



Battelle Darby Creek Metropark Backpack Trail

Length: Two loops totaling 10.7 miles

Difficulty: The trail is easy to walk. Route is generally flat with sufficient blazing. The surface varies from dirt to mowed grass. Elevation change from the low point to the highest point on the trail is under 100 feet.

Permit/Fees: Camping is permitted only at designated locations and a (free) permit is required. Reservations can be made through metroparks.net.

Contact Information: Battelle Darby Creek Ranger contact number is (614) 370-6254. Email at info@metroparks.net Website is metroparks.net.

Location: Trailhead at Little Darby Picnic Area parking lot, 3711 Gardner Rd (N39° 53.689' W83° 13.219'). From I-71, take Exit 97 and go west on OH-665. Take a right on Lambert Rd, left on Norton Rd, right on Lukens Rd. Continue on Darby Creek Drive to west on Alkire Road to right on Gardner Road.

Trail Facilities: A latrine is located at the Trailhead. Each backpacking site has locations for tents, a picnic table and a fire ring. Camp 3 has poles for hammock hanging. Yellow blazes mark the trail.

Water: Potable water is available seasonally at locations within the park. The trail is often near either the Big or Little Darby Creek. Always filter/purify water taken from a natural source.

End-User Warranty and License Agreement

1. James Rahtz (owner of BackpackOhio.com) has authorized download by you of one copy of this BackpackOhio (BPO) PDF document and grants you a nonexclusive, nontransferable license to use the document according to the terms and conditions herein. This License Agreement permits you to install this document for your use only.

2. You shall not: (1) resell, rent, assign, timeshare, distribute, or transfer all or part of the document or any rights granted hereunder to any other person; (2) duplicate the document in electronic form, except for a single backup or archival copy; (3) remove any proprietary notices, labels, or marks from the document; (4) transfer or sublicense title to any other party. There is no limit imposed on the number of hardcopy prints used for personal use by the licensee.

3. BPO is protected by United States and international copyright and other intellectual property laws. BPO reserves all rights in the document not expressly granted herein. This license and your right to use the document terminate automatically if you violate any part of this Agreement. In the event of termination, you must destroy the original and all copies of the document.

4. BPO warrants that the files containing Battelle Darby Metropark Backpack Trail Guide, a copy of which you authorized to download, are free from defects in the operational sense that they can be read by a PDF Reader. EXCEPT FOR THIS EXPRESS LIMITED WARRANTY, BPO MAKES AND YOU RECEIVE NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS, IMPLIED, STATUTORY OR IN ANY COMMUNICATION WITH YOU, AND BPO SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIMS ANY OTHER WARRANTY INCLUDING THE IMPLIED WARRANTY OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS OR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. DIGITAL CARTOGRAPHICS DOES NOT WARRANT THAT THE OPERATION OF THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE UNINTERRUPTED OR ERROR FREE. If the Trail Guide was purchased in the United States, the above exclusions may not apply to you as some states do not allow the exclusion of implied warranties. In addition to the above warranty rights, you may also have other rights that vary from state to state.

5. IN NO EVENT WILL BPO BE LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGES, WHETHER ARISING FOR TORT OR CONTRACT, INCLUDING LOSS OF DATA, LOST PROFITS, OR OTHER SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, OR INDIRECT DAMAGES ARISING OUT OF THE USE OR INABILITY TO USE THE BACKPACKOHIO.COM MATERIAL.

6. All information in this document was verified and believed to be accurate at time of publication. BPO is not responsible for changes that occur after publication. BPO is not responsible for damages as a result of the misuse of the data contained herein.

Copyright © 2021 Jim Rahtz

All rights reserved.



Little Darby Creek

Local Information:

The Trail is located southwest of Columbus within Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park; operated by Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks. The park is over 7,000 acres, most of it natural area with significant forest, grassland and restored prairies and wetlands. It stretches along the Big and Little Darby Creeks which are both State and National Scenic Rivers. The trail spends time in the creek's riparian corridors, considered mature mixed floodplain forest communities.

