



Half of the Southside Loop Trail follows along Fairforest Creek.

Type	Backcountry
Parking	Plenty
Toilets	Yes
Land Manager	SC State Parks
Fee	\$2 pp
Access	Paved road
Special Rules	None

Croft State Park's Southside Loop Trail could very well be known as the Tsali of the Upstate. Tsali Recreation Area, located across Fontana Lake from Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina, became world famous back in the 1990s, mostly due to its buffed trails along the lakeshore. Southside has the same feel. Parts of the trail are incredibly smooth and fast, but there are plenty of roots, rocks, and short steep hills to get your attention. One way to describe it would be nicely worn-in, but not worn out. It's a really nice trail system with nearly 20 miles worth of riding options.

Originally a military camp, Croft State Park was where thousands of soldiers prepared for battle during World War II. The US Army transformed what was once a series of cotton and tobacco farms into a training ground. Soldiers came through here before shipping out to Europe and the Pacific. They learned to fire rifles at various rifle ranges, chuck grenades, and deal with poisonous gases. Luckily you won't have to do any of that, but you can ride your bike past areas that once were used for those purposes. Imagine what it must have been like for those guys. They were probably having fun and getting in shape just like you, but unlike you they didn't get to go home at the end of the day; they were heading to

a place where people were trying to kill them.

A highlight of these trails is Fairforest Creek, which is your riding companion for miles. You can hear it gurgling over small rapids much of the time and it's fun to stop and check out the little sandy beaches just off the trail. You might see a kingfisher swooping out across the creek searching for fish, or spot deer and other animal tracks leading down to the water. Ride early or late in the day and you'll have a good chance of seeing some of the animals themselves.

The Southside Trails should be enough to sate your biking appetite, but if for some reason you want to check out even more trails in or near the state park, the Croft Passage of the Palmetto Trail heads north from here and the Glenn Springs Passage heads south. Both of these are out-and-back-style rides, but you might find them interesting. To go north, ride from the Palmetto Trail trailhead toward the headquarters building and then turn left onto the multipurpose Craig Trail. To go south, follow the Southside Loop Trail out to Fosters Mill Circle Road.

Getting to the Trailhead

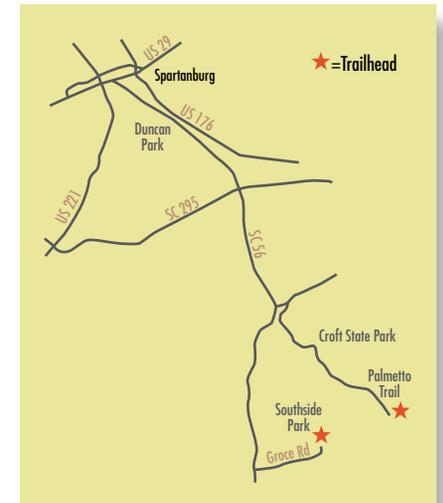
There are two trailheads. Palmetto Trail is located within the state park itself and the other is at Southside Park, managed by Spartanburg County. Pay your use fee at the entrance to Croft State Park or at the payment station at the county park trailhead. Each charges \$2 per person.

Palmetto Trail From Spartanburg, travel south on SC 56. After passing the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, look for the Croft State Park sign. Turn left off SC 56 and then turn right to enter the park. From the gate it's about 3 miles out to the trailhead, just past the campground entrance and the park store and headquarters.

Southside Park Follow the directions from Spartanburg as above. Stay on SC 56 as you pass the entrance to Croft State Park and continue another 3 miles or so. Turn left on Groce Road and follow it to the park. The trail starts behind the kiosk.

GPS Coordinates

Palmetto Trail 34.862, -81.839
Southside Park 34.855, -81.855



Croft State Park Routes

Southside Loop

Distance 9.7 miles
Difficulty Moderate
Surface Single track
Trailhead Palmetto Trail or Southside Park

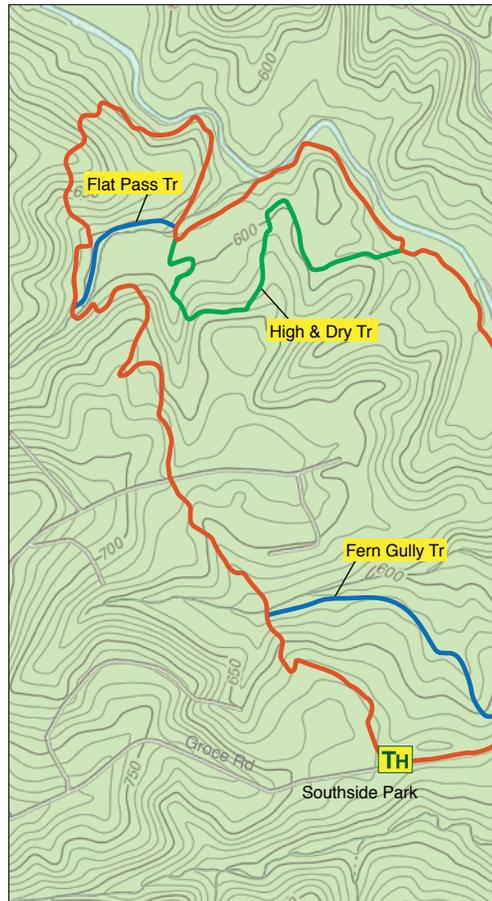
This is the big outside loop at Croft State Park. It's easy to follow, since all the trails are marked so well. Just look for the white diamond blazes saying Southside Loop. To ride more mileage means making connections with the internal trails and then repeating parts of this one. You can ride it in either direction and if you ride here often, you'll want to change directions every now and then to keep things interesting.

Much of the route you can crank along in your bigger gears, just be ready to shift down at a moment's notice to twist through some trees or—more likely—to dip down across a tiny creek and make a steep but short climb up the other side.

If you start at the Palmetto Trail trailhead, you'll coast down to a narrow bridge across Fairforest Creek. Once on the other side you'll need to decide to go right (counterclockwise) or left (clockwise). If it's your first time, go right. That way you'll get the easy riding along the creek first and finish with a tricky downhill. The same goes for starting at Southside Park. Go

counterclockwise the first time and you'll start with a good downhill.

Generally the most difficult portions of the loop are found on the outer ends. If you want to skip a difficult climb and some major roots, take Flat Pass Trail on the west end.



Short Loop

Distance 5 miles
Difficulty Moderate
Surface Single track
Trailhead Southside Park

Try this for a shorter and somewhat easier loop ride. You can ride it in either direction, but if it's your first time, ride it counterclockwise.

From the trailhead, begin on Southside Loop Trail. It's straight and fast here,

so be ready for trail junctions. Turn left on Centerline Trail to cut the loop roughly in half. When you reach Southside Loop Trail again, go left and follow the trail along Fairforest Creek. When you reach Flat Pass Trail, turn left again. Back on Southside, go left once more and follow the loop trail all the way back to the parking lot.

