



Colonel Frances Beatty Park: Perfect for Mountain Biking

Calling all novice mountain bikers (young and old): This is a trail for you. On a recent scorching afternoon, we wanted to get out and do something active, but for sure in the shade, and preferably with some wind in our faces. So we threw the bikes in the trunk and headed for a new-to-us destination: Colonel Francis Beatty Park in Matthews, about 30 minutes from uptown Charlotte.

I found the park by scouring the Tarheel Trailblazers website (a valuable resource!) for recommendations for easy, beginner-level trails. We chose the Main Loop Trail, and it couldn't have been more perfect.

Here's why:

Distance: The Main Loop Trail is a little over 4 miles long. Which is enough to feel like you've taken a good spin and walkable if you plan to hike alongside young riders.

Difficulty: As long as you stick to the green and blue blazes, the trail is technical enough to keep things interesting without being overwhelming to beginners. Some portions (green blazes) are simply long stretches of dirt and gravel, but you also get the opportunity to wind through the woods on narrower natural-surface trails.

Features: There are some sneaky roots you have to mind, but obstacles are mostly relegated to some really fun man-made bridges and ramps.

Crowd: On a sunny Sunday afternoon, we were among the only bikers or hikers on the trail. I can't say for sure if that's a typical amount of traffic, but the smaller crowd made our outing enjoyable and manageable.

Proximity: Colonel Francis Beatty Park is an easy, 30-minute drive from uptown Charlotte. Quick to get to and easy to navigate.

Tips:

- To jump on the Main Loop Trail, park in the Lake Point Hall parking lot. There, you'll find the trailhead marked with an information kiosk. There are also restrooms, playgrounds and picnic shelters.
- Unless you're feeling really adventurous, don't wander onto a Black Diamond Trail. Those are technically difficult.
- Bike riders ride counterclockwise; hikers hike clockwise.
- Be mindful of your surroundings. We spotted a large black snake and plenty of patches of poison ivy.



How to get there:

Colonel Francis Beatty Park is located at 4330 Weddington Rd, Matthews, NC 28105. To jump on the Main Loop Trail, park in the Lake Point Hall parking lot. There, you'll find the trailhead marked with an information kiosk. There are also restrooms, playgrounds and picnic shelters.