

George Washington Memorial Parkway

George Washington Memorial Parkway
District of Columbia/Maryland/Virginia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Road, trail, and river meet near Fort Hunt Park along the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Few figures in United States history are more revered than George Washington—Revolutionary commander-in-chief, founding father, and first President. Henry Lee's 1799 eulogy to Washington still rings true: "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Two centuries later, Washington lives on through innumerable places of tribute. The sites in and around his namesake city can claim a special significance, though, for this is where he lived, worked, worshipped, and planned for the future of the nation.

Even during Washington's lifetime, his home at Mount Vernon attracted sightseers, increasing in popularity with each generation. In 1932, the bicentennial of Washington's birth, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway opened from Arlington Memorial Bridge to the estate. The 16-mile road not only improved automobile access through Virginia, but ushered in a new era of road-building. Constructed by the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Public Roads, it was proclaimed "America's Most Modern Motorway." While the highway was under construc-

tion, Congress renamed it the George Washington Memorial Parkway and greatly expanded its authorized length and its mission. Under the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930, the Federal Government acquired land along the Potomac River from Great Falls, Virginia, to Mount Vernon to protect the shoreline and palisades, preserve historic features, and provide public recreation areas. In the 1950s and 1960s, the parkway was extended northward. Traversing more difficult terrain than the southern leg, this section displays the latest road engineering methods for

its time—a wide, gently curving road with a grassy median, low stone guardrails, and soaring steel-and-concrete arched bridges. By 1970, 6.8 miles of the Maryland section was completed; that section was renamed in honor of Clara Barton in 1989. Today the George Washington Memorial Parkway is a 7,600-acre national park area protecting the landscape and native habitat of the Potomac shoreline. Within the park you can visit more than 25 sites associated with George Washington's life, and with the life of the nation he helped establish.

A Road Through Past and Present

By the time he became President in 1789, George Washington owned some 8,000 acres along the Potomac River in Virginia, extending from south of Mount Vernon to several miles north of the estate. One of Washington's dreams for post-Revolutionary America was to turn the Potomac River into the commercial gateway to the West. He lobbied for construction of the Patowmack Canal to route boat traffic safely around the "great falls" of the Potomac, nearly 30 miles upriver from his home. Today, the George Washington Memorial Parkway includes remains of this late 18th-century canal at Great Falls Park, as well as sections of Washington's tidal Potomac farmlands—Riverside Park, Fort Hunt Park, and Collingwood Picnic Area. Other members of Washington's family held land that is now within the parkway. Abingdon, home of Washington's stepson John Parke Custis, is now the site of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. A few miles northwest is Arlington House, which was the property of



Mount Vernon Estate

Washington's step-grandson George Washington Parke Custis. Raised by the Washingtons, Custis left Mount Vernon in 1802 upon the death of his grandmother, Martha Custis Washington. That year, on the 1,100-acre Arlington estate he inherited, Custis began construction of a Greek Revival mansion, completed in 1817. The home, which Custis filled with Washington heirlooms, was later occupied by Custis's daughter Mary and her husband Robert E. Lee until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

Two more U.S. Presidents are honored at Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Grove and Theodore Roosevelt Island. Many other sites along the parkway recall the nation's past: Claude Moore Colonial Farm recreates 18th-century tobacco farm life. Historic military sites in Virginia include Civil War-era Fort Marcy and Spanish-American War-era Fort Hunt. In Glen Echo, Maryland, is the home of American Red Cross founder Clara Barton, and the site of a 19th-century Chautauqua Assembly, now Glen Echo Park.

Turkey Run Park and Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve are natural habitats preserved within the boundaries of the parkway. Watch for signs of the seasons: dogwood, redbud, and daffodils in spring; the fiery hues of red maples, oaks, sumacs, and hickories in fall. You may also see wild turkeys, bald eagles, and hundreds of other migratory and resident birds. As you make your way along the parkway, observe the changing nature of the Potomac River from falls to tidewater.

