

Oxon Hill Farm

Oxon Cove Park
Oxon Hill Farm
Maryland

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Sometimes life on Oxon Hill Farm seems relaxed, as if the world had returned to a simpler time when afternoons are filled with exploring a field, reading under a tree, or sleeping in the tall grass. With city noises in the distance, we often imagine that life on the farm is better than where we live now, with fewer worries and less stress.

Why do farms seem so idyllic? Perhaps it is because they are close to nature and provide us with milk, eggs, meat, grains, and vegetables. What do you see when you look around? Perhaps you see sheep or horses nibbling at grass, chickens taking a dust bath, or cows chewing and chewing. This

world may appear slow-paced but don't be fooled—Oxon Hill Farm is a lively place.

You can watch the activities or, better yet, join in. Let the rangers know that you want to help, and—depending on the time of day or the season—you may feed chickens, make apple cider, husk and crack corn, work in the garden, gather eggs, or milk a cow.

Why not leave city life behind for a day? Try your hand at farming as it has been done at Oxon Hill for centuries. Since the 1600s the Oxon Hill area has attracted men and women who saw its agricultural



potential. Large estates raised cattle, wheat, corn, tobacco, and fruit as cash crops for nearby developing urban areas. Much of the labor for early plantations like Mount Welby (Oxon Hill's early 1800s name) was provided by enslaved workers.

In 1891 the US Government acquired the land and established a farm for St. Elizabeths Hospital. Patients worked on the farm for therapy and to grow their own food. In the mid-

1960s the farm was entrusted to the National Park Service, and in 1967 Oxon Hill Farm welcomed its first visitors.

The park opened its gates not as a farm museum or petting zoo but as a working farm that represented the time when horsepower came from actual horses. As it has for generations, Oxon Hill Farm depends on hard work, understanding agriculture and animals, and a love for the land.



Sunlight, Soil, and Seasons

Animals and plants do not follow clocks or calendars. For generations here at Oxon Hill Farm, sunlight, temperature, and natural processes determined the timetable.

Spring was the time of birth, when baby goats, lambs, calves, pigs, and

chicks made a noisy entrance into the world. The increased sunlight warmed the soil and signaled the planting season. Farmers plowed, planted, and readied for a long growing season. Crops depended on careful attention to timing. Farmers watched care-

fully for the optimum conditions for planting seeds and harvesting mature crops.

Cooperative weather and long hours of hard work ensured a winter's supply of grains and hay for the animals and fruits and vegetables for people.

You could see real horsepower in action during these busy seasons. In spring horses plowed, disced, and harrowed the fields for planting. At harvest time they hauled crops to storage.

The draft horses that did this work were

different from riding horses. Wide chests, broad sloping shoulders, slower metabolism, and dense muscles gave them the power to pull equipment. A two-horse team could plow two acres or disc 10 acres per day.

"Come on down, we'll put you to work."

Why just dream about helping on a farm? Come join the fun. Feel the skin of a cow and the warmth of her fresh milk. Listen to chickens clucking and goats bleating. Smell the sweet aroma of horses and hay.



STAY SAFE, PROTECT THE PARK

- Animals can be frightened if you yell at or poke them. They may defend themselves by kicking, biting, showing with their heads, or stepping on you. Move slowly and don't make loud noises. Stay out of animal stalls and pens. Never walk behind or under a hoofed animal.
- Do not feed the animals; they may bite. Do not touch any animal unless one of the rangers is with you.
- Farms are dusty and have sloppy things to step in. Remember when volunteering to wear old clothes and sturdy shoes. Bring work gloves if you plan to help in the garden or barnyard. Contact the park for information on volunteering.
- Do not climb on any machinery. Stay back from moving wagons and tractors. They are heavy, cannot stop quickly, and may have sharp, moving parts.
- To avoid cuts and splinters, do not touch barbed wire or wooden structures. Please do not climb on fences.
- Dogs are not allowed.
- The risk of fire on a farm is high—smoking is prohibited.
- Please supervise your children at all times.
- Unauthorized vehicles and bicycles are not allowed beyond the main gate or in the farm area.
- Ask permission before picking any fruits, flowers, or vegetables. Federal law protects all plants and wildlife. They are an important part of the farm's ecological balance. Please do not collect, disturb, or harm them.
- For a complete list of regulations, including firearms information, visit the park website.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

From I-495/95 Capital Beltway, Inner Loop (southbound):

- Exit 3, MD 210 Indian Head Hwy.
- At stoplight, continue straight ahead to Bald Eagle Rd.
- Look for Oxon Hill Farm sign; parking lot on right before bridge.

From I-495/95 Capital Beltway, Outer Loop (northbound):

- Exit 3B, MD 210 Indian Head Hwy north toward Forest Heights.
- At stoplight, turn right to MD 414 Oxon Hill Rd, center lane.
- Second stoplight, turn right to Bald Eagle Rd; parking lot on left after bridge.

From I-295 Anacostia Freeway southbound:

- Exit 1A, I-495/95 toward Baltimore.
- Exit 3B, MD 210 Indian Head Hwy north toward Forest Heights.
- At stoplight, turn right to MD 414 Oxon Hill Rd, center lane.
- Second stoplight, turn right to Bald Eagle Rd; parking lot on left after bridge.

PLANNING YOUR VISIT



Oxon Hill Farm is open daily 8 am to 4:30 pm except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Admission and activities are free. Reservations are required for special programs.

To make reservations, plan a group visit, or get information about educational and volunteer programs, contact us: 301-839-1176; or www.nps.gov/oxhi.

Self-guiding Tour

Explore on your own to see the farm machinery, dairy barn and silo, 1800s brick stable, feed and tool sheds, and barnyard. *Note: Animals are not always out-of-doors, and they may be in different locations.*

Hiking and Biking Venture beyond the hilltop and explore part of Oxon Cove Park's 512 acres by strolling along the lower fields or riding the bike path along Oxon Cove.

Woodlot Trail Take this steep ½-mile trail, marked with yellow blazes on trees, to explore the wooded area north of the

farmyard. You may see some of the foundations of the buildings used by St. Elizabeths Hospital many decades ago.

Picnicking Picnic in designated areas. Food is not sold in the park.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For

information, ask at the visitor center, call, or check our website.

Special Events and Educational Activities

The park offers demonstrations, guided walks, wagon rides, and talks about farm life and the animals. Reservations are recommended for these special activities.

Stewards of the Land Since opening to the public as a National Park Service site on July 8, 1967, Oxon Hill Farm has served as an important place to learn about rural traditions and responsible land management. Today, park rangers and staff continue their role as stewards of our public lands, values, and history.

Join us, and follow in the footsteps of those who have farmed the land for generations. Help us preserve the countryside and cultural traditions while protecting the land for future generations.

Oxon Hill Farm is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks visit www.nps.gov.

More Information Oxon Cove Park and Oxon Hill Farm
6411 Oxon Hill Rd
Oxon Cove, MD 20745
301-839-1176
www.nps.gov/oxhi

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

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