



C & O Canal

≈ TRAIL *to* HISTORY ≈



HANCOCK

PAWPAW

OLDTOWN



CUMBERLAND



www.canaltrust.org



C & O Canal

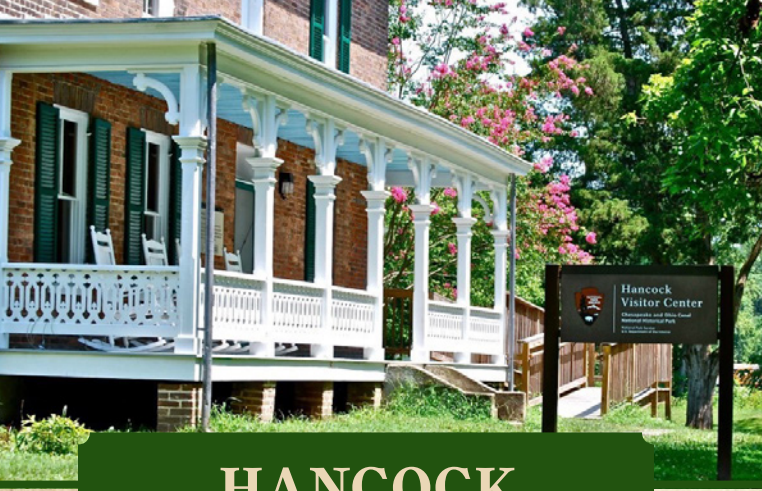
☞ TRAIL *to* HISTORY ☜

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!



It's 38 miles from Hancock to Cumberland, MD on interstate highways, but bends along the river when you are traveling the C&O Canal towpath stretch that mileage to 60. It's best not to rush anyway, as this wooded area is filled with natural beauty and wildlife. Travelers with an interest in heritage will also want to linger, as the towns of Hancock, Paw Paw, Oldtown, and Cumberland are rich in stories of frontier, mines, transportation, industry, and war. Opportunities for comfortable stays, good food and entertaining adventures round out the reasons to spend a few days exploring the C&O's Western region.





HANCOCK

Hancock's earliest settlers arrived in the 1730s, making it one of the oldest towns in Western Maryland. The town is named after Edward Joseph Hancock, Jr., who operated a ferry in the area and fought alongside George Washington in the American Revolutionary War.

Hancock's unique location at a northern bend in the Potomac River made it a transportation hub, and it was connected by road to the National Road in 1818. The C&O Canal arrived in 1839, and by 1905 the Western Maryland Railroad formed a link to the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad.



St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Hancock shortly after the Civil War



Towpath, canal, and town streets lie alongside each other in Hancock.

Hancock's main action during the Civil War took place in January 1862, when Confederate General Stonewall Jackson and his troops suffered one of their first defeats of the war. On January 5 Jackson's men occupied Orrick's Hill across the river from Hancock, firing on the town and demanding surrender. With the help of bad weather, Union Brigadier General F.W. Lander held the town and prevented an invasion by Jackson's men.



Bicyclists on the Western Maryland Rail Trail

Today you can visit the Hancock Museum and Visitor Center at 42 W. Main Street to learn about Hancock's Civil War history and the apple orchard industry that followed. Sideling Hill's well-known geology and wildlife exhibits are here as well. At Sideling Hill itself you can see evidence of the unique geologic formations in the area.

BIKE ACCESS

Multiple roads and trails link the C&O Canal towpath with nearby and parallel Main Street, Canal Street, and the Western Maryland Rail Trail.

POINTS OF INTEREST

For information on lodging, food and other services, visit www.townofhancock.org.

Hancock Town Museum, 126 W. High Street. Exhibits and archives of town history. Sun. 2-4pm, April through October, or by request.

C&O Canal Visitor Center, 439 E. Main Street. Area history and life in historic Bowles House. Fri.-Sun., 10am-3pm, Memorial Day through September.

