

Potomac Heritage

National Scenic Trail
Washington, D.C./Maryland/
Pennsylvania/Virginia



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



©PAT AND CHUCK BLACKLEY

©MILLARD H. SHARP/PHOTO
RESEARCHERS, INC.

Linking the Potomac and upper Ohio river basins from Chesapeake Bay and Potomac tidewater to the Allegheny Highlands, this national scenic trail network lets you retrace—by foot, bicycle, horse, or boat—the corridor George Washington explored as essential to U.S. national development.



Linking People and Places

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail both encompasses and transcends the Potomac River. By varied modern means it lets you explore the landscapes and footsteps of George Washington and his prescient vision for western expansion in the 1700s. He could see that Pittsburgh was closer to Georgetown (and the future Washington, D.C.) than to Philadelphia. Washington's dream birthed the region's booming 1800s industry and commerce.

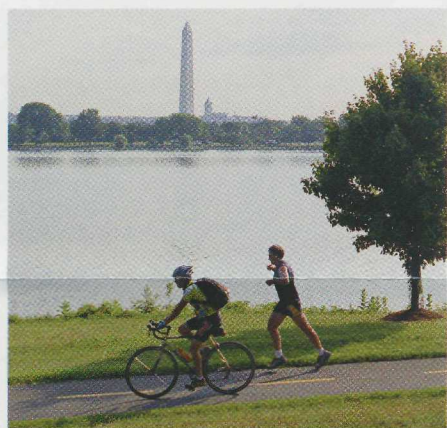
The region brims with tales about George Washington. From his Mount Vernon estate on the river, Washington recognized the Potomac's potential as a commercial artery between the Atlantic and "the Ohio country," a site for a major federal armory, and a capital city of the fledgling United States. The city would bear his name, and the Potomac become the nation's river.

George Washington's Patowmack Canal proved short-lived, but his foresight gave rise to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal that borders the river between Washington, D.C., and Cumberland, Md. Decades after the C&O's demise, the canalway would be

preserved, thanks to Justice William O. Douglas and many other visionary conservationists, to become a national historical park.

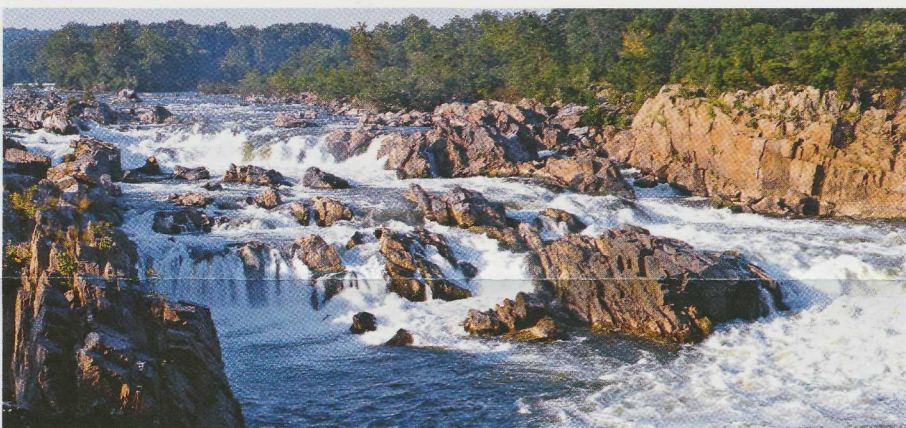
Associations with this history are many today, and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, designated by Congress in 1983, has become an expanding network of trails in a corridor that blends the heritage of the past with the needs of future generations. The corridor encompasses the Nation's Capital and landscapes that vary from tidewater marshlands and rolling foothills of the Piedmont to mountains and valleys of the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenies.

The story today is one of people and organizations—in practice, planning, and partnerships—who seek to rediscover rivers and trails as windows onto the region's history, culture, and ecology. With modern tools like land trusts, community-based river corridor conservation, the Clean Water Act, and redevelopment of formerly polluted brownfields, they are imagining and building a new kind of conservation.



