

# Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



EXPERIENCE  
YOUR  
AMERICA



# The Billy Goat Trail Section A

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- Difficult 1.7 mile long trail in Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park
- Trailhead is located 1/2 mile downstream of Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center on towpath
- Roundtrip hike takes approximately 3-4 hours (3.7 mile loop)



# Other Hiking Options

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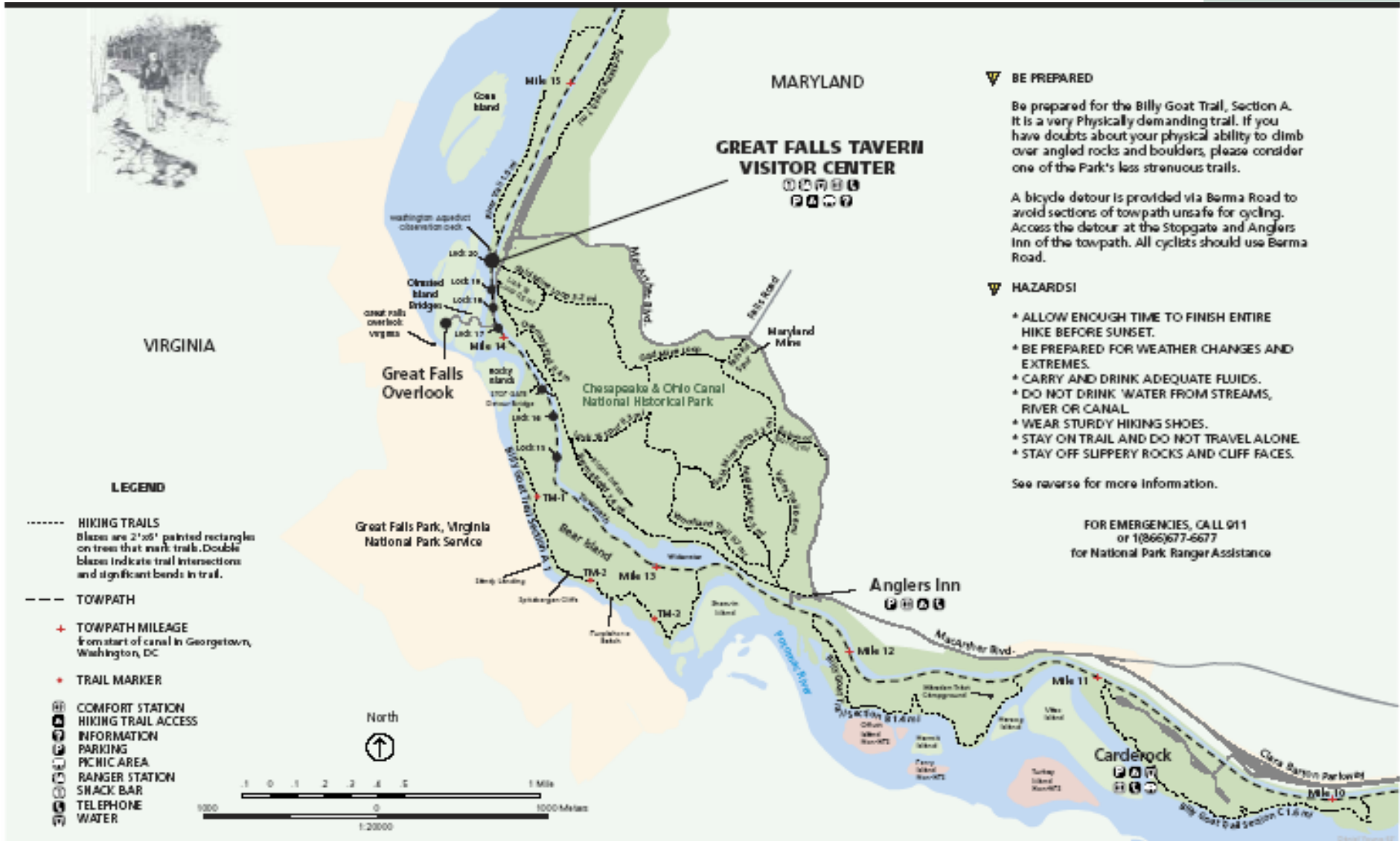


