

Catoctin Mountain

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Catoctin Mountain Park
Cunningham Falls State Park
Maryland

A Mountain Heritage

View from Chimney Rock NPS

On Catoctin Mountain you can read the story of early industry and its effects on the land. It is written in old stone fences, logging roads, and the forest that now covers the land. You can find it along the old Hagerstown-Westminster Turnpike (Md. 77) that crosses the mountains from east to west between the two parks: Catoctin Mountain Park, managed by the National Park Service, and Cunningham Falls State Park, managed by the Maryland State Forest and Park Service (Md. Dept. of Natural Resources).

Although little evidence remains of those who lived in Maryland before the arrival of Europeans, we do know that many small tribes of American Indians farmed, hunted, fished, and quarried stone for tool-making here. In 1732, as European settlers began to arrive in Maryland's Monocacy River valley, the Indians were engaged in a series of wars. Catoctin was neutral ground where no Indians lived permanently and were seldom seen. The name "Catoctin" probably came from the Kittoctons, who lived at the foot of the mountain.

The first pioneers were second-generation Americans and German immigrants. They had pushed west from Philadelphia until they crossed the Susquehanna River and then turned southwest. They settled along the Monocacy River because of Lord Baltimore's attractive offer of 200 acres of land rent-free for three years and one cent per acre each year thereafter. In the mid-1800s more Germans and some Swiss and Scotch-Irish pioneers came into the area. Some of these settlers became loggers or charcoal-makers supplying the Catoctin Iron Furnace, the remains of which are in Cunningham

Falls State Park. There is evidence of both slaves and free blacks working at the Catoctin Iron Furnace. Other settlers supplied oak and chestnut bark, rich sources of tannin, to the developing tanneries in the Monocacy valley. Farms were established in the high valleys. Today you can find remnants of these old farms—stone fences and cellar pits—as you walk through the forest.

Over the years clear-cutting for charcoal making, stripping of bark for tanning, and logging depleted the resources. Many people moved away, and it was becoming harder for the people who remained to eke out a living.

Beginning in 1935 more than 10,000 acres were acquired by the Federal Government and developed as the Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area, a Depression-era program to find new uses for marginally productive lands. Work performed in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) still plays an essential role in helping you enjoy your visit. Under the management of the National Park Service since November 14, 1936, and the Maryland State Forest and Park Service since 1954, the land has been allowed to revert to eastern hardwood forest habitat.

Walk the trails among the regrowth of chestnut oaks, hickories, black birches, and other trees. Along the way you may encounter animals that make the parks their home. With a receptive mind and keen eyes, you will learn the stories of Catoctin Mountain.

Things to See and Do

At Catoctin Mountain and Cunningham Falls parks there are trails for everyone.

Many lead you to tranquil places such as this cascade on Hunting Creek.

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MINDEN PICTURES

Winter brings its own quiet beauty to Catoctin Mountain.

NPS

The mayfly, an aquatic insect, is a favorite food of trout.

NPS/
ROBERT HOFFMAN

Though the May apple has medicinal properties, its berries can be toxic.

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You are likely to encounter white-tailed deer in the parks. Drive gently!

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MINDEN PICTURES

A park road winds through fall hues, one of the parks' seasonal palettes.

OPAT AND CHUCK
BLACKLEY

In early spring look for the yellow bloom and mottled leaves of the trout lily.

NPS

Stay overnight in one of the camper cabins built in the 1930s by the WPA.

NPS

Planning Your Visit

Visitor Centers and Programs For park orientation and information, stop first at one of the visitor centers: Catoctin Mountain Park visitor center off Md. 77; Cunningham Falls State Park visitor center off U.S. 15; or Cunningham Falls State Park headquarters in the William Houck Area. Rangers present a variety of programs in both parks. Get schedules at the visitor centers or consult bulletin boards throughout the parks. Group visits may be scheduled in advance.

Scenic Drives The roads of Catoctin Mountain Park offer scenic driving all year; portions of Park Central Road and Manahan Road are closed in winter. A scenic overlook on the east side of Hunting Creek Lake offers a panoramic view of the water and surrounding forest. The lake is south of Md. 77 via Catoctin Hollow Road.

Trails Levels of difficulty range from short, paved loop trails to serious hiking trails. Bicycles are not permitted on park trails. A horse trail is open April 15 to December 1; horses are not allowed on any other park trails. See the "Trail Guide" on the other side of this brochure.

Picnic Areas Owens Creek, Chestnut, Manor, and William Houck areas have restrooms, tables, and fireplaces. A 30-table picnic pavilion at the Manor Area may be reserved for a small fee. Individual picnic tables are located throughout the parks, but fires are permitted only at the four developed picnic areas.

Water Sports Hunting Creek Lake has sandy beaches and a modern bathhouse. Boats may be rented in summer. The lake is stocked, and there is stream fishing in Owens and Little Hunting creeks. Big Hunting Creek is a trout management area; fly-fishing only and catch-and-return. A Maryland license with trout stamp is required for those 16 and older.

Camping Camping is permitted only in campgrounds, cabins, and shelters. Manor and William Houck campgrounds are open April through October. Owens Creek is open mid-April through the third weekend in November. Trailers longer than 22 feet and tents larger than 9 by 12 feet are prohibited at Owens Creek. Areas have restrooms, tables, and fireplaces. Camping is limited to seven consecutive days and a total of 14 days per season at Owens Creek, and to a total of 14 consecutive days at Manor and William Houck.