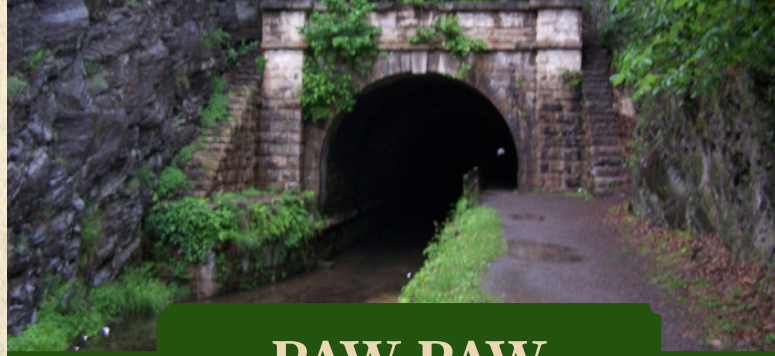
Fort Frederick State Park, 14 miles east of Hancock near C&O Canal towpath. Stone fort served as Maryland's frontier defense during the French and Indian War. Daily 8am-sunset, April through Oct; 10am-sunset other months. Visit www.dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands.

Sideling Hill, 6 miles west of Hancock on I-68. 800-foot wide geological syncline exposed by highway cut in mountain. Visitor Center is closed, but walkways and observation bridge are open.

Western Maryland Rail Trail. Paved multi-use trail runs over 20 miles through Hancock, much of it parallel and adjacent to the C&O Canal towpath. Visit www.dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands.



Fort Frederick



PAW PAW

About 15 miles upstream from Hancock, the Potomac River snakes back and forth in what is known as the Paw Paw Bends. In one of these bends lies the town of Paw Paw, WV, named after the native fruit tree common in the area. Colonial-era travelers, including George Washington, forded the river here. Later, a ferry operated until the present bridge was constructed in 1928. During the French and Indian War, British General Edward Braddock's army camped nearby at a site that later became Camp Chase during the Civil War. There 16,000 Union troops guarded the B&O Railroad. Today you can visit Camp Hill Cemetery at this site.

The C&O Canal follows several bends in the river, but near the town of Paw Paw canal builders blasted and dug a 3,118-foot tunnel through a mountain, saving five miles of canal construction and creating a 19th-century engineering wonder. The tunnel was begun as early as 1836, but not fully completed until 1850. Mules pulled barges through the tunnel until the canal closed in 1924. Today hikers and bicyclists on the C&O towpath can walk through the Paw Paw Tunnel; a flashlight will help.

BIKE ACCESS

Downtown Paw Paw is one mile from C&O Mile 156.2, via MD Route 51 and the Paw Paw Bridge. It is a flat ride with moderately low traffic.

POINTS OF INTEREST

For information on lodging, food and other services, visit www.berkeleysprings.com.

Camp Hill Cemetery, 1 mile south of town on WV 9. Beautifully situated cemetery served as encampment site in both the French and Indian and the Civil Wars.

Paw Paw Tunnel, C&O Canal towpath, between Miles 155 and 156. 19th-century tunnel provided passage by canal through the mountain.



OLDTOWN

In 1741 a military officer named Thomas Cresap opened a trading post at the site of an abandoned Shawnee Indian Village called “Shawanese Old Town.” While there he helped Lord Baltimore establish Maryland jurisdiction over the area, worked with Delaware Chief Nemacolin to open a road to the Ohio frontier, and aided George Washington during several trips to the West. Thomas’s son Michael fought in the Revolution alongside the future President.

The B&O Railroad reached the Potomac shore opposite Oldtown in 1842, and the C&O Canal opened traffic through Oldtown by 1850. The Western Maryland Railroad opened connections here in 1906.

In August 1864 Confederate raiders crossed the Potomac back into West Virginia here after returning from their destruction of Chambersburg, PA. Union forces attempting to block the Rebels’ withdrawal at Oldtown were routed by Confederate Lt. John R. McNulty’s close-range artillery fire.

Today Oldtown is a quiet village right on the C&O Canal towpath. You can visit the Irvin Allen/Michael Cresap Museum in the old officer’s home and cross over the 1937 low-water toll bridge to Green Spring, WV (free to pedestrians and bicyclists).

