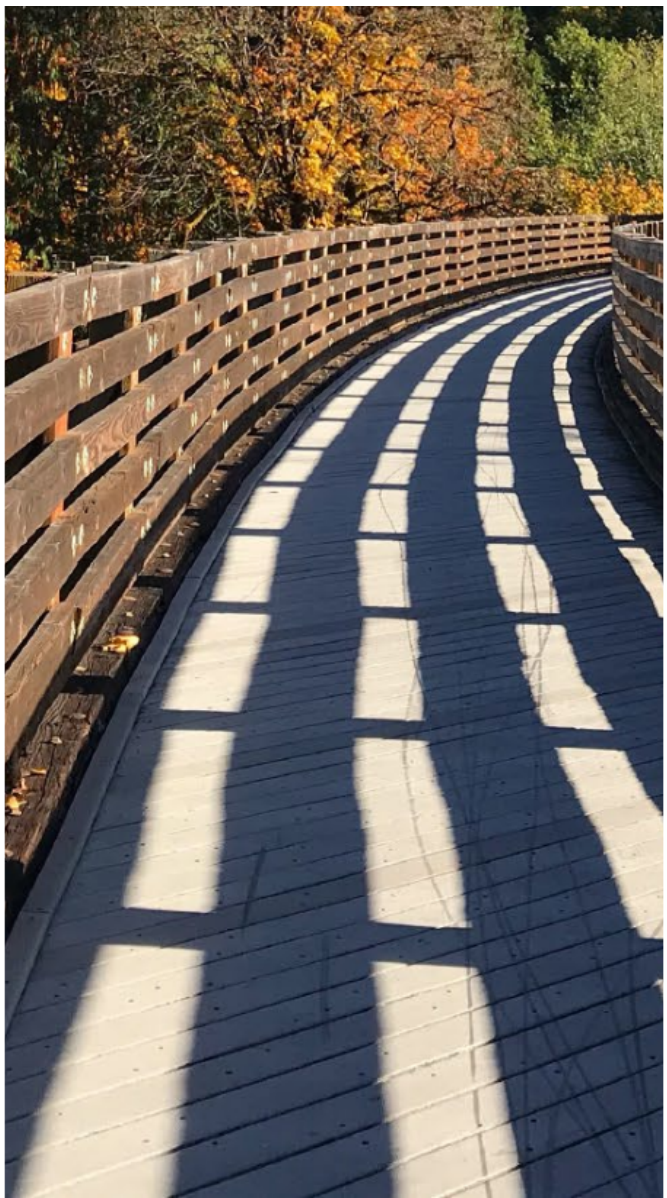
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2025

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Guest River Gorge Trail

Virginia

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The Guest River Gorge Trail meanders along 300-million-year-old sandstone cliffs that plunge 400 feet to the pristine waters below. The deep gorge was created as the Guest River, now designated as a state scenic river, tunneled through Stone Mountain on its way toward the Clinch River.

The grade of this trail and its crushed stone surface make for a comfortable walk or bike ride downhill, and a real challenge heading uphill. Benches along the route offer more than a place to rest; they yield stunning views of crystal-clear currents that, when interrupted sporadically by boulders, turn into impressive rapids.

In addition to spectacular Guest River views to the south, the trail offers a trip through the Swede Tunnel, built in 1922. The trail also crosses three bridges that were built over small creeks to replace the trestles once traveled by rail cars hauling coal mined nearby. Be sure to look for Devil's Walking-stick, a plant native to the southeast and a member of the ginseng family. This tall and spindly plant produces white blooms during July and August.

Near the end, the trail slopes downhill toward a working rail line across the Guest River. Just before this point, you will see a connection to the Heart of Appalachia Bike Route, which stretches another 125 miles to Burke's Garden in Tazewell County, Virginia. Legend has it that Burke's Garden is so beautiful, it was originally sought after as the location for George Washington Vanderbilt's Biltmore Estate, but the people of Burke's Garden refused to sell him any land and thus he built his estate in Ashville, North Carolina, instead.

Popular with cyclists, hikers, and rock climbers, this trail meanders along 300-million-year-old sandstone cliffs that plunge 400 feet to the pristine waters below. The deep gorge was created as the Guest River—now designated as a state scenic river—eroded a passage through Stone Mountain on its way toward the Clinch River.

The grade and crushed-stone surface of the out-and-back Guest River Gorge Trail make for a comfortable walk or bike ride when heading downhill but a challenge heading uphill. Benches along the route offer more than a place to rest; they also yield stunning views of crystal-clear currents that, when interrupted sporadically by boulders, turn into im-pressive rapids. Some people enjoy fishing along the trail, although accessing the water can be challenging. There is also no drinking water available along the trail, so bring some with you.

