

LET'S GO HIKING!

**YOUR GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE RECREATION
IN MARYLAND**





A Hiker's Reward by Rachel Park, Grade 8 (2015).

Wes Moore - Governor | Aruna Miller - Lieutenant Governor

Josh Kurtz - Secretary



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Cover Photo: Patuxent Hike by Jessica Human, DNR Photo Contest 2019.

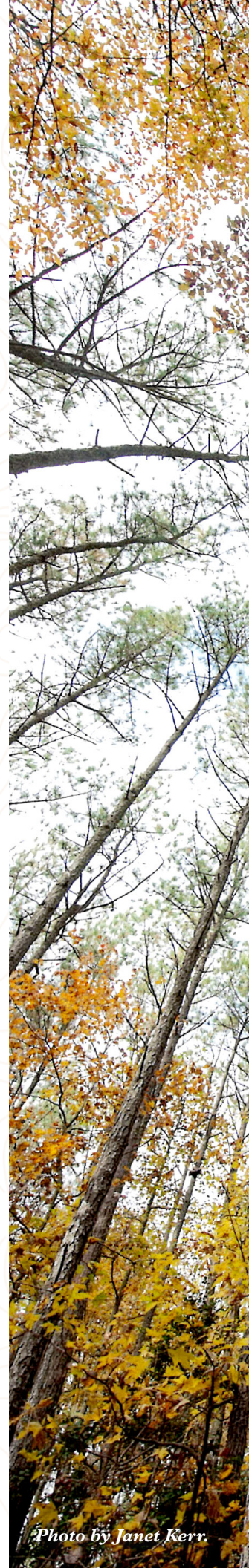


Photo by Janet Kerr.

WHAT IS HIKING?

We start this series with hiking because it's one of the most beginner-friendly ways to start getting outdoors. Hiking can be adapted to all ages, abilities, and fitness levels, as hikes can vary from leisurely strolls in local parks to more challenging wilderness treks. This is also why it's one of the most popular ways to get outside: **the Outdoor Industry Association estimates that more than 63 million Americans went hiking in 2024.**

There are trails for families and adventure seekers alike, and hiking is a great activity for practicing mindfulness in connection with nature. In the outdoor recreation industry, we call hiking a “gateway” recreation activity. Once you get out on the trail for the first time, you'll want to keep exploring!

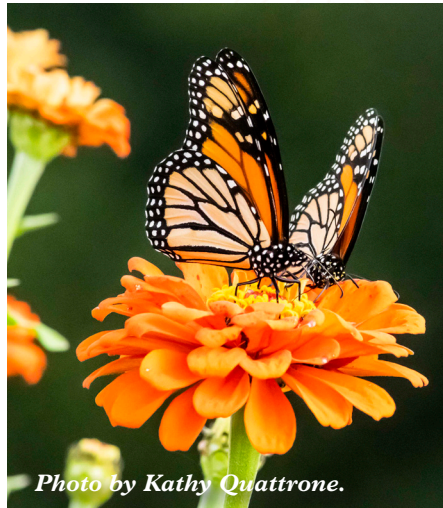


Photo by Kathy Quattrone.

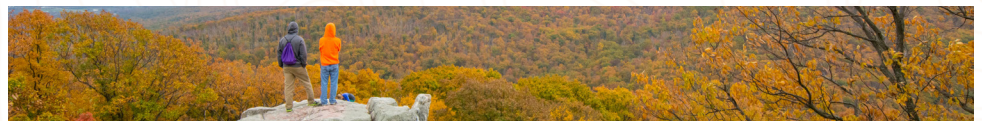
WHAT DO YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT HIKING IN MARYLAND?

“I wish people would know you're always welcome to hike here. You're a citizen of the world. The world doesn't just belong to you, but you are also part of it, and that means experiencing the land and helping to take care of it.”

**KENDRA BREE, MARYLAND PARK RANGER
FORT FREDERICK STATE PARK**

The State of Maryland is known as “America in Miniature” for its vast range of landscapes and outdoor recreation opportunities. From mountains to shores to urban city centers, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Office of Outdoor Recreation works to expand public access to nature and strengthen the state's outdoor recreation economy.

We define outdoor recreation as “**activities done in nature or outdoor settings (including both active and passive experiences) that support health, enjoyment, and connection with the natural world.**” Spending time outdoors also benefits both our communities and our economy. That's why it's important to recreate responsibly! This series is designed to share beginner tips, insider knowledge, and useful resources as you journey outdoors with the goal of transforming all Marylanders into stewards, or caretakers, of our shared lands and waters.



PREPARING TO HIKE

Hiking is a great way to connect with the outdoors, but don't forget – from weather to wildlife, the outdoors can be unpredictable, so be sure to prepare beforehand. The following sections feature some great tips to get you started on beginner-friendly hikes.

