Discover.....

...the beauty and diversity of the Backcountry Trail!
Seven trails among six distinct ecosystems make up
the more than 14 miles of the Hugh S. Branyon
Backcountry Trail system through Orange Beach, AL
and the Gulf State Park. This multi-purpose trail is
shared by hikers, cyclists, photographers and nature
lovers all year round. It offers a paved path through
thousands of acres of natural habitat that is home to
countless species of native plants and wildlife.

Visitors will find convenient parking areas at designated trail heads.
Along the trails, benches and swings dot the path for
those who want to linger a while and a butterfly
garden and pavilion are the perfect spot for a picnic.
Whether you’re looking for a quick escape or a day-long
adventure, the Backcountry Trail offers a unique
opportunity to explore the natural beauty and diverse
landscapes of Alabama’s Gulf Coast.

Butterfly Garden & Pavilion
Relax on a swing, picnic in the screened pavilion or take
a stroll through the butterfly garden at this beautiful spot
that serves as a hub for several trails. Restrooms and
water fountains are located nearby.

Boulder Park
Near the intersection of Catman Road, Twin Bridges, Rattlesnake Ridge and Rosemary Dunes there is a special
new adventure for the kid and the kid at heart:
a boulder park with small, medium and large boulders for
climbing! Come check out the view from the top!

Geocaching
Bring your GPS or smartphone for a round of geocaching on the trail – there are many treasures hidden among the natural beauty!

Backcountry Loop
A great addition for runners and sports enthusiasts. Powerline Connection creates a loop using portions of
Gulf Oak Ridge, Twin Bridges and Catman Road. With the loop measuring just over 5k... it’s the perfect
place to train...and even has some extra trail for warming up and cooldown!

Gulf State Park

ATTRACTIONS

RULES

For your safety, please keep the following rules in mind when visiting the Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail:
- Non-motorized vehicle use only.
- Absolutely No Pets or Smoking – wildlife may result.
- Pets must remain on a leash at all times.
- Keep to the right! Be mindful of patrol and maintenance vehicles and give them the right of way.
- 10 mph speed limit – no “road training” allowed on the trail – it is not designed for high-speed road biking.
- No littering. Please dispose of litter or dog refuse in provided bins.
- DAYLIGHT HOURS ONLY – no camping allowed.

The trail hosts many sports, holiday and community events during the year. To keep up with the latest trail updates, events and activities or for trail souvenirs, go to:

www.backcountrytrail.com
251-981-1180
Join the Conversation

Your Donations Count
Become a partner with us by donating to the trail, either in a donation box or on our website – your support helps us keep the trails beautiful and produce these wonderful brochures! Thank you!
About the Trail

The Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail is a transportation alternative and collaborative partnership between the City of Orange Beach and Gulf State Park. It is named for long-time Gulf State Park Superintendent Hugh Branyon, who managed Gulf State Park from 1970 until his retirement in 2009. The Backcountry Trail was designated a National Recreation Trail in 2016 and is a part of the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail and the Coastal Connection National Scenic Byway.

The Backcountry Trail complex consists of seven trails, totaling nearly 14 miles of paved, multi-use paths. The system is home to several events throughout the year including fun runs, half-marathons, marathons and fundraisers. Periodically, volunteer projects and work days are scheduled, offering trail enthusiasts an opportunity to maintain and improve the trail system, restore native vegetation, or work on Watchable Wildlife projects. Please call 251-981-1180 for more information.

The Backcountry Trail was developed using existing logging roads, abandoned roads and paths. Several sites used by Native Americans have been discovered and it is thought that some of the trails that are now part of the Backcountry Trail were used to connect each site. When settlers came into the area in the 1700-1800’s they used these same trails which, in modern times, became logging roads, hunting trails and the original Catman Road. The Backcountry Trail “rediscovered” these old trails, improved them and now, once again, people are using these same paths that are quite possibly thousands of years old.

Flora & Fauna

The Backcountry Trail system is home to six distinct ecosystems: over gneiss flatwoods, live oak maritime forests, coastal dune and swales, longleaf sand ridges, freshwater marshes and coastal hardwood swamps. From the canopies of ancient oaks atop the island’s highest bluff to the palmettos and scrub oaks covering areas of sandy swales, the combination of familiar and rare ecosystems in such a relatively small area is unique.

Each ecosystem contains its own variety of plants, including rare species. Among them are white-topped pitcher plants, needle palms, sawdews, Florida rosemary and cordgrass. There are several rare and threatened plant communities found along the trail and in Gulf State Park as well, making the park and trail a perfect place for a fun day of plant identification.

Be sure to bring your camera when visiting the Backcountry Trail. The trail can be a birdwatcher’s paradise, with four locations on the trail listed as stops on the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail. In addition to birds, visitors may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of small creatures like Rosemary Dunes, a bobcat on Twin Bridges, or a dandy whitetailed deer on Gulf Oak Ridge.

The trail is home to many reptile species and has two excellent viewing locations for American alligator, including Levy and her family on Rosemary Dunes. Mammals commonly seen on the trail also include armadillos, raccoons, coyotes, opossum, bobcats and even wild boar.

ECO TOURS

TAKE A TOUR OF THE WILD AND LEARN ABOUT THE WILDLIFE OF PLEASURE ISLAND

Friendly and knowledgeable tour guides, representing the City of Orange Beach, will provide a 2 hour tour through pristine woodlands and natural habitats of our Backcountry Trail.

- Restrooms & Water Fountain Stops
- Along The Tour
- Bring Snacks, Beverages & Insect Spray
- Don’t Forget Your Camera!

$15 per person - Reservations only - Seasonal
To schedule a tour call 251-981-1180 or email lells@cityoforangebeach.com