Wildlife is prevalent in the park as well. Per the Metro Parks masterplan, five federally-listed and nearly 30 state-listed or rare species occur within the park. Nearly 1,200 total species have been documented. My hikes have been filled with sightings of songbirds, larger raptors and numerous deer.

In addition, while not right on the trail, Bison have been reintroduced to the park and roam in large pasture near the park's nature center. "Buffalo" watching is a worthwhile side trip before or after backpacking.

Hiking/camping on the Backpacking Trail is a bit different from many Ohio options. Specifically:

- Campsites must be reserved in advance, though no fee is charged for the permit.
- In fact, you are to have a permit to even hike on the Backpack Trail. I assume that keeps the crowds down.
- You must check in and meet with the Park Ranger at the Trailhead before heading back to your site.
- A full list of regulations is available, along with the reservation process, at metroparks.net.

The Hike:

Assuming you have reserved a site and met with the Ranger, you are ready to hike. Bureaucracy aside, the hike is generally pretty pleasant with well maintained trails and no issues with topography. There are two loops and both are relatively flat. Neither contains a climb of 100 feet.

A short (3.7 mile) loop containing Camp 1 & 2 starts across the street from the Trailhead. Both campsites are within a half mile of the trailhead so packing in extra supplies, or even hiking out to use the latrine is not out of the question. On the flip side, Camp 1 is out in the open, right on the trail and Camp 2 is only marginally better. Both sites are within earshot of roads. Both sites do have a fire ring and a picnic table.

The loop itself bounces between mature bottomland forest and grassland while running near Big Darby Creek. About halfway through, the trail turns away from the stream and heads uphill nearly 70 feet in elevation. After the “big climb” the path continues to bounce between grassland and forest. The forest is mature in spots and down leaves in the fall are thick. Between the leaves and a lack of other hikers, the trail wasn’t always apparent. However, there were enough blazes to keep me on, or at least close, to the trail. For those interested in such things, the short loop also passes by two small cemeteries with graves dating to the 1800’s.

The longer (7.0 mile) loop consists of a two mile stretch of out and back trail meandering near the Little Darby Creek connected to a convoluted figure eight. Like the shorter loop, this path spends time bouncing between streamside forest and grassland. Much of the figure eight portion is spent in an impressively large grassland.

Camp 3 is about 350 feet down a side trail and is situated right by the Little Darby. Beyond a fire ring, picnic table and seclusion, the site also has two raised tent pads and poles for hanging hammocks. If you don’t appreciate relieving yourself outdoors, the site is also located about a quarter mile from a portalet.

Camp 4 is tucked into some trees and boasts the fire ring, table and two tent pads.



Camp 1

The Trail: Short Loop

- 0.0 Trailhead at Little Darby Picnic Area parking lot, 3711 Gardner Rd (N39° 53.689' W83° 13.219'). From Parking Lot walk out the entrance drive, turn right on Gardner Road. After 100 yards, trail enters the woods on the left on mowed path. Blazes are yellow along with yellow Carsonite markers.
- 0.4 Trail intersection with main loop. Turn right and immediately reach Camp #1. Continue on mowed path to the left of the campsite.
- 0.5 Leave mowed path, turning right into the woods.
- 0.7 Return to mowed path. Turn right and quickly turn right again into the woods. In 200 more feet, reach another mowed path and turn right.
- 1.5 Turn right.
- 1.6 Turn right.
- 1.8 Right off mowed path onto single track, starting largest climb of the loop.
- 2.0 Left onto mowed path.
- 2.2 Back in woods, single track has unmarked split. Bear to the right.
- 2.3 Bridge.
- 2.5 Bridge.
- 2.6 Several headstones dating to the 1800s near the trail.
- 2.7 Bridge, then cross service road.
- 2.8 Creek crossing.
- 3.2 Camp 2 is off to the right, trail bears left. Just beyond is a small, old cemetery. Trail continues straight and returns to the woods.
- 3.4 Turn right at intersection to leave loop and return to the Trailhead.
- 3.7 Arrive at Trailhead.

