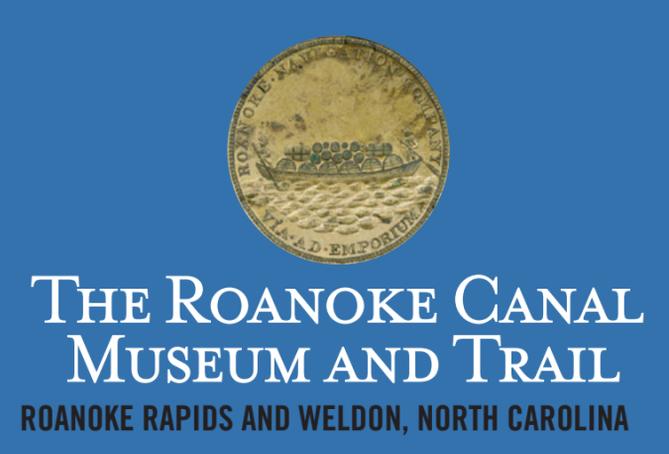


Roanoke Canal Museum and Trail
 15 Jackson Street Extension
 Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
 (252) 537-2769
www.roanokecanal.com

Days/Hours of Operation
 Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 Roanoke Canal Trail is open seven days a week from sunrise to sunset.



THE ROANOKE CANAL MUSEUM AND TRAIL

ROANOKE RAPIDS AND WELDON, NORTH CAROLINA

WELCOME TO THE ROANOKE CANAL MUSEUM AND TRAIL

Step back in time with us toward the end of the 18th century. Imagine, if you will, our forefathers. Their fight for independence behind them, they now turned toward the task of developing this country, not only socially and politically, but also economically.

At that time, the Roanoke was the most important River in the state. With "proper encouragement," this river could be used to transport goods to market.

However, there is a granite shelf in the river here in Halifax County. This creates a fall line which also creates the "great falls," a major obstacle in transporting goods.

The realization that man would have to intervene to move goods around these falls to market led to one of the greatest engineering feats of the 18th century...The Roanoke Canal.

Follow the river now and experience the creation of the canal, the development of its industries, the beauty of its wildlife and the determination of its people...

What can we do at the Roanoke Canal Museum and Trail?

- Stroll through the museum exhibits, featuring the development and construction of the Roanoke Navigation Canal and other canals like it on the fall line and the conversion from navigation to power generation
- Watch an oral history DVD in which 10 people share their research and reminiscences about the Roanoke Canal and the Roanoke River
- Peruse locally donated artifacts portraying life along the Roanoke River during the lifetime of the canal
- Learn about local wildlife found along the Roanoke Canal Trail and the Roanoke River, including the infamous striped bass
- Angle for magnetic fish, construct an aqueduct, dress in animal costumes, draw on the chalkboard or play with blocks or animal magnets in our children's area
- Have a picnic with family, friends or civic group in our picnic area
- Walk portions of the 7.5 mile Roanoke Canal Trail to observe wildlife, view historic canal structures and enjoy the scenic beauty of the Roanoke River

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Thanks to Our Sponsors:

OUR MUSEUM OWES A SINCERE DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROANOKE CANAL MUSEUM AND TRAIL.

LOCK KEEPERS

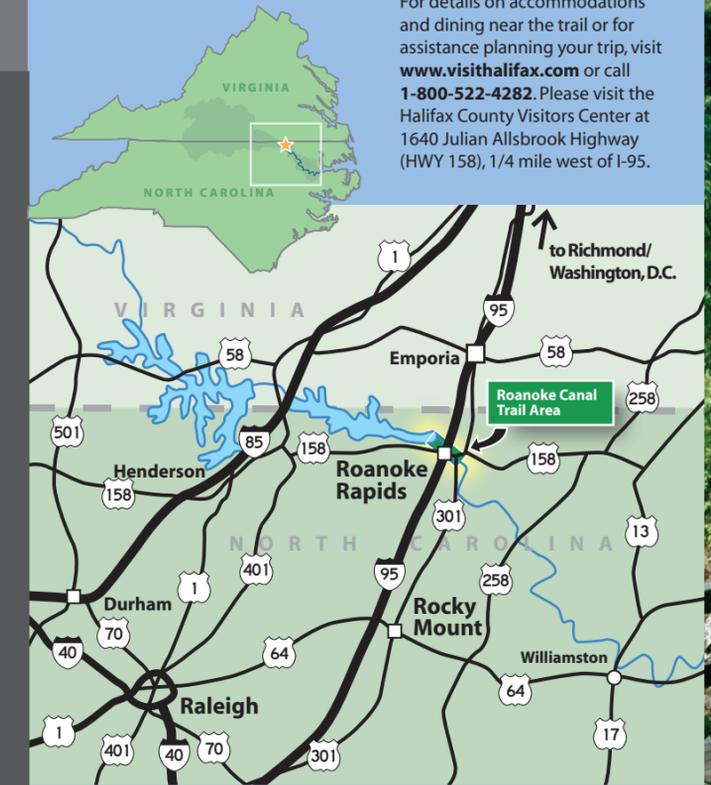
- City of Roanoke Rapids
- Dominion/North Carolina Power
- Halifax County Tourism Development Authority
- National Recreation Trails Program
- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
- Roanoke Rapids Graded School District