Clothing & Gear

The Right Shoes: Happy feet, happy hiking! Think about traction, support, comfort, and protection when choosing well-fitted shoes for your hike. **Running shoes and sneakers** are lightweight and flexible for easy to moderate trails. **Hiking sandals** offer breathability and quick drying, great for easy trails, warm temperatures, sandy beaches, and areas near water. **Snow or hiking boots** provide ankle support and protection, ideal for heavier terrain and more difficult treks.

Weather-Appropriate Layers: It's best to dress in comfortable layers so you can adjust to varying activity levels, like steep inclines or long journeys. As your body temperature changes, you can easily add or remove layers as needed. Activewear or gym clothes you already own will work great for your first few hikes! Bring a waterproof jacket in case it rains, and invest in a comfortable pair of socks to keep your feet dry. A backpack or small bag can help carry your extra supplies. It is strongly recommended to wear high visibility blaze orange or pink clothing if hiking during hunting season.

Sun Safety: Sunscreen, sunglasses, and sun-protective clothing like hats and visors should be used by everyone in every season, and especially when the UV Index is at 5 or higher. Be sure to reapply your sunscreen regularly and take breaks in the shade.

Water: Drink water before you hike, and always bring a full water bottle to stay hydrated on the trail. Experts recommend carrying more water than you think you need, especially on hot days and more difficult trails. Serious hikers might consider hydration backpacks and ways to purify or treat drinking water on the trail.

Food & Snacks: Calorie-dense foods help fuel your body and keep you going. You'll want to choose snacks that pack well, are easy to eat, and leave little waste. Common snacks include trail mix, nuts and seeds, energy or granola bars, dried fruit, jerky, vegetables and dip, sandwiches, and crackers. Remember to **"Pack In, Pack Out"** – bring a plastic bag or reusable container to take all your trash home with you.

First Aid Kit: It's possible to get a few scrapes, bumps, or bruises while adventuring, so it's common sense to keep supplies to treat minor injuries like scratches or bug bites on the trail. However, supplies are only as helpful as your knowledge of how to use them, so if you plan to be outdoors often, consider taking a first aid skills class. Organizations like the American Red Cross offer virtual and in-person first aid courses, plus specialized wilderness first aid courses for seasoned adventurers. Keep a way to contact emergency services in case of more serious injuries.



The American Hiking Society recommends everyone pack these **"Ten Essentials"** for every hike: appropriate footwear, map and compass or GPS, water, food, rain gear and fast-dry layers, safety items (light, fire, whistle), first aid kit, knife or multi-tool, sun protection, and emergency shelter like a space blanket or plastic trash bag.



An example of a **natural surface trail** at Cedarville. The hikers are walking on the trail **tread**, made up of grass and leaves.



The Western Maryland Rail Trail in Washington County was freshly repaved in 2025. It is common to encounter other user groups, like cyclists, on **paved trails** like the WMRT.



Above is a trail sign indicating a **single-use** (hiker-only) trail with a blue **blaze color** at Patapsco Valley. Below is a classic **information kiosk** found at the **trailhead** at Calvert Cliffs.



Understanding Trails

Preparation is the key to success when venturing onto any trail. We recommend starting with **Day Hiking**: hikes that only take a few hours at most to complete. You should always research trail conditions in advance. When you're choosing what kind of trail to tackle, it's best to start by understanding trail terminology.

Trailhead: The designated access point for a trail where you will start your hike. Popular trailheads may have parking areas, signs, maps, and amenities nearby, whereas lesser-known trails may not have such obvious trailheads.

Natural Surface Trails: If you picture a traditional hiking trail in your mind, you're likely imagining a natural surface trail. These trails have dirt or grass **tread** (the surface of the trail you hike on). They provide a nature-based hiking experience but may have natural hazards like tree roots, mud, steep inclines, ice, or poison ivy.

Blaze: Trail blazing refers to the system of marking hiking trails with painted symbols on trees, rocks, or posts to guide hikers at turns or trail intersections. Many well-maintained trails have clearly indicated blaze colors to help you navigate.

Paved Trails: Paved trails are scenic, wide, paved, and accessible trails ideal for walking, running, cycling, strollers, and mobility devices. These flat trails are commonly hiked by families and beginners.

Multi-Use Trails: Multi-use trails are used by multiple different user groups, like hikers, trail runners, cyclists, mountain bikers, and **equestrians** (horseback riders). Alternatively, **single-use trails** are designated for use by a single user group, like trails with sensitive wildlife or extreme features. Watch out for signage at trailheads that will let you know to expect equestrians or bikers on the trails, and practice basic trail etiquette when you encounter others.

Out-And-Back: Out-and-back trails are straightforward for hikers. You simply hike to your destination, then turn around and walk back the way you came.

Loop Trails: Loop trails are self-contained, circular loops that end back where you started without turning around. These trails offer more variety and scenic routes, but may be more difficult to navigate. Another variety is the **Lollipop Trail**, which combines a loop with an out-and-back portion of the trail known as the stem.

