



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Goldmine
Loop Trail**
Maryland



Goldmine Loop Trail

Maryland

Tucked in the meandering, wooded hills of the sprawling yet understated multimillion-dollar estates of Great Falls, just outside



Tucked in the meandering, wooded hills of the sprawling yet understated multimillion-dollar estates of Great Falls, just outside Washington, D.C., is the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historic Park. Home to the already famous [C&O Canal Towpath](#), the Great Falls section of the park also hosts this unique rail-trail circuit.

The trail begins at the hillside just beyond the historic, early 1800s-era Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center. Start at the well-marked post and head up a series of stairs that are cut into the hillside and reinforced with logs. This is not your traditional rail-trail. Only part of it runs on the former railroad corridor, so prepare for some gentle uphill climbs. (The trail is off-limits to bicycles.)

The trail, marked by a blue blaze, immediately takes you

into the surrounding airy forest. After less than a mile, you reach the beginning of the actual loop. Take note: Detours on yellow-blazed spur trails along the route take you to the Maryland Mine ruins, where gold was processed from 1867 to 1939. Upon reaching the start of the loop, go either left or right; both ways will take you back to this starting point.

If you head to the right, you will first come to the Woodland Trail Spur (one of six trail spurs along the loop), where you'll cross a tiny creek and the surface will change from dirt to gravel. If you are on the trail in the spring, several stands of red bud will be blooming, providing a vibrant color contrast to the grayish-green of an awakening forest. At certain points, you may have to scramble over, under or around impressive felled trees, but they only add to the trail's woodland feel.

When you return to the beginning of the loop, take the path back down to the visitor center and explore the rest of the park. Don't miss the nearby Great Falls overlook, which provides stunning views of the waterfall that separates the upper and lower Potomac River. Pick up a trail map at the ranger station to find directions to the overlook.



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States: Maryland

Counties: Montgomery

Length: 2.5miles

Trail end points: Great Falls Tavern Visitors Center to Great Falls Tavern Visitors Center (Potomac)

Trail surfaces: Dirt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Horseback Riding, Walking

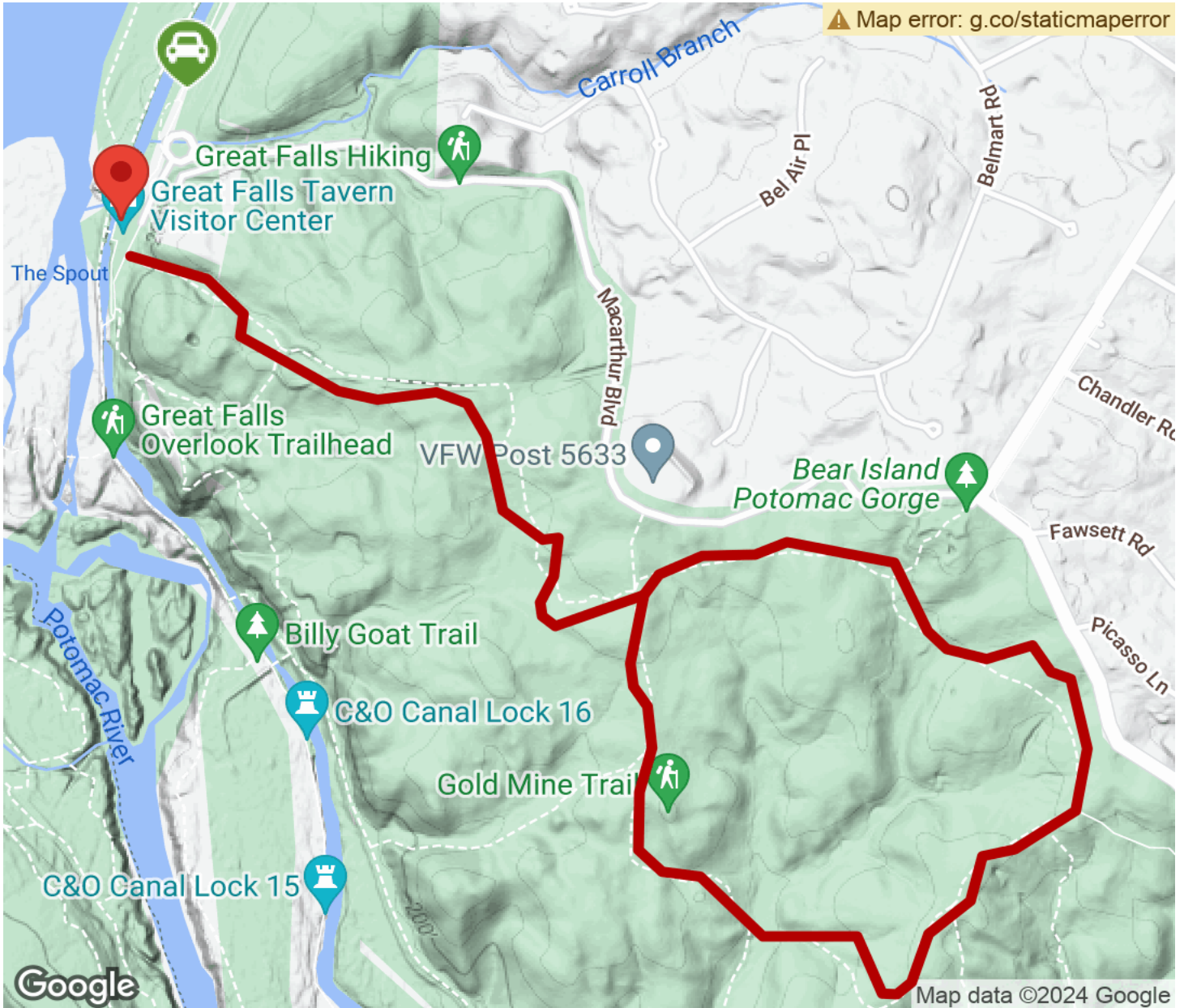
Parking & Trail Access

From Washington, D.C.'s Beltway—Interstate 495—take Exit 41 (Carderock/Great Falls) to follow the Clara Barton Parkway. At the stop sign at the end of the road, turn left onto Macarthur Boulevard. Go 3.5 miles to the end of the road at the park. There is an entry fee.



Goldmine Loop Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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