

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

Washington Crossing

Washington Crossing Historic Park

Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Pennsylvania State Parks Mission

The primary purpose of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of parks should be given first consideration. Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

PAStateParks

2026



Top 10 Activities

1. Experience history by taking a guided tour in the park.
2. Bicycle along the adjacent Delaware Canal State Park Towpath.
3. Stroll along Washington's Crossing Trail to learn about the momentous events of December 1776.
4. Attend the Annual Christmas Day Reenactment of Washington crossing the Delaware River.
5. Take in the scenic view from atop Bowman's Hill Tower.
6. Discover the encampment of Washington's army at Thompson-Neely House.
7. Appreciate the historic artifacts in the exhibit area of the visitor center.
8. Attend a free education program.
9. Pay respect to those who are honored at Soldiers' Graves.
10. View native plants in the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve.



Washington Crossing Historic Park



Michael Brooks

Washington Crossing Historic Park preserves the site of George Washington's dramatic crossing of the Delaware River on December 25, 1776. The park was founded in 1917 to commemorate and preserve the site where the Continental Army crossed the Delaware River. It was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1961.

The park has historic buildings, walking paths, picnicking, fishing, education and recreation programs, special events, and historical re-enactments.

Washington Crossing Historic Park is open every day of the year, sunrise to sunset. Day use areas close at dusk. The visitor center, historic building tours, and gift shop are available to the public during specific hours. Contact the visitor center for facility seasons and hours.

Some park facilities and areas are free. Other facilities are operated by Friends of Washington Crossing Park or Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve and fees may be charged.

Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 40.296129, -74.874238

The visitor center is on the opposite side of road from the visitor parking area.

Visitor Center Address: 1112 River Road, Washington Crossing, PA 18977

The northern section is 3.6 miles north of the visitor center on PA 32, River Road.

Caution: The Washington Crossing Bridge between PA 32 and NJ 29 has a 3-ton weight limit and is too narrow for buses, large trucks, and campers.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station

Two 2-plug, electric-vehicle charging stations are available for public use in the parking lot directly across from the visitor center. There is a 4-hour maximum time limit. Overnight charging is prohibited. Please move to another parking space once your vehicle has been charged or the maximum time-limit has been reached.

History



It was the winter of 1776. With the War of Independence failing, General George Washington and his ragged army had experienced only defeat and despair. The Battle of Long Island ended in a loss when the British troops managed to out-maneuver the Continental Army. A string of defeats forced Washington out of New York. As the British pursued him across New Jersey, Washington retreated across the Delaware River. Once in Pennsylvania, encamped soldiers occupied the property and homes of local residents.

With the harsh winter weather setting in, the morale of the American troops sank to an all-time low. Soldiers were forced to cope with minimal food and clothing supplies while Washington watched his army shrink due to desertions, illness, and expiring enlistments.

Washington was anxious to drive the British from New Jersey and protect Philadelphia. He formulated a plan to cross the Delaware River once again and attack Hessian troops at Trenton.

On December 25 as Washington assembled his troops near McConkey's Ferry, a winter storm began to cover the region with snow and sleet. At sundown, the army began crossing the ice-choked river. The weather made the operation slow and difficult. Poor river conditions prevented additional crossings planned at Trenton and Bristol.

Against all odds, Washington and his men successfully completed their crossing, marched into Trenton, and achieved a resounding victory over the Hessians. By moving ahead with his bold and daring plan, General George Washington reignited the cause of freedom and gave new life to the American Revolution.

Recreational Opportunities

Spend the Day



PICNICKING: Picnic areas are in the Valley of Concentration and Bowman's Hill Tower area. General Washington, General Greene, and General Sullivan pavilions have electricity and are reservable up to 11 months in advance. Unreserved pavilions are available for public use on a first-come, first-served basis.

