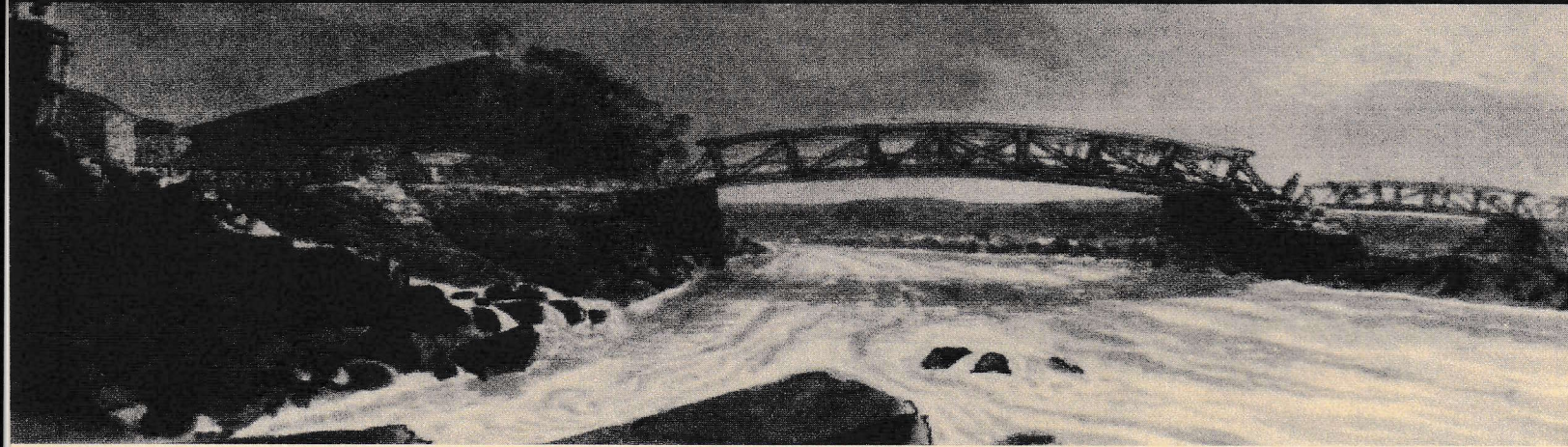


Potomac Heritage Trail

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

George Washington Memorial Parkway



Wild Discoveries Within the Beltway

Bridge at Little Falls on the Potomac, above Georgetown. The first bridge across the Potomac River, at the current location of Chain Bridge. Painted by Benjamin Latrobe, March 1798, courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.

The Potomac Heritage Trail (PHT) winds for 10 miles along the Potomac River, through steep, rocky hillsides, forested stream valleys and years of history. For centuries, Native Americans lived and traded along this route. Captain John Smith explored the area in 1608. George Washington envisioned this part of the Potomac as the beginning of a “great avenue into the Western Country.” The river was the dividing line between North and South during the Civil War. Quarries, mills, and farms along the Potomac helped create a strong local economy and provided material for the development of Washington, DC. Today, the area serves as a haven for wildlife and outdoor recreation, preserved within the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

The PHT is a segment of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST). The PHNST is a 425-mile corridor of trails between the Chesapeake Bay and Allegheny Highlands. For more information about the PHNST, contact:

Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
P.O. Box B, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
E-mail: phnst@nps.gov, Web: www.nps.gov/pohe

For information on local projects and activities, contact the Potomac Heritage Trail Association at 1-888-223-4093, by e-mail at info@potomactrail.org, or visit their website at www.potomactrail.org.

Points of Interest

Mile-0: At the trailhead, George Mason IV, the author of the Virginia Bill of Rights, ran a ferryboat business to Georgetown. His son, John, built a home on the island in the 1790s. The Mason family owned

Mile-4.9: Above Chain Bridge are the preserved earthworks of Ft. Marcy, which was built by the U.S. Army in 1861 to defend the bridge. Today it is one of the few remaining examples of the 68 forts

much of the land you will hike on.

