

## **Rock Creek Park, Thompson Boat Center**

The Thompson Boat Center in Rock Creek National Park. It's right on the paved Rock Creek hiker-biker trail but also close to five other major trails which are outside the park. By foot, you can reach the: Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal Towpath, Capital Crescent Trail, Glover Archbold Trail, Custis Trail, and the Mount Vernon Trail. In addition, it's within easy reach of The Mall. Boats and bicycles can be rented at the boathouse. Some local high school and university crew teams base their training at the boathouse. Parking, just off Rock Creek Parkway across from the infamous Watergate complex, is limited so arrive early.

### **Getting There**

#### From Montgomery County, Maryland (except evening weekdays)

Exit the Capital Beltway (I-95), at the River Road (Rte. 190) and Cabin John Parkway exit, onto the Cabin John Parkway. The Cabin John Parkway merges onto the southbound Clara Barton Parkway after 1.3 miles. At the Chain Bridge intersection, 3.3 miles later, the road changes its name to Canal Road. This intersection also is as far as you can go southbound during evening rush hour, because during that time, traffic is one way northbound, leaving D.C. (cut through the city or see directions from northern Fairfax County below to get there during evening rush hour). Continuing on, bear right after 2.6 miles onto M Street, taking care not to stay in the right turn only lane for the Whitehurst Freeway. After 0.9 miles, turn right onto Wisconsin Avenue. Turn left at the bottom of the hill onto Water Street (under the Whitehurst Freeway). Bear right at the end of Water Street onto the Rock Creek Parkway, then turn right at the traffic light into the Boat Center parking.

#### From Northern Fairfax County, Virginia

Exit the Capital Beltway onto the George Washington Parkway. Go southbound for 8.5 miles to Francis Scott Key Bridge. After crossing the bridge into Georgetown, turn right on M Street. One third of a mile later, turn right on Wisconsin Avenue. Turn left at the bottom of the hill onto Water Street (under the Whitehurst Freeway). Bear right at the end of Water Street onto the Rock Creek Parkway, then turn right at the traffic light into the Boat Center parking.

#### From Southern Fairfax County, Virginia

Exit the Capitol Beltway, I-95, northbound onto Henry G. Shirley Highway (I-395). After approximately 9.5 miles, take the left exit just before the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridges, northbound onto the George Washington Parkway. Stay in the left lanes and follow the signs to Arlington Memorial Bridge. After crossing Memorial bridge, bear right on the clover leaf ramp to Rock Creek Potomac Parkway. Stay in the left most lanes through several twisting and branching intersections. After 1 mile, passing under the Kennedy Center and then passing the Watergate on the right, turn left into the Boat Center parking lot.

### From Prince Georges County, Maryland

Use the Capital Beltway (I-95), to get to Rte. 50 west or I-295 north. From either, take the westbound Southeast Freeway (I-395) after 11 miles or approximately 6 miles respectively. After 0.9 or 2.75 on the Southeast Freeway respectively, bear right onto Main Avenue. Main Avenue merges onto Independence Avenue at the Tidal Basin. Just before the underpass for Memorial Bridge, Independence Avenue becomes the Rock Creek Potomac Parkway; this is 1.4 miles after the exit from I-395. Once on the Rock Creek Potomac Parkway. Stay in the left most lanes through several twisting and branching intersections. Follow the Rock Creek Parkway 1.1 miles, You will pass under the Kennedy Center and then the Watergate complex on the right. Turn left into the Thompson Boat Center parking lot.

### By Metro Rail

Ride metro rail's Blue or Orange lines to Foggy Bottom station then walk or run around Washington Circle onto Pennsylvania Avenue, heading toward Georgetown. After crossing on the bridge over the Rock Creek Parkway, turn left on the connecting asphalt path to the Rock Creek Trail. Turn right on the trail to the Thompson Boat Center parking. The total distance from the station is 0.8 miles.

