

# Suggested Hikes, Rides and Paddles!

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## Great Falls Discovery Center

2 Avenue A., Turners Falls, MA 01376, (413) 863-3221

To help you plan your visit to DCR's Great Falls Discovery Center, we offer the following suggested experiences that we think you might enjoy.

- **“Introductory”** are short and appropriate for most users, including families with children.
- **“Signature”** are recommended trail experiences. These may be longer or more difficult but highlight some of the best park features.

For a safe and enjoyable park experience please review the **Things to Know Before You Go** section at the end of this document.

## Introductory Hike

### Canalside Rail Trail – Power Town Hike

**Trailhead:** Begin at the Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls

**Lat/Long:** 42.609539, -72.556494

**Distance:** 3.0 m round-trip **Difficulty:** Easy

**Brief Description:** Start at the Great Falls Discovery Center and walk along the trail heading south, following the power canal for the Cabot Station Hydroelectricity facility. Enjoy views of a number of different mill sites from 19th Century industries in Turners Falls. Several of the mills made paper. As you walk further, the canal widens at a stand of pine trees with a park bench. Wetlands near the canal and the open waters of the canal provide abundant homes and resting places for wildlife, especially waterfowl. You may see signs of beaver or hear the calls of bald eagles. For a short 3-mile round-trip hike, here you can head back to the Great Falls Discovery Center. For a longer hike, you can continue to follow the Canalside Rail Trail south. Be aware that during winter, portions of the trail may be quite icy.

## Introductory Bike Ride

### Canalside Rail Trail-Waterside Ride

**Trailhead:** Begin at the Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls

**Lat/Long:** 42.609539, -72.556494

**Distance:** 7.2 miles round-trip **Difficulty:** Moderate

**Brief Description:** Starting at the Great Falls Discovery Center, the Canalside Rail Trail heads south along the water canal for the Cabot Hydroelectric Station. (You can

also start your journey at Unity Park on First Street). Enjoy views of brick mill buildings and wildlife habitat. Don't be confused by one on-road section that connects Depot Street across Montague City Road to Masonic Street. Follow Rod Shop Road to Masonic Street to connect back to the rail trail. The trail then continues to the crossing of the Connecticut River on a historic metal truss bridge. Look upstream to the confluence of the Connecticut and the Deerfield Rivers. Be on the lookout for wildlife, especially waterfowl. During winter months portions of the trail may be quite icy.

## Things to Know Before You Go

- **Time, distance, difficulty.** The average hiker pace is estimated at 1.5 miles per hour. Most distances are round-trip. Plan conservatively, start early. Be aware of weather and sunset. Trail difficulty ratings based on ruggedness and gradient are *easy*, *moderate*, or *difficult*.
- **Wear weather appropriate clothing**, layer for temperature changes. Bring sunblock. Wear appropriate and sturdy footwear.
- **Parking at trailheads.** [Parking fees](#) may apply. Space may be limited. Be courteous to avoid blocking in others. Do not leave valuables in your car.
- **Bring a map and share your plans with someone.**
- **Drinking water** may not be available on site. Bring plenty!
- **Stay on designated trails.** Follow painted blazes and signs if available. Generally, double blazes indicate an intersection or direction change.
- **Pace & group size.** Keep your group together; hike only as fast as your group's slowest hiker or rider. Limit your group size to 12 people or fewer to lessen impacts.
- **Carry-in, carry-out all trash and personal belongings.** Follow the Leave No Trace outdoor ethics. [More information here.](#)
- **Know which parks are pet friendly.** Dogs are not permitted in DCR Water Supply Protection areas (such as Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs) and certain state parks. Always keep your dog leashed, 10-foot maximum. Always pick up after your dog and dispose of waste properly. [Complete guidelines here.](#)
- **Be aware of hunting seasons.** Wear blaze orange when appropriate. [More information here.](#)
- **Wear a bicycle helmet** while biking. Riders age 16 and under must wear a helmet. It is the law. [More information here.](#)
- **Wear your PFD** while boating. A Personal Flotation Device (PFD), or life preserver, must be worn by boaters age 12 and under; and canoeists/kayakers from Sept. 15-May 15. [More information here.](#)

- **Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers.** Prevent the transport of nuisance species. Clean all recreational equipment. It is the law. [More information here.](#)
  - **Be aware some trails may not be well marked, and some may not be identified on a trail map.**
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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) oversees over 450,000 acres of state parks, forests, beaches, bike trails, parkways, watershed lands, and dams across the Commonwealth. DCR's mission is to: *Protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.*