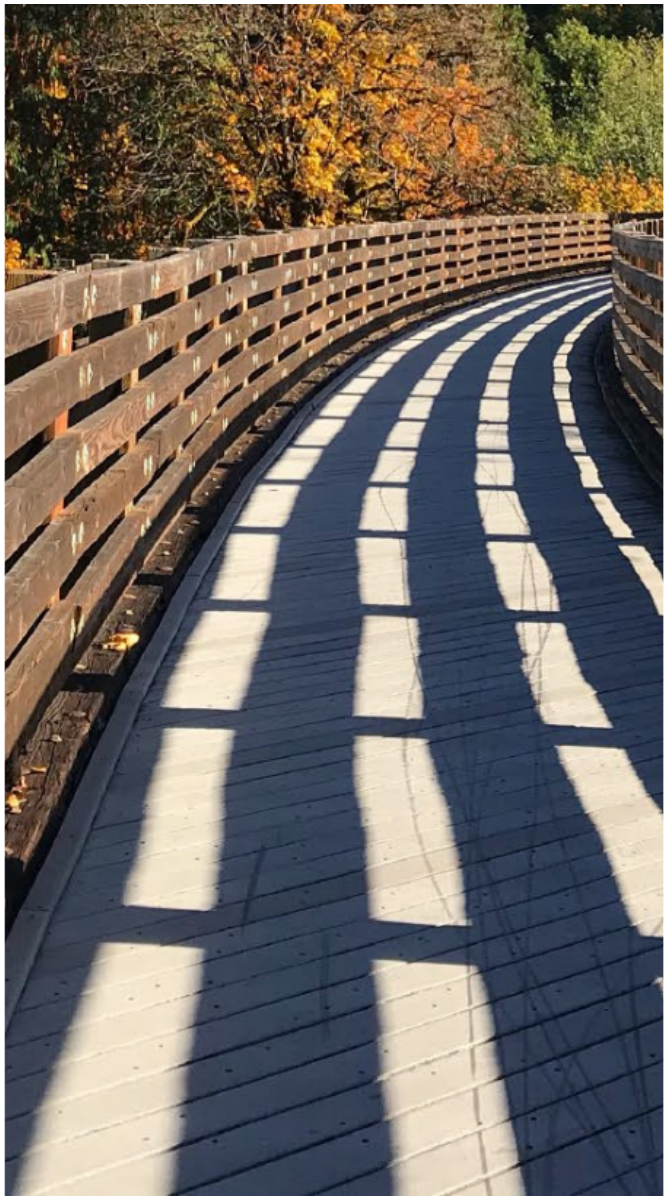
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2026

TrailLink Unlimited Guides



Western Maryland Rail Trail

Maryland

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Hugging the picturesque Potomac River and the C&O Canal Towpath, the Western Maryland Rail Trail (WMRT) rolls for nearly

Hugging the picturesque Potomac River and the C&O Canal Towpath, the Western Maryland Rail Trail (WMRT) rolls for nearly 28 miles through Maryland's narrow panhandle wedged between Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

The flat route through the remote, wooded river valley set in the Appalachian Mountains passes many historical sites, including the old river town of Hancock. Trail users can either use the campsites and facilities on the close-by C&O Canal Towpath—the popular 185-mile unpaved route between Washington, D.C., and Cumberland—or use the towpath as a return route on out-and-back treks.

About the Route

The western end of the trail is located just before a dilapidated iron bridge into West Virginia. The westernmost trail access point is just a short distance west, in Little Orleans. Trail users can also find a grocery store here.

The next 2.3 miles shares a trail with the dirt C&O Canal Towpath and bypasses the Indigo Tunnel, to protect the eight species of bats hibernating in the tunnel. Be on the lookout for deer, wild turkey, and even bears as you pass through the Woodmont Natural Resources Management Area and Sideling Hill Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Three miles before reaching the town of Hancock, trail users can find the ruins of the Round Top Cement Mill, which dates to the 1830s and was the area's largest employer during the Civil War. Just outside of Hancock, a large rocky outcropping may catch the attention of trail users. At the Hancock Trailhead, trail users will be able to find museums, cafes, and antique shops nearby. The town, named for a local ferry operator, saw a skirmish during the Civil War when several buildings were shelled by artillery.

East of Hancock, the trail is never far from 1-70 or the C&O canal. Trail users may want to explore locks and aqueducts on the adjacent canal. The Western Maryland Rail Trail reaches its eastern endpoint in Big Pool, about a mile from Fort Frederick State Park, home of a reconstructed stone fort built in 1756.

Connections

Nearly the entire Western Maryland Rail Trail parallels the C&O Canal Towpath.

