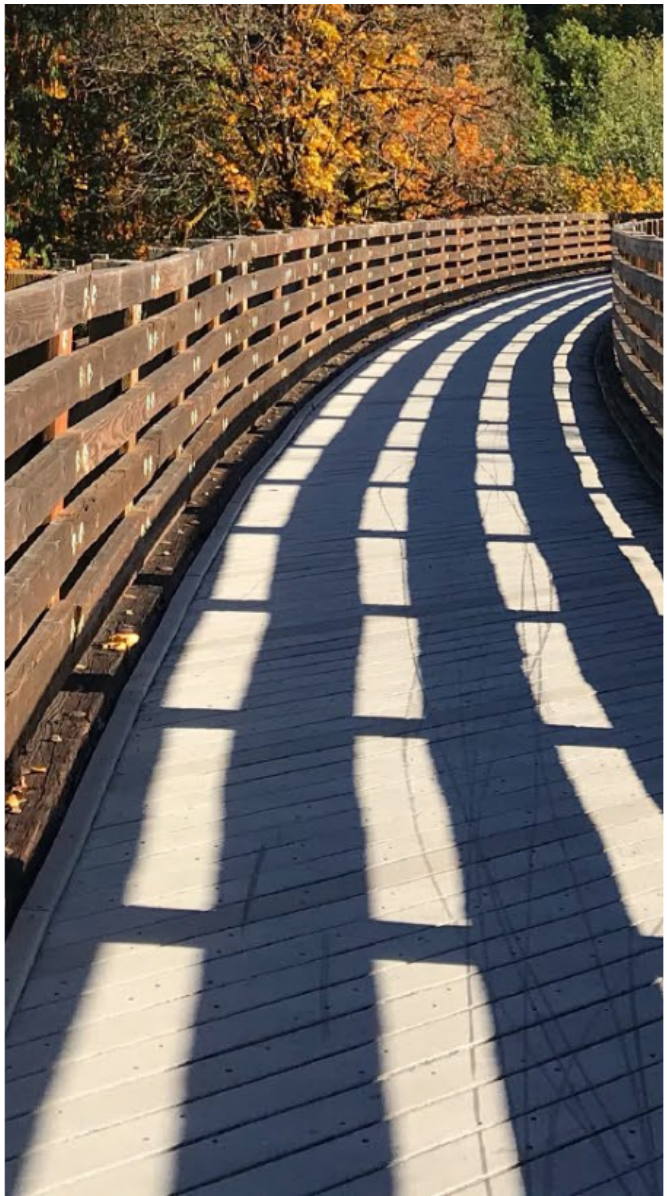
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2026

TrailLink Unlimited Guides



Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail

Alabama

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The Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail is a network of multiuse trails winding through Gulf State Park in southern Alabama. It is named in honor of Hugh S. Branyon, who was instrumental in developing and preserving the park.

The ADA-accessible trail system covers over 28 miles and features a variety of landscapes, including coastal dunes, wetlands, pine forests, freshwater marshes, and wet prairies. Along the way, visitors may encounter a variety of wildlife, including alligators, deer, bobcats, turtles, and a variety of bird species. The trail network offers visitors a chance to explore the natural beauty and diverse ecosystems of the park.

The trail system is made up of multiple interconnected trails, each with its own unique character and attractions. These trails include the following:

The Gulf Oak Ridge Trail (3.2 miles) winds through a maritime forest of live oaks and palmettos. This trail was an ancient corridor through the island, used by early native Americans, explorers, settlers and soldiers from nearby Fort Morgan. There is an overlook on this trail that offers great views of the unique wet prairie and the Gulf of Mexico.

The Rosemary Dunes Trail (1.6 miles) takes you through a relict dune scrub ecosystem. The trail is also home to a variety of plant and animal species, including the endangered Alabama beach mouse and the gopher tortoise. An eagle's nest can be seen by sharp-eyed viewers.

The Twin Bridges Trail (1.75 miles) through a pine savannah environment with a impressive pitcher plant bog a short hike from the paved trail. There is a "parkour" course for the kids on this trail near the Orange Beach Sportsplex trailhead, and the trail accesses the pleasant Hidden Lake Trail. The trail is a popular spot for bird watching and wildlife photography.

The Cotton Bayou Trail (1.5 miles) winds through a beautiful coastal wetland area, offering opportunities to see a variety of waterfowl and wading birds. This trail offers the best access to the Outpost, a primitive campsite with established wall tents for rent through Gulf State Park.

The Catman Road Trail (1.9 miles) follows a former roadway through coastal scrubland and pine flatwoods. This trail is named for a legendary "half man-half panther" creature that haunted these forests!

The Rattlesnake Ridge Trail (2 miles) is a unique trail constructed of the material that once was the original Gulf State Park Lodge, and connects to the Orange Beach City Hall and Museum campus. The trail is also home to a variety of reptiles, including the eastern diamondback rattlesnake.

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States: Alabama

Counties: Baldwin

Length: 28miles

Trail end points: Gulf State Park to Gulf State Park (20115 State Park Rd, Gulf Shores)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Concrete

Trail category: Greenway/Non-RT

Trail activities: Bike,Fishing,Inline Skating,Walking,Wheelchair Accessible

Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available at several trailheads throughout Gulf State Park, providing convenient access to the Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail. Visit the TrailLink map (20115 State Park Rd, Gulf Shores) for all options and detailed directions.

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Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

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