BIKE ACCESS

Oldtown is right off the C&O Canal towpath.

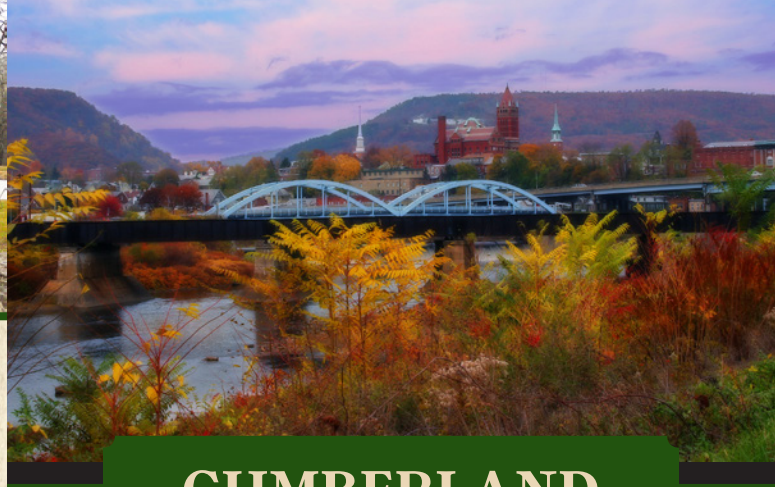
POINTS OF INTEREST

For information on lodging, food and other services, visit www.mdmountainside.com.

Irvin Allen/Michael Cresap Museum, 19015 Opressa St., SE, 1764 home of frontiersman and Revolutionary War hero. Open by appointment, call 301-478-5848.

Oldtown Historical Toll Bridge. 1937 bridge across the Potomac River, free to bicyclists and pedestrians.

Locks 69, 70 and 71. All on the C&O Canal towpath in or nearby Oldtown.



CUMBERLAND

In the mid-18th century an Indian village at the confluence of Wills Creek and the Potomac River gave way to a colonial settlement and a trading post. The British Fort Cumberland was established at this site during the French and Indian War, and both General Braddock and the 22-year-old Colonel George Washington used the fort to force French settlers out of the area.

The town of Cumberland became an important stop on the National Road in 1818, linking travelers from eastern cities with Wheeling, VA (now WV) and the Ohio River. The C&O Canal originally planned a similar route,



Folck’s Mill

but by the time the canal reached Cumberland in 1850 the B&O Railroad had raced ahead, making a canal over the Allegheny Mountains economically impractical. The city became the western terminus of the C&O, and coal, flour, iron and limestone all floated downstream from the area mines and mills.

During the Civil War thousands of Union troops were stationed in Cumberland to protect this vital transportation, supply and communication hub. Frequent Confederate raids were staged against the railroad in the area, the most spectacular being a pre-dawn raid on February 21, 1865, when Confederate Lt. Jesse McNeill and his raiders captured Union Generals George Crook and Benjamin Kelly. The raiders succeeded in entering Cumberland by overwhelming a Union picket post and gaining the secret countersign. The generals were unharmed and were soon exchanged for

Confederates imprisoned in Cumberland.

Rich coal deposits and transportation resources transformed Cumberland into an industrial boomtown following the Civil War, and it became an



Gordon-Roberts House

important producer of beer, glass, tires and textiles. Today, many factories have ceased operation, and tourism rivals industry as an area employer and economic force.

At the end (or the beginning!) of your C&O towpath tour is Canal Place, where you can learn about C&O history, take a ride on the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, and learn about tourist sites in the area. Cumberland's vibrant downtown has shops, cafes, and museums, and historic neighborhoods lie nearby. In Riverside Park you'll find Washington's Headquarters, the only remaining structure from old Fort Cumberland.

BIKE ACCESS

The C&O Canal towpath ends at the edge of downtown Cumberland, at the Cumberland/C&O Canal Visitor Center.



Cumberland, "Queen City" along the Potomac

POINTS OF INTEREST

For information on lodging, food and other services, visit www.mdmountainside.com.

