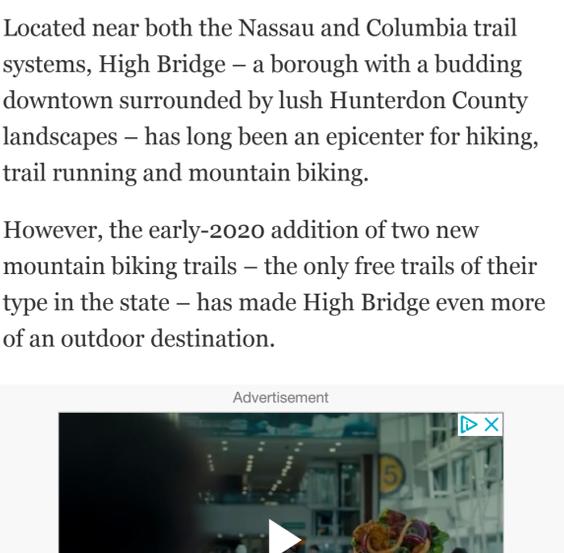


EVENTS

# Ready to coast? These High Bridge downhill mountain biking trails are one-of-a-kind in NJ

**Jenna Intersimone**  
MyCentralJersey.com

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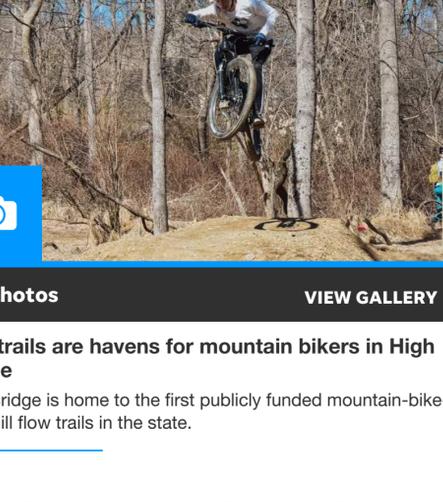


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Located near both the Nassau and Columbia trail systems, High Bridge – a borough with a budding downtown surrounded by lush Hunterdon County landscapes – has long been an epicenter for hiking, trail running and mountain biking.

However, the early-2020 addition of two new mountain biking trails – the only free trails of their type in the state – has made High Bridge even more of an outdoor destination.

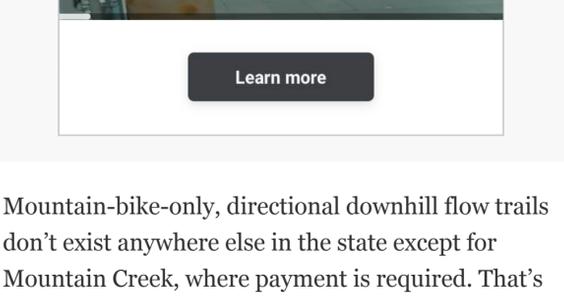
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High Bridge is home to the first free mountain-bike-only downhill flow trails in the state, thanks to a collaboration between the borough, a nonprofit mountain biking group, and a trail design and construction firm.

With these trails, mountain bikers climb about a half-mile. Then they can wind down either the Green Flash or Blue Steel trails (the former is better suited for beginners), without needing to dodge people doing other sports or mountain bikers going the opposite direction.



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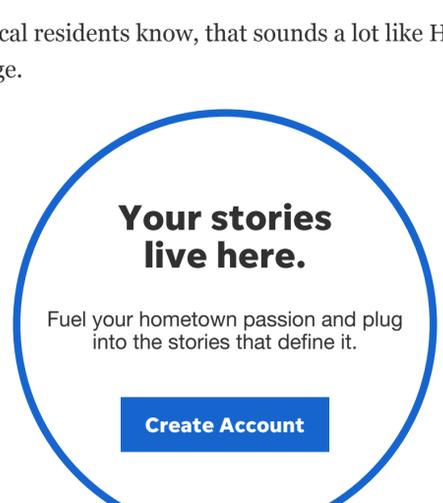
## New trails are havens for mountain bikers in High Bridge

High Bridge is home to the first publicly funded mountain-bike-only downhill flow trails in the state.

The trails look more like a bike park than cross-country trails, said Ken Seebeck, executive director of the Jersey Off Road Bicycle Association, or JORBA, the nonprofit organization that helped fund the trails.

