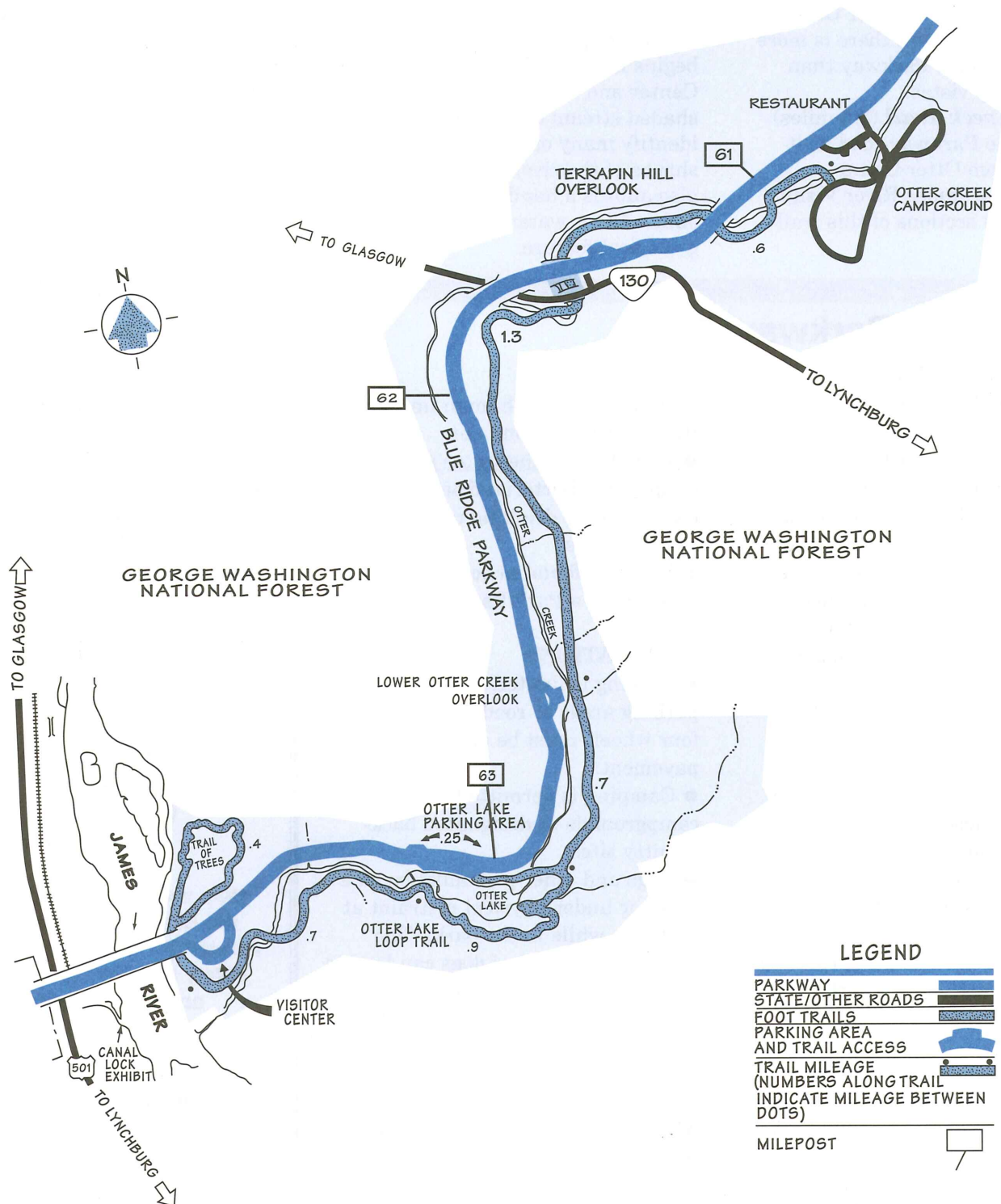


# Blue Ridge Parkway

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Otter Creek & James River Trails



# Otter Creek and James River Trails

As Otter Creek descends to the James River, the Blue Ridge Parkway dips to its lowest elevation—roughly 650 feet above sea level. This area's abundant water and warmer temperatures support plant and animal communities that are unlike those found at other areas on the Parkway. A short walk along the Trail of Trees or a hike along the clear, cool waters of Otter Creek will give ample proof that there is more to the Blue Ridge Parkway than mountain-top vistas.

