

Pennsylvania and Delaware

9/13/21 Princeton, NJ to Philadelphia, PA ...



Continuing on the towpath to Trenton, I passed into Pennsylvania. Trenton was confusing but finally I was through. I passed through Northeast Pennsylvania and entered Greater Philadelphia. Two surprises – North Philly is much longer than I thought it would be and there are many more bike lanes than when I was living in Philadelphia 30+ years ago. The Ride through North Philly was a sad experience – trash strewn everywhere along city streets and cars periodically blocking bike lanes. It suggests a lack of civic pride. It was also a much longer route than it appeared on the map. I was late getting to Center City due to another rear flat tire. I made up my mind to replace said tire next morning before proceeding on to Delaware. Many thanks go to my Warm Showers host in Philadelphia for a safe and quiet place to sleep. I had a fine but late dinner at Marathon On The Square – located not far from Rittenhouse Square and also quite close to my overnight accommodations.

9/14/21 Philadelphia, PA to New Castle DE ...

First – Tire replacement. To do that, I had to wait until 10:00 AM, opening time for the nearest bike shop. I had agreed to leave my overnight accommodations at 7:00 AM previously and thus had three hours to pass. Those hours were spent reading and people-watching in Rittenhouse Square. Second – Getting out of Philly. Not so easy. A waylaid freight train frustrated my attempts at an easy approach to the Greenway. It was around Noon before I could say that Philadelphia was behind me. Then came Chester, and after that ... Delaware. Delaware is blessed with many paved pedestrian ways easing cycling. So, once in Delaware, travel proceeded apace and I found myself in New Castle just before dark, emptied out onto a thoroughfare. The trek from the Greenway to my overnight, a Super 8 motel was longer than I realized and it was dark before I arrived there. More work is needed to have accommodations for cyclists along the Greenway.

9/15/21 New Castle, DE to Havre De Grace, MD ...

This would have been an easy ride if on US Route 40. Direct. Wide Shoulders. Somewhat flat. But there were trails in Newark, DE so there I had to go. Nice trails but construction in Newark and no clear way for cyclists to go made the trip longer than necessary and caused me to just miss a critical bus ride across the Susquehanna River. I had to wait an extra two hours for the next bus from Perryville to Havre De Grace. Ironically, I found out from the Bus Driver that cyclists *are* allowed to use the bridge but after the crossing, I was glad I waited for and took the bus. The driver kindly left me at my next overnight – another Motel 6. By now, I was counting the days to DC – 3 at this point.

(Proceed to the Maryland and DC blog)

Maryland and DC

9/16/21 Havre De Grace to Baltimore ...

This was the only day that I went off-route on purpose. More rain was forecast so I wanted a fast ride and that was Route 40. The Greenway stretched out to the north and west. I was already on Route 40 so it made sense to continue. The ride into Greater Baltimore was 30+ miles and I took that in about five hours. That left a comfortable three hours to navigate from Baltimore to Hampden – about 10 miles. I arrived early in Hampden and spent time in the Rotunda Mall drinking smoothies and buying groceries and waiting out the rain which had started to fall around that time. I might have made it along the Greenway Route but appreciated the faster ride afforded by taking Route 40. Many thanks to my Hampden Host for meals, overnight accommodations, and conversations about cycling and other topics. Two days to DC. Tomorrow would take me to Annapolis.

9/17/21 Baltimore to Annapolis ...

Another early start and bike lanes through Baltimore eased my way and soon I was headed for Annapolis. As most of the Ride was on a paved bike path, the day passed without much on which to comment. I made the connection between the well-groomed and paved bike path and the nearby Airport (BWI). The Greenway comprised a series of rail trails including the B & A Rail Trail (11.0 miles).

My overnight was spent with family members of a local friend. The next day would see me finally arrive at my destination of Washington DC.

9/18/21 Annapolis, MD to Washington DC ...

Many back-roads, and two bike paths later, and I was in Greenbelt, MD. This was the home of the Greenbelt Food Cooperative. Similar to a supermarket in its product line, it afforded me the opportunity to grab some much-needed lunch and road rations. This would be the second food cooperative I would visit on this trip. There were others near the Greenway Route but they were not located in an area that I could easily visit, being either at the end or beginning of my days travel and generally not open at a time when I would pass them.

An afternoon ride, especially through the Anacostia Trail System saw me into DC proper and the first of three hosts – DC, Leesburg, and Arlington in that order. Many thanks to those hosts as they gave me the opportunity to explore the area, including the Washington Mall, two Smithsonian Museums, and the Washington and Old Dominion Trail – between Arlington and Purcellville, VA – a 45 mile trail / regional park. Many comments were made regarding the GAP Trail – stretching 150 miles from Pittsburgh, PA to Washington DC. Food for thought.

I had planned to lobby for greenway expansion while in DC but one wrong phone call squandered that opportunity.

There's not much else to tell. The return trip took two days but might have been more pleasant if I had shipped the bike home and much of my equipment. Lessons learned.

I am grateful to all the people who have hosted me. Warm Showers, Couch Surfing, and local connections have made this adventure possible.

More pictures and videos will be available on various apps.