

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

P.O. Box 4
Sharpsburg, Maryland 21782
301-739-4200

HIKING ALONG THE CANAL

The C & O Canal is a hiker's park! The 184 miles of towpath between Washington, D.C., and Cumberland, Maryland, offer a wide variety of hiking opportunities ranging from an hour's walk to a week's backpacking trip.

The towpath paralleling the canal is a walkway averaging 12' in width. The surface ranges from dirt to crushed stone. Dirt sections may be slippery and hazardous after rainstorms and extra caution should be used. The terrain is generally flat.

Approximately every 5 miles from Seneca to Cumberland, hiker-biker overnight camp areas have been developed. Facilities include chemical type toilets, well water (water good if handle is on pump), table and fireplace grill. Hikers are cautioned to keep fires under control and to use only dead and down wood (carry-in camp stoves are recommended). Length of stay at these campsites is limited to one night.

Plan ahead--route, distances, proper equipment, food, etc.

Know your limitations--don't overexert; average hiking distance is about 10-12 miles a day, less for beginners, slower with a full pack.

Trail guides are available at local area boy Scout Council offices-- National Capital Area (301-530-9360), Baltimore Area (301-338-1700), Potomac Area (301-729-1300), Mason-Dixon Council (301-739-1211), Shenandoah Area (703-662-2551)--park headquarters, Great Falls Tavern and other visitor information stations along the canal.

IF YOU NEED HELP--Rangers patrol on the section between Seneca and Cumberland and the United States Park Police patrol from Seneca to Georgetown. If an emergency arises call 301-739-4200 or 739-4206, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. At other times call the Park Police at 202-426-6600 or Park Rangers at our emergency number 301-739-4206.

Natural areas possess hazards not normally encountered in your home surroundings. You are responsible for your family's safety.