Trail History

The Western Maryland Rail Trail follows the corridor of the Western Maryland Railway, which ran from Baltimore into West Virginia coal country. Although construction on the

Western Maryland Rail Trail

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States: Maryland

Counties: Allegany,Washington

Length: 27.5miles

Trail end points: C&O Canal Towpath (Little Orleans) to Big Pool Rd. (Big Pool)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Mountain Biking,Inline Skating,Walking,Wheelchair Accessible,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Western Maryland Rail Trail runs between C&O Canal Towpath (Little Orleans) and Big Pool Rd. (Big Pool), with parking at both ends.

Parking is also available at:

- 11741 High Germany Rd (Little Orleans)
- 273 MD-144 (Hancock)

See TrailLink Map for all parking options and detailed directions.

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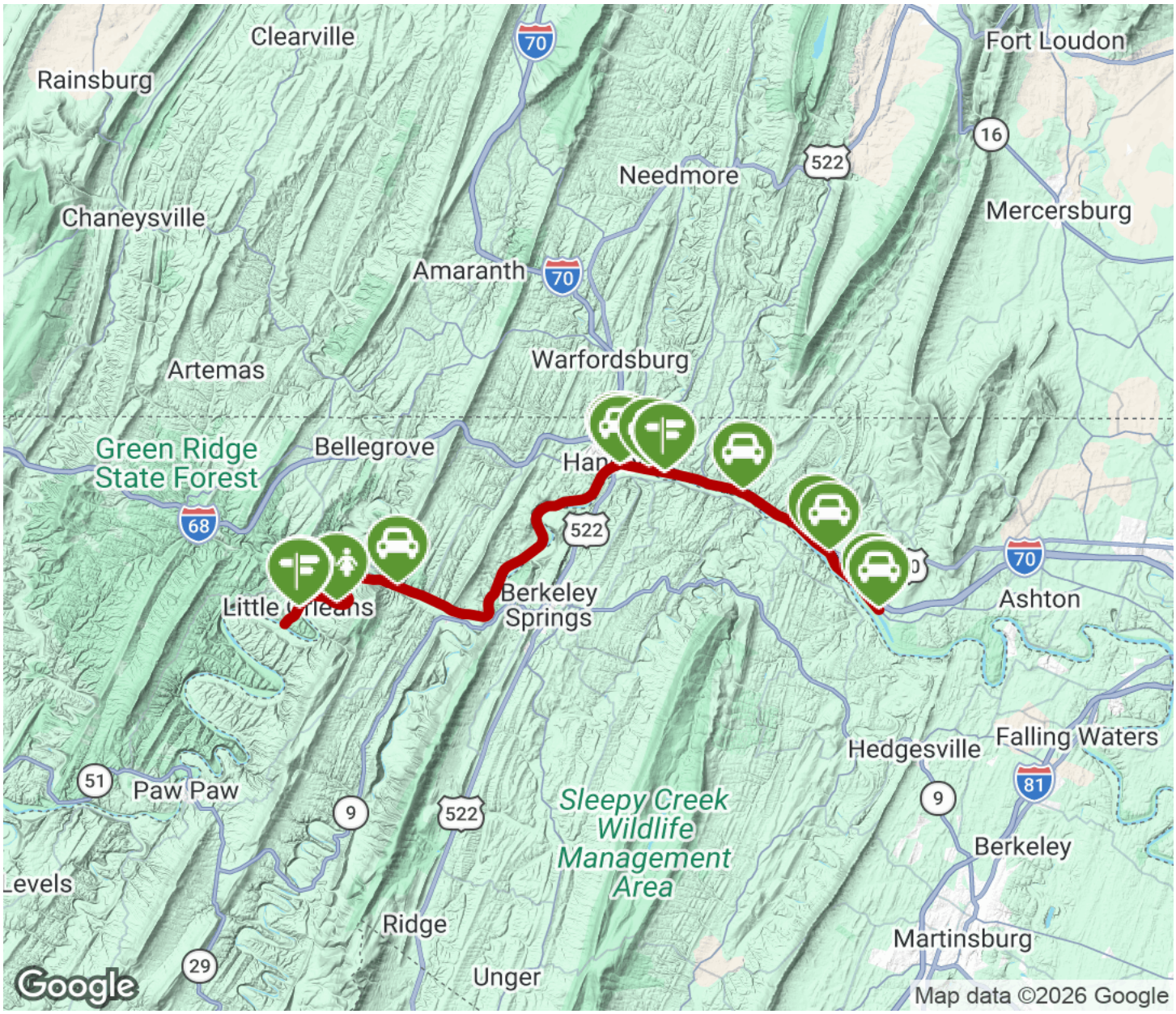

Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

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