

Anacostia River Trails

Maryland & Washington, DC

For Boating, Bicycling
and Walking

Anacostia Park, National Capitol Parks – East
Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior



Experience the Water Trail

There are lots of ways to experience the Anacostia River and the destinations along its shores.

IF YOU LIKE TO BE ON THE WATER — or you'd like to give it a try — **Anacostia Park** 12 and **Bladensburg Waterfront Park** 1 are good places to launch a kayak or canoe. Bring your own to Anacostia Park, where there's plenty of space to load and unload gear and a nice stretch to paddle both north and south of the CSX bridge.

Bladensburg Waterfront Park 1 is paddle-friendly, too, with kayak and canoe rentals on site. You'll travel calm waters on one the greenest parts of the river, with options for an easy downstream daytrip to the **U.S. National Arboretum** 7 or the **Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens** 6. Summer is a great time to visit the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, when lotus and water lilies are in full bloom.

The Ballpark Boathouse, 15 right next to the Nationals baseball stadium, rents kayaks and encourages newcomers. The **Anacostia Watershed Society** offers free paddle nights from a variety of locations. Canoes are provided, with tips and lessons for beginners.

GUIDED BOAT TOURS are a fun and relaxing way to be on the water, especially if you're not ready to explore on your own. Try tours offered by the Anacostia Watershed Society and **Bladensburg Waterfront Park**, 1 which highlight the river's history and ecology.

For a more adventurous experience, try **SAILING**. Sailors find the best depths and winds toward the mouth of the

river south of the Navy Yard and in the Washington Channel. If your sailing skills are rusty, or you're ready to learn something new, **DC Sail** provides rentals and lessons for members.

ROWING is popular, too — and you don't need a team to try it out. The **Washington Rowing School** offers sculling and sweep lessons for groups or individuals.

You can also find fun and scenic places along the river without leaving dry land.

Wide paved trails for **BIKING AND HIKING** follow the river through wooded paths, and the network continues to grow. Unpaved trails offer more routes for hiking, and mountain biking too. Bikes are available at designated locations through **Capital Bikeshare** and through the rental office at **Bladensburg Waterfront Park**. 1

Anacostia Park 12 is a very large waterfront park with lots to offer. You'll find picnicking grounds with grills, waterfront trails, and public restrooms. The Anacostia Pavilion is available for special events. The **Aquatic Resources Education Center** in **Anacostia Park** 13 allows you to see local fish species and other aquatic wildlife in a collection of 20- to 1,500-gallon tanks.

Yards Park 15 is a vibrant summer destination for dining, concerts and community events. From there it's a quick stroll to the **National Museum of the U.S. Navy**.

Boating Safety Tips

Safety is your responsibility. If you choose to explore the Anacostia River, make sure you have the appropriate boating skills before setting out and always use good judgment. Here are a few tips to remember:

- Wear your life jacket at all times.
- Research your route and leave an itinerary with a friend or loved one.
- Check the weather before you leave and make sure you are prepared for inclement weather.
- Know the tide! The Anacostia is a tidal freshwater river, which means that water levels change by approximately three feet twice per day. Especially use caution in the Kenilworth and Kingman marshes where it is easy

- to get stuck in deep mud as the tide changes.
- Never paddle alone! Always paddle with a buddy — preferably more than one.
- Bring extra drinking water and food. Remember an extra paddle and your first aid kit.
- Bring your cell phone (use a dry bag or other waterproof container).

This informational map is not intended for navigational purposes. For more guidance on planning a safe boating trip, see the American Canoe Association's top ten safety tips at www.americancanoe.org/?page=Top_10.

What is a Watershed?



A watershed is an area of land that drains into a body of water. When it rains, water from parts of Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and Washington, DC, drain into streams that flow into the Anacostia River.

Each stream that drains into the Anacostia has its own watershed as well and is a sub-watershed of the Anacostia. Likewise the Anacostia is a sub-watershed of the larger Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds. The water from the Anacostia River drains into the Potomac River, which then drains into the Chesapeake Bay, finally reaching the Atlantic Ocean nearly 200 miles downstream from Washington, DC.

