

Directions For The Nature Center Trail

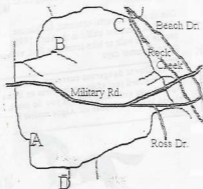


Begin at the Rock Creek Nature Center

- Follow paved trail down the hill and across Military Road
- Take your first right.
- Continue straight onto the wooded trail
- At the next trail intersection, Ft. DeRussy lies feet ahead, but you will need to turn left to get to down to the river at Milkhouse Ford. Therefore, double-back to this intersection after visiting Ft. DeRussy.
- Follow the signs down to Milkhouse Ford.
- Restrooms are located just across Milkhouse Ford and Beach Drive, however, the trail continues on the near-side of the creek.
- Follow the trail along the creek, eventually crossing a paved bike trail, going beneath Military Road and crossing the access ramp to Beach Drive.
- After crossing the access ramp, the trail turns to the right, crosses Ross Drive and heads uphill into the forest.
- The trail will come out at the back of the Horse Center.
- Follow the parking lot out and the Horse Center will be on your left with the Nature Center on your right.

Total distance covered is about 1.5 miles

Nature Center Trail



A = Nature Center

B = Fort DeRussy

C = Milkhouse Ford

D = Horse Center

This trail was created by
the Boy Scouts of Troop 90

Enjoy a quiet wooded trail,
explore a Civil War earthwork,
wade across Rock Creek at
Milkhouse Ford and pet horses
at the stables.

All of these experiences and
more are available along

The Nature Center Trail



A 1.5 mile moderately strenuous hike
from the Nature Center
down to Rock Creek and back.



Nature Center

Stroll into the Nature Center to learn more about this fascinating park nestled in the middle of Washington DC. A beautiful exhibit hall introduces you to many of the plants and animals you may encounter along the trail. The Nature Center also contains live animals native to the Park, a discovery room for small children and the only planetarium in the National Park Service.

Don't forget to pick up a monthly guide to Park Ranger led programs.

Fort DeRussey

Constructed on one of the highest peaks in Washington, D.C., Fort DeRussey assisted in protecting the capital city from a Confederate attack July 11th -12th 1864. Imagine standing on the fort during that raid! With all of the nearby trees were removed, you would have been able to see the Washington Monument to the south and nearby Fort Stevens to the northeast.

The raid, led by General Jubal Early, was focused on Fort Stevens. Fort DeRussey, manned by the 4th New York Heavy Artillery, contributed supporting fire with its mortars, and devastating anti-troop fire with its 100-pounder Parrot rifle.

Milkhouse Ford

Picture horse drawn carriages pulling cargo across the river during the early 1800s. Before bridges were built, shallow river crossings like Milkhouse Ford connected communities and businesses. Today, it is one of the last remaining fords across Rock Creek.

Due to environmental concerns, Milkhouse Ford closed to vehicular traffic in the early 1990s. Many people still walk or bike across the ford, especially on hot summer days.

Notes: Due to dangerous currents, please do not cross the ford just after a rainstorm or if the water looks exceeding high. If you do cross, please keep your shoes on. Algae makes it very slippery.



Horse Center

The Horse Center brings out the child in everyone. Simply watch the horses in one of the three corrals or ask handlers if you may pet or help feed one. In addition, horses may be rented for guided trail rides and lessons. The Horse Center also boards many privately owned horses.

Most of the trails developed within Rock Creek Park were created for horseback riding as well as hiking. In fact, President Theodore Roosevelt used to ride his horse along these same trails.

History of Rock Creek Park

Set aside when the city was just beginning to grow, Rock Creek Park contains over 2,000 acres, 1,500 of which are natural forest growth. On September 27, 1890, it was added to the National Park Service, making it the largest and oldest urban natural National Park.

Rock Creek Park continues to serve as a refuge; not only an essential habitat for animals, but also a place of solitude for people. Time appears to slow down in the Park; in certain places, the busy city seems to vanish; the sound is lost in the trees. With a variety of natural, cultural and recreational opportunities, there is something for everyone at Rock Creek Park.



Please help us continue to keep Rock Creek Park clean and beautiful for generations to come. Please recycle this trail guide when you are finished. Thank You.