



WISSAHICKON TRAILS

CONNECTING LAND,
WATER & PEOPLE

Walk the Wissahickon

Green Ribbon Trail Accessibility Information & Hike Descriptions*

This document provides a detailed description about the Green Ribbon Trail that is managed by Wissahickon Trails starting at Parkside Place in Upper Gwynedd, ending at Skippack Pike in Fort Washington at the entrance to Fort Washington State Park.

Miles 0-5

Parkside Place to Penllyn Woods - 8, 14, and 21-mile hikes

General Information

Trail Surface: Asphalt; hard-packed dirt with sections of embedded rocks (some up to 6" tall); gravel; exposed roots and rocks; wooden bridges/boardwalks; mowed grass; **one very steep section with exposed roots and no guardrails above creek**; short stretches of concrete; two areas with medium to large boulders that must be navigated. Note the wooden bridges/boardwalks can become very slippery if wet.

Grade: Generally less than 5%, but with a few areas with maximum inclines or 15-25%.

Infrastructure and Creek Crossings:

4 stepping stone crossings across the creek; multiple wooden bridges and boardwalks of varying lengths, some with steps up and some with wooden or earthen ramps; wooden steps.

Detailed Hike Description

The 8, 14, and 21 mile hikes all begin at Parkside Place. For the first few minutes, the trail is on asphalt, then it turns to a mowed grass path with some patches of dirt/mud/embedded and loose gravel. The trail then turns into the woods and there are several boardwalks/ one small bridge over seasonally muddy areas and a small stream. The first set of stepping stones is roughly .75 miles in and consists of 9 cement stepping stones embedded in the creek bottom. Getting to the stepping stones requires a short scramble down large,

irregularly-shaped rocks. On the other side, 10 wooden steps with a handrail bring trail users back up to the trail surface.

The trail continues to be mowed grass/packed dirt, with 3 wooden boardwalks/bridges (each with earthen ramps on and off) before crossing North Wales Rd.

After North Wales Rd. the trail crosses the creek at the Memorial Crossing, where there are 18 cement stepping stones embedded in the creek bottom, and another four reasonably flat but not totally stable large rocks across the creek. To get to them from the trail on either side is a hard-packed dirt trail with less than 5% slope. Note that three of the cement stepping stones have some tilt, although they do not shift underfoot. On the south side of the creek there is a large chicken wire layer over the trail bed/rocks, which is there to assist with keeping the rocks in place but sometimes lifts higher than the trail surface and can be a tripping hazard.

Trail continues as mowed grass/packed dirt with several more small bridges and boardwalks before arriving at the 1.5 mile marker. The trail then crosses the creek once more at the Merck Crossing, where 7 concrete stepping stones embedded in the creek bottom and one large boulder acting as a stepping stone on the southern end. The trail has a large gravel surface that leads down to the crossing at less than 5% grade on the north side, and on the south side the large gravel trail has a 15% incline.

The trail surface continues to be packed dirt with roots and rocks and after the Merck crossing, it rises gently and follows the side of a slope above the creek. There are no guard rails here and lots of roots in this short section. The trail then crosses an access road to the Upper Gwynedd Wastewater Treatment plant at the 2-mile marker and continues briefly through a meadow before reentering the woods, where there are more boardwalks/bridges and short stretches of gravel. The trail then crosses Swedesford Rd (here, there there will be snacks, water, and porta-johns). It continues up a very short rise on the other side of Swedesford, then descends gradually again into the woods. There are stretches of gravel as well as dips and rises. Some areas have lots of roots and erosion to navigate, along with a few new wooden bridges/boardwalks and one new, 66-foot composite boardwalk just beyond the 2.5 mile marker. At roughly 3 miles, the trail comes out into an open meadow areas before going under Route 202 along a concrete "sidewalk" beside the Wissahickon Creek. Cars passing over the bridge overhead can be loud here. The trail then crosses over a small ditch with no bridge, then dips down and across a small stream with 4 steps down and a gradual soil slope on the other side.