Interpretive Trails: These shorter trails are designed to give hikers the chance to study special animals, plants, geological features, or historical elements of a specific area. Interpretive trails may also have educational signposts or self-guided resources that explain more about their special features.

Rail Trails: Rail Trails are multi-use paths created from former railroad corridors. Because they follow old rail lines, these trails typically have gentle **grades** (slope, meaning they're relatively flat) with scenic, repurposed infrastructure like bridges, tunnels, and corridors. Rail trails run through rural, suburban, and urban areas, and have an added "greenway" bonus of linking towns, historical sites, and green spaces.

Switchbacks: Switchbacks are a trail feature that zig-zag up steep hills instead of a straight vertical climb. They're designed to make the ascent safer for hikers and control erosion from foot traffic. Protect the environment by sticking to the trail!

Plan Your Trip & Stay Safe

There are many resources for researching trails in advance. Apps like AllTrails, Gaia GPS, and Strava allow you to preview routes, follow GPS-enabled trail maps, and see reviews from other trail users. Once you've done your research and you understand the trail conditions for your intended hike, there are a few more things you'll want to consider to keep you and your hiking buddies safe.

Start Time – As part of your trail research, you should understand the average time it takes to complete your hike. You should also know the park's hours of operation. Most parks close at sunset. Check what time the sun sets and choose a start time early enough to finish your hike. If you're cutting it close to nightfall, bring a flashlight just in case.

Communication – Before your hike, always tell someone (who is NOT on the hike with you) where you will be hiking, who you're hiking with, and when you expect to be back. These people can get help for you if you get lost or if something more serious happens. Always keep a duty ranger phone number or other way to contact park staff on hand in case you need assistance while on the trail.

Cell Reception – Most parks have poor cell reception, which is why preparation is key. Be sure to download trail maps or directions ahead of time. If you're nervous about trying a trail for the first time, consider hiking with a buddy.

Check the Weather – "There is no bad weather, only bad clothing." Proper gear and preparation can help us overcome the downsides of wind, rain, heat, and cold. However, some weather conditions are just not safe to hike in, especially for beginners. Trails can freeze over from excessive snow and ice, wind can knock down trees and branches along the trail, and torrential rains can cause flooding and mudslides. For both your safety and for the preservation of the trail, avoid hiking on unpredictable weather days and call ahead to ask about trail conditions if you're uncertain.

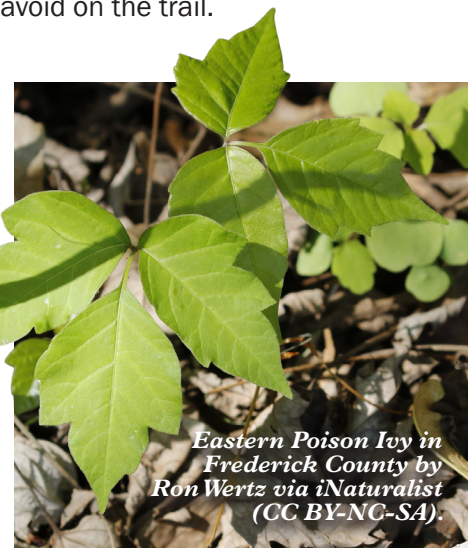
Check for Hitchhikers – Ticks are most active in late spring through early fall, but they are becoming increasingly active throughout the year due to the changing climate. When hiking in wooded areas, wear long, light-colored pants tucked into your socks or boots and use EPA-approved insect repellent. Stay on marked paths in the center of the trail away from tall grasses, shrubs, and leaf litter. Always do a tick check on yourself, children, and pets after being outside, and shower as soon as possible once you return indoors. The Maryland Department of Health has great resources for preventing tickborne illnesses like Lyme disease and staying safe outdoors.

Hiking in Black Bear Country – Garrett, Allegany, Washington, and Frederick counties are all home to black bears. There is a possibility that visitors may see a black bear while hiking, camping, picnicking, or recreating in these areas. Ask a park ranger or consult educational resources like BearWise.org for safety tips so you know what to do if you encounter a black bear on the trail.

Avoid Poison Ivy – Poison ivy is a common plant native to Maryland. The oils from this plant contain urushiol, a compound that can irritate the skin upon contact. The oils can also be spread by pets or clothing that has come into contact with poison ivy. Like tick prevention, wearing long sleeves or pants and staying on the trail can help prevent poison ivy rash. Practice identifying the plant in its different forms so you know what to avoid on the trail.



A Summer Afternoon at Cunningham Falls by Steve Ember.



Eastern Poison Ivy in Frederick County by Ron Wertz via iNaturalist (CC BY-NC-SA).



