

Welcome to your
Letterboxing Adventure at

The Spring Run Trail



What is Letterboxing?

Letterboxing is an old English tradition dating back to 1854 where people began leaving a self-addressed post card or note in a jar, hoping for them to be returned by mail by the next visitor. We've adapted this tradition at Saratoga PLAN!

Follow the clues. Find a treasure. Earn a prize.



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OPEN AIR
SPORTS



HISTORY OF THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

During the Victorian era, a railroad operated between downtown Saratoga Springs, Saratoga Lake, and beyond. Passengers experienced a wilderness adventure through the wetlands of Spring Run and Bog Meadow Brook.

Today, the Spring Run Trail is an off-road, two-mile pedestrian and bicycle path situated on that very same railroad. The Spring Run Trail is paved and provides safe off-road pedestrian bicycle and handicapped accessible access in downtown Saratoga Springs. The trail links downtown High Rock Park (the site of the summer Farmer's Market), the City's indoor recreational facilities, and the commercial area surrounding Wilton Mall.

The Spring Run Trail is owned and maintained by the City of Saratoga Springs.

Thank you,
Your Friends at Saratoga PLAN

Saratoga PLAN stewards and protects farms, forests, and waters of the Saratoga region and the southern Adirondack foothills – now and forever. To learn more, please visit us at www.saratogaplan.org



Thank you for generously funding the Letterboxing Program!

HOW IT WORKS!

Follow the clues on the pages in this guide. As you reach each clue, complete the activity listed on the clue card. When you find the letterbox, feel free to leave a note in the notepad and stamp your passport or postcard to redeem your prize from Saratoga PLAN!

Distance to Letterbox: 0.9 miles one way

ACTIVITY



The **GREEN** activities are recommended for Ages 3+.



The **ORANGE** activities are recommended for Ages 6+.



The **PURPLE** activities are recommended for Ages 10+.

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

Start your journey on East Avenue where the sign marks the trailhead just to the right of the parking lot.

ACTIVITY



Can you **sprint like a choo-choo train** to the trailhead sign? But watch for cars in the parking lot!



Take a minute to look down the path and **imagine the railroad tracks** that used to be here over 200 years ago!



What **types of historical evidence** do you think would give you information about the railroad line that used to run here? (Ex: maps, stories, etc.)

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

Follow this paved path as it curves and winds with the wooden fence on your left.

ACTIVITY



How many frog hops does it take you to get from one fence post to the next?



Look near the fence as you walk. **Can you find 3 different types of plants?** How are they similar, how are they different?



As you walk, look to the right and look to the left. What looks the same about both sides? What looks different?

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

You will cross over a wooden bridge.

ACTIVITY



Stop on the bridge and close your eyes. What sounds do you hear?



The train that once ran along this route would have stopped at different mineral springs along the way. **Have you tried any of the local spring water in our town?**



Mineral springs are a unique feature of our town, **can you think of other towns that you've visited?** What was a unique feature there?

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

As you continue walking on the trail, up ahead you should see a bridge titled “Spring Run Trail” that you will go under.

As you approach the bridge you may see a tall, lonely dead tree on your right. Woodpeckers search for food in these trees; keep a lookout for woodpecker holes in other trees on the trail!

ACTIVITY



How fast can you skip under the bridge?



Stand under the bridge and yell your name. Did you hear an echo?



What is the geography like around you? **Why do you think they needed this bridge for the train?**

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

Once you are through the bridge and are heading uphill, another access to the trail will come in from the right, but you must stay on your current trail heading LEFT to find the letterbox.

ACTIVITY



Do a **BIG HOP** to the right. Now **do a BIG HOP towards the trail on left.**



What's the weather like today? How might this trail change in a different type of weather? Snowy, rainy, cloudy, sunny?



Run as fast as you can up the hill. Now, run back down. Which direction was easier? Why do you think that is?

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

Going downhill, you will come to a second wooden bridge.

ACTIVITY



Find something you can roll down the hill. A pinecone, a small rock, a toy... can you chase it to the bottom?



With one person standing at the bottom of the hill, call up to the person at the top of the hill while facing each other. Now, turn away from each other. What's different? Why?



If you were to roll a ball or pinecone down the hill towards the bridge, **do you think it would roll faster or slower than if you rolled it across a flat part of the trail? Why?**

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

After you cross the bridge, you soon will walk between two very large stone walls.

In the springtime, during this next straightway, the trail is often full of Red-Winged Blackbirds!

ACTIVITY



Can you flap like a Red-Winged Blackbird as you walk between the stone walls?



When you look around, **what features do you think are natural and what features do you think were built** by humans?



Red-winged blackbirds typically build their nests near a water source. **Why do you think you may see Red-Winged Blackbirds on this part of the trail?**

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

On the left you will pass a short section of wooden fence.

Stopping at this section of fence will provide a beautiful look at the Spring Run creek.

ACTIVITY



Take a break drink and some water. Enjoy the scenery. What do you see? What do you hear?



Now is a good spot to have some water and take in the scenery. When the train used to run through this area, it would make stops at the natural springs and mud baths!



Take a minute to study the creek. How would the creek look different at another time of year?

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

Continuing on, you will go under a second bridge.

ACTIVITY



Woo hoo! **Another chance to hear your echo!**



Is there a temperature change when you stand under the bridge compared to when you are outside of the bridge?



Look at the geography on the top of the bridge. Why do you think a bridge was needed in this spot?

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

On your left, notice a Stone Marker with the numbers 204/19 etched in.

This stone marker is a remnant from the old railroad system.

ACTIVITY



Can you high five the stone marker?



How do think our town has changed since the 1800's?
How do you think it's the same?



Why is it important to preserve historical facts about an area? How is the stone marker manmade and natural?

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

Next on your left is a small section of wooden fence.

ACTIVITY



Can you skip from one fence post to the other?



On your mark, get set, GO! How fast can you run past the fence?



Look through the opening in the fence. What are three things that you see?

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

Just past the fence you will see the ground rise up on your left.
This is your destination!

ACTIVITY



You're almost there! **What was your favorite part of the trail?**



Getting closer... **is the weather the same as when you started?**



So close! **Was the trail busy or quiet today?**

LETTERBOXING CLUES FOR THE SPRING RUN TRAIL

You are now searching for the letterbox, carefully leave the trail and head up this little rise.

We hope you enjoyed your letterboxing adventure at the Spring Run Trail. Please keep in mind that the trail continues on a little farther to a turnaround point. Otherwise, please return the letterbox as you found it, and head out the way you came in.

ACTIVITY



You did it! What does your happy dance look like? Feel free to draw a picture of your hike in the notepad and leave it in the letterbox!



Woo hoo! **Be sure to leave a note or draw a picture of something from your adventure in the notepad!**



Congrats! **Give yourself a pat on the back** for finding the letterbox and be sure to leave a message or drawing in the notepad!

CONGRATULATIONS!

We hope you enjoyed your letterboxing adventure! **Please return the letterbox as you found it and the clue cards back to the kiosk.**

Be sure to continue your Letterboxing Adventures at more of our Saratoga PLAN preserves! **Scan the QR code below** to check them out.

Lastly, we'd love to “tag” along on your adventures. You can us on social media at:



@saratogaplan



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