

**Safety on the water is everyone's responsibility.**

### ONLINE RESOURCES

DELAWARE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
[www.fw.delaware.gov/boating/](http://www.fw.delaware.gov/boating/)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
[www.dmv.org/washington-dc/boat](http://www.dmv.org/washington-dc/boat)

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
[www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/)

PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION  
[www.fish.state.pa.us/boat\\_basics.htm](http://www.fish.state.pa.us/boat_basics.htm)

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES  
[www.dgif.virginia.gov/boating/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/boating/)

U.S. COAST GUARD  
[www.uscgboating.org/safety/courses.htm](http://www.uscgboating.org/safety/courses.htm)



PHOTO BY SARAH ROGERS

Greenwell State Park in Southern Maryland is one of many places along the trail that offer kayak lessons and rentals.

## Boating Safety

Though many of the waterways within the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail are suitable for new boaters, there is also plenty of broad open water that demands respect. Sections of the rivers can funnel wind and develop nasty, choppy seas. Remember that accidents can happen on any type of water.

Whether you are paddling a kayak or piloting a trawler, it is important to build your boating skills, keep your vessel in good operating condition, and review U.S. Coast Guard safety guidelines before every trip.

### FOR BEGINNERS

If you are new to boating and want to explore some of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail by water, consider taking day trips with a canoe/kayak outfitter or a tour boat captain first.

Before you pilot your own boat, take a boating safety/operation course. In fact, your state may require it. Many boating safety courses are offered across the country for all types of recreational boaters, and for boaters of all ages. The U.S. Coast Guard can provide a list for your area.

You will find additional information on boater education through these agencies:

- Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife
- District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Harbor Patrol or Department of Motor Vehicles
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources/Boating
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Learn your boat's capabilities and weaknesses. Spend time in your boat, beginning in calm waters. Learn how to handle her in a range of sea conditions. Build redundancy into her operating and safety systems, such as an extra paddle or a handheld VHF radio.

### THE RIGHT GEAR FOR YOUR BOATING ADVENTURE

Always wear a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket that is appropriate for your vessel.

Dress for the day and be prepared to get wet. If the weather is cool, dress warmly in layers and bring an extra set of dry clothes sealed in a plastic bag for emergency use. If it's hot, find ways to avoid heat exhaustion, such as taking breaks in shade and drinking plenty of water.

Use sun block. Skin cancer is a real danger but is easily preventable with sunblock, appropriate clothing, and some caution.

## Safety 101

Wear a hat on bright, warm days as well as cool ones. Remember that wool and pile vests, sweaters, and jackets retain their insulating qualities even when wet. In cold weather, wear pile or neoprene gloves, especially those that cover and insulate the blood vessels on the undersides of your wrists. Take along a windbreaker or rain gear, including pants or bibs with suspenders to keep your lower body dry.

Always wear boots or shoes to avoid foot injuries. If you are going to wade and want to wear sandals, make sure you choose models that offer protection for your toes and the tops of your feet as well as the soles.

Carry at least one signaling device on every trip—a flashlight or strobe, flares, horn/whistle, cell phone, VHF radio, bright flag, or mirror.

Bring insect repellent. Biting insects can be vicious during the warmer months.

Other essentials: a first-aid kit (Know what's in there; understand how to use it; and keep it stocked and current.), plenty of drinking water, and sunscreen and lip balm.

Take a first-aid course. Know what to do, and how and when to do it.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Respect private property when boating. Land only on public areas or spots where you have permission to be.

If under power, remember that you are responsible for your wake. A high wake can capsize small boats and damage fragile shorelines.

Don't litter or pollute the water. Use the Leave No Trace principles listed on page 13.

Be careful with campfires. Use camp stoves when possible.

- Avoid canoeing or kayaking alone when possible. Two people can solve a lot of problems that one person can't.
- File a float plan with family or friends. Include where you expect to go, when you expect to return, and whom to call (the U.S. Coast Guard is a good first choice) if you don't return as planned.
- When paddling or cruising designated water trails, read important safety information and posted rules. Those rules are there to protect both you and the waterway you are exploring.
- Explore water appropriate to your skills. If you are a novice paddler or cruiser, start with low-risk waterways.
- Learn to recognize water hazards, such as shoals, crab pot buoys, bridge piers, high-speed boat traffic, and strainers (downed trees or branches reaching into the water).
- If you capsize, stay with your boat unless doing so poses immediate danger. You'll be much easier for rescuers to find.
- When paddling in a group, assign a lead and a sweep boat. Both boats should be manned by experienced paddlers. No one passes the lead boat or falls behind the sweep.
- Stay in your canoe/kayak if it becomes stuck on an obstruction. Try shifting your weight carefully as you push off with your paddle or pole.
- Remember that kayaks and canoes are not easily seen by other boaters. Try to stay out of the shipping channels, and be as predictable and visible as possible.
- Never paddle farther from shore than you are prepared to swim.
- During fall and winter, waterfowl hunters are active on or near many Chesapeake waterways. Check for exact dates and seasons.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
www.weather.gov