BATTEAUMEN

- Halifax Horizons
- International Paper

TRAILBLAZERS

- Fitts Memorial
- Halifax County
- Heaton Construction, Inc.
- Lowe's Home Improvement
- North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation Adopt-a-Trail Program
- North Carolina's Northeast Partnership
- Town of Weldon
- Wal-Mart



Plan Your Visit

For details on accommodations and dining near the trail or for assistance planning your trip, visit www.visithalifax.com or call 1-800-522-4282. Please visit the Halifax County Visitors Center at 1640 Julian Allsbrook Highway (HWY 158), 1/4 mile west of I-95.

Special Thanks to Our Partners:



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weldon seal



ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The Roanoke Canal Trail

The Roanoke Canal Trail and its contributing resources tell the history of transportation on the Roanoke River from the early 1800s to today. Segments of the canal that remain intact today include portions of the 39 foot wide channel, its 10 foot wide tow path, the original aqueduct and one of the stone culverts. In 1976, the canal, the tow path, and the canal structures were added to the National Register of Historic Places. The towpath and bottom of the canal provide pedestrian access between the communities of Roanoke Rapids and Weldon, North Carolina. The Roanoke Canal Commission, Inc. was chartered in 1984 to "promote, develop and maintain the natural beauty and historic area that is part of the old Roanoke Navigation Canal in Halifax County, North Carolina." The Commission has remained intact over the years and oversees the management of the Canal Trail through a variety of partnerships. Visitors using the Canal Trail can experience engineering feats and explore life along the Roanoke Valley as it was in the early 1800s. The canal and the supporting structures are a living legacy to the early years of transportation, the engineering profession, and a developing way of life along the Roanoke River.

Wildlife on the Roanoke Canal Trail

There is a wonderful variety of wildlife and plants that visitors can enjoy when hiking or cycling the Roanoke Canal Trail. Deer, fox and other wildlife are residents of the wooded areas along the trail and the Roanoke River. Different plants in the area include the Atlantic ispyrm, Lewis heartleaf, Sessile-flowered trillium and stinging nettle. The Roanoke Canal Trail also serves as a site on the North Carolina Coastal Plains Birding Trail, which is an effort to direct birding tourists to the region and help stimulate sustainable economic growth in these communities. Birders and nature-lovers can immerse themselves in regular, year-round sightings of Bald Eagles, Osprey, Hawks, Pileated woodpeckers, White-Breasted Nuthatches, Barred Owls and Great Blue Herons. Spring and summer months visitors may discover the state-threatened Cerulean Warbler, Mississippi Kites, Swainson's Warbler and other Neotropical Songbirds such as Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, Wood Thrush, Hooded and Prothonotary Warblers, and other hardwood forest species. During winter months, flocks of Cedar Waxwing are often present, as well as less common species such as Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Fox Sparrow, Red-Headed Woodpeckers and other forest species.

History of the Canal

The Roanoke Canal contains some of the most impressive and best preserved early nineteenth century canal construction in the nation. Begun before 1819 and completed in 1823, the Roanoke Canal was built as the North Carolina segment of the ambitious Roanoke Navigation System. It was designed to connect the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and Norfolk over a distance of 400 miles.

Hamilton Fulton, an English engineer, was hired to supervise the construction of the canal around Great Falls. The present Roanoke Canal Trail is part of this Great Falls area which presented the biggest obstacle to the builders.

The initial plans for the canal show how ambitious the project was, particularly before modern machinery. The navigation system was composed of three parts; the lower (tidewater) Roanoke was over 100 miles long, and was to be cleared for large craft such as steamboats and barges from Norfolk; the Great Falls above Weldon, a major obstacle where the river dropped 100 feet in a few miles, which was to be overcome by a nine-mile bateaux canal with locks; and the upper Roanoke, Dan and Staunton, over 300 miles long, which were to be made navigable for bateaux by clearing and sluicing the river bed.

When completed, the canal provided an economic boost for the area and the farmers of the interior. Goods and produce were carried on the canal. A large profit was never realized for the company due to the major repairs needed especially after frequent flooding. A new transportation development - the railroad - signaled the beginning of the end for the canal. Trade continued into the 1850s. In 1885 the canal was purchased by the Roanoke Navigation and Water Power Company. This company deepened and widened the canal for use as a source of water power. In the early 1900s a brick generator house was built on the upper locks to produce the area's first electricity. This National Register of Historic Places building is currently being developed into the Roanoke Canal Museum.

Now maintained in partnership by the nonprofit Roanoke Canal Commission, Inc., the City of Roanoke Rapids, Town of Weldon, Halifax County Tourism Development Authority and others, the more than seven-mile trail along the old canal has been preserved for the enjoyment of the public.

