

Hiking Trails of Great Falls Maryland

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



VIRGINIA

Great Falls Overlook

Olmsted Island

GEORGE WASHINGTON
MEMORIAL PARKWAY
GREAT FALLS PARK

GREAT FALLS TAVERN
VISITOR CENTER



Maryland Mine

CHESAPEAKE
& OHIO CANAL
NAT'L. HISTORICAL
PARK

Anglers



MARYLAND

North



1 Kilometers

1 Mile

2 Miles

- Paved Road
- Towpath
- Towpath Mileage from start of canal in Georgetown, Washington, D.C.
- Accessible Trails
- Hiking Trails
- Trail Marker (TM)
- Overlook
- Lock
- Stop Gate Bridge

- Comfort Station
- Hiking Trail Access
- Information
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Snack Bar
- Telephone
- Water

Washington, DC



The Billy Goat Trail

The Billy Goat Trails have been popular with hikers since the mid-1800s. Comprised of three separate trails accessible from the towpath, and designated Sections “A”, “B”, and “C”, the Billy Goat Trails offer beautiful views of the Potomac River. Please choose the appropriate trail by its difficulty level.

Section “A” is extremely strenuous and involves a lot of rock scrambling and the need for good balance. With its difficult terrain, the 1.7 mile hike takes most visitors 2-3 hours to complete. Visitors in less than optimal health, with small children, or those not experienced or properly outfitted, should consider other trail hiking options. Section “A” starts below Great Falls near the Stop Gate and ends on the towpath just upstream from the park’s Anglers access point. Dogs are not permitted.

Section “B” is a moderate hike. Located just downstream from Anglers, in the Marsden Tract area, “B” contains a few small rock scrambles and provides a quieter atmosphere than “A”. It is the best of the three for birding, especially in the spring.

Section “C” is an easy walk. Although there are still a few rock outcroppings, most of the trail is wooded. It is located just downstream from “A” and “B”, in the Carderock area of the park. Great hike for spring wildflowers and fall colors or during the hottest summer days.

Special Note About Bear Island

Section “A” traverses one of the most biologically diverse areas in the country, Bear Island. Topography, geography and regular flood events have created some of the rarest and most sensitive habitats. Because of this, the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy jointly own and manage Bear Island. Please lessen your impact by remaining on the blazed trail and staying off the island when the trail is closed. This will help preserve the uniqueness of the island and the trail for future generations of hikers.

Trail Safety Recommendations

- **Allow enough time to finish your entire hike before sunset** - trails are difficult to follow and distinguish after dark. Hiking trails after dark greatly increases your risk of being lost, injured and/or stranded.
- **Be prepared for environmental extremes** - rocky outcroppings tend to amplify extreme weather conditions. Lack of adequate shade and protection from the elements can also greatly increase hikers’ exposure.
- **Carry adequate fluids & replenish fluids regularly in summer months** - dehydration and heat stress can lead to heat stroke and death.
- **Wear appropriate footwear** - adequate soles and ankle support can prevent injuries.
- **Be aware of your surroundings and locations** - knowing your location on the trail will help in an emergency situation. Because of the difficult terrain, most rescues, even for a hurt ankle, often involve dispatching boats and/ or a helicopter.

National Park Service Regulations

These regulations are enforced to protect the resource and provide for your safety. A more complete list is available by contacting the National Park Service.