## **Area Routes**

### Georgetown Loop (5.45 miles, IV)

From the intersection of the Thompson Boat Center parking entrance and the Rock Creek Trail, take the paved Rock Creek Trail northward, under the Whitehurst Freeway. After only 0.2 miles a red brick trail on the left marks the beginning of the C&O Canal Towpath. The towpath continues 184.5 miles west to Cumberland, MD. Continuing past the towpath, the Rock Creek Trail is initially somewhat narrow and close to the busy Rock Creek Parkway. Daffodils bloom abundantly in early spring on the grassy and sunny hillsides. The trail widens after the P Street underpass. The Devils Chair bridge near Oak Hill Cemetery brings the trail to the east (right) bank of the Rock Creek. The rocky and hilly cemetery is both gothic and beautiful. Many of the cities arteries pass over the Rock Creek valley. Look for the detail on the Q Street bridge which has casts of American Indian faces on it. Others like the Massachusetts Avenue bridge are arched in a manner common to many of Washington's older structures. Watch the other bank on the left side of the Rock Creek for part of the return loop. At the Shoreham Hill Bridge, 0.8 miles after the Devils Chair Bridge, the trail crosses the Rock Creek again. Immediately after the bridge, on the left is the turnaround/trail head for the Parkway Trail. It's unpaved but wide with good footing (see the description for Dumbarton Oaks loop in the Rock Creek Park, Pierce Mill section of this guide).

Partway up the hill at the end of the Parkway Trail, is Lover's Lane. The once cobblestone street is now asphalt on one end and dirt on the other. It connects Massachusetts Avenue with R Street and is closed to traffic. It's also off-limits to people, even lovers, at dark. Turn left up Lover's Lane 0.15 miles to R Street. The way through Georgetown town is on sidewalks and known as the Montrose Connector (it connects Montrose Park and Glover Archbold Park). It passes houses more typical of an earlier Washington D.C. Pass Dumbarton Oaks mansion, the Duke Ellington

School of the Arts, Georgetown University and the Embassy of France along the connector. The tree covered and dirt Glover Archbold Trail descends to the Crescent Trail. Follow the Crescent Trail along the Potomac River to its end at Water Street; under the Whitehurst Freeway. Continue on Water St. until you can bear right at the Wisconsin Avenue intersection to Washington Harbor. Follow along the river on the boardwalk back to Thompson Boat Center.

#### Fletchers Boathouse (6.05 or 2.6 miles, IV or II)

From the intersection of the Thompson Boat Center parking entrance and the Rock Creek Trail, take the paved Rock Creek Trail northward, under the Whitehurst Freeway. Quickly turn left after the freeway underpass onto the red brick C&O Canal Towpath. Follow up the C&O Canal Towpath past locks 1 through 4. The locks and canal are well maintained and for much of the year, mule drawn boat rides are available. After the locks, the trail is virtually level. If you have time, stop in at the C&O Canal Visitor Center, located on the towpath just after 30<sup>th</sup> Street. The brick surface ends soon after the Visitor Center and is replaced by crushed gravel and dirt. Continue on the north (right) side of the canal until just before the massive Key Bridge underpass. There, take the footbridge to cross to the other side of the canal. As you pass under Key Bridge, views of the river open up. The stone remains of the old aqueduct/canal that once carried water from Arlington into Georgetown are visible here. Also from here, the towpath begins to closely parallel the Capital Crescent Trail. Only a few trees and the higher elevation of the towpath separate the two trails. After a half mile, a ramp and stairs on the left mark the intersection of the Glover Archbold Trail, return point to the Capital Crescent Trail for the short loop. Continuing on, the towpath and the Crescent Trail get even closer together so that only a narrow grass strip and a vertical foot separate them. Finally, make a left hand U-turn at the foot bridge on the right that takes people from Abner Cloud House and Canal Rd. over the canal to Fletcher's Boathouse (the boathouse is on the left side, nearer the river). The park at Fletcher's Boathouse has water, restrooms, a snack bar, picnic areas and canoe rentals. It is also a training center for local rowing teams.

The return trip is on the paved Capital Crescent Trail. This trail is more preferred by cyclist and in-line skaters. The skaters in particular, favor the trail for its wide, flat and smooth, surface. Nice views of the Potomac River are to be seen. In the spring, wild Wisteria vines bloom on tall trees over the water. In the summertime, kayakers paddle around the Three Sisters Island rocks and boaters sunbath on their decks. After the trail ends, follow Water Street under the Whitehurst Freeway to Washington Harbor and Thompson Boat Center, like the Georgetown Loop described above does.

