



National Parks Conservation Association

Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

Designated as the first national water trail, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail follows the historic routes of the English explorer's voyages on the Chesapeake Bay, as well as the York, James, and other rivers between 1607 and 1609. Following Smith's original maps and journals, the trail spans 3,000 miles in present-day Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia.

Exploring the Chesapeake

Humans have been living on the Chesapeake and its 150 major tributaries for more than 10,000 years. American Indians created thriving societies long before the arrival of European settlers who became the initial founders of the United States. One of the first Europeans to explore the bay was Captain John Smith, a leader of the first English colony, Jamestown.

In 1608, Smith led two voyages on an exploratory survey of the Chesapeake Bay, mapping the locations of Jamestown, American Indian villages, and numerous bay tributaries. His map and journals claimed that "Heaven and Earth never agreed better to frame a place for Man's habitation." At the time, dense forests surrounded the bay, and the water clarity was exceptional. Smith wrote that oysters "lay as thick as stones" and the Bay and its tributaries contained more sturgeon "than could be devoured by dog or man."



National Parks Conservation Association®
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

777 6th Street NW • Suite 700 • Washington, D.C. 20001
202.223.NPCA (6722) • Fax 202.454.3333 • npca@npca.org • www.npca.org

Following in John Smith's Wake

John Smith's goals were to explore the North American landscape, map the area, and claim the land for the English crown. Colonists were instructed to uncover gold, silver, and minerals and trade with American Indians in the region. Today, visitors to the historic water trail can follow Smith's routes through hidden coves, marshes, secluded woodlands, historic towns, and modern cities.

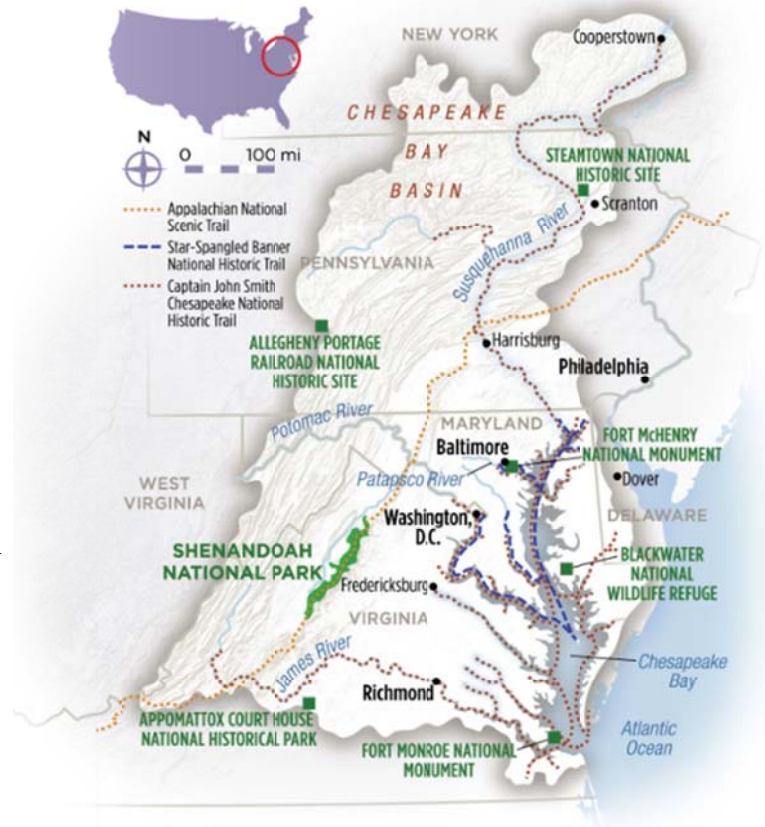
Sites such as Jamestown Island, Fort Monroe National Monument, and Fort McHenry are along the path. The trail extends beyond Smith's voyages routes through Steamtown National Historic Site and ends in Cooperstown, New York. Those accessing the water trail can have an expert guide them with the [Official Boater's Guide](#).



Preserving and Connecting the Chesapeake Landscape

NPCA is working to leverage the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail to encompass land-based sites along the James and Patapsco rivers, to promote land conservation and connectivity of habitat and cultural landscapes.

The national park presence in the Chesapeake provides compelling opportunities for advancing landscape conservation to preserve iconic historical and natural treasures.



Get Involved

With more than 50 national parks in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the National Park Service is responsible for protecting some of our nation's most sacred natural, cultural, and historic places. However, underfunding our national parks threatens what is needed for rangers, interpretation, and other services. Contact your senators and representative and urge them to support full funding of our national parks.

Every action taken helps preserve the national parks of the Chesapeake landscape for future generations. To learn more, visit <http://www.npca.org/about-us/regional-offices/mid-atlantic/virginia> to find additional information, events, and volunteer opportunities.

Contact Us

Pam Goddard, Chesapeake & Virginia Program Manager, 202.454.3363, pgoddard@npca.org
Edward Stierli, Steve & Roberta Denning Landscape Conservation Fellow, 202.454.3339, estierli@npca.org

To learn more about the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail visit: <http://www.smithtrail.net/> August 2012