“The whole idea of a flow trail is you ride down and you don’t need to pedal, so it’s a really fun sensation,” continued Seebeck. “It’s that feeling of coasting, freedom and flow. Mountain biking is a difficult sport – when you pedal up, the reward is coming down.”

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Mountain-bike-only, directional downhill flow trails don’t exist anywhere else in the state except for Mountain Creek, where payment is required. That’s because it’s a newer style of riding in mountain biking.

However, Justin Lax, Stockton resident and president of trail design and construction firm Avid Trails, has seen these sorts of trails throughout the U.S. – which inspired him to bring the trails to High Bridge.



Justin Lax Lax approached both the borough and the Jersey Off Road Bicycle Association with his idea to create the trails in High Bridge in 2019. ~Courtesy Of Scotty Hawk

“We travel all over the country to work on projects – places where these trails are growing rapidly,” he said. “It’s working everywhere else, for example, Bentonville, Ark., which has a robust trail system ... It’s all concentrated around a town and just being able to get a beer and a burger after your ride.”

As local residents know, that sounds a lot like High Bridge.

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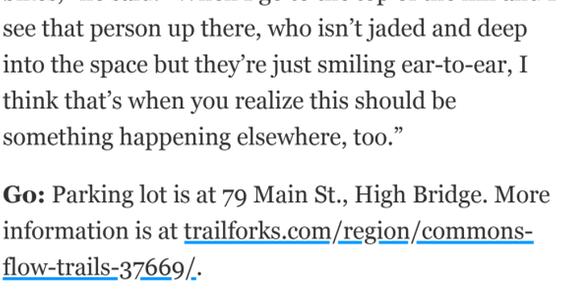
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The 15-mile-long Columbia rail trail begins there, and the Nassau trail system – which has 27 trails encompassing 10 miles – is there, too. As is a downtown scene with restaurants, shops and a brewery.

“For example, I live two hours away so I’m not going to come just to ride the flow trail,” said Seebeck. “But if I know I can spend the day, ride the Nassau and Columbia trails as well, maybe have lunch at Circa after, then it becomes a destination. High Bridge (has) the infrastructure for this outdoor experience.”



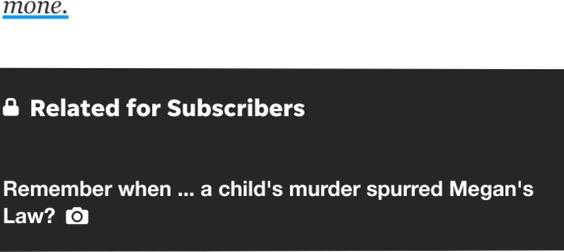
The addition of two new mountain biking trails – the only free trails of their type in the state – has made High Bridge a destination. ~Courtesy Of Scotty Hawk

Lax approached both the borough and JORBA with his idea to create the trails in High Bridge in 2019. JORBA then contributed \$15,000, and both Avid Trails and JORBA held fundraisers to raise the other \$15,000. Avid Trails donated labor, time and design work to complete the trails.

When the pandemic hit New Jersey around the time the trails were set to open in April 2020, it seemed disastrous. It quickly proved the opposite as people scrambled to spend more time outdoors.

## Raritan is revamping its downtown: 'If Somerville can do it, we can do it'

“Our company came to a screeching halt right at the start of shutting down, and two months later, we got busier than we have ever been before,” Lax said. “It timed perfectly with this huge increase in outdoor recreation by necessity.”



Justin Lax, president of Avid Trails. ~Courtesy Of Roslan PR

People young and old are coming from every part of the tri-state area to ride the trails, Lax said.

“We have just as many local kids on budget bicycles riding down these trails, growing their skills and becoming passionate, as we have adults with \$7,000 bikes,” he said. “When I go to the top of the hill and I see that person up there, who isn’t jaded and deep into the space but they’re just smiling ear-to-ear, I think that’s when you realize this should be something happening elsewhere, too.”

**Go:** Parking lot is at 79 Main St., High Bridge. More information is at [trailforks.com/region/commons-flow-trails-37669/](https://trailforks.com/region/commons-flow-trails-37669/).



Jenna Intersimone. ~Staff Photo

Jenna Intersimone has been a staff member at the USA Today Network New Jersey since 2014, after becoming a blogger-turned-reporter following the creation of her award-winning travel blog. To get unlimited access to her stories about food, drink and fun, please subscribe or activate your digital account today.

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