

Billy Goat-A

Trail Head Information

- Section A of the Billy Goat Trail (1.75 miles) is a rugged and challenging hike with multiple rock scrambles and steep sections, and is considered the most strenuous urban hike on the east coast of the United States.
- Section B is a moderate hike (1.4 miles), and Section C is a fairly easy walk (1.6 miles).
- BGT-A traverses Bear Island, one of the most biologically diverse areas in the country, with over 60 rare and endangered species of plants and 40 more plants found only at in this location in Maryland. Topography, geography and regular flood events have created this rare and fragile habitat. The National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy jointly own and manage Bear Island.
 - Hikers are urged to lessen their impact by remaining on the **blue blazed trail** to help preserve the uniqueness of the island and the trail for future generations of hikers.
 - Hiking on the island is prohibited (subject to fine) when the trail is closed due to flooding.
- Absolutely no dogs are permitted on BGT-A, subject to fine by law enforcement.
- People who are afraid of heights or have balance issues should consider a different hike.
- In addition to answering questions, it is useful to greet visitors as they approach the trailhead.
 - Remind them to **follow the blue blazes and stay on the trail**. Informing them of the diverse and fragile nature of Bear Island can be done quickly, and is effective in getting people to stay on the trail. This is especially important on busy, crowded days.
 - A suggested approach would be: "Hi, I just want you to know that the trail is very crowded today, and we are asking for everyone's help in preserving Bear Island by following the blue blazes and staying on the trail. We appreciate your patience in places there may be a brief wait, but every step off-trail destroys rare and endangered species of plant life."
- You may see people who appear to be inappropriately dressed for the hike (especially unsuitable footwear), who do not seem to be carrying water, who are carrying a small child, or in some other way don't seem prepared for such a strenuous hike.
 - A good approach is "Have you hiked this trail before?" If yes, then they likely know what they are doing. If no, then take the opportunity to explain the rigorous nature of this trail (point out photo of Traverse on board).
- People with dogs should be intercepted with an explanation of the rules, and be offered a trail map with suggestions for alternative hikes (e.g., BGT-B, Gold Mine, Berma Road, etc.)
- Distances
 - BGT-A is 1.75 miles long
 - The Visitor Center is 0.5 miles from the upstream BGT-A trailhead
 - Upstream BGT-A trailhead to Emergency Exit is 0.6 miles
 - Upstream BGT-A trailhead to downstream BGT-A trailhead is about 1.1 miles
 - Walking one direction on BGT-A trail and returning to the starting trailhead on the towpath is a loop of about 2.8 miles
 - Hiking ROUND TRIP--one direction on the BGT-A and the other direction on the towpath--is approximately 4.5 miles from EITHER the Visitors Center OR Anglers.
 - The distance between the Visitors Center and Anglers via the towpath is 2 miles
 - Downstream BGT-A trailhead to the bridge at Anglers is 0.4 miles, and 0.5 miles to upstream BGT-B trailhead (at mile 12.3)

Milepost	Description
14.30	Great Falls Tavern Visitors Center
14.05	Great Falls Overlook - Olmsted Island
13.88	Mary's Wall
13.83	BGT-A upstream trailhead
13.20	Emergency Exit at towpath
12.69	BGT-A downstream trailhead
12.28	Anglers Bridge
12.27	BGT-B upstream trailhead
11.52	Marsden Tract Campground
11.44	BGT-B downstream trailhead
10.96	BGT-C upstream trailhead
9.92	BGT-C downstream trailhead