Reservations William Houck Area, 1-888-432-CAMP (2267); www.md.campnow.com. At Misty Mount (301-271-3140) individual cabins may be rented from mid-April through October. Poplar Grove, Greentop, and Round Meadow make excellent outdoor classrooms for environmental education. Poplar Grove Youth Camp Area, 1-800-388-2733 or reservations.nps.gov; Greentop and Round Meadow, 301-271-3140.

For a safe park visit Posted speed limits are enforced. • Park only in designated areas. Parking in day-use areas is not permitted after dusk.

• Build fires only in fireplaces. • Practice proper food storage to discourage bears, raccoons, and yellow jackets. • When swimming, stay within the guarded beach areas. • *Catoctin Mountain Park*: Pets are permitted at Owens Creek Campground but must be on a leash. They are not allowed in buildings or in group camps. • Firearms are not permitted in the park. • Plants, rocks, and wildlife in the park are protected by federal law. • *Cunningham Falls State Park*: Pets are not permitted in developed areas, including day-use areas. • Firearms are permitted only in the Hunting Area during hunting season. • Obey state fishing regulations. • Do not deface or remove trees, wildflowers, plants, or rocks.

Camp David, the Presidential retreat, is located within Catoctin Mountain Park. It is not visible from the roads, and it is closed to the public.

More Information

Catoctin Mountain Park
6602 Foxville Road
Thurmont, MD 21788-1598
301-663-9388; Resource Crimes Hotline: 1-866-677-6677; 24-hour Emergency: 1-301-714-2235
www.nps.gov/cato

Cunningham Falls State Park
14039 Catoctin Hollow Road
Thurmont, MD 21788-1514
301-271-7574; 24-hour Emergency: 1-800-825-PARK(7275)
www.dnr.state.md.us

Exploring the Parks

Trail Guide

All the trails and self-guiding trails in both parks are described here. Many trails interconnect, so you may wish to plan a circular route to avoid retracing your steps. The trails are listed in alphabetical order by destination or name.

Trail Name/ Destination	Round- trip	Ascent	Trailhead/Starting Point	Description
Blue Blazes Whiskey Still	0.6 mile 30 minutes	60 feet	Lot across Park Central Rd. from visitor center	Easy Trailside interpretive signs. Whiskey-making talks on weekends.
Browns Farm	0.4 mile 30 minutes	20 feet	Owens Creek Picnic Area	Easy Printed interpretive guide. Environmental study area.
Cat Rock	9 miles 6 hours	1,120 feet	Manor Area	Strenuous Passes Bobs Hill; magnificent views. Continues to Md. 77.
Cat Rock	3 miles 2 hours	700 feet	Parking lot across from NPS park headquarters, Md. 77	Strenuous Last leg of trail is steep; beautiful overlook. Continues to Manor Area.
Charcoal	0.5 mile 30 minutes	20 feet	Thurmont Vista parking lot on Park Central Rd.	Easy Trailside interpretive signs tell the story of charcoal-making in the 1800s.
Chimney Rock	2.2 miles 2 hours	520 feet	NPS park headquarters on Md. 77	Strenuous Rock formations and scenic view; use care on slippery rocks. Continues to Wolf Rock.
Cunningham Falls	2.8 miles 2 hours	240 feet	Lot across Park Central Rd. from visitor center	Moderate Both uphill and downhill sections in the forest. Goes from the visitor center to the falls.
Cunningham Falls— Accessibility Trail	0.3 mile 30 minutes	40 feet	Parking lot on Md. 77; <i>accessibility parking only</i>	Easy Shortest access to falls; access for visitors with disabilities. Continues to William Houck Area.
Cunningham Falls— Lower Trail	0.8 mile 1 hour	20 feet	William Houck Area	Moderate Follows Hunting Creek to falls. Connects with Cunningham Falls cliff trail.
Cunningham Falls— Cliff Trail	0.8 mile 1½ hours	300 feet	William Houck Area	Strenuous Rough terrain and rock outcrops. Connects with Cunningham Falls lower trail.
Deerfield	1.3 miles 1 hour	260 feet	Owens Creek campground, near site 30	Moderate Printed interpretive guide. Non-campers please park near bulletin board.
Hog Rock	1 mile 45 minutes	80 feet	Hog Rock parking lot on Park Central Rd.	Easy Printed interpretive guide. Loop trail with overlook.
Spicebush	0.2 mile 30 minutes		Chestnut Picnic Area	Easy Trailside interpretive signs. Teaches forest ecology. Hard surface for disabilities access.
Thurmont Vista	1 mile 45 minutes	240 feet	Thurmont Vista parking lot on Park Central Rd.	Moderate View of the town of Thurmont. Continues to Wolf Rock and Chimney Rock.
Wolf Rock	1.8 mile 1½ hours	400 feet	Wolf Rock parking lot on Park Central Road, or visitor center	Strenuous Rock formations and scenic view. Use care on slippery rocks. Continues to Chimney Rock.

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Catoctin Mountain Park and Cunningham Falls State Park