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- Olmsted Island Bridges- A 1/4 mile boardwalk allows hikers access to spectacular views of Great Falls MD overlook
- River Trail- Easy trail lasting 1 mile. Hike is a gentle stroll along river's edge and through a rich floodplain forest
- Gold Mine Loop – 3.2 Mile Loop of moderate difficulty. Hikers have opportunity to view remains of mining operations

# Ask for a Map

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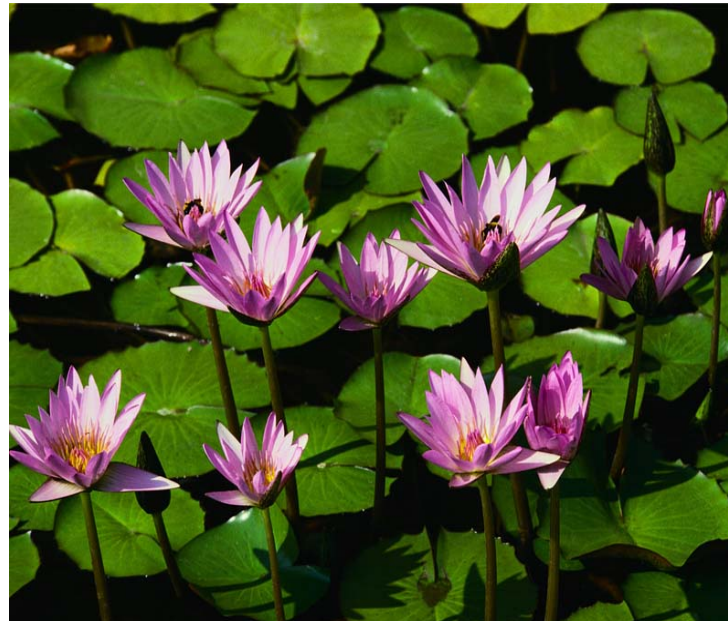
# Bear Island: A National Treasure

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- The Billy Goat Trail runs through Bear Island, a 96 acre nature preserve co-owned by The Nature Conservancy and National Park Service
- Bear Island is one of the most biologically rich areas of the Potomac Gorge
- Bear Island is one of few exposed bedrock terrace habitats in the Mid-Atlantic
- It is home to more than 50 state-listed threatened and endangered species



# Know Before You Go

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- The Billy Goat Trail is an enjoyable hike with beautiful views
- However, the trail is both physically and mentally challenging
- No pets allowed
- No swimming in Canal or Potomac River



# Stick to The Trail

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Please follow “Leave No Trace” sensitive recreational use principles as you hike:

- Do not walk off the trail to avoid a puddle
- Shoes dry overnight. Plants take years to regenerate
- Hikers should wear clothes they are willing to get dirty



# Be Aware if the Trail's Challenges

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## The Traverse:

- Hikers must find way up/down this 40 ft. cliff.
- There is not an alternative trail around
- The Billy Goat Trail is not recommended for people afraid of heights





# Pothole Alley

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- Pothole Alley is a ¼ mile long section of trail
- Hikers must navigate over large boulders and jagged rocks
- Extremely difficult and strenuous
- Good balance is required



# Slippery When Wet (Or Dry)

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- Rocks between Trail Marker 2 and Purple Horse Beach (pictured) are extremely smooth
- Sand collected on shoes causes hikers to slip on these rocks
- Potential injuries include ankle sprains/breaks, cuts and scrapes



# High Water

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- The Billy Goat Trail is prone to flooding
- Check river level and trail status at Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center before hike
- Trail may be closed during high water on the Potomac River



# Be Prepared

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- Check local weather forecast and dress appropriately
- Bring adequate amounts of water
- Pick up hiking trail map
- Wear proper shoes
  - ✓ Hiking boots
  - ✓ Tennis shoes
  - ✗ No Flip flops
  - ✗ No High heels

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- Failure to prepare properly may result in costly rescue efforts
- Such efforts can increase stress on the fragile ecosystem of Bear Island



# It's a Cold Winter Day, Is She Prepared?

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EXPERIENCE  
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# It's a Cold Winter Day, Is She Prepared?

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Backpack with food  
and first aid kit

Water

Rain Jacket



Warm  
Clothing

Sturdy Hiking Shoes

# Be Safe and Considerate

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- The Billy Goat Trail is entertaining and exhilarating
- Only through respect for its difficulty can you ensure a safe, enjoyable hike
- By being safe and sticking to the trail, you can help preserve Bear Island for future generations