**Otter Creek Trail** (3.5 miles) parallels the Parkway road as it stretches from Otter Campground to the James River Visitor Center. Most sections of this trail

are easy to hike and can be reached from many points along the motor road.

**Otter Lake Loop Trail** (0.9 miles) provides scenic views of Otter Lake. This is also a good trail for watching wildlife. Look for beaver lodges and dams along tributary streams. Early morning and late evening are prime times for wildlife observation.

**Trail of Trees** (0.4 miles) begins near the James River Visitor Center and wanders through a shaded stream drainage. Trail signs identify many of the trees and shrubs of the river valley. This trail also affords a handsome view of the James River water gap, a rare geological feature.

**Canal Lock Trail** (0.4 miles) begins at the Visitor Center and crosses the James River on a walkway built beneath the bridge. The restored Battery Creek Lock, located a short distance from the bridge, is typical of those constructed in the 1800s as part of the James River and Kanawha Canal. This canal, with nearly 100 locks, helped make the river a major transportation corridor before the Civil War. Exhibits at the Battery Creek site explain how locks were used to raise and lower boats to adjust for the changing elevation of the river.

## Blue Ridge Parkway Trails

### IMPORTANT ADVICE

- Lock valuables in the trunk of your car or take them with you.
- Hiking shoes or boots are recommended for most trails, especially for the more strenuous ones. Steep and rocky areas and slippery stream crossings require extra attention and careful footing. Even for trails marked "easy," it is advisable to wear flat or rubber-soled shoes for comfort and good traction. Wearing sandals, "flip-flops," or high heels can result in accidents.
- Sudden changes in weather are common in these mountains. Even in mild seasons, rapid dips in temperature and unexpected thunderstorms frequently occur, and at higher elevations the wind and temperature can carry a surprising chill. Be prepared for weather changes by bringing along suitable clothing.
- For your safety and the protection of the resources, stay on established trails. Shortcutting at switchbacks causes soil erosion, disfigures the trail, and makes it difficult for other hikers to find their way. Take advantage of log walkways, steps, or other trail construction. They are

there to minimize human impact on the natural environment.

- Do not drink the water in streams or springs. Bacterial diseases can be contracted by drinking untreated "wild" waters.
- Lost and found articles should be reported to a Park Ranger.

### REGULATIONS

- Parking is limited to designated parking areas or road shoulders. All four wheels must be off the pavement.
- Camping is permitted only in park campgrounds or designated back-country sites.
- Dogs and other pets must be on a leash or under physical restraint at all times while in the park. The territorial instinct of dogs can lead to fights with other dogs on the trail. Dogs also frighten hikers and chase wildlife.
- Deposit all litter in trash cans or recycling bins.
- Metal detectors are prohibited.
- Natural resources are protected by Federal law. Do not disturb animal and plant life in any way. Hunting, trapping, and carrying weapons are prohibited. Do not interfere with

animals by feeding, touching, or frightening them. Do not cut, deface or damage trees, Leave wildflowers and other vegetation in their natural condition for other hikers to enjoy.

- Historic resources are protected by Federal law. Do not damage, deface, or remove any of these structures, furnishings, or exhibits.



**Help protect and preserve  
the Blue Ridge Parkway.  
Be alert for uncontrolled fire,  
safety hazards, accidents,  
and emergencies.**

**Please report such  
conditions by calling:  
1-800-PARKWATCH**

(1-800-727-5928)  
For general Parkway  
information, call (828) 298-0398  
or visit [www.nps.gov/blri](http://www.nps.gov/blri)  
on the Internet.