

Equiery Readers' Top Park Picks to Trail Ride



Kurt Pluckhorn

The Equiery recently conducted a survey asking readers which of the many Maryland parks they have ridden in. There are over 100 Maryland parks with equestrian trails and we were delighted to see that every park on our list had been visited by at least one person. We also learned about two more parks in Maryland that offer equestrian trails.

Our full list of Maryland public equestrian trails is on page XX. Here we reveal our readers' top 10 most popular parks.

The Survey

We generated our list of 104 public parks from the Maryland Horse Industry Board's "Maryland Horse Trails" guide, which was last updated in 2014. To that list we added King's Landing Park in Calvert County and the Agricultural History Farm Park in Montgomery County based on survey input. This brings our master list of public equestrian trails in Maryland to 106 parks.

The majority of the people who responded to our survey were from Carroll County (16.8%), followed by Montgomery County (15.8%) and Harford County (9.9%). We also had seven respondents who are not Maryland residents but who nevertheless enjoy our extensive trail system.

Additional Comments

At the end of the survey, we asked participants for additional comments about their trail riding experiences in Maryland public parks. Responses varied but many of them revolved around loose dogs and congestion with hikers and people on bikes. Many of the public trails on this list are multi-use trails and to help navigate the dos and don'ts of trail riding on multi-use trails, we have printed the Maryland Horse Council's "Trail Etiquette & Safety Guidelines" on page XX of this issue.

Another common theme of the survey responses was surprise at how many trails offer equestrian access. We hope this issue of *The Equiery* will help spread the word. More information on Maryland's trails and various trails-related links can be found on equiery.com.

Are you up for a state-wide trails challenge? Pack your trailer and load up your horse for *The Equiery's* Trails Challenge. See page XX for details!

Top 10 Parks for Trail Riding

#1 Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area



Katherine O. Rizzo

Almost half of our survey respondents have ridden at Fair Hill, making it the top pick on our public trails list. Fair Hill offers 80-miles of trails on over 5,656 acres of preserved land in Cecil County.

The park is managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and offers camping sites, overnight stabling, rest rooms with showers, and electric hook up.

Fair Hill is also home to the Cecil County Fair, horse trials, horse shows, steeplechase races, and for the first time next month, the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill three-day event.

#2 Patapsco Valley State Park/McKeldin Area



Katherine O. Rizzo

The second most popular park among our respondents was the McKeldin Area of Patapsco Valley State Park, in Carroll County. The McKeldin Area is where the main branch and south branch of the

Patapsco River join to create rapids along the south branch that can be seen from the Rapid Trail. The rocks in the McKeldin Falls are Baltimore Gneiss and they carbon date to over 1.1 billion years ago, some of the oldest rock outcroppings in our area.

#3 Morgan Run Natural Environment Area



Katie Brown

Morgan Run, also in Carroll County, was the third most popular park to trail ride in according to our survey participants. This area has 11 miles of trails over 1,400 acres, maintained by

MHC-member association the Carroll County Equestrian Council. Morgan Run is a trout catch-and-release area, and some areas are re-

stricted wetlands. Please check park boards at the trail heads before heading out on the trails.

#4 Gunpowder Falls State Park/Graham Equestrian Center



Graham Equestrian Center

With over 20 miles of trails to explore, this 18,000-acre Baltimore County section of the Gunpowder Falls park, run by Maryland DNR, took the number four spot on our list.

The Graham Equestrian Center, which is located within this section of Gunpowder Falls does not offer guided trail rides or horse rentals to the public however, so to enjoy the park, you must bring your own horse and contact GEC before arriving.

#5 Gunpowder Falls State Park/Sweet Air



Nicole Martin

The Sweet Air section of Gunpowder Falls State Park straddles the Little Gunpowder Falls between Harford and Baltimore counties. The Sweet Air area offers 18 miles of trails spread over

1,250 acres of natural terrain.

Horseback riding is allowed on all trails in the park except for the Cody Jean and Red Dot Trails.

#6 Rosaryville State Park



Jenna Nuth

Sitting in the number six position is Rosaryville State Park in Prince George's County. The 982-acre park is managed by Maryland DNR and holds 10 miles of trails. Rosaryville is rich in Maryland history with structures dating back to the original Calvert family.

The park is also home to the Marlborough Horse Trials, hunter paces and fox hunting and other activities.

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Equiery Readers' Top Park Picks to Trail Ride, continued...

#7 Little Bennett Regional Park

Little Bennett Regional Park is run by Montgomery County Parks and was the seventh most popular park according to our survey participants. The park is spread over 3,700 acres

with over 20 miles of trails. Little Bennett is one of the few parks in Maryland where you can go camping with your horse!

The trails at Little Bennett range from open fields to wooded paths and take visitors around a lake and past various historic sites. There are multiple trailer parking areas with access to various trails.



TROT photo

Howard and Montgomery counties and is 6,700 acres with over 25 miles of trails. According to our survey participants, the Howard County section gets more use with 28 people saying they trail ride there as opposed to 15 in the Montgomery County section.

Trail heads can be found from parking areas at Long Corner, Mullinix Mill, Route 94, Hipsley Mill, Howard Chapel and Route 97 road crossings over the river.

#9 Schooley Mill Park



TROT photo

Schooley Mill Park, run by Howard County Parks, is the smallest park to make our top 10 list with only 5 miles of trails over 192 acres. However, over 25% of those who took the survey stated they

have ridden in this park! The park offers a mix of woodland trails and meadow paths and a small cross-country jump course.

Schooley Mill also has a sand arena and two smaller schooling rings. The park is home to several horse shows including those organized by *Equiery* advertiser Potomac Valley Dressage Association.

#10 Patapsco Valley State Park/Avalon Area



Tracy Adams

The Avalon Area of the Patapsco Valley State Park is located in Baltimore County and rounds out our top 10 list. Maintained by Maryland DNR, the park has 20 miles of trails over 16,043 acres. This

section of Patapsco links to Rockburn Branch Park in Howard County, which has an additional 5 miles of trails to explore.

The Avalon area has picnic shelters, a visitor's center (currently closed for renovation) and access to the Orange Grove area of Patapsco.

For a full list of public parks in Maryland you can trail ride in, see page XX of this issue!

And don't forget to help protect and maintain our trails by joining one of the MHC trails and open space groups featured on page XX.

Find helpful links about Maryland's trails on equiery.com!

#8 Patuxent River State Park/Annapolis Rock Road

The Annapolis Rock Road section of the Patuxent River State Park is located in Howard County. The entire Patuxent River State Park crosses between



Katherine O. Rizzo