National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Catoctin Mountain Park
Maryland



Simple Pleasures *For All Seasons*

Catoctin Mountain Park was created during the Great Depression of the 1930s as a place for people to reconnect with nature. Today the park remains true to its origins—and takes on new significance as new generations discover fiery autumn leaves, jewel-like spring wildflowers, a stream flowing through a blanket of snow, or a trail through the woods to a spectacular valley view.



Catoctin Mountain Park

At Home in the Mountains

Long before the arrival of Europeans, small tribes of American Indians hunted, fished, and quarried stone here. By 1732, when settlers began to arrive in the Monocacy valley, Catoctin Mountain was neutral ground where no American Indians lived permanently. The name "Catoctin" probably came from the Kittoctons, who lived nearer to the Potomac River.

The first pioneers were second-generation Americans and German immigrants. They came west from Philadelphia, across the Susquehanna River, then 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 after. In the mid-1800s more Germans and some Swiss and Scots-Irish came to the area.

Early settlers found adequate natural resources to make a living. Many families established farms in the high valleys. Today you can see stone fences, cellar pits, and other remnants as you walk through the forest. Some settlers harvested oak and chestnut bark—rich sources of tannin—which supplied the developing tanneries in the Monocacy valley.

The discovery of hematite (iron) in the region spawned a new industry—iron production. The Catoctin iron furnace was built in the 1770s and operated for well over a hundred years. Its



chief products were stoves, wheel rims, cannons and shot, and cast pieces for machinery.

Founders, molders, finishers, miners, woodcutters, charcoal makers (colliers), and teamsters worked here. Enslaved and free African Americans worked skilled and unskilled jobs.

Today you can see the remains of the furnace in Cunningham Falls State Park.

Over the years logging, extensive cutting for charcoal making, and stripping of bark for tanning depleted the resources. It became harder for people to make a living, and many moved away. One of the last money-making products was whiskey. Transporting bulky corn and rye grains through the mountains to market had always proved troublesome and expensive. In the 1700s farmers began to distill grain into alcohol, which earned them a much greater profit.

Taxes—and later Prohibition laws in the 1920s—forced the bootleggers into hiding. A 1929 raid on the Blue Blazes still, where a deputy sheriff was killed, spelled the much publicized end of large-scale "moonshine" making. The Blue Blazes Whiskey Still Trail leads you to a replica of a typical farm still.



Left to right: Chimney Rock; Catoctin iron furnace; whiskey jug.

LEFT TO RIGHT: NPS / MARK MUSE; THURMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY; MUSEUM OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY / RON BLUNT

A Natural Setting Restored

Catoctin Mountain Park got its start during the Great Depression. In 1935 the federal government bought over 10,000 acres and developed it as the Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area (RDA). The program made



public parks out of marginal farmland near cities. Forty-six RDAs were created in 24 states, and most eventually became state or national parks.

In 1936 the Works Progress Administration (WPA), another New Deal effort, hired hundreds of local men to build maintenance shops, picnic areas, cabin camps, and a visitor center. The park's chestnut and oak trees were the ideal "log cabin" material for the rustic architecture.

In 1939 the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) set up camp at today's Round Meadow. Their job was to return the depleted Catoctin landscape to native Eastern hardwood forest. They planted trees, turned old farmland into meadows, and restored streams to their natural flow—all of which encouraged the return of native species. The CCC also built roads, trails, guardrails, stone walls, and shelters.



The park closed in 1941, on the eve of the US entry into World War II. The camps were drafted into the war effort as rehabilitation centers for sailors and marines and a training facility for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). President Franklin D. Roosevelt chose Camp Hi-Catoctin as a presidential retreat he called Shangri-La. It was renamed Camp David in the 1950s by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. *Camp David is not open to the public.*

In 1954 the park was divided along MD Rt. 77. To the north is Catoctin Mountain Park, which remains in the National Park System. To the south is Cunningham Falls State Park, managed by the Maryland Park Service.

The 1960s revived the spirit of the CCC when Camp Round Meadow became the nation's first Job Corps center. The program, started by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his "War on Poverty," combined work, education, and recreation for economically disadvantaged youth.



Left to right: WPA poster; CCC trail crew, 1930s; dogwood blossoms.