*Fly Fishing on the Gunpowder
by Matt Shevland.*

BEFORE YOU GO: A TRAIL CHECKLIST

Trail Features	Prep & Gear	Planning Your Trip
Do you know the...?	Do you have...?	Did you make sure to...?
- Name of the trail - Length of the trail - Blaze color - Trail tread surface - Location of the trailhead - Proximity of the trailhead to bathrooms, water fountains, parking lots, picnic pavilions, and other amenities - Estimated time to complete - Unusual/interesting terrain - Wildlife safety concerns or other hazards in the area - Maintenance work, bridge closures, detours, or other incidents affecting the usual trail route (if any) - Park entrance fees / costs	- The right shoes - Layered clothing - Water - Food or snacks - A plastic bag or other way to take your trash with you - A first aid kit - Sunscreen - Sunglasses, a hat, or a visor - Bug spray or insect repellent - A leash for your dog - A physical map or digital trail map downloaded onto your phone - A compass or GPS for backup navigation - Safety items like a flashlight, whistle, or multitool	- Check the weather - Give yourself plenty of time to finish your hike before the sun sets or the park closes - Tell someone else where you're hiking and when you expect to return - Learn how to identify ticks, poison ivy, and other hazards - Save the duty ranger number to your phone - Make a plan for what to do if you, or someone in your group, gets lost or hurt - Know how to use essential gear, like first aid equipment, compasses, and maps



WHERE TO HIKE

The Department of Natural Resources maintains more than 1,100 miles of trails across the state! With more than 80 Maryland State Parks, 9 State Forests, and plentiful Natural Resource Management Areas, there are plenty of places to hike on public lands. Our rangers have recommended some of the following trails for beginner hikers looking to gain experience or those new to hiking in the Old Line State.

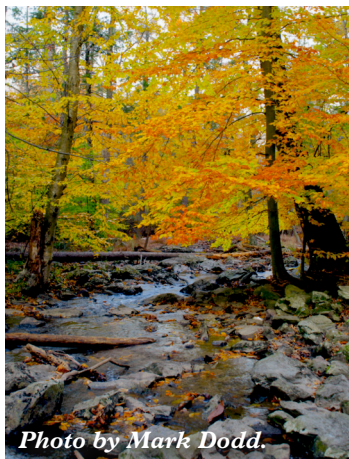


Photo by Mark Dodd.

Cunningham Falls Lower Trail

Location: Cunningham Falls State Park, William Houck Area (Frederick County)
Directions/Parking: Convenient parking available at both ends of the trail and near Hunting Creek Lake. Day-use park entrance fees apply.
Distance: 0.5 mile (1 mile Out & Back)

This easy to moderate out-and-back natural surface trail is the easiest and shortest way to see the famous Cunningham Falls. There are interpretive signs and benches for resting along the way. Red blaze. Note that cell service is unreliable in the park. Cunningham Falls is also home to two unique festivals, the annual Maple Syrup Festival in March and the Maryland Iron Festival at Catoctin Furnace in May.

Contact Information: 301-271-7574, cunninghamfalls.statepark@maryland.gov



Photo by Chowdhury Shams.

Clopper Lake Shore Loop Trail

Location: Seneca Creek State Park (Montgomery County)
Directions/Parking: Parking is available at the trailhead near the boating center.
Distance: 3.7 miles (Loop)

Encircling the lake, this scenic, natural-surface trail offers continuous views across water from woodlands or open field settings. Several streams are bridged and shore locations offer good opportunities for wildlife observations of waterfowl, herons, fish and turtles, plus fishing access. Blue blaze. Day-use reservations may be required.

Contact Information: 301-924-2127, senecacreek.statepark@maryland.gov



Calvert Cliffs Red Trail

Location: Calvert Cliffs State Park (Calvert County)
Directions/Parking: Parking is available at the Red Trailhead near the entrance to the park. Day-use park entrance fees apply.
Distance: 1.8 mile (3.6 miles Out & Back)

Calvert Cliffs State Park is well known for the massive cliffs it was named after. Today these cliffs reveal the remains of prehistoric species, like sharks, whales, and rays. The one-way, 1.8 mile Red Trail takes you directly to the sandy beach, where fossil hunting for shark teeth and swimming are common. Calvert Cliffs is a popular park – plan ahead for weekends during peak season.

Contact Information: 443-975-4360, calvertcliffs.statepark@maryland.gov



Find a state park near you!



Maryland State Parks

Please Note: For the latest up-to-date information regarding trail status, maps, weather, park closures, fees, or for other assistance, visit the park website or call ahead before your visit.



Photo by Karin Dodge.

Cedarville White Trail

Location: Cedarville State Forest (Prince George's County)

Directions/Parking: The White Trail trailhead is located by the charcoal kiln parking lot off Forest Road. The Cedarville State Forest trail map is available online.

Distance: 3.5 miles (Loop)

The White Trail is natural-surface loop trail passing through hardwood forest and pine plantations. It's a popular trail for bird watching. The White Trail follows the neighboring Orange and Blue Trails for some time if you'd like to extend your hike. For safety, visitors should wear bright orange or pink during the hunting season.