#### Theodore Roosevelt Island From Washington (4.7, 6.3, or 3.15 miles, IV, V, or III)

Four pieces of history and enjoy commanding views over the Potomac River on this short loop within a loop. For the regular route, leave Thompson Boat Center on Virginia Ave., heading east. Check your stride in reflection in the windows of the posh shops on the ground floors of the infamous Watergate buildings. Later, cross in front of the J.F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. A trail along the freeway takes you up onto the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge which crosses into Virginia. The trail on the bridge is a little narrow but is pretty well guarded from the road (I-66). It drops down to join the Mt. Vernon Trail before arriving at the parking lot for Theodore Roosevelt Island.

The longer option starts at the boathouse parking but follows the Potomac River downstream. On the way it passes the J.F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Lincoln Memorial. Following the trail along the looping exit ramps, it avoids the worst intersections before crossing onto Columbia Island on Memorial Bridge. There are two busy intersections to cross before joining the Mt. Vernon Trail. The Mt. Vernon Trail links the longer option to Theodore Roosevelt Island parking.

From the parking lot, take the bridge across Little River (a fork of the Potomac) to the island. On the island are interpretive exhibits, the memorial to the President, and crushed gravel trails. Theodore Roosevelt believed in the need for wild places to challenge the soul and actively applied this policy himself. The island was once cleared of trees and farmed in the 1800's. In a fitting tribute, it is now wooded in the midst of city all around it. Park placards say it's now close to the way Captain John Smith saw it 400 years ago. To loop the island (it's 1.36 miles around by trail), one must use the Wood Trail, then the Swamp Trail to cross a wetland. Most of the way on along the Swamp Trail is on a boardwalk 2000ft. long. Though made of recycled plastic, it's a nice improvement from the muddy mess that the old trail used to be. In May in the wetland, see wild yellow irises and Red-Winged Blackbirds.

After the island (the shortest route skips the island completely), the paved Mt. Vernon trail crosses over the George Washington Parkway on a bridge before ending at Key Bridge. After crossing Key Bridge over the Potomac into Georgetown, turn right, down to the C&O Canal. Finish by using the Rock Creek Trail to return to Thompson's Boat Center.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

East Potomac Park & The Mall  
Iwo Jima Memorial  
Rock Creek Park, Pierce Mill

Battery Kemble Park  
Rock Creek Park, District of Columbia,  
Military Road

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

Viet Georgetown - Vietnamese food at great value - (202) 337-4536  
Sala Thai; Thai cuisine - (202) 872-1144  
The Burro; quick Mexican food - 202 483-6861  
Café Luna - pasta and pizza - (202) 387-4005  
Teaism - tea, dessert, and meals - 202 667-3827, 202 835-2233  
Fuzio - pasta - 202 986-5300  
The Tombs - sandwiches and dinners near Georgetown University - (202) 337-6668

#### Entertainment and Edification

Old Stone House; oldest standing building in Washington (1765); (9AM-5PM Wed-Sun); (202) 426-6851  
Dumbarton House - garden and mansion - (202) 337-2288  
Lincoln Memorial - 202 426-6895  
Vietnam Veteran Memorial - 202 634-1568  
Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts - (202) 467-4600  
Ford's Theatre - 202 426-5924