Make online reservations or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday. www.pa.gov/state-parks

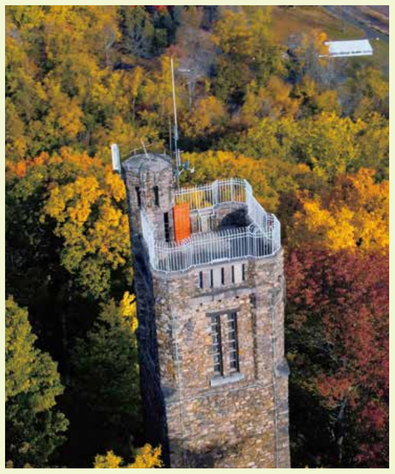
FISHING: The Delaware River contains many species of fish including American shad, striped bass, smallmouth bass, and walleye. Shad migration starts in early spring. The Delaware River, Delaware Canal, and the Lagoon are all warmwater fisheries. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.



BIKING: Bicycle from the northern section to the southern section of the park on the Delaware Canal State Park Towpath. For loops and longer bicycle riding options, connect with the 70-mile-long New Jersey Delaware and Raritan (D&R) Canal State Park Towpath via the Washington Crossing Bridge. E-bikes are permitted but must follow all e-bike guidelines. www.pa.gov/dcnr/ebike-policy

HIKING: 12.2 miles
See hiking section on reverse side.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING: The paths and fields of the park and the adjacent Delaware Canal Towpath are suitable for cross-country skiing when weather conditions permit.



SIGHTSEEING: The 125-foot Bowman's Hill Tower, located in the northern section off Lurgan Road, provides a fabulous view of the Delaware River Valley. An entry fee is charged. The tower is open April through November.

Learn with State Parks



Washington Crossing Historic Park offers a wide variety of programs year-round. Engage in hands-on activities about colonial Pennsylvania or the ecosystems within the park. Gain a better understanding of the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources through diverse program offerings such as guided outdoor recreation, hands-on activities, and special events. Special emphasis is placed on Washington Crossing's unique history, natural features, and biodiversity.

The Washington Crossing Historic Park Visitor Center features an introductory film in the auditorium offered hourly, a copy of Emanuel Leutze's famous painting of George Washington crossing the Delaware River, historical exhibits including a sculpture of Leutze's famous scene for tactile experiences, educational programs, and a gift shop. Visitors can purchase tickets for guided historic tours or admission to Bowman's Hill Tower. Self-guided tours of the historic site begin at the visitor center.

Standards-aligned, inquiry-based environmental education programs are available for school groups. A wide range of standards-aligned professional development trainings are offered for formal and non-formal educators. Diverse outdoor education programs are offered to organized groups. Touch tours can be arranged for visitors with low-vision and other groups. Contact the visitor center to schedule.

For more information on programs and other learning experiences, contact the park office or explore the DCNR Calendar of Events. https://events.dcnr.pa.gov

Information and Reservations

Washington Crossing Historic Park
1112 River Road
Washington Crossing, PA 18977
215-493-4076
WashingtonCrossingSP@pa.gov

Bowman's Hill Tower
215-862-3166

Washington Crossing Historic Park is administered by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in partnership with the Friends of Washington Crossing Park.

An Equal Opportunity Employer
www.pa.gov/state-parks

Make online reservations at www.pa.gov/state-parks or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

@WashingtonCrossingPark

Access for People with Disabilities

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a park employee to summon medical, fire, or safety professionals.

Call or text 988 to contact a crisis center counselor during a mental health or substance abuse crisis.

Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the park office.

NEAREST HOSPITALS

St. Mary Medical Center
1201 Langhorne-Newtown Rd.
Langhorne, PA 19047
215-710-2000
www.stmaryhealthcare.org

Capital Health
One Capital Way
Pennington, NJ 08534
800-637-2374
www.capitalhealth.org/our-locations/hopewell

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from Visit Bucks County. www.visitbuckscounty.com

In the northern section of the park, **Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve** showcases diverse plants native to Pennsylvania and the Delaware Valley. Visit, enjoy, and learn about the richness of Pennsylvania's natural heritage. Admission fee is charged. 215-862-2924. www.bhwp.org

