Hughesville, MD - Maxwell Hall Park, located in Charles County Maryland between Hughesville and Benedict, is the perfect combination of history and practicality.

Featuring the longest trail system and more acreage than any park in Charles County, an exquisite 18th century home to boot, Maxwell Hall Park is balm for the hiker’s soul.

And for the woods walker, there is plenty. A variety of birds, wildlife and, remarkably, a little thing called peace and quiet. But the hills are not for the weak-hearted.

“We had a hard time putting trails in there,” Acting Charles County Director of Parks and Recreation John Snow admitted. “There was a wide variety of terrain. It was more challenging establishing the trails. The hiking trail has five fingers which go all over. It’s a weird place, the trails go across the crest and on either side are these canyons and ravines.”

Maxwell Hall Park has some steep grades for either hikers or equestrians.

Judging from the number of hoof prints in the sand along the trails, the park is well acquainted with riders.

Hiking and horseback riding are allowed, but bicycles and any type of motorized vehicles are not, and neither is hunting permitted.

This arrangement allows the park visitor to hike or ride uninhibited and worry free.

Except for, as Mr. Ed would say, the occasional pile of horse biscuits.

The estate was acquired by the county in 2004, along with historic Maxwell Hall, constructed by merchant and tobacco farmer George Maxwell in 1768.

Trails were laid out in 2005 and at 14.5 miles, the park clearly has the longest hiking trails of any park in the county.

At just under 700 acres, Maxwell Hall Park is also the largest park in the county.

Through an agreement with the state of Maryland, Charles County was able to join the two sides of the park together.

On one side, trails wind through steep grades up and down hills. But there are more benches as well, more than I’ve seen on any of the trails. The engineers must have sensed there would be a need.

There is a beautiful old barn that greets you on the southern trail and eventually the path will take you through some really fine scenery until you come to Swanson Creek.

The goliath-like Chalk Point Power Plant rising up over the marsh was initially a shock, but the beauty of the landscape outweighs it.

“In another month, that creek will be chocked full of waterfowl,” Snow said.

The northern trails wind right on down to the Patuxent River.

Old-timer wisdom alert: My grandfather would say... “If the acorns are thick, the winter is liable to be a bad one.”

Acorns are literally carpeting the ground at this point in time at Maxwell Hall. So, consider yourself forewarned.

The old plantation house will be hosting its Christmas Holiday Trail on Saturday, Dec.10. Mark your calendar.

Snow noted that Charles County is looking to expand the park’s services. There is a possibility of utilizing the manor house, with its massive chimneys and foundation crafted of English chert, for weddings and conference events.

“We’re also looking at possibly opening the manor house for tours one Sunday of each month,” he added.

In the meantime, take a hike. It’s an outstanding place. Maxwell Hall Park is located at 6680 Maxwell Hall Drive Hughesville, MD 20637. For more information on hours of operation and parking call the park office at 301-932-3470.

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