## Georgetown Loop

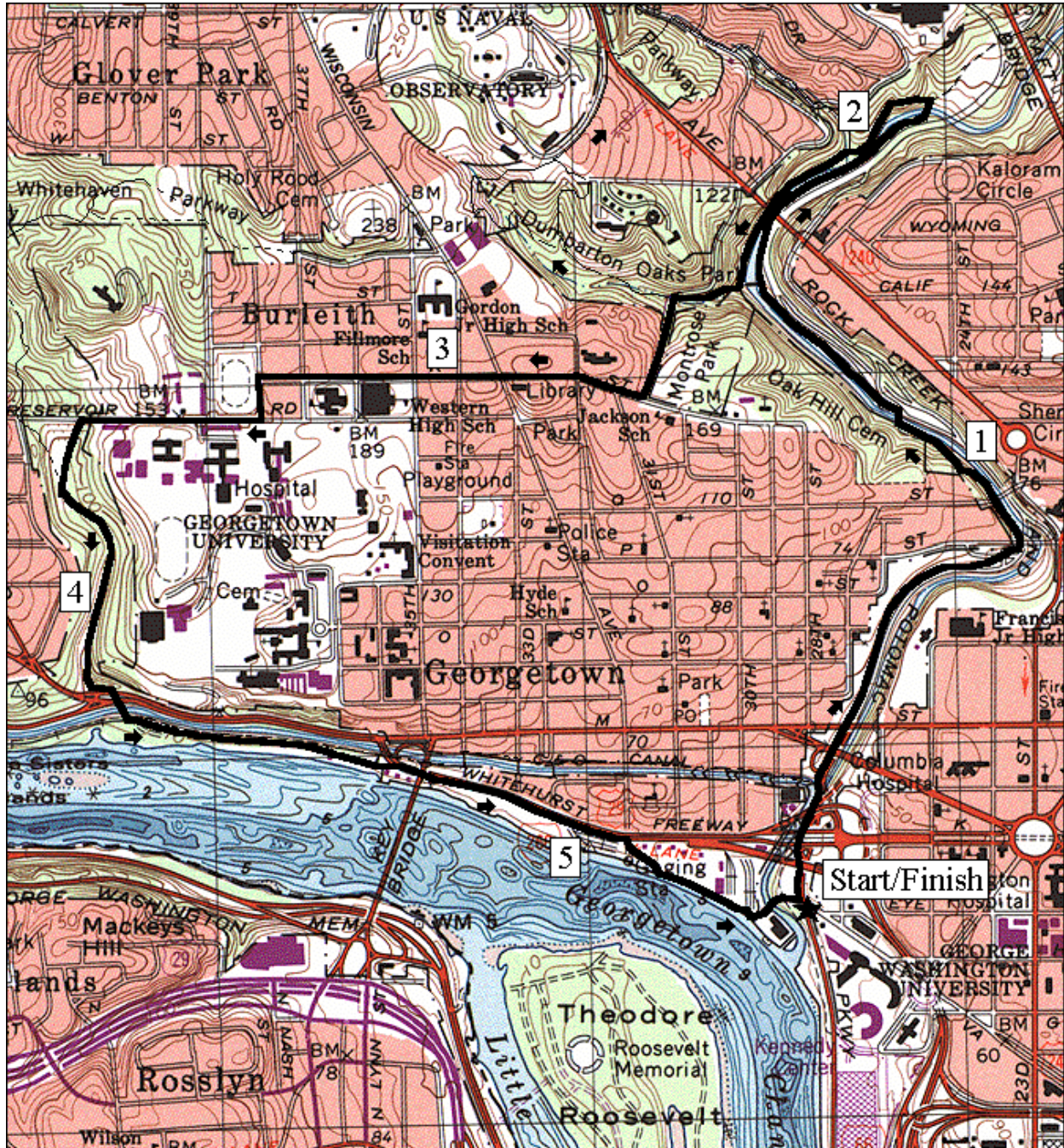
Distance: 5.45 miles

Rating: IV; paved hiker-biker trails; unpaved trails, city sidewalks

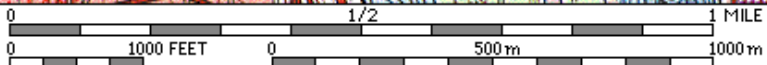
- L 0.0 from the parking lot on the Rock Creek Trail
- 0.1 underpass Whitehurst Freeway
- 0.2 C&O Canal Towpath on L
- 1.1 Devils Chair Bridge crosses Rock Creek
  