Over 1 million people live in the Anacostia Watershed, yet much of the river itself is surprisingly isolated from the city.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Parking | Floating Dock | National Park Property |
| Restrooms | Pier | Military Installations (restricted access) |
| Canoe/Kayak Launch | Bus | Other Federal Property |
| Boat Ramp | Metro Station | City/County Property |
| Canoe & Kayak Rentals | Fees | Anacostia River Trail |
| Picnic Area | Water Taxi | Access Path Major |
| Visitor Info/Museum | Marina | Access Path Minor |
| Accessible Canoe/Kayak Launch | Wheelchair Accessible | Unpaved Trail |
| | | Tide Restriction |
| | | Capital Bike Share |



For more detailed information on the Anacostia Water Trail visit www.anacostiaws.org/explore/anacostia-water-trail

2017 map update and reprint funded by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.



Smart Trail Use

- ON THE TRAIL**
- Be courteous to other trail users.
 - Stay to the right; pass on the left.
 - Pedestrians have the right-of-way.
 - Pedestrians and cyclists traveling two abreast must yield to on-coming and overtaking traffic.
 - When overtaking, give courteous but audible, advance warning using voice or bell.
 - Bicyclists should ride at safe speeds for current conditions: generally 10-15 mph.
 - Horses should be kept on the grass shoulder, where possible.
 - With the exception of motorized wheelchairs, motorized vehicles are not allowed on the trail.

- STAY SAFE**
- Carry a mobile phone; don't wear earphones.
 - Stay alert, be observant of your surroundings.
 - Tell friends or family the route you'll be taking; travel with a partner, when possible.
 - When stopping along the trail, move off the pavement to avoid blocking the path for other users.
 - Pets must be kept on a short leash and owners must clean up pet waste.
 - Bicyclists should wear a helmet; helmet use is required by state law for those under age 16.
 - Wear reflective material; carry a whistle or noisemaker.
 - When on roadways, ride with traffic, but walk and run against traffic.

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Discover the natural abundance of the Anacostia River as it threads through the heart of Washington, DC. Watch birds on Kingman Island or dock at the National Arboretum and roam the forest. Paddle to Nationals Park and catch a baseball game or tie-up at Yards Park and explore new restaurants. The Anacostia River corridor has lots of options for outdoor fun and the Anacostia Water Trail can help you find them.

The trail covers a nine-mile stretch of the Anacostia River, running from Bladensburg, Maryland, through Washington, DC, to its juncture with the Potomac River about two miles south of Capitol Hill. Along this trail, the character of the river varies remarkably. Upstream you'll find forests, wetlands, and wildlife that seem amazingly removed from the city. Downstream are hubs of riverfront recreation, with community parks, restaurants, and sporting events.

The Anacostia has changed dramatically over the last 400 years – from a place of quiet natural abundance and American Indian settlements to a colonial seaport and bustling corridor in the nation's capital. Water quality has suffered, but strong partnerships and community support are helping the river rebound. As development thrives along the southeast waterfront, interest in the river's recreational potential has been renewed.

The Anacostia Water Trail offers a way to explore the river and its resources. Its public access sites, programming, and orientation information is helping both residents and visitors find new adventures on the Anacostia and discover other treasures that have been there all along.

For more detailed information on the Anacostia Water Trail visit www.anacostiawatertrail.org.

Sites along the River



1 Bladensburg Waterfront Park
Bladensburg was a major seaport during the colonial period and site of the Battle of Bladensburg during the War of 1812. The park rents boats and bicycles. Open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm daily.

2 Bladensburg Wetlands
These 20 acres (once a landfill) have been restored with native tidal wetlands. Fox and bald eagles are a frequent sight.

3 Dueling Creek
During the 1700s and 1800s, it was illegal to conduct a duel in Washington DC. Instead, people would travel the Anacostia River into Maryland and up this creek. Twenty-eight recorded duels were fought along its shores.

4 Lower Beaverdam Creek
Pull a canoe or kayak onto the southern bank at the mouth of this creek at high tide and access the unpaved River Walk Trail. From there, it's just a quarter-mile walk to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens.

