

My Story



Wheeling to Washington

Montour Trail

By Jesse Mestrovic, OhioValleyAdventure.com

"My trip along the Montour Trail was a rewarding experience. It makes the perfect getaway for anyone seeking some solitude outside of Pittsburgh."



My experience on the Montour Trail was a brief stint of my 420-mile journey from Wheeling, West Virginia to Washington D.C., but it was a rewarding one.

I joined the trail from the Panhandle Trail that originates in Weirton, WV. The Montour trail started with a beautiful railroad trestle high above a meandering creek below. The trail penetrated a typical wooded western Pennsylvania forest. I pedaled and pedaled to where I saw a sign that said "steps." I assumed that they were going to be bicycle steps and I was correct. I came to find out a gentleman that I met later in the evening, Ned Williams, fabricated and designed those steps. I rode with a local girl on a road bike for approximately a mile asking her questions about the area before she pedaled swiftly away, leaving me in her dust.



Keystone Fund Investment: \$548,000

Total Public/Private Investment: \$1.5 million

I reached the Cecil-Henderson Campground for my first night. To my surprise, there was an Adirondack shelter and a fire ring at the campsite. It was wonderful to not have to assemble my tent or tear it down in the morning. I just rolled out my ground pad on the platform of the shelter and

hung up my supplies. I finished setting up camp and explored the area, gathering wood for a fire.

While I was enjoying my fire and reflecting on the day, a mother and her daughter stopped as they were riding their bikes along the trail. I could tell that the little girl was interested in the fire and I yelled down, "It's okay, you are welcome to come up if you would like." I talked to them about camping, bicycle touring, and my planned trip to D.C. I showed them some of the essential equipment necessary for such an

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endeavor and all the preparations for the planning process. They appreciated my hospitality and I appreciated the company. I always enjoy sharing my passion for physical fitness, exploration, and the great outdoors.



Later in the evening, I was refilling my water bottles when I noticed that someone was inside the nearby garage. I saw lights and instantly thought that this might be an opportune time to charge my phone, so I ran back to camp to get my phone charger. I met Ned Williams, a Montour Trail volunteer (and gained a much-needed charge). We exchanged introductions and began talking about the trail. He told me how the Montour Trail is run completely by volunteers, who tend to have a vested interest in their trail. The surrounding communities have a sense of pride and ownership for the trail. I was royally impressed with accomplishments of the volunteers, the maintenance garage, and the complexity of the trail.

He wished me luck and safety on my trip, but before we parted ways he gave me a book. This book was about my next two trails, the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) and Chesapeake & Ohio Tow Path (C&O), with a detailed waterproof map. This book had descriptions about the trail and the historical significance of the trails and the towns that serve them. I read into the night about the towns and the history

of the areas that I would be passing the next day.

I woke up around 8:00 and didn't hit the trail until 8:45 after breaking down camp and eating a hearty instant oatmeal breakfast. I continued on the Montour Trail until it joined the Steel Valley Trail that connects to the GAP. The GAP crosses the eastern continental

divide and ends in Cumberland, Maryland at the C&O Tow Path, which finished in D.C.

My trip along the Montour Trail was a rewarding experience. Friendly people, a remarkable camping trail accommodation--it makes a perfect getaway for anyone seeking some solitude outside of Pittsburgh. Once all the trail sections are completed, the Montour Trail will become one spectacular trail system that creates a large "C" skirting around the greater Pittsburgh area.

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