

LAUREL RIVER TRAIL

3.66 Miles One Way - 7.2 Miles Round Trip - Bicycle Trail

Moderate Hike with very little elevation change

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Directions to Trailhead: Drive from the city limits of Greeneville toward Asheville, NC on SR70 locally called the Asheville Highway. At the state line the road becomes NC 208. After driving 24 miles you will reach a junction with highway US 25-70. Continue straight at the Intersection and park in the large lot on your right next to the Laurel River.

From the trailhead on the upper (left) side of the parking lot, hike downhill through a wooded area with the Laurel River on your right and below the trail. You will pass by an old railroad caboose and passenger car on private property above the trail on the left. After descending about a quarter mile you will reach a junction with a gravel road. Turn right here and continue along the road which passes several houses. This is a private road for the occupants of these houses and hikers are allowed to use this road for walking but it cannot be used for vehicle traffic except in case of emergency. After covering about three fourth of a mile this gravel road turns into a single track trail for the duration of the hike.



The road and trail follow the left bank of the beautiful Laurel River until its confluence with the French Broad is reached. This is a very popular trail and you will usually see trout fisherman, picnickers, swimmers, kayakers and hikers with dogs. Although the Laurel River Trail is considered a Bicycle Trail, it doesn't get a lot of cycling pressure except in the summertime. The trail is mainly flat but there are several very rocky sections and care must be taken if you decide to try it on a mountain bike. Laurel River is a great wintertime trail since the trailhead is on a major highway and is easy to reach.

After covering a total of about three miles you will reach the ruins of Runion, which at one time was a major logging town. Although it is very hard to believe judging from the present appearance, Runion and the nearby Stackhouse area was once the home of over 1000 loggers and their families.

Just past the ruins you will intersect with a trail going steeply uphill on your left. This is a connector to the railroad track and Stackhouse, an old railroad depot. Be sure not to take this trail on your return trip.

At mile 3.66, you will reach the end of the trail at the railroad tracks just adjacent to a small trestle that crosses the Laurel River just before it reaches the French Broad. You can continue past the tracks on a manway down to the French Broad floodplain. This manway (which is very rough and overgrown) between the railroad track and river can also be followed upstream to the Stackhouse with is about a mile away. If you want do to a one way hike, the easiest way is to walk on the tracks to the Stackhouse parking lot and be picked up by a prearranged shuttle. This parking lot is used as a pickup area for kayakers and commercial rafting companies.

If you have time for a seven mile hike, just return to the trailhead the way you came. Make sure to turn left just before reaching Runion as the main trail is very easy to miss here during the warm weather when the foliage is at it highest. If you find yourself going steeply uphill you have missed the trail.

When you are nearing the end of the hike and are on the wide gravel road passing the houses on the right, be sure to take the left fork which goes through the woods. This junction is not marked very well and many people have gone wrong here. If you are climbing steeply up a hill in an open area you have missed the trail to the parking lot.

SYNOPSIS OF HIKE

Mile	Elevation	Description
0	1646	Laurel River Trailhead on Hwy. 25-70.
.27	1610	Junction with gravel road. Continue to the right.
.78	1607	End of wide gravel road. Continue on single track.
2.91	1497	Ruins of the town of Runion.
3.05	1495	Spur trail to left. Continue straight ahead.
3.66	1445	End of Trail. JCT with Railroad Tracks.