View of the Washington Monument from the Mount Vernon Trail.

NPS/TERRY ADAMS



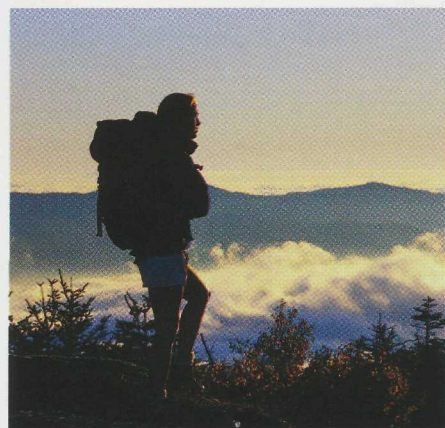
George Washington's Patowmack Canal went around the Great Falls of the Potomac River (above) to make the river navigable farther inland toward what was then the western lands.

©CAROL HIGHSMITH



Bicycling on the C&O Canal towpath, Maryland.

©PAT AND CHUCK BLACKLEY



On the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail in Pennsylvania.

©GRAPHITTI DESIGN, INC.

Enjoying the Trail Corridor's Mix of Natural and Cultural History

Opportunities abound to explore historic sites and museums and Civil War fortifications and battlefields. Frederick Gutheim, the biographer of the Potomac River, has written that you can discover the Potomac's lineage as a "fishery, granary, harbor, route, homesite, plantation, hunting ground, mine, power source, factory, swamp, and pleasure ground."

From hiking, biking, or horseback riding to canoeing, kayaking, or fishing, the Trail embraces manifold recreation opportunities and natural areas. See pileated woodpeckers, beavers, Virginia bluebells, and other birds, small mammals, and wildflowers. Or just relax and enjoy serene moments basking in the solitude beneath a majestic oak, maple, or sycamore.



Chickadee

©STEVE AND DAVE MASLOWSKI/
PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.



Pileated
woodpecker

©STEVE MASLOWSKI/
PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.



Virginia bluebells

©SAMUEL R. MAGLIONE/
PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.



Beaver

©ALAN AND SANDY CAREY/
PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.

Building Partnerships for Conservation and Recreation

Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is part vision and part reality. Under the National Trails System Act, the Secretary of the Interior may designate trails between the Potomac River mouth and the Allegheny Highlands (except in West Virginia) as Trail segments, based on applications by local or state agencies. As of early 2009, over 800 miles of trails exist or are planned in the Trail network.

In addition to efforts to improve the health of the Potomac and other rivers in the Trail corridor, many communities are pursuing conservation and economic development goals to preserve historic landscapes and open space, to restore riverscapes, and to maintain local sources

of food. At the same time, they create great opportunities for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, boating, and cross-country skiing. The braided Trail network not only connects communities and special places but will link present and future generations to the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Potomac and upper Ohio river basins.

Safety Watch children near stream banks, cliffs, and automobile traffic. Beware of poisonous snakes and spiders and know how to identify and avoid poison ivy and poison oak. Observe the posted regulations and always wear life vests (PFDs) when on the water. Your safety is your responsibility.

More Information

Potomac Heritage NST Office
National Park Service
Post Office Box B
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
www.nps.gov/pohe



For a list of Trail segments and partners visit www.nps.gov/pohe. To view a hiking guide visit www.potomacallegheny.org.