Mile-1: Looking out towards the river, you can see Three Sisters Island, the focus of a Native American story crafted to warn children of the deceptively calm Potomac River currents. Legend has it that the sisters disobeyed their father and tried to cross the river to visit an enemy tribe. The strong current capsized their vessel and the sisters drowned in a whirlpool. A great storm raged and the rocky islands appeared the following day. Some people believe that when the skies are dark and stormy, you can still hear the sisters crying.

Mile-1.7: Just beyond Windy Run lies the rusty remains of 19th-century boilers used to quarry Potomac blue stone. The din of explosions, the sounds of hammers on steel drill bars and the towns are gone, but history is preserved in city buildings constructed from this stone.

Mile-4.1: A gristmill once operated near the mouth of Pimmit Run at Chain Bridge. In August 1814, President James Madison's panicked staff hid the Declaration of Independence in flour sacks in this mill as British soldiers invaded the city and burned the White House.

and 93 batteries that once encircled and protected Washington during the Civil War.

Mile-7: Turkey Run Park, a 700-acre area, supports a diversity of plants and animals. The water gauge (mile 7.2) recorded the river levels from the 1930s to the 1960s. The highest recording – 28.6 feet – was in March 1936. At that level, the water would have been about 15 feet above the trail. A short distance from the gauge is a soapstone quarry and a quartz outcrop. Native Americans living in or traveling through this area may have used both, as they were valuable commodities.

Mile-8.2: Hiking along the floodplain, you cross Turkey Run and Dead Run (mile 9.4), two of the healthiest streams in the region. Carefully turn a rock over and look closely for larvae of caddisfly, mayfly and stonefly. These insects are intolerant to pollution and are considered biological indicators of good water quality.

As you walk in the footsteps of Native Americans, explorers and laborers, help ensure that future generations can walk in yours by protecting the trail and its resources.



Located between Theodore Roosevelt Island and I-495 (at the American Legion Bridge), the PHT is administered by:

George Washington Memorial Parkway
c/o Turkey Run Park, Virginia District Ranger
McLean, VA 22101
703-289-2500 www.nps.gov/gwmp



National Park Service staff and Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) volunteers maintain the PHT. For more information about PATC, contact:


Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
703-242-0693, ext. 12 www.patc.net


PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND ENJOY!


- Pack out everything you brought into the park.
- Keep your pet on a leash & clean up after it.
- Please do not pick any plants or remove any animals or cultural artifacts.
- No bicycles are permitted on the trail.
- Beware of poison ivy, stinging nettles, and ticks.


Potomac Heritage Trail (PHT)

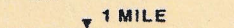
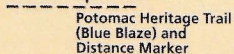
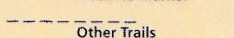
LEGEND

 Park Headquarters,
George Washington
Memorial Parkway

 Parking

 Restrooms (Seasonal)

 Telephone

 1 MILE
 Potomac Heritage Trail
(Blue Blaze) and
Distance Marker
 Other Trails

Access Points

Besides walking the PHT from one end to the other, you may access the trail at several other points for shorter hikes. The following descriptions will help you find the trailheads.

Live Oak Drive

Limited parking is available in the residential cul-de-sac at the end of Live Oak Drive. PHT starts at the lower, right side of the cul-de-sac and descends to the river bank.

Turkey Run Park

The park is accessible from both north- and southbound George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP). Park in one of three parking lots. Yellow-blazed trails leading to the PHT on the river bank go north 0.3 miles (upriver) from lot C1.