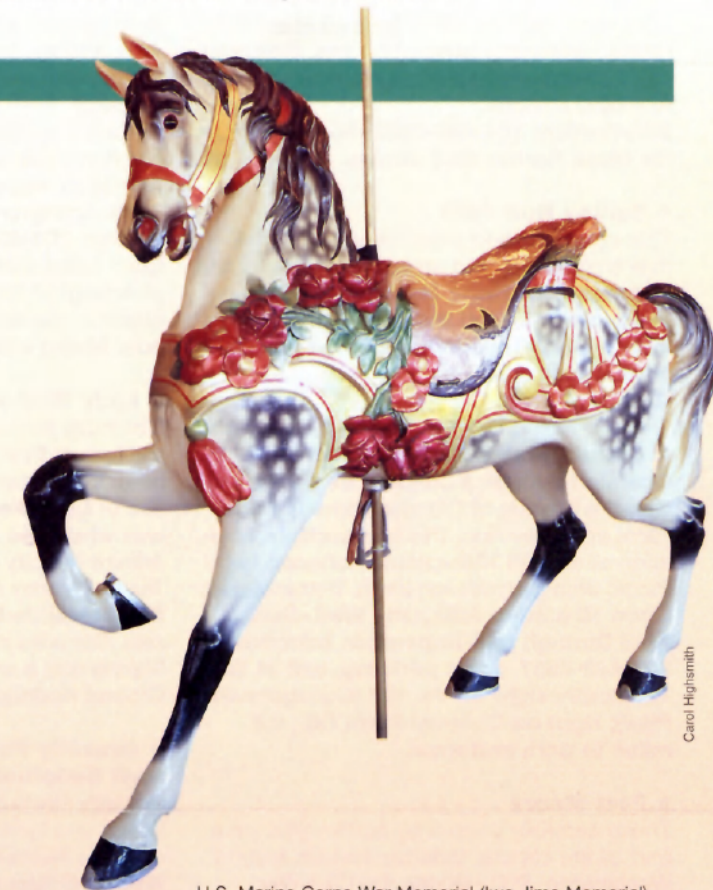


Carol Highsmith

Above: At Great Falls the Potomac River drops 77 feet in about one mile. The Patowmack Canal was built in the late 18th cen-

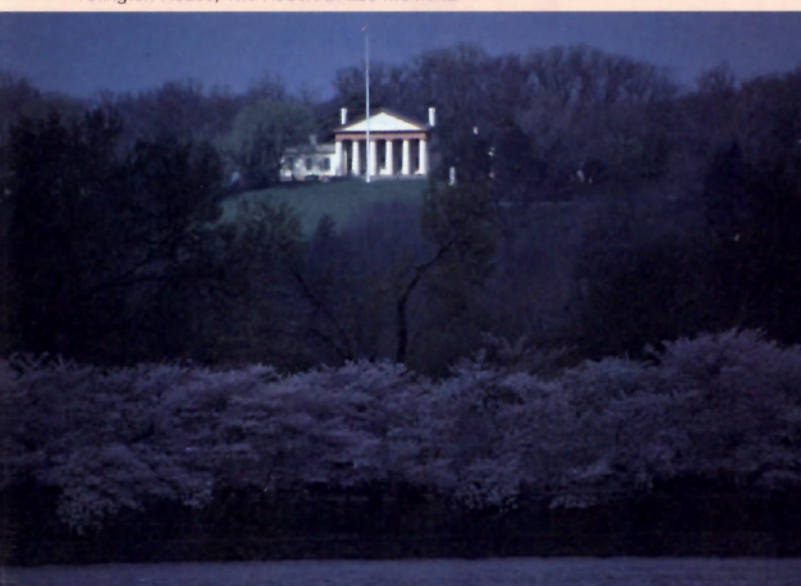
tury to skirt the falls and promote trade with western markets. Right: The 1921 Dentzel Carousel at Glen Echo Park in Maryland is still in operation.

This horse, restored to its original color and sheen, is from the carousel's circular parade.