From here, the trail goes through a heavily wooded section that can be muddy at times and gradually rises before leveling out. Just before the 3.5 mile marker, the trail dips down a gully/culvert lined with concrete and then passes an old chimney before going uphill with a small set of wooden steps without a handrail. **The trail surface becomes very irregular**

here and can be challenging to navigate, with 25% inclines and a significant cross slope with roots right next to a sudden drop off towards the creek. There are no handrails or safety barriers. After that, the trail bed is full of medium to large rocks, and a short scramble over large, rough boulders underneath a railroad bridge is required. The trail continues briefly on packed dirt and then merges with an asphalt road before crossing Plymouth Road.

After crossing Plymouth Road, the trail descends slightly toward the Wissahickon creek with a surface of large gravel that can shift underfoot. It then crosses the creek just before the 4-mile marker via 17 stepping stones, with 2-3 large boulders to get you to the stepping stones on both ends. From here, the trail follows a sewer line cut and then descends briefly over some large rocks and a concrete sidewalk under another railroad bridge. On the other side of the railroad overpass, the surface continues to be packed earth with some muddy areas with embedded gravel, roots, and larger rocks, and then a stretch of gravel used as an access road, before coming out at Penllyn Woods. At this point, walkers will follow the road to the 5 mile stopping point at Penllyn Woods Park.

Miles 5-8

Penllyn Wood to Four Mills Barn - 8, 14, 21, and 3 mile walks

General Information

Trail Surface: Asphalt; hard-packed dirt with sections of embedded rocks (some up to 6" tall); gravel; exposed roots and rocks; wooden bridges/boardwalks; mowed grass. Note the wooden bridges/boardwalks can become very slippery if wet.

Grade: Generally less than 5%, but with a few areas with maximum inclines of 15-25%.

Infrastructure and Creek Crossings:

1 Stepping stone crossing across the creek; multiple wooden bridges and boardwalks of varying lengths, some with steps up and some with wooden or earthen ramps; wooden steps down the creek crossing; 3 large, metal bridges with wooden decking and 10-14 steps on either end.

Detailed Hike Description

After a break for snacks, restrooms, and water, the 8, 14, and 21 mile hikers will be joined by the 3 mile hiker to continue on to the Four Mills Barn.

The first stretch of this section follows paved roadways through Penllyn Village before meeting the Green Ribbon Trail again. Once on the trail, the surface is again packed dirt with roots and rocks, and a couple of wooden bridges/boardwalks. There is roughly 20-25% ascent up a hill beside Cedarbrook Country Club near the 6 mile marker before the trail levels out and then descends more gradually through a heavily vegetated area with roots

and rocks, and several more wooden structures. It then joins with a paved road before re-entering the woods, where the surface returns to packed dirt with two bridges.

The trail then crosses a small stream over medium and large stones that can shift underfoot before crossing the Wissahickon Creek again at the Garden Club Crossing, which consists of 11 stepping stones embedded in the creek. Immediately after the stones, the trail ascends up 4 steps to get you back up to level ground, then continues through a wooded area before crossing Mt. Pleasant Avenue. At this point, the trail has many embedded and loose rocks of varying sizes as well as roots. It is flat, with few muddy areas until it reaches and crosses Butler Pike just after the 7-mile marker.

After crossing Butler Pike, the trail continues down a sewer line with small loose/embedded gravel before coming to a large, metal bridge with wooden decking and with 10-14 steps on either side. There are 42" high safety barriers on both sides and handrails on both sets of steps. The wooden decking can be slippery when wet. After the bridge the trail turns to the right and continues beside the Wissahickon as a packed dirt trail with roots and rocks, and some areas with washed up gravel (from flooding), along with four short boardwalks that each have a 3-5" step up and down. At the 8 mile marker, walkers will go up and across two more large, metal bridges similar to the first one, with 10-14 steps on either end of each. After the second bridge, the trail meets the parking lot at Four Mills Barn,

Participants will stop for lunch. The 3 and 8 mile hikers will be picked up by busses after lunch and taken back to Parkside Place, while the 14 and 21 mile hikers continue on.

