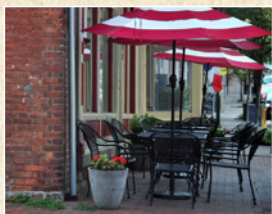




# C & O Canal

## ≈ TRAIL *to* HISTORY ≈



SHEPHERDSTOWN

SHARPSBURG

WILLIAMSPORT



[www.canaltrust.org](http://www.canaltrust.org)





# C & O Canal

## ☞ TRAIL *to* HISTORY ☞

*Take a journey into the rich history of our Canal Towns along the C&O Canal towpath. Explore our region in your car, ride a bike, raft the river or take a leisurely stroll in our historic towns. Visit our historical parks and learn about our region's rich history. Pioneer settlement, transportation innovations, struggles for freedom—it all happened here. Visit, explore and enjoy!*



Between Shepherdstown and Williamsport, the Potomac River and the C&O Canal follow a 25-mile serpentine path through an area of pastoral landscapes and rich, historical heritage. The distance is significantly shorter by road. Bustling canal construction and trade helped form all three of these towns, but remembrances of September 1862 loom even larger today. Still, along with battlefields, aqueducts and historic houses, tourists in this region can also take in contemporary drama, fine dining, and some of the best local ice cream in the Mid-Atlantic.





# SHEPHERDSTOWN

As you near Shepherdstown from the east along the C&O Canal, you will pass Boteler's Ford, or Pack Horse Ford, an easy crossing of the Potomac during low or moderate water levels. Stonewall Jackson's troops made the crossing in September 1862 on their way from Harpers Ferry to the Battle of Antietam. After that watershed event, when Robert E. Lee's Army retreated back into what was then Virginia, the shelling and shooting across the river here were described by Confederate General A.P. Hill as "the most terrible slaughter that this war has yet witnessed."

A busy warehouse, a cement plant, and the grain trade made early Shepherdstown one of the busiest towns along the C&O. But during those bloody days of September 1862, it was transformed into a vast hospital, as sick and wounded soldiers filled churches, businesses and private homes.



Mellow Moods Cafe

Today, Shepherdstown is a lively college town and cultural center, and you can enjoy its restaurants and lodging or visit its bike shop without giving a thought to Civil War matters. But wander around Elmwood Cemetery, and you'll see the graves of fallen Confederates. Or visit Ferry Hill Plantation, a seasonal visitor center for the C&O that overlooks Shepherdstown from the Maryland shore. It was the home of Henry Kyd Douglas, the author of one of the War's most colorful first-person accounts, "I Rode with Stonewall."



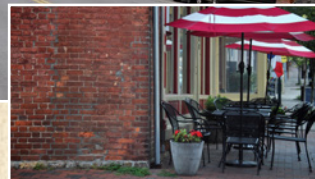
Bridgeport Lock



Ferry Hill Plantation



German Street



Sweet Shop Corner



## BIKE ACCESS

Shepherdstown lies across the Potomac River from the C&O towpath. A circuitous ramp connects the towpath with a broad sidewalk on the Rumsey Bridge across the river.

Riding a few blocks through the Shepherd University campus or on WV Route 45 will bring you to downtown.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

For information on lodging, food, bike shop, other services, and Shepherdstown's vibrant cultural calendar, visit [www.shepherdstownvisitorscenter.com](http://www.shepherdstownvisitorscenter.com).

**Shepherdstown Historic District.** Walking tour takes you past historic homes, churches, and businesses. Visit [www.shepherdstownvisitorscenter.com/history](http://www.shepherdstownvisitorscenter.com/history).

**The Entler Hotel and Museum,** 129 E. German Street. The 1786 hotel houses the town's historical museum along with period artifacts, furnishings and documents. Open Sat. 11am-5pm, Sun. 1-4pm.