- L 1.85 immediately after Shoreham Hill Bridge crosses Rock Creek
  
- L 2.5 Lover's Lane (unmarked); just before Dumbarton Oaks Trail
  
- R 2.65 R St
  
- L 3.3 38<sup>th</sup> St at T
  
- CR 3.35 Reservoir Rd at T
  
- BL 3.65 onto grassy trail/field; down into Glover Archbold Park
  
- BL 3.75 Glover Archbold Trail (blue blazed)
  
- L/R 4.15 after trestle bridge underpass; down the stairs before MacArthur Blvd to the old tunnel (6.5' head clearance) to stay on trail
  
- L 4.25 Crescent Trail
  
- S 4.6 trail ends; continue on Water St
  
- BR 5.1 at Wisconsin Ave X on L; Harbor Parking on R; through park to wooden dock at river
  
- L 5.35 before Thompson Boat Center; bridge crosses Rock Creek
  
- 5.45 Rock Creek Trail & parking



# Georgetown Loop



MN ↑ TN  
10 1/2°



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## **Fletcher's Boathouse**

Distance: 6.05 or 2.6 miles

Rating: IV or II; paved trails and gravel towpath; shady with excellent views

### **6.05 Mile Route**

L 0.0 from the parking lot on the Rock Creek Trail  
0.1 underpass Whitehurst Freeway

L 0.2 C&O Canal Towpath on L  
0.4 C&O Canal Visitor Center (water, restrooms)

L/R 0.65 cross canal on bridge at T

<\*

1.9 C&O towpath mile marker 2

UL 3.1 onto Capital Crescent Trail at ramp nearest Fletcher's Boathouse (water, food, restrooms)

3.45 Crescent Trail mile marker 8.5

3.95 Crescent Trail mile marker 9

4.85 Glover Archbold Trail on L (see tunnel)

>\*

S 5.2 trail ends; continue on Water St

BR 5.7 at Wisconsin Ave X on L; Harbor Parking on R; through the park to the wooden dock

L 5.95 before Thompson Boat Center; cross Rock Creek

6.05 Rock Creek Trail & parking

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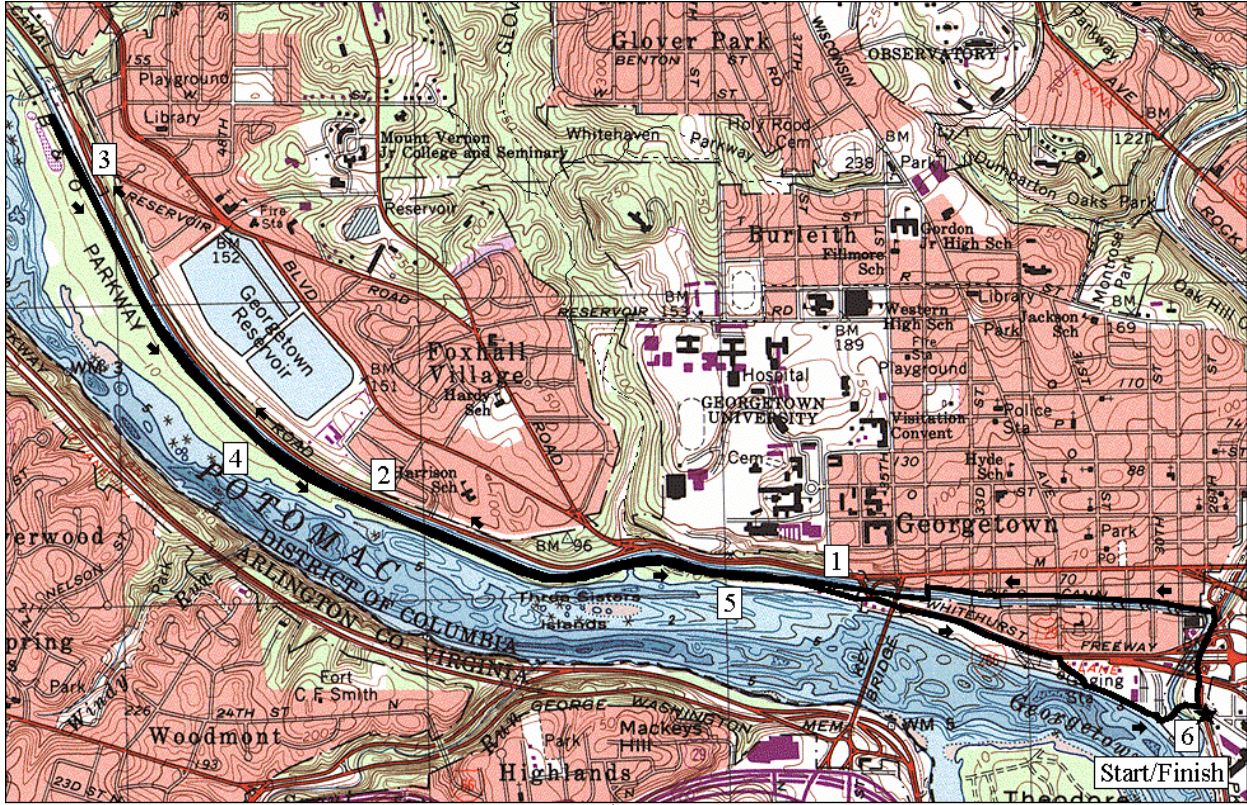
### **\*2.6 Mile Route**