Carol Highsmith

Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial



Clara Barton National Historic Site



LBJ Memorial Grove



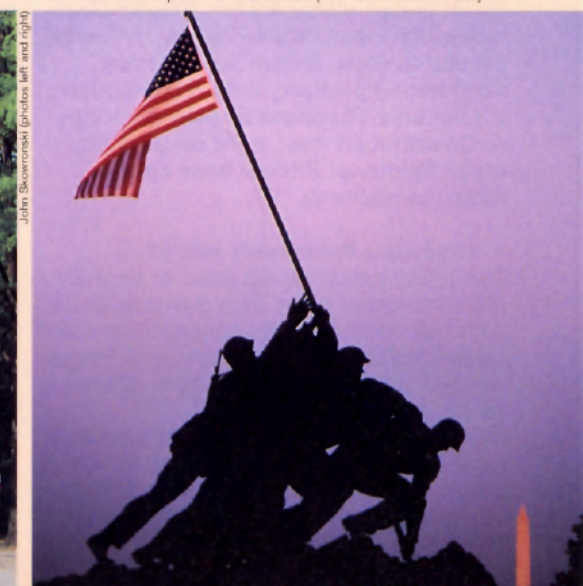
Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve



Theodore Roosevelt Island



U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima Memorial)



The George Washington Memorial Parkway was designed to bring people closer to nature and history. With increasing suburban development, the parkway is now a major commuter route. The very qualities that set this roadway apart from others—a rolling, winding course bounded by stone walls, with eye-catching scenery and opportunities to spot wildlife—make it unsafe at high speeds. When driving, observe posted speed limits. Keep in mind that first and foremost, the parkway is a park!

What to See and Do Along the Parkway

Overlooks have views of the most dramatic series of falls on the Potomac. Nearby are remains of the Patowmack Canal, promoted by George Washington and built 1786-1802. Visitor center, trails, picnic area, snack bar.

Open 7 a.m. to dark daily except December 25. Entrance fee. Information: 703-285-2965. From I-495 take exit 13, Va. 193 (Georgetown Pike) west for 4.2 miles; right on Old Dominion Drive; follow signs to park entrance.

Built in 1891 and renovated in 1897 for Clara Barton, this house served as a supply warehouse, American Red Cross headquarters, and Barton's home until she died in 1912. **For hours of operation, call 301-492-6245. From Clara Barton Parkway take Cabin John exit; turn right on MacArthur Blvd. and follow signs to entrance.**

Established by the Chautauqua Assembly in the 1890s, Glen Echo was an amusement park from 1907 to 1968. Today it is a center for the visual and performing arts. Restored 1921 Dentzel Carousel, picnic area, classes, weekend dances.

Information: 301-492-6282. See directions for Clara Barton NHS above.

This quiet wooded area has views of the river's palisades and an access point for the **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail**, which follows the riverbank 8.5 miles from I-495 to Theodore Roosevelt Island. Trails, picnic area.
Closed at dark.

Operated through a cooperative agreement with the Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm at Turkey Run, this is a working recreation of a small 18th-century tobacco farm. Picnic area (permits required). Entrance fee. **Open 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Wed.-Sun., April through mid-December. Information: 703-442-7557. From parkway, exit at Va. 123 south; right on Va. 193 (Georgetown Pike); right on Colonial Farm Rd., 0.6 miles to park entrance.**

These carefully preserved earthworks were part of the circular defense system around Washington, D.C., during the Civil War. South of Fort Marcy are two **Scenic Overlooks** with views of the Potomac palisades. **Closed at dark. Entrances are from northbound parkway only. Southbound traffic: take Theodore Roosevelt Bridge to Constitution Ave., right on 23rd St., cross Memorial Bridge; bear right to return to parkway.**

This island preserves 88 acres of swamp, marshland, and forest as a memorial to the 26th U.S. President and conservation advocate. A formal plaza has a statue of Roosevelt with his quotations carved in stone. Hiking, wildlife observation.

Closed at dark. No bicycles. Entrance is from northbound parkway only. Southbound traffic: see directions for Fort Marcy above. Metro station: Rosslyn.