Contact Information: 301-888-1410, cedarville.statepark@maryland.gov



Beaver Pond Trail

Location: Fort Frederick State Park (Washington County)

Directions/Parking: Trailhead parking is available near Beaver Pond at the river.

Distance: 1.9 miles (Lollipop)

The Beaver Pond trail passes along wetlands near the campground. It's an easy, flat trail for wildlife viewing, as hikers can see several species of turtles, waterfowl, birds, white-tailed deer, and more. Historical interpretation of the area is available within the state park at Fort Frederick and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Museum.

Contact Information: 301-842-2155, fortfrederick.statepark@maryland.gov



Lore of the Land Sensory Nature Trail

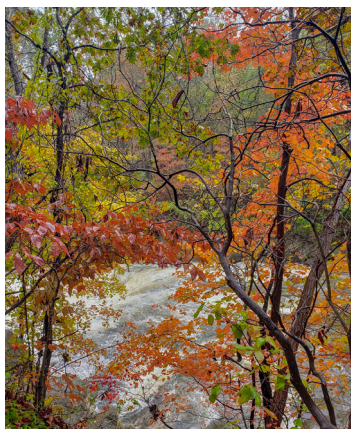
Location: Tuckahoe State Park (Caroline & Queen Anne's Counties)

Directions/Parking: Parking is available at the trailhead in the park's northern area.

Distance: 0.5 mile (Loop)

This inclusive sensory trail was designed for safe exploration. Stations along the way encourage hikers to explore nature with various senses. The trail is wide enough for someone to walk with an aide and there is a guide rope to make navigation clear. Tuckahoe State Park features a variety of trails, a disc golf course, an archery range, campgrounds, picnic pavilions, and a 60-acre lake for boating and fishing.

Contact Information: 410-820-1668, tuckahoe.statepark@maryland.gov



Grist Mill Trail

Location: Patapsco Valley State Park, Avalon Area (Baltimore & Howard Counties)

Directions/Parking: Convenient parking is available at the trailhead, though the park may fill to capacity during peak summer seasons. Day-use entrance fees apply.

Distance: 2.5 miles (5 miles Out & Back)

The Grist Mill Trail offers a paved, accessible hiking experience with scenic views along the Patapsco River. This trail also connects to other trail areas through tunnels and trail offshoots. Patapsco Valley is Maryland's oldest state park and has more than 5 distinct park areas to explore.

Contact Information: 410-461-5005, patapsco.statepark@maryland.gov



Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail

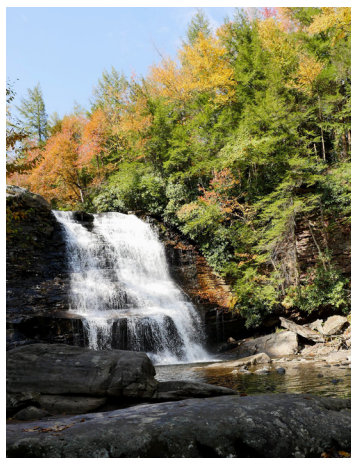
Location: Gunpowder Falls State Park (Baltimore County)

Directions/Parking: There are multiple parking options along the length of the trail. List most popular options here (where is the trail map??)

Distance: 20 miles (One Way)

The Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail follows the former Northern Central Railway (NCR) in northern Baltimore County. It passes through multiple historic communities and welcomes hikers, joggers, cyclists, horseback riders, and pets on leashes. Along the way, stop by the Monkton Train Station or Sparks Bank Nature Center.

Contact Information: 410-592-2897, gunpowderfalls.statepark@maryland.gov



Swallow Falls Canyon Trail

Location: Swallow Falls State Park (Garrett County)

Directions/Parking: Parking and restrooms are available near the camp store.

Distance: 1.25 mile (Loop)

This trail passes by several waterfalls, including Muddy Creek Falls, the highest free-falling waterfall in Maryland. Wet weather can create hazardous trail conditions, such as slippery surfaces and swollen creeks, especially during the winter. Sturdy footwear is recommended when trail conditions are slick. Be advised that cell phone service is unreliable in the area. Reservations are required in summer. Another 5.5 mile trail connects Swallow Falls and Herrington Manor State Park through Garrett State Forest.

Contact Information: 301-387-6938 (Swallow Falls State Park Office)



Serpentine Trail

Location: Soldiers Delight Natural Environment Area (Baltimore County)

Directions/Parking: Park at the Visitor's Center or the overlook on Deer Park Road.

Distance: 2.5 miles (Loop)

Soldiers Delight NEA has a unique serpentine barren ecosystem, home to dozens of rare grassland plant species, insects, rocks, and minerals. Practice responsible recreation by staying on clearly marked hiking trails. Hiking is NOT recommended during extreme heat and sun. Visit early in the morning or on cool, cloudy days.

Contact Information: 410-461-5005

Photo: Alfie Chambers & Matilda Machioli-Chambers at Soldiers Delight, Owings Mills, MD, by Benjamin Israel. CC by-nc-sa 4.0



Discover trails near you!