LEFT TO RIGHT: NATIONAL ARCHIVES; NPS; VISUALS UNLIMITED

Activities for Everyone

Catoctin Mountain Park is full of stories, best told via its 25 miles of trails. Old stone fences, logging roads, charcoal-making exhibits, and high valley vistas tell us how people once valued this land for its commercial resources. Trails through the regrowth of red oaks, birches, dogwoods, maples, and other trees remind us that nature brings us wealth by simply being itself.

Trails vary from the wheelchair-accessible Spicebush trail to the strenuous Wolf Rock and Chimney Rock trails. About six miles of trail are designated for horse use. For detailed descriptions, ask at the visitor center or visit www.nps.gov/cato.

Cabin camps offer accommodations for one or more nights. Misty Mount and Greentop were built in the 1930s. Cabins



house three to 12 people. There are centrally located bathrooms and dining halls; guarded swimming pools are available in the summer months.

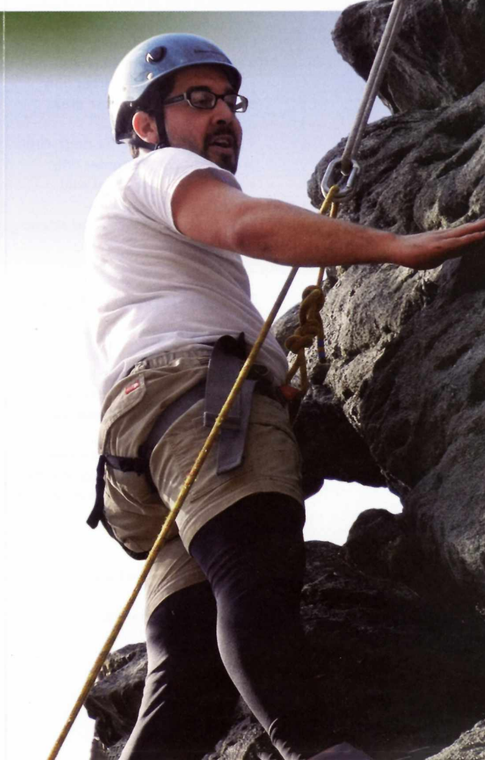
Round Meadow has more modern facilities with dormitory-style lodging, a dining hall, and full gymnasium. It is designed for large groups and can be used in all seasons. Greentop and Round Meadow are wheelchair-accessible.

Big Hunting Creek was the first stream in Maryland designated as fly-fishing-only and the first catch-and-release trout stream. State fishing regulations apply.

In winter, some sections of park roads are closed to vehicular traffic and opened for winter recreation. Most park trails are narrow, steep, and rocky, but a few sections are good for skiing. Safe trail skiing requires a snow base of six to eight inches. Note that all trails are designed for hiking, not skiing.

Bouldering is allowed throughout the park, but rock climbing and rappelling are allowed only in designated areas by permit.





Left to right: Camp Misty Mount; cross-country skier; camper and counselor at Camp Greentop; rock climber.

LEFT TO RIGHT: NPS / MARK MUSE; ISTOCKPHOTO / © DAN DRIEDGER, © THE GAZETTE / TOM FEDOR; NPS

Recreation, Relaxation, Retreat



Big Hunting Creek
NPS / TERRY ADAMS

Things to See and Do

The **Catoctin Mountain Park Visitor Center** *(see GPS address below)* has exhibits and information to help you plan your visit. Groups of 10 or more may require a permit; reserve in advance. Program schedules are available at the visitor center or on the park website.

Cunningham Falls State Park, south of MD 77, is managed by Maryland Park Service. It has hiking, camping, fishing, swimming, boating, and hunting. Call 301-271-7574 or visit www.dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands.

Scenic Drives Park roads wind through woods and along streams. Portions of Park Central Road and Manahan Road are closed in winter.

Trails The park has over 25 miles of **hiking trails** *(chart, upper right).* Hikes may take longer in winter months when some parking areas are closed. **Horseback riding** is permitted on 6 miles of trail. Trailer parking is across from Camp Greentop spring through fall.