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Guest River Gorge Trail

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States: Virginia
Counties: Scott,Wise
Length: 5.8miles
Trail end points: SR 755 near river to Forest Rd 2477 (Jefferson National Forest)
Trail surfaces: Crushed Stone
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Bike,Fishing,Mountain Biking,Walking,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Guest River Gorge Trail is an out-and-back trail, so there is only one endpoint. From US 58 Alternate, head south on State Route 72 near Coeburn. Travel for 2.3 miles on this curvy, two-lane road. You will pass the Flatwoods Picnic Area on your right, and very soon afterward, you will reach a sign for the Guest River Gorge on your left. Turn left onto this paved road, which is Forest Road 2477, and drive for 1.4 miles until you reach the parking lot. The trailhead is marked with a kiosk at the edge of the parking area.

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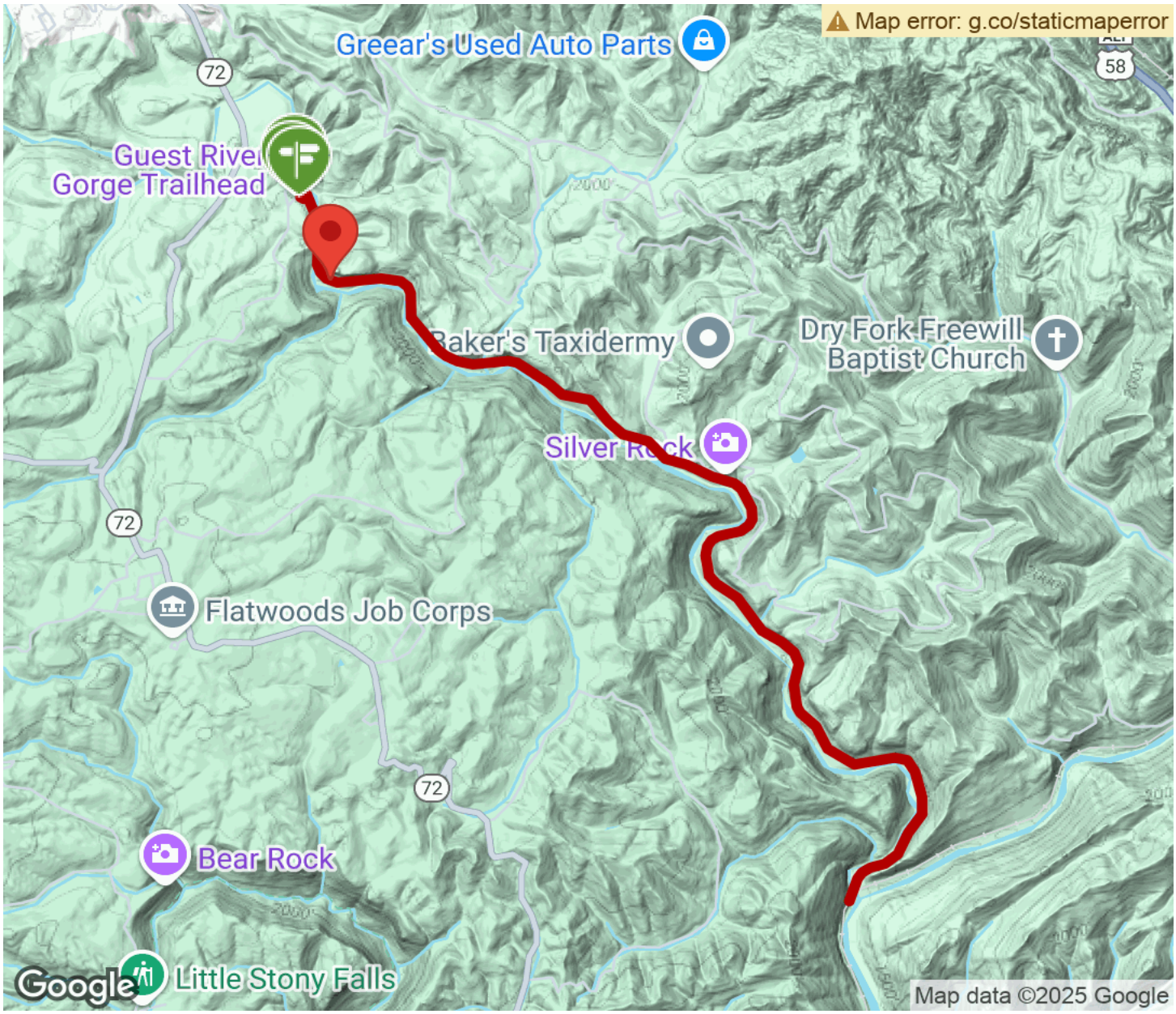

Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

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