

## **Theodore Roosevelt Island—An Urban Oasis**

*Heather Smithson, Fredericksburg*

Originally published in the July-August 2015 issue of [\*VaHomeschoolers Voice\*](#).

In the Potomac River between Arlington and Washington, D.C., lies a pocket of nature on an island. Theodore Roosevelt Island is both a memorial to the 26th President of the United States and a great place to hike and get away from the city. We arrived by car, and there was ample parking on a weekday morning. It is only a short walk from the Rosslyn Metro station as well.

We walked across the bridge and made a left turn. Immediately my daughter was hungry and stopped to have a snack while sitting on a rock. Fortified, we set out on our hike. The main path is a loop around the island so there's really not any worry about getting lost.

Not far into the hike, the woods and undergrowth were so heavy and thick that we couldn't see the buildings anymore. It felt like we were far from the city except for the periodic noise of an airplane overhead.

My daughter, who has always been a climber, enjoyed the rocks. My son, who has recently become more of an inside person, wandered ahead of us on the trail thinking his own thoughts and sharing various things that came to mind.

We had been on this trail once before, in July nearly seven years ago. It was much prettier the last week of April with wildflowers blooming and birds skittering about. We stopped often to take pictures of rocks and flowers, each other, and the contrast between nature and city buildings. The main trail is fairly flat and on our previous visit was easily covered with a stroller. This time we explored some of the side trails which were quite rocky and led us to quiet spaces where we could observe wildlife. We were kind of loud that day, chatting as we walked, and I'm sure we would've seen more wildlife had we been more quiet and patient.

At one point, the trail crosses under Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. The area feels both edgy with graffiti and natural because of the abundant trees. The redbuds were in flower.

An hour and a half later, when the temperature started rising and we were tired from walking, we found the memorial. I highly recommend that, when you first get there, you turn right at the first bridge, walk about 50 feet, and then turn left and visit the memorial while you and your young scholars are still fresh. My kids tend to enjoy history, especially when it is experienced as a story, but they were not too excited to go over to the memorial at this point.

Child engagement was better when we actually got there, because the area has lots to explore. In addition to the Teddy Roosevelt statue, there are some interesting stairways and plaques and, during the warmer months, water features as well.

I really enjoyed exploring a slice of nature right next to the city, and seeing the contrast between wild space and the memorial. Overall, this is a great outing; my daughter said she didn't like it "because it was too beautiful." She requested to come back again in the fall.

*Heather Smithson lives near Fredericksburg where she homeschools her two children. She can be found on [Pinterest](#) and [Instagram](#).*