



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**Patuxent
Branch Trail**
Maryland



Patuxent Branch Trail

Maryland

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Whether by wheel or foot, many off-road trips in southern Howard County involve the Patuxent Branch Trail. Opened in 1997, the 4.5-mile regional trail connects to an extensive network of local trails that serve neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas, making it ideal for recreation or commuting.

The trail takes a generally flat route, following the Little Patuxent River from Lake Elkhorn reservoir south of Columbia to the athletic fields at Savage Park near Laurel. It is currently surfaced with crushed stone for 1.3 miles—from Old Guilford Road to Vollmerhausen Road—and asphalt for the remainder, but Howard County plans to completely pave the trail in 2023. The trail passes under several major highways. Horseback riding is prohibited.

A 2-mile segment follows the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad's (B&O's) Patuxent Branch, which at one time served a major granite quarry in Guilford and a cotton mill complex in Savage. Built in the 1880s from the main B&O line passing through nearby Savage Station, the Guilford section was closed in 1928, leaving Savage Mill as the end of the line.

Park at either lot near the reservoir, and take the Lake Elkhorn Loop trail to an intersection with the Patuxent Branch Trail just west of the dam. As the trail enters the wooded valley alongside the Little Patuxent River, remember to consult trail markings at frequent junctions to stay on the correct path.

After 2 miles, the trail comes to the Guilford Road parking lot at the beginning of the former B&O branch line. Signs along the trail explain the historical significance of the B&O and the quarry that operated here until 1928. Leaving the trailhead, you'll cross the picturesque 83-foot Pratt Truss Bridge, installed in 1902.

The trail follows a wooded area alongside the Little Patuxent River for 1.3 miles until it emerges at Vollmerhausen Road. Cross the road and take the sidewalk or bike lane for 0.2 mile, and then make a sharp right back onto the trail at Patuxent Valley Middle School. (To visit 4 miles of mountain biking trails, turn right at Vollmerhausen Road, go 0.1 mile, and turn left into the Wincopin Loop trailhead parking lot.) The Patuxent Branch Trail ends in 0.7 mile at the sports complex at Savage Park, which has restrooms, drinking water, and parking, as well as 3 miles of hiking or mountain biking trails.

About 0.5 mile south, the historic Savage textile mill complex, which dates to the early 1800s, is now a tourist spot housing restaurants and shops. Follow the signs from Savage Park for street access. The mile-long [Savage Mill Trail](#) starts there and offers scenic views of the Little Patuxent rapids.



Patuxent Branch Trail

Maryland

States: Maryland

Counties: Howard

Length: 4.35miles

Trail end points: 7494 Sea Change (Columbia)
to Savage Park, 8400 Fair St. (Savage)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Fishing, Horseback

Riding, Mountain Biking, Inline

Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross
Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Patuxent Branch Trail runs between 7494 Sea Change (Columbia) and Savage Park, 8400 Fair St. (Savage), with parking available at both ends.

Parking is also available at:

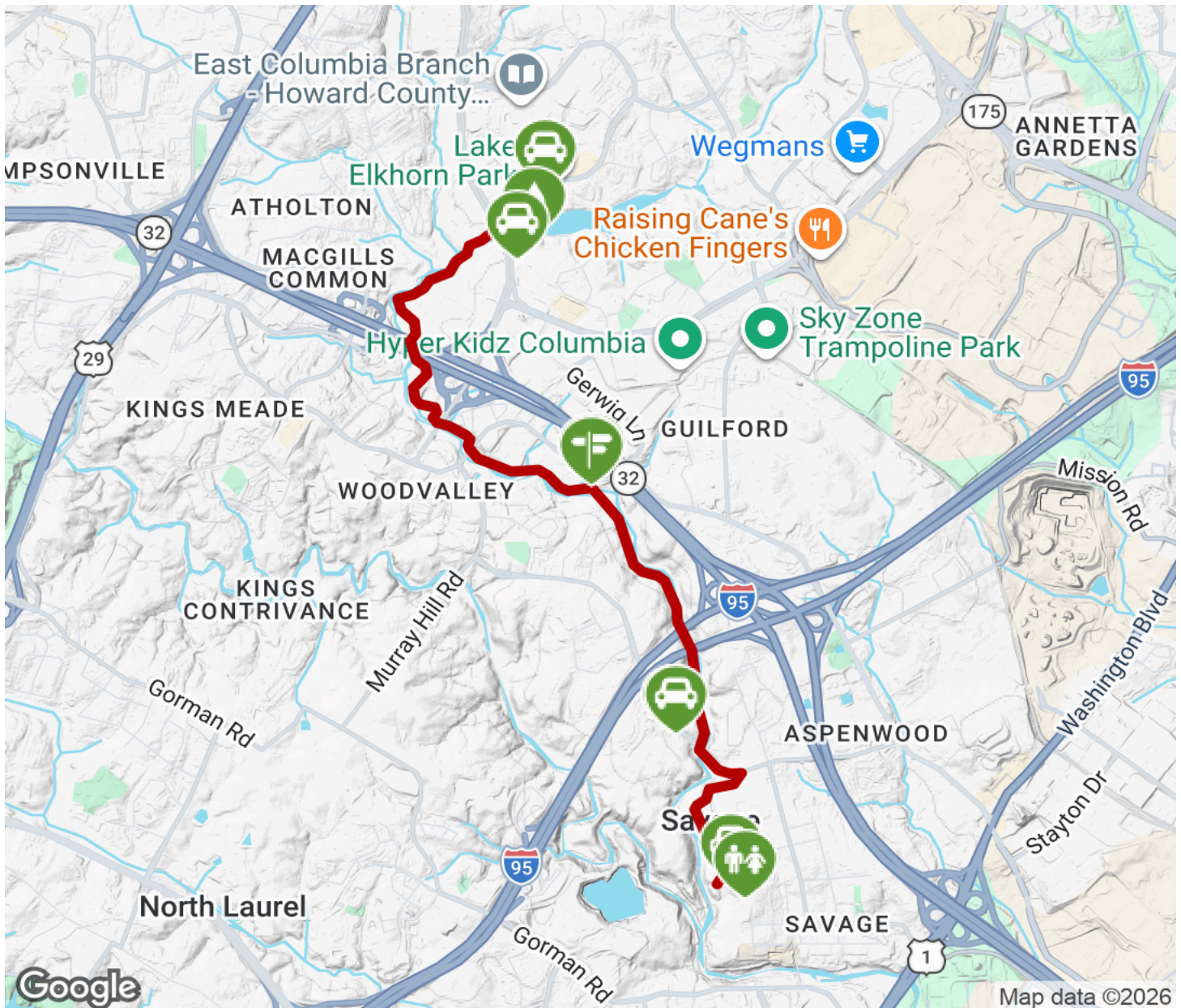
- 9190 Old Guilford Rd. (Columbia)
- 9299 Vollmerhausen Rd. (Jessup)

Please see [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



Patuxent Branch Trail

Maryland



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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