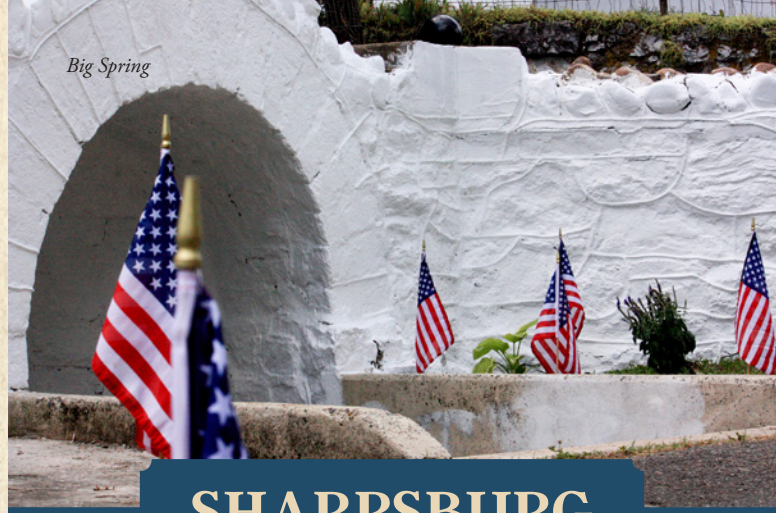
**Mecklenburg Tobacco Warehouse,** Shepherdstown Riverfront. Oldest tobacco facility in West Virginia (1790).

**Rumsey Monument, Rumsey Park,** overlooking Potomac River. Monument to Federal-era inventor of the steamboat.

**Boteler's Ford and Battle of Shepherdstown site.** Undeveloped historic sites 2 miles east of downtown on River Road.

**Ferry Hill Plantation, C&O Canal Visitor Center** overlooking Shepherdstown and the Potomac River at 16500 Shepherdstown Pike, Sharpsburg, MD. Home of Confederate officer and author Henry Kyd Douglas. Open Sat.-Sun. 11:30am-3:30pm, Memorial Day to Labor Day.

**Outdoor recreation** includes bicycle and boat rentals, bird walks, farm markets and more. Visit [www.shepherdstownvisitorscenter.com](http://www.shepherdstownvisitorscenter.com).



## SHARPSBURG

Sharpsburg lies two or three miles off the C&O Canal, depending on which point you measure from along this bend in the canal and river. However, it is still considered a Canal Town because of the trade and employment that the C&O brought the town after opening in the area in 1835. Like Shepherdstown, Sharpsburg was settled by German and English farmers and merchants, and its small size belies the fact that George Washington once considered it a possible site for the nation's capital.

September 17, 1862, provided one great interruption in Sharpsburg's peaceful history, for that was when it became the site of the Battle of Antietam during Robert E. Lee's first invasion into the North. During this bloodiest day in American history, 40,000 Confederates faced off against 87,000 Union troops led by General George B. McClellan. Neither side ended the day with a clear victory, and the battle



*Antietam National Battlefield*





*Tolson's Chapel*

resulted in more than 23,000 troops dead, wounded or missing. Afterwards, McClellan refused to pursue Lee's army as it retreated across the Potomac. President Lincoln believed this inaction delayed an end to the war, and he soon fired McClellan.

A bicycle ride to Sharpsburg and Antietam National Battlefield involves a few miles of roads off the towpath. The Battlefield Visitor Center lies just outside town, and there you can pick up a map for a hilly but beautiful ride around the battlefield.



*Antietam National Cemetery Chapel*



*Ferry Hill*

## BIKE ACCESS

There are multiple roads connecting the C&O towpath with Sharpsburg. All contain some hills. From the south at Antietam aqueduct (C&O mile 69.3), take Canal Road a short distance east and turn left on Harpers Ferry Road, which becomes Mechanic Street in downtown Sharpsburg after 3 miles of light traffic. From the west (C&O mile 76.6), Snyder's Landing Road is 1.5 miles long, with very light traffic, and becomes N. Potomac Street in downtown Sharpsburg. MD route 34 is Main Street in Sharpsburg and connects with Shepherdstown's Rumsey Bridge after 3 miles of moderate traffic. There is a wide road shoulder except under the railroad overpass and as you enter or leave downtown Sharpsburg.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

For information on lodging, food and other services, visit [www.sharpsburgmd.com](http://www.sharpsburgmd.com).

