

Comments by riders from Rails to Trails

- We have done many rails to trails and this one is very well done. The is very similar to the greenbrier trail. Much, much less bike and people traffic then Creeper trail (not as touristy). Very scenic along river with a couple of dams, couple tunnels, some long bridges and great scenic views. Excellent for bikers. Don't need suspension and a 32c tire will work fine. Relatively flat, didn't notice any hills. Surface conditions excellent will slight choppiness just north of Ivanhoe for a couple of miles but still in good shape.

Only Negative we encountered was with some really rude horseback riders just after and north of Ivanhoe. Perhaps these horseback riders owned this section of the trail. Yelled at us for passing, even though we alerted them to the pass several times (they didn't respond to us) before hand and we passed slowly wide to the left on the grass about 3 feet off the trail. However it did seem that one person was holding the reigns of another horse in training with a child on top. Didn't seem like one or two of their horses were used to bikes, especially the horse with the child. But all was fine.

Overall this is one of those trails you don't want to miss and worth a 5 star rating in my book. Good Job by the Virginia parks

- Definitely ride north to south. I did opposite and found last part of trail from New river to Pulaski is a long uphill slog at the end of a long ride. Also, be aware that the trail cut off to downtown Pulaski train station if you are headed north takes you by the sewage treatment plant which is ugly and smelly. Trail condition generally great until this cut off into Pulaski. Also on this cutoff there is soft mushy gravel. Definitely not a bike friendly surface. Avoid this cutoff and instead keep straight to Dora junction to complete the ride. Note: Pulaski is north end of trail. Also, the last 5 miles of the trail is through a residential/industrial area and does not appear to have any scenery other than buildings. If no one has an objection, we will make Draper our starting point rather than Pulaski.
- 57.7 miles of beauty, much of it shaded. Stayed at the cabins in Galax - great choice! On the evening of our arrival, we did the Fries spur. Then divided the rest of the trail over 2 days. Best and cheapest shuttle service was found at the state park in the middle.
- The scenery is breathtaking. The trestles were beautiful, the bridges amazing, and the tunnel closest to Galax was incredible. The view of the dam on the New River was also pretty cool. I encountered plenty of wild life. I saw many deer. The last one certainly startled me as I did not see it in the woods and it jumped out on the trail only about 10 yards in front of me and ran down the trail for about a quarter mile. I did let out a little scream as I was not expecting it and could not close the gap to draft. Also saw some wild turkeys, lots of little critters, and some cows relaxing in the New River having a drink.

- I bike the New River Trail almost every week. One choice path is from the trailhead mile marker 52 in Galax to the dams on the New River. Free parking in Galax can be found near the visitor center and bluegrass theater. The trail follows the gorgeous Chestnut Creek about 12 miles through a railroad tunnel and over a long steel bridge across the New River, then goes south to Fries or north toward Pulaski. In spring, I have seen indigo buntings, mink, and even a bear cub on the trail. Usually there are deer and turkey along the way, which borders the Mt. Rogers national forest. The New River is particularly wide, scenic and calm, but class 3-4 rapids can be seen right below Byllesby and Buck dams. There are campsites near mile markers 38 and 39. Usually, I do this as a 30 mile round trip and eat in Galax. The other choice path is to free park right behind Shot Tower State Park off I-77 exit 24. This route begins at mile marker 25 and goes to Draper near mile marker 6. Draper has a wonderful restaurant called the Mercantile, and a bike shop next to it. This is the only amenity on the trail and well worth the stop, if only to sit in a rocking chair on the Merc porch. Around mile 10, there is the fantastic Hiwassee steel bridge crossing the New River, and in the fall the surrounding mountains are full of colors. This 19-mile stretch has many whitewater class 1-2 rapids, a train station and abandoned orphanage at Foster Falls, caves in the karst limestone cliffs, and a couple of lovely villages. In terms of animal life, it's not as wild at the Galax end of the trail, but may be more stunning in terms of forest and river. Wildflowers abound in the spring, making this 38-mile round trip about as close to heavenly as you can get for a day trip.
- We broke the trail down into sections so we could do round trips and not have to shuttle cars, with each section being about a 25 mile round trip. Overall the trail has been wonderful and a joy to ride.

We did Foster Falls to Fries Junction and back yesterday, and I must admit it is not my favorite. From Ivanhoe to around Buck Dam the trail is pretty rough due to the horse traffic. Also, while I know bikers must yield to horse riders (which I gladly do), I did come across some riders who were very demanding and bossy towards us...to the point that it felt like they thought they owned the trail.