5 Kenilworth Marsh
Parts of this marsh are 11,000 years old, while the rest of the river's remaining marshes were constructed during the last few decades. Motorized craft are restricted here. Paddle during high tide to avoid getting stuck in the mud at low tide.



6 Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens
This is one of Washington's hidden gems (and a part of the National Park System), featuring exotic and native aquatic plants and abundant wildlife. Open from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm daily. During daylight saving open until 5:00pm. Call (202) 426-6905 or visit www.nps.gov/keaq.

7 US National Arboretum
The Arboretum displays plants and trees from all over the world on a square mile of land. Open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm daily. Call 202-245-2726 or visit www.usna.usda.gov.

8 Kenilworth Park
Once a landfill, this park is now home to ball fields and meadows.

9 Watts Branch
The largest stream restoration project in DC history is taking place on the upper reaches of Watts Branch.



10 Kingman Marsh
Enjoy a remote paddling experience, observing wildlife and navigating a maze of plants. Paddle during high tide to avoid getting stuck in the mud.

11 Kingman Island
Once a large tidal wetland, Kingman Island is a man-made island approximately two miles long. The Northern half of this island is Langston Golf Course, a National Park site that was important for providing access to African American golfers during the segregation era. The southern half features trails and natural areas.

12 Anacostia Park
This National Park area stretching two miles along the banks of the river, is home to the historic Langston Golf Course, which provided access to African American golfers during the segregation era. The Anacostia Pavillion, which includes a skating rink, is open from 11:00 am to 5:45 pm on weekdays and until 6:45 pm on weekends. (www.nps.gov/anac)

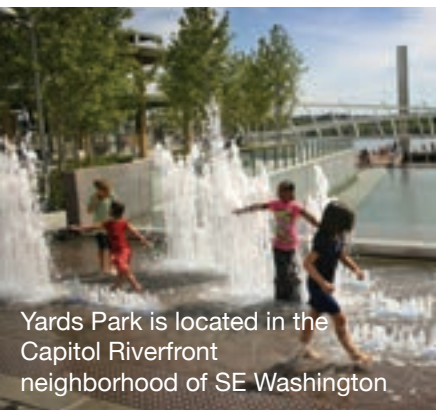
13 Aquatic Resources Education Center
This site is host to 20-1,500 gallon aquariums where you can glimpse beneath the waves of the Anacostia to see the variety of aquatic life that is supported by the River. It is open from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on weekdays. Other hours by appointment.

14 Anacostia Community Boathouse Association
The Anacostia Community Boathouse is a hub of activity for the rowing community. It hosts regattas, club racing, school sporting events, and single-scul activity.

15 Yards Park
Yards Park is DC's new waterfront destination and centerpiece of the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood, where you'll find open grassy areas and landscaped outdoor rooms, a waterfall, and riverfront boardwalk. Yards Park hosts concerts, festivals, and events.

16 Diamond Teague Dock
Located across the street from Nationals Park, this public dock provides access to the Anacostia River for canoes and kayaks. The Ballpark Boathouse rents canoes and kayaks here.

17 James Creek Marina
This marina is open to members only and accommodates sail and power boats. It also has the only gas dock on the Anacostia River.



18 East Potomac Park
This 330-acre island is managed by the National Park Service. It features the East Potomac Golf Club and East Potomac Swimming Pool, along with a number of Washington's famous cherry trees. It is currently inaccessible from the water because of the historic wall.

19 Gangplank Marina
Gangplank is a 309-slip marine facility located in the protected waters of the Washington Channel within walking distance of the Washington Monument.

Timeline

Land Use History Restorative



Bladensburg was a major shipping port.

The Battle of Bladensburg preceded the burning of the White House, and later the Battle of Fort McHenry, where the Star Spangled Banner was written.

Late 1800s – early 1900s

Population growth and development led to more pollution from stormwater runoff, alterations in the flow of the river, toxic waste dumps on the shores, raw sewage discharges, and destruction of wetlands. Construction began on the city's Combined Sewer Overflow system or CSO.



Restoration of the Anacostia began. The Anacostia Watershed Society was founded in 1989.