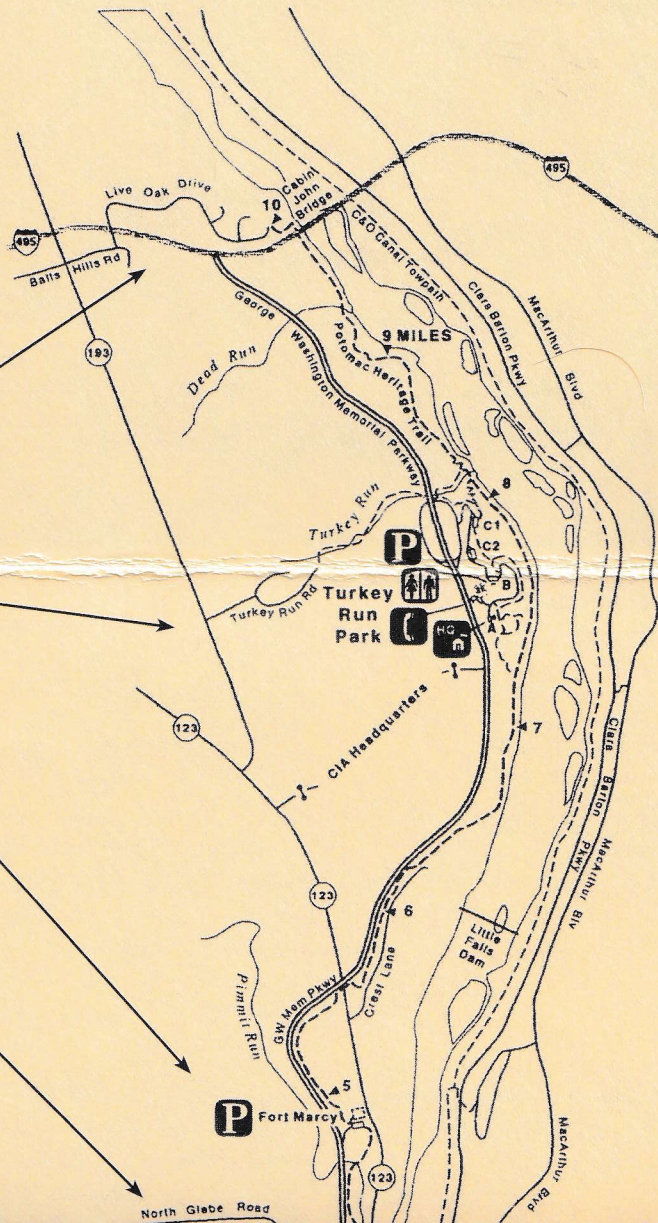
Fort Marcy

The parking lot is only accessible from the northbound side of GWMP, which means entering GWMP northbound lanes at the Key Bridge/Rosslyn interchange (or from further south). The PHT diagonally crosses through the parking lot.

North Glebe Road at Route 123

Park on west side of N. Glebe under the bridge for GWMP.

Towpath and PHT Circuit Hike (9.2 miles): Cross Chain Bridge; descend stairs to C&O Canal Towpath. Head downriver to Key Bridge, go up stairs and across Key Bridge. Take paved path from Lynn Street which goes over GWMP to the parking area for



Gulf Branch

Park on shoulder of 36th Road at intersection of Nelson Street. A 0.4 mile trail starts at 36th Road and descends to, and follows, Gulf Branch to reach PHT. Option: park at Gulf Branch Nature Center (Arlington County) and hike 0.8 miles to PHT.

Donaldson Run

Use one of the parking lots near the turn-around at the end of Marcey Road in Potomac Overlook Park. Hike on the paved driveway, 0.2 mile, leading to the Nature Center (on your right). At 0.1 mile, pass the Nature Center, bear left on a trail which descends to and follows Donaldson Run. Total distance to PHT is 0.7 miles. The final, steep descent under the bridge may be slippery in wet weather.

Windy Run

Due to a major rockslide, the Windy Run access is closed until further notice. Call the National Park Service for more information at 703-289-2500.

Theodore Roosevelt Island

At Theodore Roosevelt Island, the PHT starts at the west end of the parking lot. There is ample parking, but the lot is only accessible from the northbound side of GWMP. Hikers may also reach the site by foot from Rosslyn by following a paved path that starts at Lynn Street, next to the Rosslyn exit of westbound I-66. The path crosses GWMP via a pedestrian/bike bridge.

