



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Southside Trail

West Virginia



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As it weaves past long-abandoned mining towns, the Southside Trail (formerly the Brooklyn to Southside Junction Trail) in the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve tells the story of “King Coal” through the crumbling ruins at coal mine sites, relics of the railroad era, and a cemetery for mine disaster victims.

The trail runs nearly 7 miles within sight and earshot of the New River, a popular whitewater rafting destination preserved as a national river in 1978 and protected as the centerpiece of a 53-mile-long national park since 2021. The trail follows a segment of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, which began serving the area in the late 1800s.

A forest of oak trees, rhododendrons, and evergreens envelops travelers alongside the river. Among the most

popular of the area’s many trails, the Southside Trail is particularly attractive to mountain bikers, who enjoy the rough riding provided by exposed railroad ties along its route.

From the Cunard River Access in Brooklyn, the trail shares a road heading south for 1 mile to a parking area at the Brooklyn Campground and Southside Trailhead. Listen for the exuberant screams of whitewater rafters on what’s considered one of the finest whitewater rivers in the eastern United States.

About 1.2 miles past the campground, you’ll pass a small stream on the left that marks an off-trail low-water crossing to Red Ash Island. Up on a high point on the island you’ll find an overgrown cemetery for miners killed in disasters at the nearby Red Ash and Rush Run mines in 1900 and 1905. Most of the burials are simply marked by blank headstones.

Continuing up the trail about 2.8 miles past the campground, you’ll pass remains of the Red Ash mine and then the Rush Run mine. Stone and cement foundations are scattered through the woods, as are the remains of coke ovens where coal was purified for industrial and home use.

A trail junction for the Arbuckle Connector appears 5.1 miles past the campground. In 0.3 mile it connects to the [Rend Trail](#), which features several trestles and views of the New River and the old railroad boomtown of Thurmond on its southern segment.

The Southside Trail continues another 0.8 mile to a dead end at an active railroad line that runs along Thurmond Road, across the river from the historic Thurmond railroad yard. A legal (and safe) crossing here is currently not available. According to the National Park Service, negotiations are underway, but in the interim, please respect this private property and keep clear of the tracks.



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States: West Virginia

Counties: Fayette

Length: 6.9 miles

Trail end points: Cunard River Access Rd (Brooklyn) to railroad tracks 0.8 mile southwest of Arbuckle Connector trail (Thurmond)

Trail surfaces: Ballast, Dirt, Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Fishing, Mountain Biking, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available by the Cunard River Access (Cunard River Access Rd, 1.7 miles east of Brooklyn Loop/CR 9/14) and at the Brooklyn Campground (1 mile south of Cunard River Access).

To reach the Brooklyn trailhead from Beckley, take US 19 north to Fayetteville. Take State Route 16 south through Fayetteville and turn left onto Gatewood Road. Turn left at the Cunard turnoff and follow the signs to Cunard River Access. Once you reach the access area, continue 1 mile up the gravel road to the Brooklyn trailhead, where parking is available.

The Southside Junction end is not recommended as a start for the trail because the active rail line perpendicular to the trail often blocks access to the trailhead, making crossing hazardous.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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