L 1.4 ramp and stairs down to Glover Archbold Trail

L 1.4 sharp left onto Capital Crescent Trail (pickup cues at mile 5.2 on 6.05 mile route)



# Fletcher's Boathouse



MN  
10 1/2° TN

0 1000 FEET 0 500m 1000m  
1/2 MILE

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## Roosevelt Island from Washington D.C.

Distance: 4.7, 6.3, or 3.15 miles

Rating: IV, V, or III; paved and crushed gravel trails along the Potomac; many bridges

### 4.7 and 3.15 Mile Route

		2.1	trail X on L to Lookout Pt
<*		BL 2.5	at trail X on R to river; Upland Trail on L just ahead
0.0	from parking cross the Rock Creek Parkway at the light onto Virginia Ave	L 2.65	trail X before river
BR 0.2	traffic circle	R 2.85	to bridge into Virginia
CR 0.25	New Hampshire Ave	R 2.95	Mt. Vernon Trail (parking)
0.35	F Street (go S up hill toward the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts)	>***	
BL 0.5	trail X on L (after Kennedy Center on R; the trail crosses the hwy exit ramp for entrance to parking then goes to Roosevelt Bridge)	3.15	Heritage Trail on R before ramp/bridge over GW Pkwy
1.3	Mt Vernon Trail merges from R	R 3.35	Lynn St; to Key Bridge into Georgetown, DC (Custis Trail is S)
>*, <***		R 3.8	trail X on R after Key Bridge
R 1.4	bridge to Roosevelt Island (parking)	R/L 3.85	down stairs to ramp & canal; do not cross the canal; L on towpath
R 1.5	at T after crossing bridge	4.3	Visitor Center on L (water/restroom)
L/R 1.55	L at trail X on R; R at memorial on L	R 4.45	Rock Creek Trail at T
1.75	trail X on R (unmarked)	R 4.7	Thompson Boat Center parking
1.85	Upland Trail on L (water/restroom)		
1.9	bridge underpass and trail X on R; plastic boardwalk ahead is Swamp Trail		

### \*6.3 Mile Route

		L 1.25	Lincoln Circle
R 0.0	trail X on R along river toward Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts	L 1.35	Memorial Bridge
0.6	Rte 50/I-66 underpass	1.8	trail X on R from Arl Cemetery; dangerous exit ramp X ahead (!)
XS 0.65	at NW Parkway X; continue S toward Lincoln Memorial	BL 1.9	trail X; R is toward Pentagon
		CL 2.0	cross GW Pkwy (!) onto Mt Vernon Trail
		2.2	underpass Memorial Bridge (! narrow)
L 0.9	Lincoln Circle; continue bearing L following trail down clover ramp	2.6	bridge over Boundary Channel
1.05	underpass NW Parkway	2.7	underpass Rte. 50
1.15	underpass Memorial Bridge; follow clover ramp up to Lincoln Circle	BR 2.95	at trail X (pickup cues at mile 1.4 on 4.7 mile route)

Roosevelt Island from Washington D.C.

