offer parking.

Please see [TrailLink Map](#) for detailed directions.



Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail

Virginia



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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