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH CHESAPEAKE  
NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL  
www.smithtrail.net

CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS AND  
WATERTRAILS NETWORK  
www.baygateways.net

NOAA CHESAPEAKE BAY  
INTERPRETIVE BUOY SYSTEM  
www.buoybay.noaa.gov  
Also available at 1-877-BUOY-BAY

NOAA TIDES AND CURRENTS  
<http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/ports/index.shtml?port=cn>

CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY  
www.chesapeakeconservancy.org



PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System (CBIBS) marks points along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. “Smart buoys” provide near-real-time data on weather, water conditions, and other features for recreational and commercial users. The buoys are accessible by phone and Internet and via apps for Android and iPhone.

## Planning Your Trip

**Study a good map or chart** of the section of the water trail you plan to explore. If you expect to carry a handheld or fixed-mount GPS, save several key way-points in it for important navigation markers and points of interest. Remember that the maps included in this Boater’s Guide are for illustration and should not be used for navigation.

**Scout your trip.** Know where your trip will take you and where you can find a safe harbor or takeout in case of a mishap or bad weather. Make sure you understand how to identify and avoid any hazards marked on your map or chart. Note: the maps in this guide are for general reference only. You will find links to sources for official NOAA charts where available.

See the section on “Scouting Your Trip: How to Use This Guide” for tips on using Google Earth to plan your route.

**Plan your day.** Allow ample time to complete your trip during daylight hours, taking weather and water conditions into account. Even if you have to alter your schedule, having an initial plan will help you figure out how to complete your trip safely.

**Check the weather** before you go and during the day while on the water. Check the forecast on television and/or online. NOAA’s National Weather Service provides standard and marine forecasts for wherever you are or may be headed.

**Carry a compass.** Don’t rely solely on a GPS or chart.

**Carry a VHF radio**—handheld or fixed-mount—with bands for receiving forecasts from NOAA’s National Weather Service while on the water. Don’t rely on having cell phone coverage.

**Check the tides and currents.** They are especially important if you are paddling or rowing or trying to make a tight schedule under sail or power. Find tidal information at NOAA’s Tides and Currents website.

**Check the buoys.** In addition, you can get near-real-time information from numerous locations around the Chesapeake from NOAA’s Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System (CBIBS). You can even access these buoys while you’re out on the water where there’s cell phone coverage by calling 1-877-BUOY-BAY or by accessing the website or apps on your smart phone.

Either online or by phone, NOAA’s Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System will also give you background on Captain Smith’s activities in the area around each buoy and geographical/ecological information about the buoy’s site. Each season, the buoy also offers updated information about what is happening in the surrounding water. You’ll find additional information on the CBIBS website, including curricular material for teachers and a graphing tool that enables you to watch trends through measurements like temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity, and turbidity.

# Travel Lightly

## MINIMIZE THE IMPACT OF YOUR BAY ADVENTURE

To protect the Chesapeake Bay, the National Park Service supports the Leave No Trace principles and practices of the Center for Outdoor Ethics ([www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)). When exploring the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, leave no trace that you have been there by following the LNT principles. With many thousands of boaters on the Chesapeake, all of our individual actions are magnified, and, when combined with other careless deeds, can greatly harm the watershed.

Leave No Trace principles apply to all outdoor activities, including every form of boating. This is an ethical program, designed to educate users about ways to minimize their recreational impacts through following ideals, rather than using a fixed set of rules and regulations. Remember that you are a guest while exploring the trail. Travel lightly and minimize the impact of your visit as much as possible.

### LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES FOR BOATING

#### PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- Know your route.
- Carry the proper equipment and clothing.
- Know your abilities and those of your group.
- Allow adequate time to find a legal and designated campsite, takeout landing, anchorage, or marina.

#### BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS

- Respect the privacy of others, on the water and off.
- Watch your wake!
- Be courteous to other river users. Minimize noise and visibility.
- Respect private property.

#### CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

- Use existing clearings that won't be damaged by your stay.
- Avoid long stays at one site and trampling plants.
- Keep groups small.

#### LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

- Leave rocks, plants, trees, and artifacts as you found them.
- Minimize campsite alterations.

#### RESPECT WILDLIFE

- Enjoy all wildlife from a distance and do not disturb them.
- Keep well away from nests and burrows.
- Never feed wild animals or leave food scraps where they might be eaten by wildlife.

#### DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

- In a cruising boat, retain all waste in a holding tank and have it pumped out at one of the many sites around the Chesapeake that offer this service.
- If camping on shore, carry out all waste.
- Do all washing as far from the water as possible.
- Scatter strained dishwater on land away from camp.
- Use biodegradable soaps and minimize use.
- Carefully plan meals to minimize waste.

#### MINIMIZE USE AND IMPACT OF FIRES

- Use existing fire rings or a camp stove.
- Use only downed, dead wood.
- Leave limbs (dead or alive) on standing trees.
- Make positively sure that your fire has been extinguished before leaving the site.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

GOOGLE EARTH  
<http://earth.google.com>

NOAA CHARTS ONLINE VIEWER  
[www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov)

Select "View NOAA Charts." On following web page, choose "Atlantic." Scroll down to series of Chesapeake Bay charts.

## Scouting Your Trip

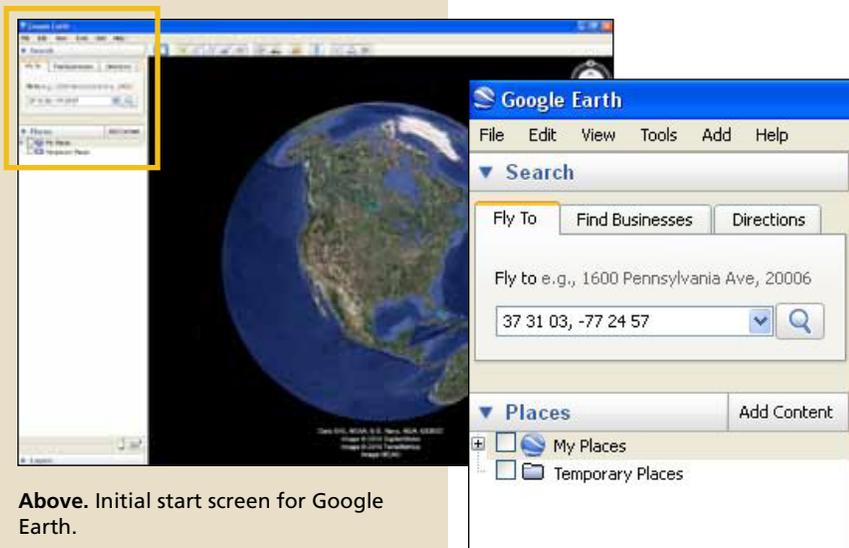
### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Scout your trip by satellite using Google Earth. (Captain Smith would be amazed!) You'll find latitude and longitude numbers listed for every trailhead, boating facility, and itinerary in this Guide, making it easy to find specific locations. If you haven't already, be sure to install the latest free version of Google Earth on your computer.

Here's how to scout your trip on Google Earth. Begin at the trailhead you have selected as a starting point. Integrate what you see on your computer with a good chart of the portion of the water trail that you plan to explore. Note the water depths, curves in the waterway, channel junctions, and narrow spots where you may have to pay close attention to other boats, or even tugboats pushing barges. Also note the direction you will be traveling and think about how various wind scenarios might affect your trip, especially if strong ebb and flood currents will be involved. If your trip is one-way, make sure you get a good look at the place where you will conclude your trip.

If you expect to carry a handheld or fixed-mount GPS, save several key waypoints in it for important navigation markers, points of interest, and both beginning and ending locations.

Use Google Earth Maps to get driving directions to the trailhead. From the toolbar at the top of the Google Earth satellite image, put a "placemark" (a yellow pushpin symbol or equivalent) onto the trailhead. Then use the "View in Google Maps" tool at the right-hand end of the toolbar to shift to a satellite image that overlays the system of roadways onto the natural features of land and water. Now click on the "Get Directions" link in the top left corner of the page and fill in the information blocks for your starting point and destination. Google will give you directions, distance, and driving time.



**Above.** Initial start screen for Google Earth.

**Right.** Enlarged image of the program's search panel.

### ENTERING COORDINATES INTO GOOGLE EARTH

The following is a brief lesson on entering coordinates into Google Earth. The coordinates for this lesson are: 37° 31' 03" N, 77° 24' 57" W.