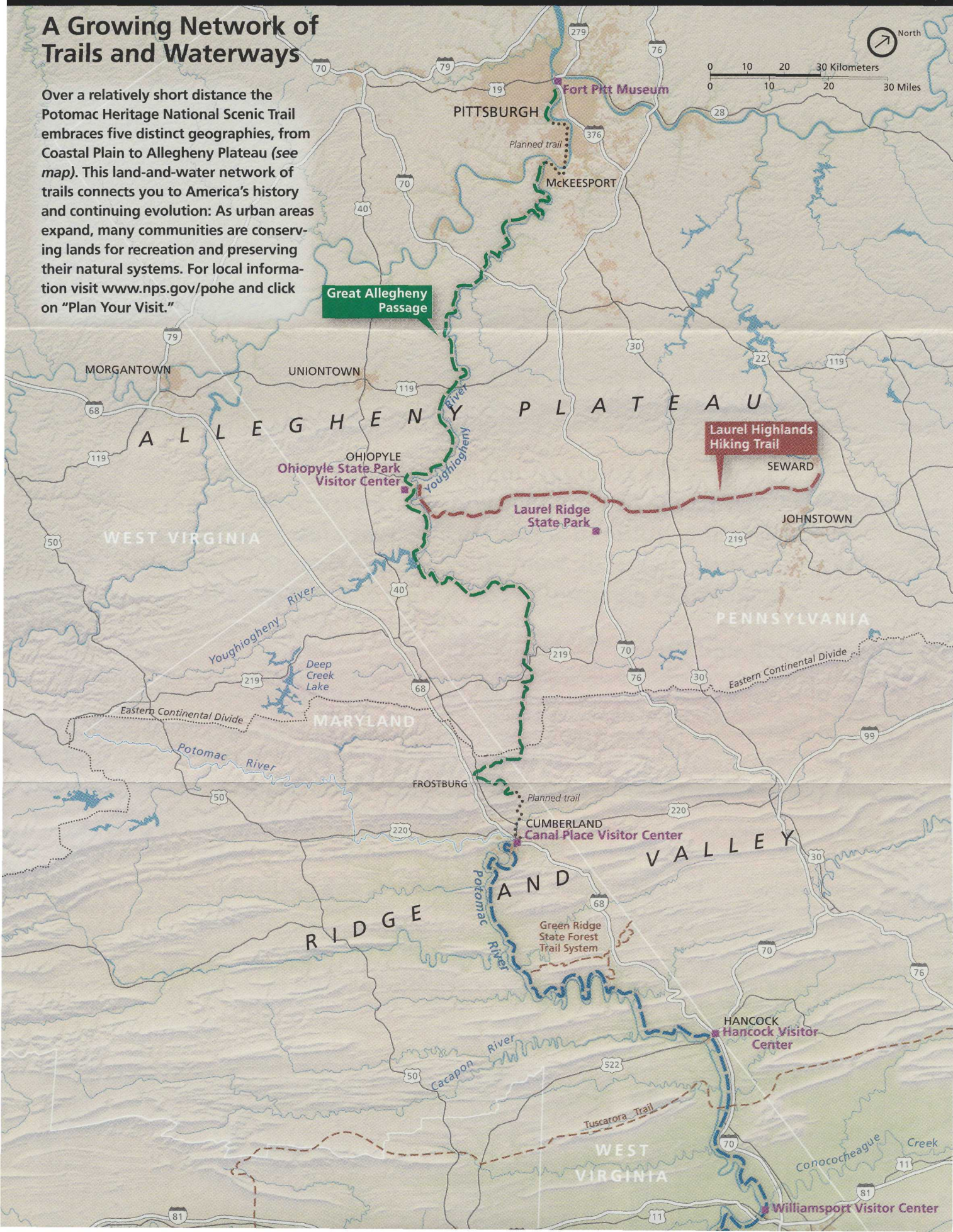
This national scenic trail is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs, please visit www.nps.gov.

©GPO:2009—349-224/80199 Reprint 2009
Printed on recycled paper.

Experience the Corridor of Commerce First Imagined by George Washington

A Growing Network of Trails and Waterways

Over a relatively short distance the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail embraces five distinct geographies, from Coastal Plain to Allegheny Plateau (see *map*). This land-and-water network of trails connects you to America's history and continuing evolution: As urban areas expand, many communities are conserving lands for recreation and preserving their natural systems. For local information visit www.nps.gov/pohe and click on "Plan Your Visit."





VIRGINIA

Historic St. Mary's City

Rice's Hotel/
Hughlett's Tavern

POINT LOOKOUT

Reedville SMITH POINT

Captain John Smith Chesapeake
National Historic Trail follows
the lower Potomac River and
other Chesapeake Bay estuaries.

Map Location