Long Loop

- 0.0 Trailhead at Little Darby Picnic Area parking lot, 3711 Gardner Rd (N39° 53.689' W83° 13.219'). Follow mowed path of Dyer Mill Ski Trail.
- 0.3 Left at intersection.
- 0.4 Straight at intersection.
- 1.0 Backpack Trail leaves day hiking trails. Bear left at intersection.
- 1.4 Creek crossing.
- 1.9 Nice view of Little Darby then 1/10 mile later, cross on bridge. Turn right after bridge and walk through the picnic area.
- 2.3 Bear left at intersection. There is no signage to indicate it, but Camp 3 is to the right, near the Little Darby.
- 2.8 Turn left at service road, then quickly turn right back off of it. Cross a small bridge. Once across the bridge, turn left at intersection. (On the return trip, trail to the right will be used.)
- 2.9 Pass by a pond.
- 3.0 Turn left.
- 3.1 Bear to right. Signage indicates the location is a Sensitive Area and hikers should stay on the trail.

3.2 Creek crossing.

3.4 Camp 4.

3.6 Bear right at intersection, staying with mowed path.

4.1 Bear right in midst of large grassland.

4.7 Right at intersection. In less than 100 yards, come to another intersection. Turn left here to recross the small bridge crossed at 2.8 miles. Once across the bridge, continue straight on wide path/service road.

4.9 Reach same picnic area that was mentioned at 1.9 miles. Skirt to the right of it to recross the bridge over the Little Darby and retrace the path to the Trailhead.

