



National Park Service

ARTICLE

Top 10 Tips for Biking the C&O Canal

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/>), Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (<https://www.nps.gov/pohe/>)

Plan Your Trip Like a Park Ranger

The weather is changing, and more people are on the trail than ever! We're expecting an especially busy season and want everyone to be prepared for a crowded towpath. Have fun and stay safe by following the biking etiquette tips. **#PlanLikeAParkRanger**.

Check out more [Top 10 lists](https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/plan-like-a-park-ranger.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/plan-like-a-park-ranger.htm>) from other national parks to get the most out of your summer vacation.

1. Know the speed limit: 15MPH on the towpath

Keep yourself and others safe by following the speed limit. The towpath has rocks and holes that can throw you off your bike. Think of it this way; if you are going as fast as a running dog, you're going too fast!

Learn more > Curious about other park rules? Check out the [Superintendent's Compendium](https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/management/superintendent-s-compendium.htm). (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/management/superintendent-s-compendium.htm>)



Biking near Great Falls.
Canal Trust/Ari Suryanto

2. Know when to yield

Bicyclists yield to everyone. EVERYONE yields to horses. Be courteous and pass on the left after giving an audible signal. Remember to slow down before passing and be aware that horses and people can scare easily if startled.

#JokeOfTheDay What did the bicyclist say to the pedestrian? - Ring Ring, passing on your left!

Learn more > Check out the [Horseback Riding website](https://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/horsebackriding.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/horsebackriding.htm>) for more guidance on horses.

3. Ride in a single file line

Just like the mules when the canal was in operation, ride in a straight line and stay to the right unless passing.

Learn more > Check out the [Meet the Mules website](https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/historyculture/mules.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/historyculture/mules.htm>).



Trail Yield Sign

4. Make yourself known

Hey lock! Be like the canallers and use your voice or a sound device, like a horn, to let others know you are approaching. A courteous distance is within 100 feet of others.

Learn more > Check out this [interview with a canaller](https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/historyculture/canallerinterviews.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/historyculture/canallerinterviews.htm>) to learn about daily life on the canal.

5. Wear a helmet

Know the helmet laws in the area you plan to bike, and remember, everyone can benefit from a helmet; even Harvey the mule!

Learn more > Visit the [Safety website](https://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/safety.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/safety.htm>) for more safety tips.

6. Pedal your electric bike

You are allowed to use electric bikes as long as you are pedaling while using them. Have fun and stay safe by slowing down and alerting others when passing. Don't forget, the speed limit is 15MPH.

Learn more > Curious about the specifics of electric bike use in the park? Check out the [Biking website](https://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/bicycle.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/bicycle.htm>).

7. Watch for dogs

Dogs and other pets can be unpredictable. Keep an eye out, alert the owner when passing, and pass slowly. Pet owners, keep your dog on a leash no longer than six feet.

Learn more > Check out the [Take Rover On Your Road Trip Too](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/pets/index.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/pets/index.htm>) website for fun pet ideas!



8. Expect the wild to be wild

Don't forget your helmet.
Canal Trust/Erik Wang

Many animals call the canal home. Keep your eyes and ears open while biking — that stick in the trail just might be a snake! Animals are unpredictable; treat them with the respect they deserve and give them plenty of space. If you are injured as a result of an animal encounter, seek medical help.

Learn more > Check out the [Animals website](https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/nature/animals.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/nature/animals.htm>) to learn more about park wildlife.

9. Watch for dismount signs

Dismount and walk your bike through crowded areas such as over aqueducts and near the Great Falls Tavern.

Learn more > Check out the [Monocacy Aqueduct](https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/historyculture/themonocacyaqueduct.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/choh/learn/historyculture/themonocacyaqueduct.htm>) website to learn about the longest aqueduct in the park.

10. Know where you can go

Bikes are allowed on the canal towpath, Western Maryland Rail Trail, Capital Crescent Trail, and Berma Road. They are not allowed on hiking trails or off trail.

Ready for your adventure? Check out our tips and tricks on how to [#PlanLikeAParkRanger!](https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/top-10-tips-for-visiting-c-o-canal.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/top-10-tips-for-visiting-c-o-canal.htm>)