

CANOEING IN SAFETY ON THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal provides a quiet waterway for the canoeing novice. The lack of a significant current, the relative shallowness of the water (maximum depth of six feet except for the Widewater area), and a shoreline usually not more than thirty feet distant make the Canal a safe place for canoeing. Due to constant restoration, continuity of the watered sections of the Canal may vary. At present there are only a few areas between Georgetown and Seneca that are suitable for long-distance canoeing.

LOCK 5/6 TO FLETCHERS BOATHOUSE

Fletchers Boathouse is located at the intersection of Canal Road and Reservoir Road. From Fletchers upstream to Lock 5 is a two-mile paddle. Canoeing further upstream to Lock 6 adds another one half mile to the trip. Canoe and bicycle rental is available at Fletchers. For rates and information call the boathouse at 244-0461.

LOCK 7 TO LOCK 6

A 1 ½-mile cruise may be taken between lock 7 and lock 6. Evidence of beaver activity and flood damage can be seen in this area. One quarter mile upstream from Lock 6 the boater will pass the Little Falls Pumping Station which is the site of the ground-breaking ceremony that marked the official beginning of the C & O Canal construction in 1828. Brookmont Dam spans the river adjacent to the pumping station, and the Little Falls of the Potomac extends down to Chain Bridge. Both Brookmont Dam and the Little Falls rapids claim the lives of several boaters and fishermen each year and are extremely dangerous. DO NOT CANOE IN THIS SECTION OF THE POTOMAC RIVER!

Access to the parking lot at Lock 7 is from the eastbound lane of the George Washington Memorial Parkway shortly before the Glen Echo exit. Access to the Lock 6 parking lot is from the eastbound lane of the George Washington Memorial Parkway as well. Access to Lock 5 parking is from the westbound lane of the George Washington Memorial Parkway one mile west of Chain Bridge. Public restrooms are available at these spots.

OLD ANGLER'S INN TO CARDEROCK RECREATION AREA

Beginning at Old Angler's Inn, it is 1 ½-miles downstream to the Carderock Recreation Area. A fish weir underneath a wooden footbridge halfway to Carderock requires a portage, but otherwise this is a peaceful trip. There are several beaver lodges in this section of the Canal, and in the early evening the owls may be heard.

If there is time for additional paddling, it is possible to continue past Carderock Recreation Area to Lock 14, a distance of one mile, where it is necessary to turn around and return to Carderock if convenient access to a parking lot is desired. Halfway to Lock 14 are the remains of a pivot bridge that dates from 1941.

Access to the parking lots across from Old Angler's Inn is from MacArthur Boulevard 1 ½ miles west from the end of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Telephones and public restrooms are available. Access to the Carderock Recreation Area with its drinking water, telephones, restrooms, pavilion and picnic facilities is from the George Washington Memorial Parkway opposite the Naval Ship Research and Development Center.

GREAT FALLS PARK (LOCK 20) TO SWAIN'S LOCK (LOCK 21)

This two-mile trip runs through a beautiful section of the canal, bounded by a low-lying flood plain on one side and by rocky cliffs on the other. The dam across the river at this point marks the beginning of a no man's land. Below the dam are the Great Falls of the Potomac where there is a substantial loss of life each year by drowning. DO NOT CANOE IN THIS SECTION OF THE POTOMAC RIVER!

Great Falls is the site of the historic "Crommelin House," commonly known as the Great Falls Tavern. The Tavern houses a museum open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A Park and History Association bookstore is also located in the Tavern. Restrooms, drinking water and a seasonal concession stand are available at the park. Picnickers are welcome but no picnic tables or grills are provided. Access to the park is from MacArthur Boulevard South of Potomac, Maryland.

SWAIN'S LOCK (LOCK 21) TO PENNYFIELD LOCK (LOCK 22)

The three-mile section of the Canal between Swain's Lock and Pennyfield Lock is quiet and visitors are infrequent. This area provides a very pleasant paddle up to Pennyfield Lock.

Pennyfield Lockhouse stands silent guard over the lock gates. The large white house opposite the lock, now a private residence, was once an inn that President Grover Cleveland visited on his fishing trips. Restrooms are located a short distance upstream from the lockhouse.

For directions to Swain's Lock, see the last paragraph in the above section. Access to Pennyfield Lock is from Pennyfield Lock Road from River Road, about five miles west of Potomac, Maryland.

FOR FUTHER INFORMATION ON CANOEING IN THE C & O CANAL,
PLEASE CONTACT THE C & O CANAL TAVERN AT 299-3613.