- **Do Not Disturb Park Resources**
- **The Park is a Trash-free Park**
- **Pets Must be Leashed**
- **Bicycles are Only Allowed on the Towpath and Berma Road Not on Trails**
- **Do Not Enter the Potomac River**
- **Alcohol is Prohibited**
- **Collecting or Disturbing Plants is Prohibited**
- **Keep Wildlife Wild**
- **Camping/Fires are Prohibited in the Area**
- **Hunting and Use of Firearms are Prohibited**
- **Park Closes at Dark**

TRAIL & LENGTH (one way)	DESCRIPTION
Anglers Spur 0.5 mile	Moderate - Trail connects Gold Mine Loop to Berma Road 0.1 miles from Anglers parking area.
Berma Road 1.5 miles	Easy - Views of Widewater. Old conduit road parallels canal from Stop Gate to Anglers parking lot. Connects to the towpath at either end, creating a 2.8 mile loop. Also connects to the Gold Mine Loop from Overlook Spur, Lock 16 Spur, and Anglers Spur.
Billy Goat Trail Section A 1.75 miles	Difficult - Physically demanding trail. Scrambling over angled rocks, boulders and climbing required. Views of Mather Gorge and river. Trail follows cliff along river and rejoins towpath 0.7 miles north of Anglers. Trail makes a 3.7 mile loop via Towpath. No shortcuts around rocks. Dogs are not permitted.
Billy Goat Trail Section B 1.4 miles	Moderate - Access trail from towpath near Anglers or Carderock. Trail passes through floodplain forest and along the river. Minimal rock scrambling required.
Billy Goat Trail Section C 1.6 miles	Moderate - River views and a small waterfall are encountered on this trail. Access from Carderock Area.
Falls Road Spur 0.2 mile	Easy - Short spur trail connects Gold Mine Loop to Falls Road. Trail passes directly beside remains of the Maryland Mine.
Ford Mine Trail 2.1 miles	Moderate - Trail leads over streams and up into the hills, passing the remains of the Ford Mine (1880s-1921) gold mining operations. Access is located at the end of Great Falls parking lot.
Gold Mine Loop 1.6 miles	Easy - The Maryland Mine (1867-1939) processed gold. Situated in the heart of the gold mining tract, the loop can be accessed from the Gold Mine Spur, the VFW Spur, the Falls Road Spur, the Rockwood Spur, the Valley Trail, Anglers Spur, Woodland Trail and Overlook Trail.
Gold Mine Spur 0.8 miles	Moderate - Connects Great Falls Tavern area to Gold Mine Loop.
Lock 19 Spur 0.3 mile	Moderate - Connects to Gold Mine Spur and Overlook Trail. Connecting Gold Mine Spur and Lock 19 makes an easy 1 mile loop.
Lock 16 Spur 0.3 mile	Moderate - Connects Berma Road and Gold Mine Loop. From towpath, cross foot-bridge to Berma Road.
Olmsted Island Bridges 0.25 mile	Easy - Series of bridges and boardwalks traverse a unique floodplain terrace environment and end at the Great Falls Overlook. Spectacular view of the Falls and Mather Gorge. Handicap Accessible. Dogs are not permitted. (Accessible Boardwalk)
Overlook Trail 0.7 mile	Moderate - Scenic, uphill hike overlooking Potomac River. Access Overlook Trail through the Lock 19 Trail located 400 feet downstream of the Great Falls Tavern. Connects with Overlook Spur and Gold Mine Spur.
Overlook Spur 0.1 mile	Easy - Trail connects Overlook Trail to Berma Road.
River Trail 1 mile	Easy - Walk along river’s edge and through a rich floodplain forest. Access the trail from the towpath just upstream of Washington Aqueduct observation deck. 2 mile loop can be made by walking towpath back.
Rockwood Spur 0.5 mile	Easy - Trail connects Rockwood Manor Park to Gold Mine Loop and Valley Trail. Easy 1 mile loop can be made. No parking available on MacArthur Blvd.
Valley Trail 0.6 mile	Moderate - Trail follows creek through open valley to connect Anglers Spur to Gold Mine Loop. Moderate 1.4 mile loop can be made by getting on the Gold Mine Loop and taking it back to the Anglers Spur.
Woodland Trail 0.7 mile	Moderate - Trail connects Gold Mine Loop and Anglers Spur, passes prospectors’ trenches and overgrown Civil War earthworks.

FOR EMERGENCIES, CALL 911
or 1 (866) 677-6677