

# Bicycle Outing Activity Guide

## Goals

- Complete a challenging and scenic bike ride, and over three years bike the entire C&O towpath from Cumberland to Georgetown.
- Operate together as patrols and a troop on a long excursion, with opportunities to exercise individual leadership.

## Achievements Satisfied

This activity satisfies the following achievements.

- Bicycling merit badge: 2 x 25 mile rides. Option for 50 mile ride on Segments 2 and 3.
- C&O commemorative patch (4 segments)

## Materials

- Truck (rented) for bikes and gear (26' truck provides just enough room for 40 participants).
- Sag wagon (personal vehicle) with bike rack.
- Bike repair kit: patch kit, pump, wrenches, chain tool, etc.
- Troop first aid kit.
- Headlamp (for Paw Paw tunnel on Segment 1)
- Rubber bands (for keeping pants out of bicycle chains)
- Extra water (for those who run short)
- Optional: water jug and porta-john (rental) for Williamsport.

## Tips

- General
  - Youth leaders should be encouraged to plan lunch and rest stops at lock houses, parks, etc. where there is room off the tow path.
  - Adult leaders are usually split among front, middle, and back groups. Youth should lead the riders of every group.
  - Water is sometimes (but not always) available via hand pumps at campgrounds along the towpath. It can be dark and heavy with iron or iodine.
- Shakedown (Bethesda to Georgetown)
  - Mandatory because a rider who lags too far behind causes logistics issues for the rest of the riders. Good reality check for those who have not biked the towpath before. It also covers a small piece of the towpath not covered by the main rides.
- Segment 1 (Cumberland to Hancock)
  - Nice photo op at circle in front of station.
  - Headlamp useful for Paw Paw tunnel
  - Weavers in Hancock has great pies for an end-of-ride reward.
- Segment 2 (Hancock to Dargan Bend)
  - There is a bike shop right near the start at Hancock for last minute water and supplies.

- A 50 mile ride the first day is possible by heading west 11.5 miles to the end of the Western Maryland Rail Trail (just before Sideling Hill Creek) and back, east 1.5 miles to the rail-trail parking lot and back, then riding the towpath 24.5 miles to Williamsport.
- River Bottom Park at Williamsport allows camping, but has no water or bathrooms. Porta Johns may be available 300 yards away at National Park Service parking lot. NPS building has water and bathrooms and is open 8:30-4:30 including weekends.
- Dam overlooks make for a scenic stop, but scouts should be kept away from the edge as a fall onto the rocks or into the water near the dam could be deadly.
- Segment 3 (Dargan Bend to Bethesda)
  - Carderock park overpass is not fenced and somewhat narrow. Scouts should not stop on the overpass. There is no point in planning a sag wagon meet-up here because there is no convenient way to get down from the towpath to the roadway.
  - A 50 mile ride the first day is possible by taking a couple cars with bikes and riders up to Taylors Landing.
  - Chisel Branch campground has only two sites with fire rings, and only one of those has a stand-up grill, so it is best to claim the sites early. A wagon is handy for porting gear from the parking lot to the campsite. There is potable water from the pump, though it has iodine and doesn't look very appealing. There is one porta-john.