Canal Place Heritage Area, 13 Canal Street and western terminus of C&O Canal towpath. C&O Canal Museum and Visitor Center for both canal and Cumberland; canal boat replica, "The Cumberland." Open daily. Visit www.canalplace.org.

Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, 13 Canal Street and western terminus of C&O Canal towpath. Scenic and historical train ride through the Allegheny Mountains. Visit www.wmsr.com.

Great Allegheny Passage. Bike trail along old railroad lines from Cumberland to Pittsburgh, PA. Visit www.gaptrail.org.

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 16 Washington Street. Built on remains of British colonial fort, with Tiffany windows.

Allegheny Museum, 3 Pershing Street. History and natural history of Cumberland and its region. Tues.-Sat. 10am-4pm, Sun. 1-4pm. Visit www.alleghenymuseummd.org.

George Washington Headquarters and National Road Monument, Riverside Park at Greene Street. One-room cabin used by Washington during French and Indian War.

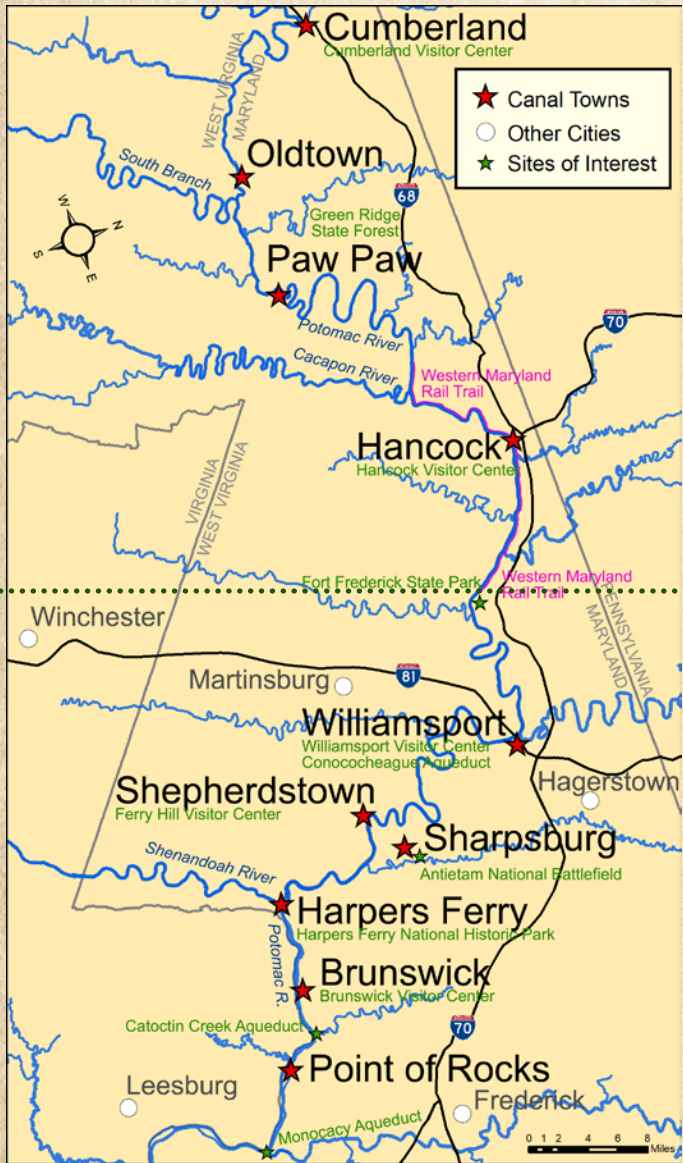
F. Brooke Whiting House, 632 Washington Street. 1911 bungalow with art collection of famed connoisseur. Tours by appointment; call 301-777-8678.

Gordon-Roberts House, 218 Washington Street. 1867 furnished Second-Empire-style mansion. Wed.-Sat. 10am-4pm. For information on Cumberland's rich entertainment and outdoor adventure offerings, visit www.downtowncumberland.com.



The Western Maryland Rail Trail and its namesake railroad run alongside each other near Cumberland.

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!



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Sinclair Hamilton, Allegany County Tourism, Sam Judge

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.