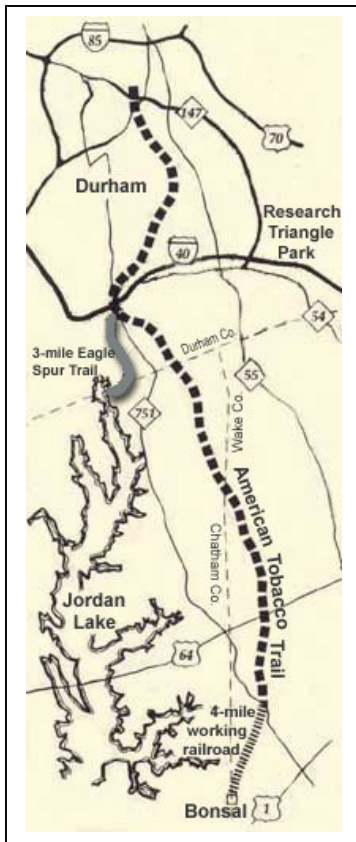


American Tobacco Trail

Whether you want to run, hike, bike, rollerblade, ride a horse, explore a city, or enjoy nature this summer, the American Tobacco Trail is a good way to go. After it's finished, the trail will be twenty-three miles long and run through Durham, Chatham, and Wake Counties. It will stretch from Durham Bulls Athletic Park to New Hill Road in western Wake County. There's also a three-mile-long side trail that leads to Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

The trail follows the path of an old railroad track, so it's called a rail-trail. Sections of the trail are paved for walking, running, cycling, and skating. They're also safe for wheelchairs. Other parts are graveled for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.

Along the trail you'll pass historic downtown Durham, several parks and schools, shopping areas, restaurants, North Carolina Central University, and suburbs. On the rural



sections of the trail you might see white-tailed deer, squirrels, and beavers. The trail is also a good place for bird-watching. Look for great blue herons, red-tailed hawks, songbirds, and owls. And if you take the side trail to Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, you might very well see a bald eagle. Jordan Lake is the largest summer stopping place for bald eagles in the eastern United States.

You'll also travel back in history on the American Tobacco Trail. Norfolk Southern Railroad built the line in 1906. Trains transported tobacco from farming towns in Wake, Chatham, and Durham Counties to the American Tobacco Company in Durham, which was once one of the largest cigarette makers in the world. The line was used less and less in the 1970s and 1980s, and most of the tracks were removed in 1987. People started using the abandoned line as a path, and soon it was being developed as a rail-trail.

If you want to really ride the rails, take a train ride on the last section of tracks still in place on the line. The New Hope Valley Railway offers eight-mile round-trip rides from the North Carolina Railroad Museum in Bonsal on the first Sunday of each month from May through November and several weekends in December.

The Chatham County section of the American Tobacco Trail isn't finished, but you can still explore most of the trail this summer. And someday the American Tobacco Trail will be part of a much longer trail that's being built. The East Coast Greenway will be 2,600 miles long and run from Key West, Florida, all the way to the Canadian border! Until then, plan a fun trip outdoors in North Carolina's Piedmont.