### Antietam National

#### **Battlefield.**

Site of 1862 battle, the bloodiest day in American history. Visitor

Center with film and exhibits, walking trails, driving or riding road tour through battlefield, National cemetery. Guided tours available. Visit [www.nps.gov/anti](http://www.nps.gov/anti).



### **Pry House, Civil War medicine exhibits,**

18906 Shepherdstown Pike (MD Rt. 34). Served as hospital and military headquarters during the Battle of Antietam. Open Fri.-Sun. 11am-5pm.

**Tolson's Chapel,** 111 E. High Street. 1866 African American church served as Freedmen's Bureau School after the Civil War.

**Newcomer House,** 18422 Shepherdstown Pike (1/2 mile east of downtown). 1780 mill house serves as Visitor Center and exhibit of Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. Open daily 11am-5pm, June through September, weekends other months.

**Hagerstown Model Railroad Museum** at Antietam Station, 17230 Shepherdstown Pike (MD Rt. 34). Open Tues. and Thurs. 10am-2pm, during summer.





# WILLIAMSPORT

Williamsport reaped both benefits and misfortunes when C&O Canal traffic and construction reached the town in 1834. Coal trade and other commerce boomed, bringing new businesses and prosperity. But the cholera epidemics and labor riots that were problems elsewhere along the canal were especially devastating here.

Fords, ferries, and pontoon bridges across the Potomac at Williamsport made this one of the most important river crossings during the Civil War. In 1861, on a hill that still bears his name, future Union General Abner Doubleday placed an artillery battery to guard against Confederate invasions into Maryland. Stonewall Jackson's troops crossed the river here in 1862 on their way to invade Harpers Ferry. A major battle was barely averted in 1863 when high water blocked General Lee's Confederates from retreating into Virginia following the Battle of Gettysburg. As Union troops skirmished with the Rebels and prepared for battle, the water at last subsided enough for hasty construction of a pontoon bridge that would carry Lee's men to safety.

Today, along with visits to town restaurants or shops, you can explore Conococheague Aqueduct and the newly restored Cushwa Basin along the Canal and check out the view from Doubleday Hill.



*Conococheague Aqueduct*



*Bicyclists in downtown Williamsport*

## BIKE ACCESS

From Cushwa Basin along the C&O towpath, it is just a short walk or ride up the street to downtown Williamsport.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

For information on lodging, food and other services, visit [www.williamsportmd.gov](http://www.williamsportmd.gov).

**C&O Canal sites.** Several prominent historic features are just yards away from downtown Williamsport along the C&O Canal, including the Conococheague Aqueduct, the railroad lift bridge, the Cushwa Basin, a power plant dam, and Lock 44. The Cushwa Coal and Brick Warehouse now houses a C&O Canal Visitor Center and historical exhibits; open Wed.-Sun. 9am-4:30pm.



*Downtown Williamsport*

**Doubleday Hill.** Historic cemetery and Civil War breastwork overlooking town near W. Salisbury and S. Commerce Streets.

**Fort Frederick State Park,** 13 miles north of Williamsport near C&O Canal towpath. Stone fort served as Maryland's frontier defense during the French and Indian War. Open daily 8am-sunset, April through October; 10am-sunset other months. Visit [www.dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands).

**Town of Williamsport Museum.** Local historical exhibits in restored Springfield Farm Barn. Open Sun. 1-4pm, March-October.



# MAP







The C&O Canal Explorer app has over 600 points of interest mapped for you in a searchable format, allowing you to find hiking trails, campgrounds, history, trailheads, parking, and more at a glance.

The app also calculates the distance from your location to nearby amenities, and points of interest. The C&O Canal Explorer app will encourage you to tread new paths and journey to new parts of the Park!



*Photo Credits:*

*Jerry Knight, Judy Olsen, MaryFran Clingan, and Michael Chapline*

This project is made possible by a grant from the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a certified Heritage Area of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. This publication has been financed in part with State funds from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, an instrumentality of the State of Maryland. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.