Miles 8-11

Four Mills Barn to Skippack Pike - 14 and 21 mile hikes

General Information

Trail Surface: hard-packed dirt with sections of loose and embedded rocks (some up to 6" tall); gravel/crushed stone; exposed roots and rocks; wooden bridges/boardwalks; mowed grass; asphalt; brick path. Note the wooden bridges/boardwalks can become very slippery if wet.

Grade: Generally less than 5%, but with a few areas with maximum inclines of 15-25%.

Infrastructure and Creek Crossings:

2 long and 1 short stepping stone crossings across the creek; multiple wooden bridges and boardwalks of varying lengths, some with steps up and some with wooden ramps; 2 sets of wooden stairs down to creek crossings – one with short steps roughly 5" high, one with high steps roughly 12" high; 2 large, metal bridges with wooden decking and 10-14 steps. One steep ladder that requires holding handles on either side and pulling yourself up while stepping up.

Detailed Hike Description

From the Four Mills Barn (mile 8), the trail continues after crossing back over the same two, large metal bridges and then turns right to continue along the creek. This is a very root-heavy section, flat and relatively narrow, with several more wooden bridges/boardwalks with 3'5" steps up and off. The trail dips down and crosses a small stream via four concrete slabs that serve as stepping stones before going back up a few feet. The trail surface on either side of this small crossing can be slick when wet and has a roughly 20% incline.

After this crossing the trail continues with sections of roots and rocks, and at times very muddy areas before reaching the Wissahickon, where the trail descends to the creek via 3 large, gravel-filled steps (roughly 5-8" high) and crosses at the Rose-Rubenstein stepping stone crossing. This crossing has 20 concrete stones embedded in the creek, some of which are dislodged and tilted, but which do not move underfoot. At the end of the crossing, there is a steep ladder that can swing toward you (to prevent breaking during flooding events) which must be used to climb back up to the level of the trail from the creek. This requires holding on to the handles on either side and using some upper body strength while going up the steps. The ladder connects to a short wooden boardwalk attached to the creek bank. The trail continues from this structure and is again packed dirt, with areas of fairly embedded gravel, roots and rocks, muddy spots, and wooden bridges/boardwalks, with some short ascents of roughly 20% slope before meeting Morris Road.

The trail crosses Morris Road and enters Germantown Academy's Carey Stadium parking area. It crosses through the parking lot and connects briefly with a section of a brick path beside a wetland before returning to an asphalt path that crosses over the Wissahickon via a bridge. The trail then turns back into the woods and becomes a dirt trail again at the 9 mile marker. From here, the trail continues along the creek and through potentially muddy areas, with one boardwalk, before crossing Lafayette Avenue. This crossing can be difficult given the speed of the roadway and the sightlines.

After crossing Lafayette, the trail briefly down a paved asphalt access road, then becomes packed dirt once more. Just before the 9.5 mile marker, the trail descends to the creek down 10, (approximately 4-12" high) wooden steps. The trail then continues across the creek via 17 concrete stepping stones. The other side of the crossing consists of a gradual, dirt rise of just a few feet and the trail continues as before, with areas of potential mud, roots, rocks, and wooden structures. Nearing the 10-mile marker, the trail runs underneath the Turnpike overpass where there are medium-large rocks that must be navigated and which can shift underfoot. The trail is somewhat sandier beyond this point from flooding deposits before becoming dirt again. It remains flat until a brief 25-30% slope up to Skippack Pike. After crossing the road, the trail turns to the right and you must go over a guardrail to enter Fort Washington State Park. **This is where Wissahickon Trails' management of the Green Ribbon ends.**

If you have a question about the trail and accessibility, please reach out to Margaret Rohde, Wissahickon Trails Conservation Manager, at margaret@wissahickontrails.org.

**Please note that these trail descriptions were accurate when assessed by a standing person with a mobility disability in September and October 2023. Like any structure in the outdoors, trail conditions are subject to change with weather conditions, after floods, and with the growing seasons, among other factors. Please use these descriptions as a guide, and always use your best judgement when determining if a trail is right for you. Trail users assume all risk. Access Birding, LLC cannot be held responsible if trail conditions change and these descriptions are no longer accurate, or for any injury that occurs as a result of using Wissahickon Trails' preserves.*
