



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



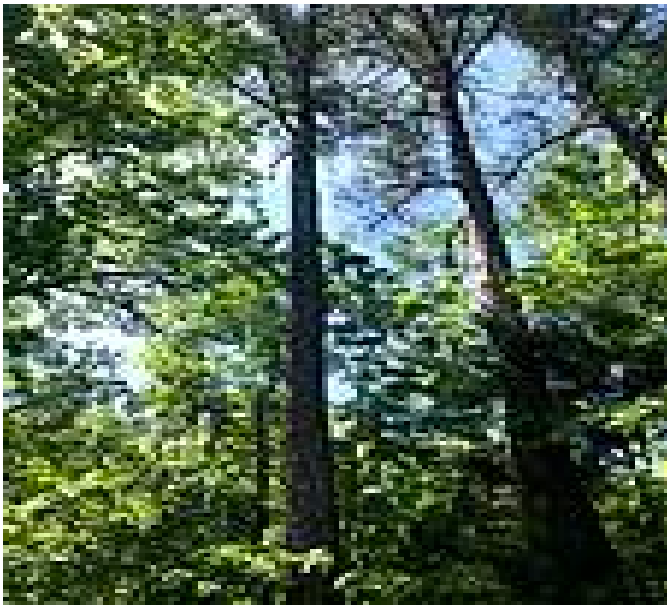
**Dismal
Swamp Canal
Trail (VA)**
Virginia



Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (VA)

Virginia

Formerly part of US 17, the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail offers users a remote experience as it runs alongside the Dismal Swamp Canal



Formerly part of US 17, the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail offers users a remote experience as it runs alongside the Dismal Swamp Canal and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. On this wide, flat, linear trail, trail users can experience the feeling of standing in the middle of a roadway without needing to worry about passing cars, as gates close the path to vehicular traffic. Horseback riding is allowed along the entire trail.

Traveling along the trail, benches provide places to enjoy the scenery and wildlife and to reflect on the history of the trail and its namesake canal. Interpretive signage explains the location's past as the site of Civil War raids, as well as how the canal was built by the labor of enslaved people and how the surrounding area served as a refuge for runaway slaves as part of the Underground Railroad.

A statue of Ches A. Peake (aka Chessie the Bear) welcomes visitors to the northern trailhead of the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail, the recommended starting point for your trip. Signs remind users to be "bear aware" due to the number of bear sightings reported in the area. But bears are not the only wildlife that can be spotted along the trail as more than 210 bird species have been identified in the Dismal Swamp.

Heading south, the surrounding trees give trail users the feeling of traveling through a tunnel. Enjoy the unique ecology while passing markers that explain the history of the trail. At the 3.5-mile marker, trail users will find bathrooms, picnic benches, a dock, and bike racks. At the dock, you can take a closer look at the color of the Dismal Swamp, which has been dyed by peat, a layer of soil created over thousands of years by the decomposition of fallen twigs and leaves.

Continuing south past the 5-mile marker, there is additional trail access at Glencoe Street. This is also the site of the Superintendent's House, the last standing vestige of the Dismal Swamp Canal Company, and the place where tolls for using the Dismal Swamp Canal were collected.

After a quarter mile, the trail opens to a field on the left side, and trail users may start to hear cars traveling along the nearby highway. After the 5.75-mile mark, there is a gate that marks the last parking area for the trail, a boat ramp, and accessible portable toilets. After this point, the trail continues briefly on a road that is open to cars until a gate blocks vehicular traffic just past Ballahack Road.

Past this gate, continue straight, with open fields to the left and the Dismal Swamp Canal and trees to the right. The trail ends somewhat abruptly at a turnaround surrounded by trees where a sign lists the rules of the trail. To head back to parking, simply turn around at this point.



Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (VA)

Virginia

States: Virginia

Counties: Chesapeake

Length: 8.6miles

Trail end points: 1724 George Washington
Hwy S. (Chesapeake) to VA/NC State Line

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Greenway/Non-RT

Trail activities: Bike, Horseback Riding, Inline
Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible

Parking & Trail Access

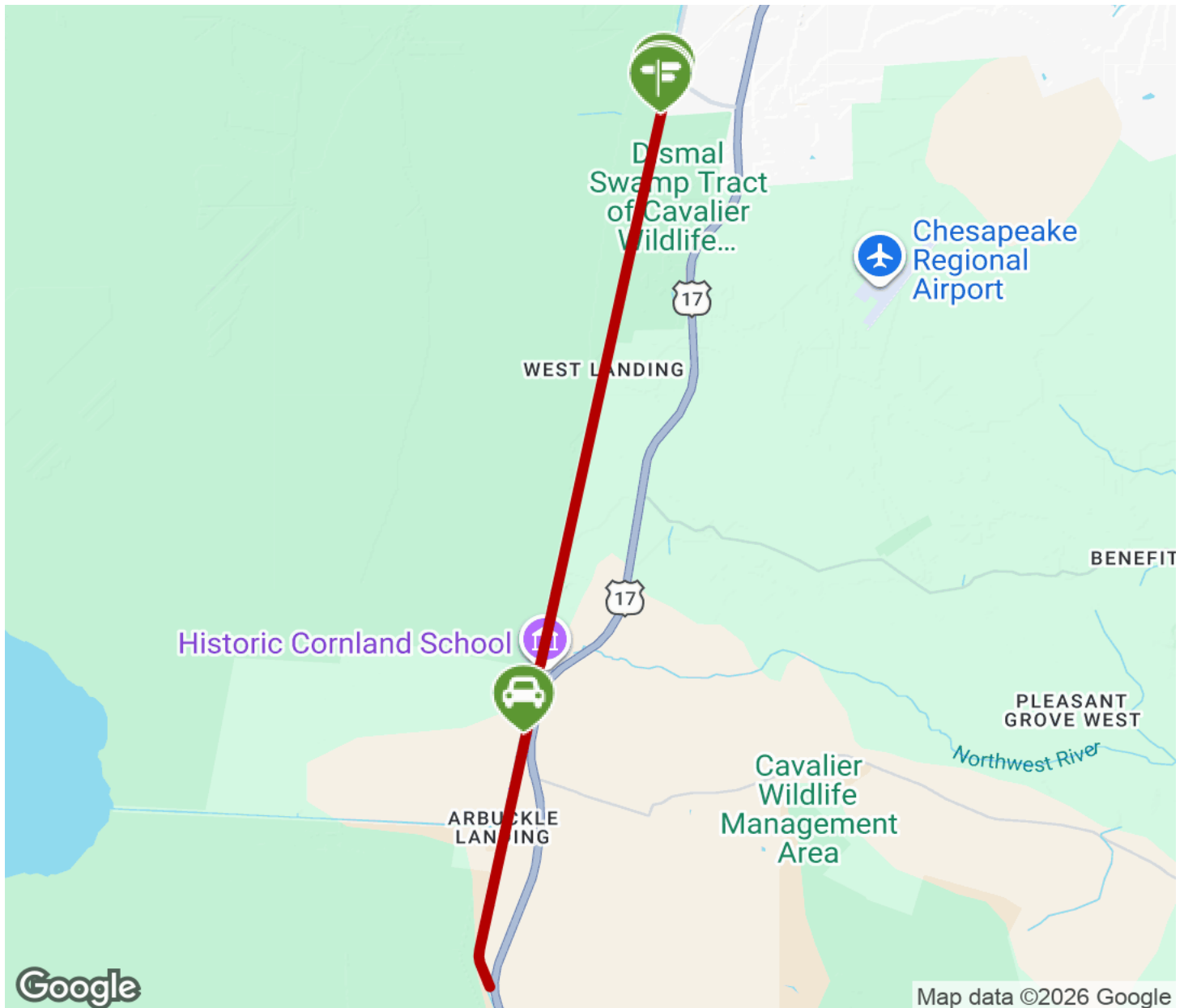
The Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (VA) runs between 1724 George Washington Hwy S. (Chesapeake), where parking is available, and the VA/NC State Line.

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



Dismal Swamp Canal Trail (VA)

Virginia



Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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