



PADDLING GUIDE

TO DORCHESTER COUNTY

On Maryland's Eastern Shore

HEART OF THE CHESAPEAKE

DORCHESTER

water moves us





Welcome!

Welcome to Dorchester County on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Dorchester's more than 1,700 miles of shoreline, flat waters, and countless creeks and coves make for great kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddleboarding. In addition to more than 30 miles of established, charted water trails, you can put in at many other spots around the county.

Here you'll find unspoiled landscapes and waterscapes, wildlife including bald eagles, great blue herons, egrets, osprey, and more.

This is also the birthplace of Harriet Tubman of Underground Railroad fame, and some of these waterways are the same that she once traversed.

Water moves us. How will it move you?

Where to launch

Dorchester County has 13 designated soft launches designed for kayaks, canoes, and SUPs, as well as 26 boat ramps which usually have concrete ramps. Use of the launches and ramps is free for individuals. In Maryland, non-motorized vessels may launch from boat ramps but are encouraged to use separate soft launch areas if one is provided at the same site. For an online map with detailed directions to each soft launch or boat ramp, visit the Maryland Department of Natural Resources page on public boating access at bit.ly/BoatRamps.



IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTES

- Check tides before you go.
- In warmer months, wear insect repellant and light-colored clothing.
- Certain types of mud and marsh appear to be safe to cross on foot, but they can be deceiving. Use caution.
- Beware of stinging sea nettles and jellyfish in the water in the summer months.
- Plan ahead. Leave your route and return time with a relative or friend. Check weather conditions before you leave.
- Always wear a life jacket.
- In an emergency, stay with your vessel. Marshes cannot be crossed on foot.
- Cell phone service is not always reliable. Don't count on it for rescues.
- Bring a spare paddle or pole, rain gear, water, sunscreen, insect repellant, a hat, and snacks.
- If your canoe/kayak gets stuck, stay put. Try shifting your weight carefully as you push off with your paddle or pole.

What you'll see



Dorchester County is known for its pristine landscapes and waterscapes. As you paddle, keep your eyes open for wildlife including bald eagles, osprey, egrets, and

great blue herons. During migration times in spring and fall, you might also see a wide range of ducks and geese and other waterbirds. In the mid- to late summer, watch for marsh hibiscus blooming on the banks of some waterways. The views you'll find in these areas around the paddling trails hasn't changed much in hundreds of years, so in your mind's eye, imagine what life was like here for the Native Americans who once used these waterways for hunting and traveling, and for Harriet Tubman and other enslaved people, who used the waterways as a means to escape to freedom.



If you don't have your own kayak, canoe, or stand-up paddleboard (SUP)

Don't have your own vessel? Don't know how to paddle? No problem! Local outfitters offer rentals, lessons, and guided tours.

OverBoard Paddle & Fitness

OverboardPaddleandFitness.com

410.463.4350

Most excursions leave from the Dorchester Visitor Center, 2 Rose Hill Pl., Cambridge, MD, or from Suicide Bridge Restaurant, 6304 Suicide Bridge Rd., Hurlock, MD.

- SUP beginner classes
- SUP sunset and glow paddles
- Custom events for groups
- SUP yoga, Big Buddha Yoga, and Big Buddha Floating Fitness

Blackwater Adventures

BlackwaterAdventuresMD.com

410.901.9255

Location 1: 2524 Key Wallace Dr., Cambridge, MD (near Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge)

Location 2: 100 Heron Blvd., Cambridge, MD (at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort)

- Kayak and SUP rentals
- Guided tours include wildlife, Underground Railroad, moonlight, and wine tasting paddles, as well as a combined kayak/bike tour

For the most up-to-date info on outfitters, go to VisitDorchester.org.

TOP PADDLES IN DORCHESTER

Below are some of our favorite places to paddle. See map on reverse side.

1abc Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Three marked water trails meander a total of 27 miles through this 28,000-acre refuge, a haven for thousands of waterfowl and wildlife. The Green Trail is best for beginners. These trails are marked.

Starting Point	1a (Purple): Route 335 Bridge, Golden Hill (.32 miles south of Route 335 and Key Wallace Dr.; west side of road) 1b (Orange): Shorters Wharf (Maple Dam Rd., 5.4 miles southwest of Maple Dam and Key Wallace Dr.; west side of road) 1c (Green): Route 335 Bridge (same as Purple Trail, above).
Mileage	1a (Purple): 9 miles one way (3-4.5 hours) 1b (Orange): 7.6 miles round trip (2.5-3.75 hours) 1c (Green): 8 miles roundtrip (2.5-4 hours)
Restrooms	Nearby at the Blackwater Visitor Center, 2145 Key Wallace Dr., Cambridge. Open Mon-Fri 8am-4pm and Sat-Sun 9am-5pm

TIP: Blackwater offers downloadable maps of the trails that can be used with Google Earth or the Avenza app—which allows you to navigate without requiring a cell phone signal. fws.gov/refuge/Blackwater/visit/watertrails.html

2 Transquaking River Loop

Scenic loop trail that goes by wooded islands where Native Americans once lived. The trail is unmarked. See downloadable map at dnr.maryland.gov/boating/Documents/FB_Watertrails_2.pdf.

Starting Point	Bestpitch Ferry Boat Ramp: Bestpitch Ferry Rd., about 4.2 miles from intersection with Greenbriar Rd., Cambridge, MD
Mileage	5-mile loop (3 hours)
Restrooms	None

3 Island Creek Trail

This out-and-back trail heads south on Island Creek toward Fishing Bay through the Fishing Bay Wildlife Management Area. Turn around where you like. You can also go upstream (north) beyond the boat ramp where you started. The trail is unmarked. See downloadable map at dnr.maryland.gov/boating/Documents/FB_Watertrails_2.pdf.

Starting Point	Island Creek Boat Ramp: On west side of Elliott Island Rd. about 12.9 miles south of intersection with Middle St., Vienna, MD; west side of road
Mileage	Variable
Restrooms	None

4 Chicone Creek

This out-and-back trail includes a little time on the wide Nanticoke River, then turns quiet and lovely once you're on Chicone Creek (just after the Route 50 bridge). When paddling on the Nanticoke, stay as close to land as you can to avoid barge traffic. Once into Chicone Creek, follow it up into a deep wooded swamp fringed with rich tidal freshwater marsh. The land you see through the trees was part of the chief's town that Captain John Smith mapped as Kuskarawaok when he visited. The trail is unmarked.

Starting Point	Vienna Boat Ramp: At intersection of Race and Water Streets, Vienna, MD
Mileage	6-mile loop (2.5-5 hours)
Restrooms	None



DORCHESTER COUNTY PADDLING TRAILS





"Amazing Wildlife Watching"

USA Today named Dorchester County's Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge—where several of our paddling trails are located—in its list of 10 best places in America for "amazing wildlife watching." Blackwater is in good company: the list also includes Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks.

This brochure is sponsored in part by the Dorchester County Health Department and is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Maryland Department of Health, Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control.



Find out more:
Dorchester County Tourism
2 Rose Hill Pl., Cambridge, MD 21613
VisitDorchester.org
410.228.1000