Picnic Areas **Owens Creek** picnic area has tables and grills. **Chestnut** picnic area has restrooms, tables, and grills. Additional tables are available at the **Thurmont Vista** parking area, **Hog Rock** parking area, and near the visitor center. Grilling is permitted only at developed picnic areas that provide grills.

Wildlife Viewing The park is home to dozens of species of animals, making it an ideal place for seeing wildlife. Please *observe from a distance and never feed them.*

Climbing and Bouldering For the beginner and recreational climber, the park offers challenges in a beautiful mountain setting. Climbing at **Wolf Rock** requires a permit from www.recreation.gov.

Crosscountry Skiing When conditions produce a 6- to 8-inch base of packed snow, the closed portions of Park Central and Manahan roads allow for runs of several miles.



Chimney Rock
© CLAUDIO SILVA



Campsite
NPS



Buckeye butterfly
NPS / ALICIA LEFEVER

Camping and Cabins

Cabins and camping facilities require advance reservations through www.recreation.gov. Visit the park website for details.

Camping is permitted only in established campgrounds, cabins, and shelters. **Owens Creek Campground** is for families and small groups. **Poplar Grove** is a tenting area for organized youth groups.

Three-sided, wooden **Adirondack shelters** offer solitude for hike-in campers.

Individual cabins can be rented at **Camp Misty Mount**. Cabins or dorms for groups are available at **Camp Greentop** and **Camp Round Meadow**. All camps are excellent outdoor classrooms for environmental education.



Spicebush Nature Trail (hard surface)
© ZEAGER BROS., INC.

Good Stewardship Begins with You

- Federal law protects all natural and cultural features. Do not collect or damage them.
- Follow posted speed limits.
- Park in designated areas only.
- Do not park in day-use areas after dusk.
- Build fires only in fire rings. Grills are for cooking purposes only.
- Store food away from wild animals, especially bears.
- Keep pets on a leash and attended at all times.
- Keep pets out of buildings and away from group camps.
- Bicycles are not permitted on trails.
- Horses are allowed only on designated horse trails.
- Camp David, the Presidential Retreat, is not visible from the road and is not open to the public.

For a complete list of regulations, including firearms information, check the park website.



Be bear aware!
© RUE WILDLIFE PHOTOS



Blacksmith demonstration
NPS / CRAIG KUHN

More Information

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information stop at the visitor center, call, or check the park website.

Catoctin Mountain Park is one of over 400 areas in the National Park System. For more information, visit www.nps.gov.

GPS address
Catoctin Mountain Park
Visitor Center
14707 Park Central Rd.
Thurmont, MD 21788

Contact
Catoctin Mountain Park
6602 Foxville Rd.
Thurmont, MD 21788
301-663-9388
www.nps.gov/cato

National Parks Reservations:
877-444-6777
www.recreation.gov

Emergencies call 866-677-6677

National Park Foundation
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

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Hiking trail/destination	Round-trip distance	Trailhead or starting point
EASY		
Blue Blazes Whiskey Still	0.6 mile	Visitor Center
Blue Ridge Summit Overlook	0.6 mile	Hog Rock Parking Lot
Brown's Farm	0.4 mile	Owens Creek Picnic Area
Charcoal	0.5 mile	Thurmont Vista Parking Lot
Hog Rock	1.0 mile	Hog Rock Parking Lot
Spicebush ♿	0.2 mile	Chestnut Picnic Area
MODERATE		
Cunningham Falls	2.8 miles	Visitor Center
Deerfield Nature Trail	1.3 miles	Owens Creek Campground
Thurmont Vista	1.0 mile	Thurmont Vista Parking Lot
STRENUOUS		
Chimney Rock	2.2 miles	Park Headquarters
Gateway	3.9 miles	Lewis Property or Chimney Rock Trail
Wolf Rock	1.8 miles	Wolf Rock Parking Lot

Hiking trail
Horse and hiking trail
Steep trail; arrows point uphill
Overlook
Unpaved road

Catoctin National Recreation Trail:
Hiking trail
Horse and hiking trail

Parking
Ranger station
Picnic area
Cabin camp
Wheelchair-accessible
Public campground
Sleeping shelter
Scenic viewpoint

Park Central Road is closed for 2.5 miles from the visitor center for winter recreation mid-December to mid-March.

0 0.5 1 Kilometer
0 0.5 1 Mile

North