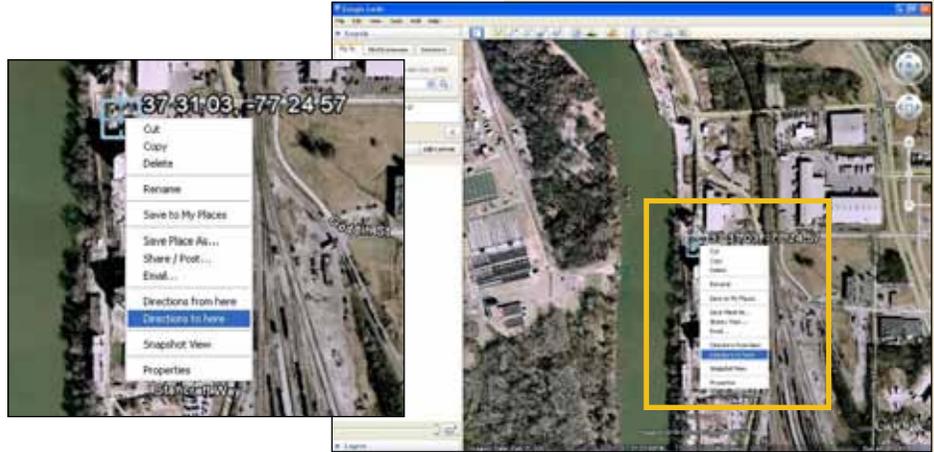
**Step One.** Open Google Earth and type the coordinates in the Google Earth search panel in the upper left corner of the screen, omitting the symbols. Place a space between each number and a comma between the north and west numbers. Type a negative sign (hyphen) before the second set coordinates.

**37 31 03, -77 24 57**

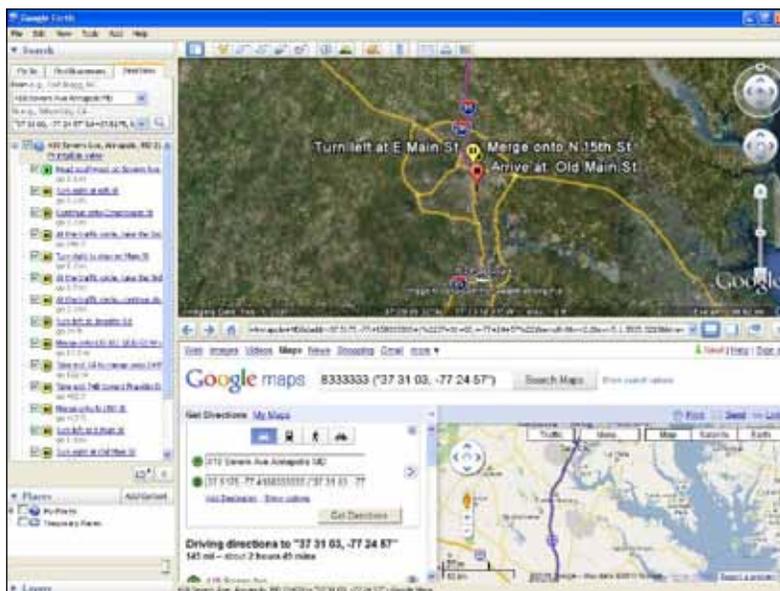
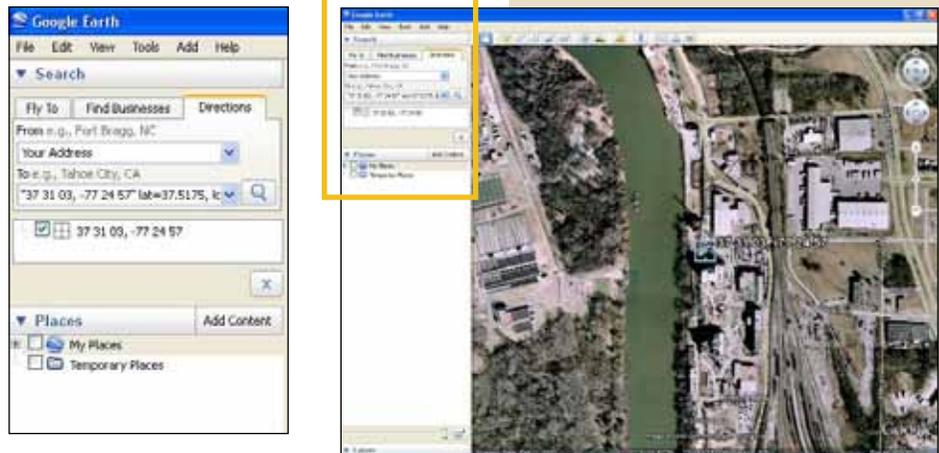
After typing in the coordinates, press the enter key. You will "fly" into the location.

**Step Two.** Right-click on the point and select “Directions to here” to find how to get to the site by road.

You can also “Save Place As...” to save the location with a name in Google Earth. This saved location can be used later to make a route or for reference.



**Step Three.** Type in your address in the search bar and press enter.



◀ **Step Four.** Click on “Printable view” for the directions to populate in a Google Maps screen. The directions can be printed from the Internet browser.