While state parks are popular places for hiking, there are likely regional, county, or local trails for hiking right near you! Research your county or city's parks and recreation division to discover your local parks, trails, and other amenities, like picnic pavilions, playgrounds, boat launches, campsites, and guided nature programs. Community-sourced resources like AllTrails can also help you locate nearby trails.

Photo: Jaren Hill Lockridge at Oxon Cove Park, Oxon Hill, MD, by Benjamin Israel. Belonging: the Black Americans in Nature Photography project. CC by-nc-sa 4.0.



If you're an avid Maryland State Park visitor, consider purchasing a **Maryland Annual State Park & Trail Passport!** The annual pass offers unlimited day-use admission for everyone in the vehicle to Maryland's state parks and facilities, so you no longer have to pay individual admission every time you visit a park. The pass is valid for a full year from the time of purchase and can be purchased online through the DNR online store or in person at most state parks. You may still need to make a reservation for popular parks.

The Maryland Park Service also offers the Golden Age Pass, a lifetime pass which entitles adults ages 62 and older free day-use entry to all state parks that charge service fees. Check the DNR store to view all current Maryland and non-Maryland resident rates.



Swallow Falls State Park by Anthony Burrows.



HIKING RESPONSIBLY

Maximize Your Experience — Minimize Your Impact!

As parks, green spaces, and recreation areas welcome more visitors and more support from Marylanders, there are also challenges posed by outdoor recreation and overuse. This is why responsible recreation is so important. An increase in visitors can result in challenges like litter, trail damage, parking issues, user conflicts, and other conservation impacts. The following tips aim to educate about your human impacts on the environment so you can better care for outdoor spaces while recreating.



Know Before You Go: Prepare properly before hitting the trail, and check the website of the trail you're visiting or call ahead for up-to-date information that might restrict your activities on a particular trail (construction, weather, wildlife conservation, etc). Plan hiking activities to match the goals, skills, and abilities of yourself and any group members.



Stay on the Trail: All official trails are carefully designed and constructed to be safe and sustainable for both human trail users and surrounding wildlife. Their features minimize erosion and prevent human impact on sensitive plant and animal habitats as much as possible. Plus, official trails are carefully marked and maintained to ensure a safe and accessible path for everyone. Do not cut switchbacks.



Dispose of Waste Properly: Pack in, Pack Out. Take your trash with you, even "natural" or "compostable" trash like apple cores or banana peels! More than 25 years ago, Maryland State Parks removed trash bins and other receptacles to keep parks clean. Consider bringing a garbage bag with you for trash. This also includes pet waste, so be prepared to clean up after your furry friends.



Leave What You Find: Ever heard of "Take only photographs, leave only footprints?" Maryland's lands are full of beautiful natural wonders, and should be protected for everyone to see and appreciate. Leave plants, rocks, and historical items as you find them so others can enjoy them. Treat living plants with respect. Carving or peeling trees may open them up to infection or kill them.



Be Careful with Fire: For longer hiking trips like backpacking treks, a good campfire can be a great part of the outdoor experience. However, fire can also be the most dangerous. Use a camp stove for cooking; stoves are easier to cook on and create less impact than a fire. Ensure campfires are permitted and safe to build in the area you're visiting. Keep your fire small. Trash should never be burned in a campfire. Instead, secure your trash and pack it out. Burn all wood to ash and be sure the fire is completely out and cold before you leave.

Keep Wildlife Wild: Trails provide great habitat for a diverse community of wildlife, and trail users are guests in their home. Observe wildlife from a distance and do not approach, feed, or follow them. Human food is unhealthy for all wildlife and feeding them disrupts their natural eating, hunting, and foraging patterns, making it difficult for them to live in the wild. Wildlife should be especially avoided during sensitive times, like mating, nesting, raising young, or winter. Keep pets on a leash under tight control and within sight at all times.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors: Thoughtful hikers respect other visitors. Consider hiking in small groups, and let nature's sounds prevail. Keep the noise down and turn cell phones low or off. Respect private property on or near local trails. If you need to take a break, step off the trail on a durable surface to let other hikers pass.

Local, regional, state, and national parks all follow these same seven principles of *Leave No Trace!*



Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary. Photo by Doug Roberts.



Share the Trail

SAY HEY, GIVE WAY, ENJOY THE DAY: TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Be aware of your surroundings. Paying attention will help keep you and any members of your group safe, and it will help keep wildlife and their habitats safe and healthy. Don't play music out loud, and if you do decide to wear headphones, be sure you can still hear ambient noise, animal sounds, and other trail users trying to communicate with you.

Make yourself known. When you encounter other hikers and trail users, offer a friendly "hello" or a simple head nod. Acknowledging others helps create a friendly atmosphere on the trail! If you approach someone else from behind, announce yourself in a friendly, calm tone and let them know you want to pass on the left.