This statue depicting the World War II flag-raising on Iwo Jima honors the sacrifices of U.S. Marines since 1775. The 50-bell carillon was presented to the United States in appreciation of support during the war. **Open 24 hours. From Key Bridge, take Fort Myer Dr.; continue on Meade St.; left on Marshall Dr. to park entrance on left. From Theodore Roosevelt Bridge, take U.S. 50 west to Fort Myer Dr., proceed as above. Metro stations: Arlington Cemetery or Rosslyn.**

From 1831 to 1861, Robert E. Lee and his wife Mary Custis Lee made the Arlington estate their home. After Lee took command of Virginia's army, Arlington was occupied by Federal troops. Later, a freedman's village was established here, along with **Arlington National Cemetery**. Completed in 1932 and visually linking the Lee and Lincoln memorials, **Arlington Memorial Bridge** symbolizes the reunited nation after the Civil War. In Virginia the bridge leads directly into the cemetery via **Memorial Avenue**, lined with military monuments including the **Women In Military Service for America Memorial (WIMSA)**. Arlington House information: 703-557-0613. Arlington National Cemetery information: 703-607-8052. WIMSA information: 1-800-222-2294. From parkway, exit at Arlington National Cemetery; follow signs to parking; walk or take shuttle bus. Metro station: Arlington Cemetery.

Columbia Island was renamed in honor of the former First Lady and her campaign to beautify Washington, D.C. She chose the site of **LBJ Memorial Grove** herself; it was where the Johnsons often stopped to admire the city when they drove up from Texas. Nearby is the **Navy and Marine Memorial** dedicated to Americans lost at sea. The area includes the Columbia Island Marina and a snack bar.
Closed midnight to 6 a.m.

Gravelly Point has a boat ramp, playing fields, and views of Washington and air traffic at **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport**. Across the parkway is **Roaches Run**, a popular birding area. Closed 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Gravelly Point entrance is from northbound parkway only; southbound traffic, turn around at Daingerfield Island. The Roaches Run entrance is from southbound parkway only; turn around at I-395 south.

Includes the Washington Sailing Marina, playing field (permits required), boat ramp, picnic area, snack bar, and restaurant.
Closed midnight to 6 a.m.

Founded by Scottish merchants in 1749, Alexandria was considered by George Washington to be his home town. Visitor center: 221 King St., 703-838-4200.

This is the southernmost point of the original 10-mile square District of Columbia. The 1856 lighthouse (closed) was one of the country's first inland river lighthouses. **From Washington St., turn east on South St.; left on S. Royal St. to entrance.**

Occupying the site of an early 18th-century tobacco warehouse, Belle Haven Park has trails, a picnic area, and a marina. **Dyke Marsh**, swamp forest and cattail marsh, is nesting or feeding area to more than 250 species of birds; look for ospreys, herons, and red-winged blackbirds. South of Belle Haven is the **Stone Bridge** at Alexandria Avenue, an example of those built in 1930-31 by the Bureau of Public Roads. **Closed at dark.**

This riverside picnic area sits on land that was once part of George Washington's River Farm.
Closed at dark.

The fort dates from the Spanish-American War in the 1890s; it never saw action. Reactivated during World War II for military intelligence operations, it now serves as a popular recreation area with facilities for group picnics (permits required).
Closed at dark. Information: 703-289-2530.

This recreation site has a picnic area, a fitness course, fishing areas, and river views. Look for bald eagles.
Closed at dark.

This paved, multi-use trail runs 18.5 miles from Mount Vernon to Key Bridge. **Bicyclists must observe 15-mph speed limit. No motorized vehicles. Parking for trail is available at most sites along the parkway.**

George Washington's home 1754-1799 is owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union. The house, gardens, and demonstration farm are open daily.
Entrance fee. Information: 703-780-2000

For your safety The parkway is narrow and winding. The speed limit varies from 25 to 50 mph. Do not exceed posted speed limits. • Watch for deer, wild turkeys and other small animals, and pedestrians. • It is a federal offense to destroy or remove natural or cultural objects. • Firearms and metal detectors are prohibited. • A Maryland, Virginia, or District of Columbia fishing license is required.

Administration The parkway is part of the National Park System, one of more than 370 parks that are examples of our nation's cultural and natural heritage. For more information, contact: Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway, c/o Turkey Run Park, McLean, VA 22101; 703-289-2500; www.nps.gov/gwmp. Park Watch 703-289-2530. In an emergency, call 911 or call the U.S. Park Police, 202-619-7300.