The Supreme Court called the dumping of sewage into the river a violation of the Clean Water Act. Authorities ordered a 99% reduction in dumping sewage into the Anacostia.

Over 20% of the Anacostia's tidal wetlands have been restored.

To get involved in the Restoration of the Anacostia River please visit www.anacostiaws.org, or call 301-699-6204.

Centuries of human activities and many forms of pollution have taken their toll on the Anacostia, but the river still supports a wide variety of plants, birds, and animals. The restoration effort has intensified in recent years, as citizens, businesses, and government increasingly recognize that a healthy river and healthy community go hand-in-hand. You too can join the cycle of discovery and recovery underway on the Anacostia River.

Pre -1600s

American Indians thrived on the fish, fertile soil, and wildlife of the Anacostia watershed.

1608

Captain John Smith voyaged up the Anacostia and included it on his map.

1600s -1700s

The watershed's forests were cut down to make way for colonial farms.

1800

Soil eroding from upriver agricultural fields filled in the once-thriving port of Bladensburg.



Image © Richard Schlecht

1930s

The Army Corp of Engineers constructed a seawall along the river, effectively eliminating most of the 2,500 acres of tidal freshwater wetlands. The River and Harbor Acts of 1890, 1902, and 1910, and District of Columbia appropriation acts, authorized and funded the Anacostia River improvements including dredging, fill, and seawall or bulkhead construction work. The construction work occurred between 1897 and the 1950's.

1970

By this time, 96% of Anacostia tidal wetlands were destroyed.

1999

A lawsuit was filed to reduce the three billion gallons of stormwater that carried raw sewage into DC's waters every year via the CSO.

2010

A 5-cent fee was put in place for each plastic bag used at DC stores, reducing plastic bag usage by over 60% and drastically reducing bags in the river.



History and Nature on the Anacostia

Long before the arrival of European explorers, the abundance of fish, game, and other natural resources along the Anacostia River drew a vibrant American Indian culture to its shores. In the 1600s, the Nacotchtank Indians — prosperous farmers, gatherers, hunters, and traders — lived along the eastern shore of the river. Jesuit priests later Latinized the Algonquian place name of Nacotchtank to Anacostia. Englishman John Smith explored the Anacostia in 1608. His arrival heralded both the rapid settlement of the land east of the river by English landowners and the rapid decline of the Nacotchtanks.

During the War of 1812, the British crossed the Anacostia River at Bladensburg on their way to attack Washington, DC. They confronted the Americans at the Battle of Bladensburg, and then burned the White House and other public buildings in Washington before setting sail for Baltimore. Word of losses at Bladensburg and the burning of Washington traveled to Baltimore, where the Americans re-enforced their defenses in preparation for battle there three weeks later.

By the late 1800s, the Anacostia River was filling up with silt that washed into the water from upstream farms. In the early 1900s, reclamation of the Anacostia River “flats” transformed the swamp lands into a riverside park. Today, **Anacostia Park**

is a national park spanning over 1,200 acres, with shoreline access, a swimming pool, ball fields, trails, and picnic areas. The southern portion contains most of the developed recreational facilities, and the northern portion provides an excellent place to view wildlife. To explore this park, visit www.nps.gov/anac.

The Anacostia Water Trail is part of the **Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail**, America's first national water trail. The John Smith Trail paints the world of the seventeenth-century Chesapeake—its English explorers, American Indian cultures, and rich natural abundance. To learn more about the trail, visit www.smithtrail.net.

The Anacostia Water Trail also follows a portion of the **Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail**. The Star-Spangled Banner Trail commemorates the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake region—a hub for trade, industry and government that made it a prime target for the British. American lawyer Francis Scott Key watched the bombardment of Fort McHenry from a ship in the Baltimore harbor. The experience inspired him to write the lyrics to the Star-Spangled Banner, which became America's national anthem in 1931. Learn more at www.starspangledtrail.net.



For more detailed information on the Anacostia Water Trail visit www.anacostiawatertrail.org

Photo credit: Anacostia Watershed Society, Anacostia Community Boathouse Association, Rindy OBrien



2017 map update and reprint funded by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.