Know your right of way. While the etiquette triangle (pictured above) may vary slightly from trail to trail, hikers should follow the general guidelines of yielding to others on the trail – especially on narrow trails where you can't pass side by side. When hiking, uphill users have the right of way. If going downhill, step aside to let uphill hikers pass. Bikers yield to both horses and hikers. Everyone yields to horseback riders and those using mobility devices. Large groups should hike in single file to leave space for others. Be cautious of unpredictable trail users, like children and pets.

Golden Rule: Treat other trail users and nature as you would want to be treated!

Know your limits!
Don't overexert yourself. If you need to take a break, take it. If the hike becomes more than you can handle, or if you feel sick, exhausted, or suspect an injury, take measures to address the issue or turn back. Know where and how to get help if you need it.

Protect What You Love

Studies show that “the more recreationists identify and build emotional connections with the physical environments they recreate in, the more they are inclined to engage in behaviors that protect, maintain, advocate for, or improve those areas.”¹ Has hiking inspired you to give back to your local trails or parks? Green spaces are always in need of volunteers to help protect and steward the land and the plants and animals that depend upon it. Here are some ways you can transform your passion into action.

¹ Thomas, Elena Rene, “The effect of place attachment and leisure identity on stewardship participation in the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and Wilderness” (2023). University of Montana, Missoula.

Trail Maintenance and Service Days:

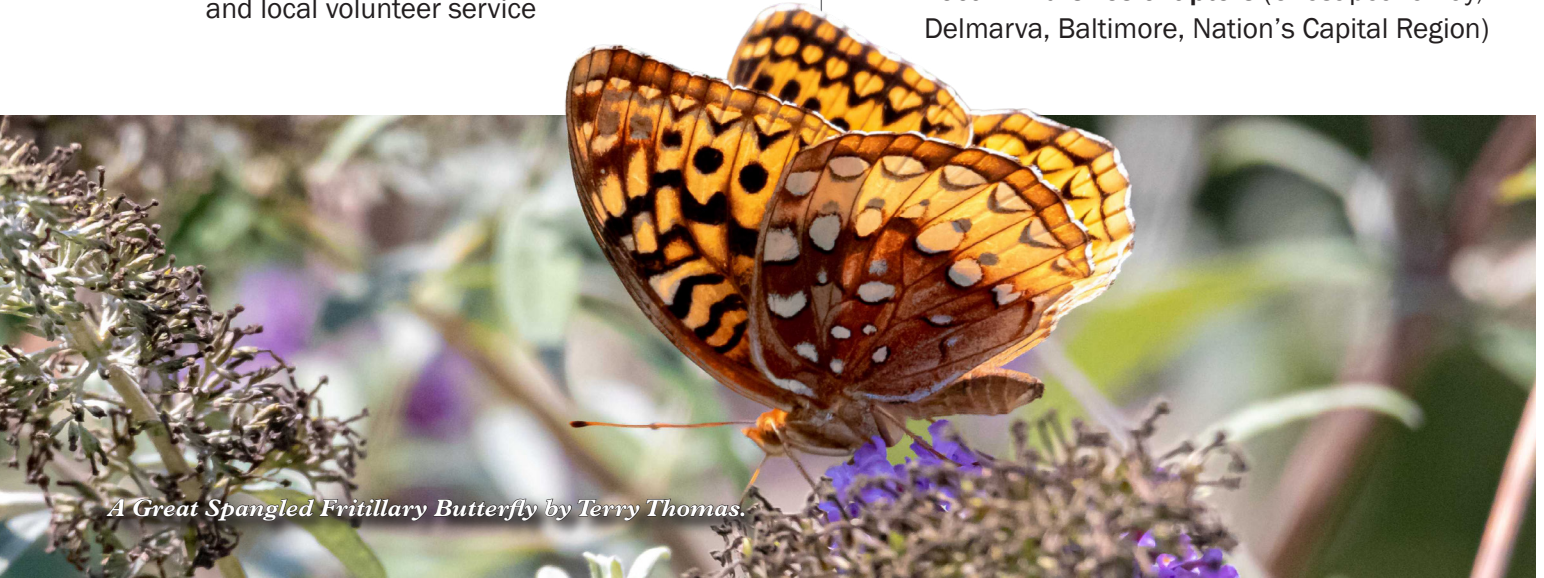
Local parks, advocacy groups, environmental associations, and other community organizations regularly recruit volunteers and schedule organized group clean-up days throughout the year. Your help is needed to pick up trash from trails, clear overgrown vegetation, remedy trails after bad weather events or storms, or repair trail infrastructure to maintain the safety and accessibility of the trails. Many organizations can provide training and supplies for new volunteers! A few example organizations include the:

- ♣ **Mountain Club of Maryland’s** Appalachian Trail Maintenance meetup group
- ♣ **Montgomery Parks** Trail Volunteers program for Montgomery County trails
- ♣ **Trail Riders of Today (TROT)** Trail Maintenance volunteers, who focus on equestrian trails
- ♣ **Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE)** Trail Work volunteers, focusing on multi-use, natural surface trail building and maintenance
- ♣ **Maryland Master Naturalists**, a statewide program that trains individuals to serve as stewards of Maryland’s natural resources and ecosystems through science-based education and local volunteer service

Battle Invasive Species: A “native” species is one that naturally evolved or originated in a region without human intervention. “**Invasive**” describes a non-native species that, when introduced into an ecosystem, aggressively establishes itself at the expense of native plants or animals and causes (or is likely to cause) economic harm, environmental harm, or harm to human, animal, or plant health. Invasive species can be any type of living organism.