Hiking Times

Walkers can estimate about 30 minutes per mile with the idea of taking time to enjoy the sites along the trail. With this in mind, the following point to point time estimates are given. Each segment offers scenic opportunities for experiencing the history and natural beauty of the trail.

Suggested Walks

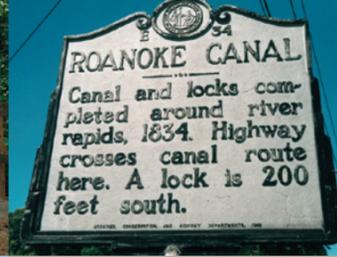
- Roanoke Rapids Lake to Canal Museum: 45 minutes
- Canal Museum to River Road: 45 minutes
- River Road to the Aqueduct: 1 1/2 hours
- The Aqueduct to River Falls Park: 45 minutes

Trail Note: The trail from Roanoke Rapids Lake to the Canal Museum is generally flat; from the Canal Museum to River Road there are a few rolling hills; and from River Road to Weldon/River Falls Park is also generally flat. Trail users should be very cautious of rocks, exposed roots and loose materials on all trail sections.

Trail Highlights

(Mileage begins at Oakwood Ave. Parking Lot)

- 1 The western Roanoke Canal Trail head is located at the Roanoke Rapids Lake Day Use Area, which offers picnicking, trails, swimming, fishing and other recreational activities. Roanoke Rapids Lake, constructed in the early 1950's, is used for electricity production and recreation. The original Roanoke Canal continues approximately two miles west under the lake.
- 2 (4 Mile) An original culvert is located here for spring and natural drainage under the Canal. The culvert is made from stacked stone and a stone tunnel.
- 3 Rochelle Pond
- 4 Bulkhead
- 5 Roanoke Canal Museum
- 6 (1.6 Mile) Just after the trail crosses Highway 48, there is another set of locks. A concrete flume ran from these locks likely in the early 1900's to operate a water-powered sawmill. International Paper operates a Kraft paper mill just to the north. The mill, which was the first Kraft pulp mill in the country operating as the Roanoke Rapids Paper Manufacturing Company, started in 1909.
- 7 (2.9 Mile) A small bridge covers an old stone structure that may have been used for surge control for the powerful flood waters in the canal.
- 8 (3.1 Mile) The trail passes through a great neighborhood segment that is ideal for a morning or afternoon walk.
- 9 (3.3 Mile) The River Road Parking Lot/Access Point is an excellent location to enter the trail. Within 1/2 to 1 mile east are outstanding views of the mighty Roanoke River. Sightings of osprey, bald eagles, hawks, great blue heron, and other water fowl are common along the Roanoke. 1/2 to 1 mile west of River Road, the trail offers great opportunities to see deer, fox, and other wildlife.
- 10 (4.3 Mile) The navigation canal was the "interstate transportation" of the 1800's. Modern transportation in the form of Interstate 95, intercepts the historic canal trail here.
- 11 (4.6 Mile) A spillway was constructed here to allow water to run from the canal back into the Roanoke River during floods.
- 12 (5 Mile) A pond created by gravel harvesting in the mid 20th century is visible here. Scenic vistas of the Roanoke River can be enjoyed at points along the north end of the pond.
- 13 (6.1 Mile) The Aqueduct Parking Lot/Access offers a beautiful lush lowland forest walk to the west and the Aqueduct and picnicking just to the east.
- 14 (6.25 Mile) The Aqueduct, just a 4 minute walk from the parking area, was built in the early 1800's to span Chockoyotte Creek. Best viewed from the observation deck on the south side, the Aqueduct is one of the best preserved examples of early 19th century canal architecture. Picnicking is available here at Edwin Akers Aqueduct Park.
- 15 (7 Mile) A Confederate graveyard is located in Weldon just south of the canal near this point. The Town of Weldon, once known as Weldon's Landing or Weldon's Orchard, served as a major railroad hub for the Wilmington - Weldon Railroad. Once known as the "lifeline of the Confederacy," remnants of the old trestles still stand today.
- 16 (7.8 Mile) River Falls Park/Access point is rich in history. The terminus of the Roanoke Canal eventually ended in a basin here and entered the Roanoke River just east of the rapids. Wooden locks were never successful here because of frequent floods, and thus were abandoned. Grist mills, an iron foundry, and two cotton gins used the old locks. In 1890, a large corn mill was constructed in this area, and is still standing. Today, a NC Wildlife Commission Boat Landing, River Falls Park, and an observation deck overlooking the massive Weldon Rapids are located in the area.



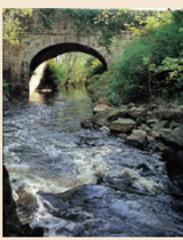
Wildlife on the trail



Roanoke Canal Museum



Roanoke River



The Aqueduct



Weldon rapids