5.6 Creek crossing.

5.9 Right turn, rejoining day hike trails.

6.7 Bear right.

7.0 Arrive at Trailhead.

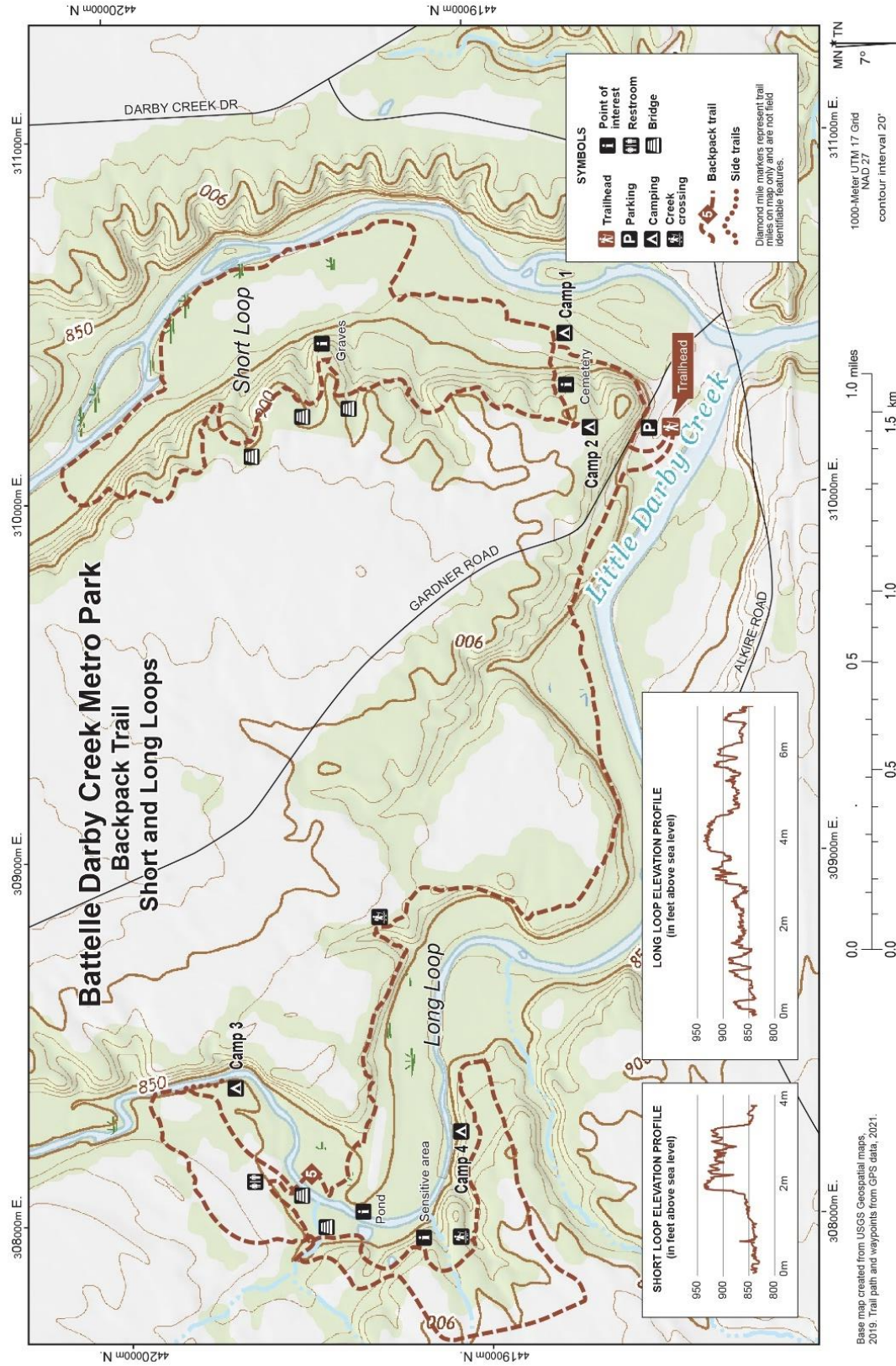


BackPackOhio Scorecards

In an effort to provide a better indication of each trail’s backpacking “experience,” an admittedly “highly subjective” scorecard has been created for each hike. While the score reflects personal preferences, the descriptions will hopefully provide planning assistance and a feel for the trail. All scores are on a 5 point scale with 5 being the highest. The first score, Hiking Difficulty, is strictly an indication of the relative physical challenge and is not considered in the Overall Score.

Battelle Darby Scorecard (Last hiked 11/21)

Parameter	Score	Logic
Hiking Difficulty	1	It’s flat, short and appears to be well maintained.
Facilities	2	Trailhead is a paved lot with a latrine. The kiosk has no information about the backpack trail. Maps are available, after you’ve made a reservation.
Trail Conditions	3	In dry conditions the trail was easy to walk. Down leaves hid the trail at times though blazes were sufficient. As some of the route is in a floodplain, things could change dramatically after significant rains. In fact, the trail can be closed with inclement weather.
Camping	4	The four sites are all near the main trail but are widely separated. 3 & 4 are great sites. The appeal for 1 & 2 is likely that they are a very short hike from the Trailhead.
Scenic Value	3	Mature forest, two beautiful streams and huge grasslands are pleasant to walk through. Trail length and flat topography takes away a bit.
Backpacking Experience	3	Despite having to jump through hoops to camp, both Camp 3 & 4 are attractive, secluded sites. The long loop especially gives some feel of hiking deep in nature at times though much of the hike is on a wide mowed path.
Overall Score	3	Very handy to the Columbus area, Battelle Darby gives a nice taste of backpacking. The short loop caters to those that just want to try backpacking or test a piece of equipment where failure is an option. The longer loop provides a better experience, still in a “bite sized” package.



Copyright © 2021 Jim Rahtz
All rights reserved.