In and around our parks and green spaces, invasive plants specifically are a big threat to our trails. Land managers and rangers need a lot of help cleaning up invasive species. Invasive species removal isn’t limited to trails – you can make a big difference right at home in your backyard! There are many resources for understanding invasive species removal in your community, including the:

- ♣ **Maryland Native Plant Society**
- ♣ **Maryland Native Plants Program**, led by the University of Maryland Extension, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), DNR, and the Maryland Native Plant Society
- ♣ **Maryland Master Gardeners**
- ♣ **MDA Maryland’s Best Native Plant Program**
- ♣ **Local Wild Ones chapters** (Chesapeake Bay, Delmarva, Baltimore, Nation’s Capital Region)

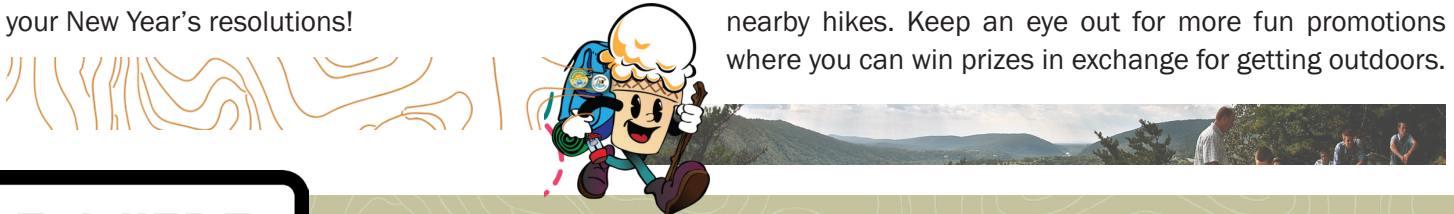


A Great Spangled Fritillary Butterfly by Terry Thomas.

More Hiking Resources

First Day Hikes are a nationwide initiative led by America's State Parks that encourages all 50 states to offer outdoor hiking opportunities on the first day of the new year. Many state and county parks, as well as local groups, offer guided hikes annually on January 1st. Add getting outside to your New Year's resolutions!

Special Hiking Promotions: The Maryland Park Service offers a new challenge program every year to encourage more visitors to hike in our state parks. The Office of Outdoor Recreation also works closely with the Maryland Department of Agriculture to promote "Hike the Ice Cream Trail," a partnership between local Maryland dairies and nearby hikes. Keep an eye out for more fun promotions where you can win prizes in exchange for getting outdoors.



Outdoor Recreation Business Directory

Are you looking to join or build a close-knit hiking community? Join a more advanced hiking or backpacking excursion? Invest in quality hiking gear? Check out the **Maryland Outdoor Recreation Business Directory**! This virtual tool compiles hundreds of businesses across the state that want to help you have fun outdoors. Use the "Hiking" recreation filter to explore organizations and businesses near you.



Photo by Asia Bright.

Black Girls Hike was founded by Asia Bright in Baltimore, and the group has since expanded statewide and even to chapters in multiple states. Through storytelling content and curated hiking and travel experiences, Black Girls Hike creates a community of black and brown outdoor enthusiasts while diversifying the outdoors.

www.blackgirlshike.net | info@blackgirlshike.net | 443-202-3525



Photo by Kent Saylor.

The American Hiking Society is a national organization headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland. The AHS envisions a world where everyone feels welcome in the American hiking community and has permanent access to meaningful hiking. AHS also leads "National Trails Day" on the first Saturday of June, inspiring the the public to discover, learn about, and celebrate trails while participating in outdoor activities, clinics, and trail stewardship projects.

americanhiking.org | [@americanhiking](https://www.instagram.com/americanhiking)



Many parks, refuges, nature reserves, and other green spaces have volunteer-run "Friends Of" groups dedicated to the preservation of and advocacy for their areas. These groups help support programming, volunteerism, and hands-on conservation. For a full list of active "Friends Of" groups associated with Maryland State Parks, check out the DNR website.

For example, the **Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park** (FPVSP) builds and maintains Patapsco's 200+ mile trail system through a series of trailwork volunteer days. FPVSP is also deeply committed to supporting visitors with special needs with expertise and specialized equipment, ensuring everyone can enjoy all that PVSP has to offer. Their program calendar includes adaptive hiking, cycling, kayaking, and more.

