

# ROADTRIP | Pilgrimage to a Mountain Biking Mecca



Beat yourself up good on the woody trails at **Patapsco Valley State Park**.

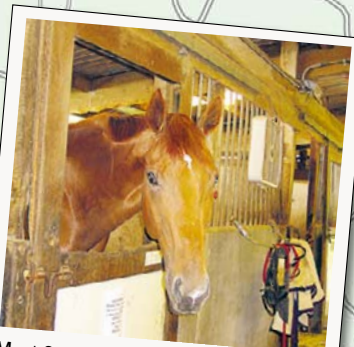


Explore the mock-up of a slave ship outside the **Sandy Spring Slave Museum**.

**Race Pace Bicycles** stocks gloves, water bottles, energy bars and more.

Pick out a bottle of Shiraz at the **Iron Bridge Wine Company**, a froufrou wine bar and restaurant.

**Smeeta's Integrative Pharmacy** offers no shortage of herbal and natural remedies.



Most Saturdays at 1:30 p.m., **Reddemeade Equestrian Center** offers free rides for novices and experts alike — reservations required.

**Driver's route**

The jalopy in the main hall of the **Sandy Spring Museum** would make for a *really* fun road trip.

A true roadside attraction — brake for the **Prayer Stop** next to Immanuel's Church.

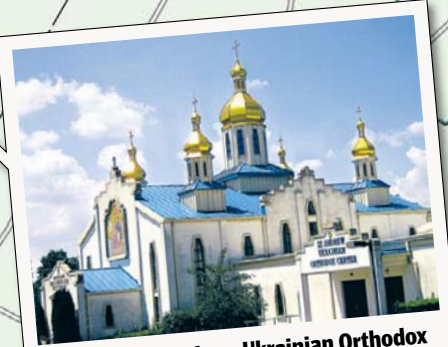
The **Muslim Community Center** is nationally recognized for its services for local families, including a free health clinic.

The wooden structure of the **Holy Trinity Ukrainian Catholic Church** is reminiscent of — surprise! — an Asian pagoda.



Enjoy the spicy flavors of El Salvador and Mexico at the **Monterrey Restaurant**.

Learn why bag-style canister vacuums work best at **Brothers Sew & Vac**.



The ornate **St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral** looks like it has been plucked from the middle of Eastern Europe.

**WHERE:** Patapsco Valley State Park near Ellicott City.

**WHY:** Churches galore, a free horse ride and some stellar mountain biking.

**HOW FAR:** About 40 miles from the Beltway, or two hours with stops.

**T**hey say the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. But what of the road to Heaven? If it's paved too, part of the road may be New Hampshire Avenue in Maryland.

As you leave the Beltway and head north, world religions come together in a five-mile strip: Adventist, Anglican, Buddhist, Catholic, Episcopal and many more. The gilded domes of the St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Center blend harmoniously with the single copper-colored dome of the Muslim Community Center next door. The tiny one-room Prayer Stop, sponsored by Immanuel's Church, has just enough room to kneel and make an offering for a loved one, U.S. troops or victims of Hurricane Katrina.

A short detour off of the main road leads to the Sandy Spring Museum, which highlights Quaker beliefs and the area's heritage with beautiful quilts, a farmhouse and a blacksmith shop. And the nearby Sandy Spring Slave Museum complements the lot with sculptures and exhibits celebrating the spirituality and roots of blacks in the region.

For a totally different path to enlightenment, make your way to Patapsco Valley State Park. The 14,000 acres have more than 170 miles of trails to help you connect with Mother Nature. There's hiking, camping, horseback riding, rock climbing, picnicking, tubing down the river — and, of

course, cycling. Followers of the unpaved road flock here for mountain biking up and down steep hills, over jagged bumps and through bone-jarring ruts. The park is nicknamed the "Moab of the East" for the number, variety and technical difficulty of its trails. (For those not in the know, Moab, Utah, is considered to be the best place in the world for mountain biking.)

Patapsco is actually three parks along the winding Patapsco River that, unfortunately, are not directly connected via a single road. All three sections (Avalon, McKelldin and Hollofield) feature rideable terrain. Hard-core enthusiasts will want to head to the Avalon area. Its 2.2-mile Ridge Trail is a favorite with a steep climb to overlooks of the valley and lots of rocks and exposed roots along the single-track path. Log ramps, sharp switchbacks, tunnels, rolling hills and water crossings add to the intensity. Riders, however, don't need to subscribe to the extremists' mantra of "it ain't fun unless you leave blood on the trail." There are also easy, flat, packed-dirt trails, as well as miles of paved cycling paths.

If you need to rent a bike, make a stop at Race Pace Bicycles ([www.racepacebicycles.com](http://www.racepacebicycles.com)) — a short drive from the park. A regular mountain bike rental costs \$25 per day. A performance bike with shocks, recommended for the more grueling trails, costs \$75. Call ahead to reserve a bike rack, if you need one; it'll set you back another \$25.

Will you survive the rugged trails of whichever path you follow? One can only pray.

— **Matthew Graham**

**Road Trip maps** are available online at [www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip](http://www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip), as are addresses and hours of operation (be sure to check before you go). Have an idea for a trip? E-mail [roadtrip@washpost.com](mailto:roadtrip@washpost.com).