At **Delaware Canal State Park**, visitors enjoy biking and hiking the D&L Trail, boating, and learning about the canal-building era of American history. 610-982-5560

Washington Crossing State Park in New Jersey offers a visitor center, trails, camping, fishing, picnicking, and educational programs. Entrance fee is charged in the summer season. 609-737-0623

Washington's Winter Gamble: Reinvigorating the Cause

December 1-8, 1776

Washington orders boats along the Delaware River be seized and brought to Trenton. The army begins crossing the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. As the final boat crosses the river, the British army arrives. Vexed at having to abandon New Jersey, Washington knows he must return.

December 9, 1776

Americans begin to conduct harassment raids in New Jersey nearly every day from this point. They agitate the enemy and gather critical intelligence about their movements. Meanwhile the British and Hessians scour the New Jersey riverbanks searching for boats.

December 10, 1776

Washington interviews a prisoner at General Lord Stirling's headquarters to gather information on British General Cornwallis' location.

December 12, 1776

Washington orders encampments at ferries from Bristol to Coryell's Ferry (present day New Hope). Stirling's brigade encamped at Beaumont's Ferry, spilling onto neighboring Robert Thompson's property (the Thompson-Neely Farmstead); and General Adam Stephen's brigade encamped by McConkey's Ferry.

December 19, 1776

Major General Nathaniel Greene orders boats and ferries be brought to McConkey's Ferry. "...send down to Meconkea [McConkey] ferry, sixteen Durham Boats & four flats [ferries]..." A plan is underway.

December 24, 1776

Hessians fire on a ferryboat containing American soldiers guarding the crossing point, resulting in one death. That evening, Washington's council of war finalizes plans to recross the river and attack the Hessian outpost in Trenton.

December 25, 1776

2,400 soldiers cross the Delaware River at McConkey's Ferry during a winter storm. Crossings at Bristol and Trenton ferries fail due to the weather. Washington's men march nine miles to Trenton.

December 26, 1776

First Battle of Trenton

The Continental Army defeats the Hessians for a much needed victory. Then they return to Pennsylvania with their prisoners. Hessian officers are imprisoned overnight at McConkey's Ferry.

December 27-January 1, 1777

With soldiers' enlistments extended, Washington plans to attack Princeton. The exertions of the crossings and battle take a toll on the army. Bedridden soldiers remain behind in local homes for months; many lose their lives.

January 2-3, 1777

Second Battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton

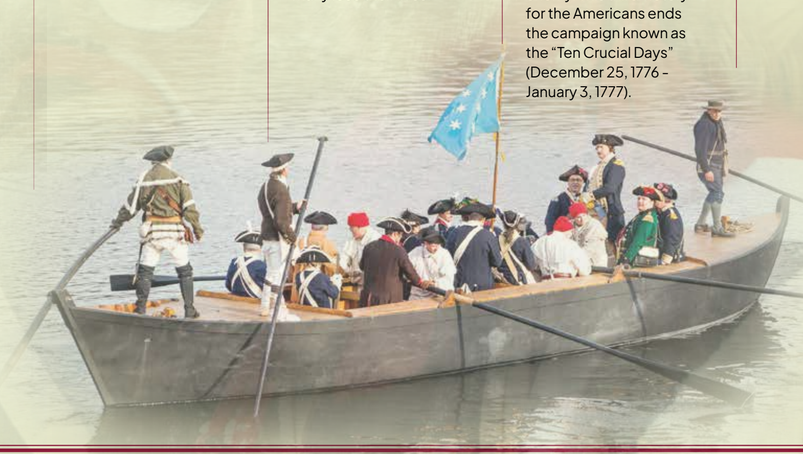
The Continental Army fights 8,000 British and Hessian troops along Assunpink Creek. Overnight, Washington withdraws from Trenton and marches to Princeton where they defeat the enemy. This third victory for the Americans ends the campaign known as the "Ten Crucial Days" (December 25, 1776 - January 3, 1777).

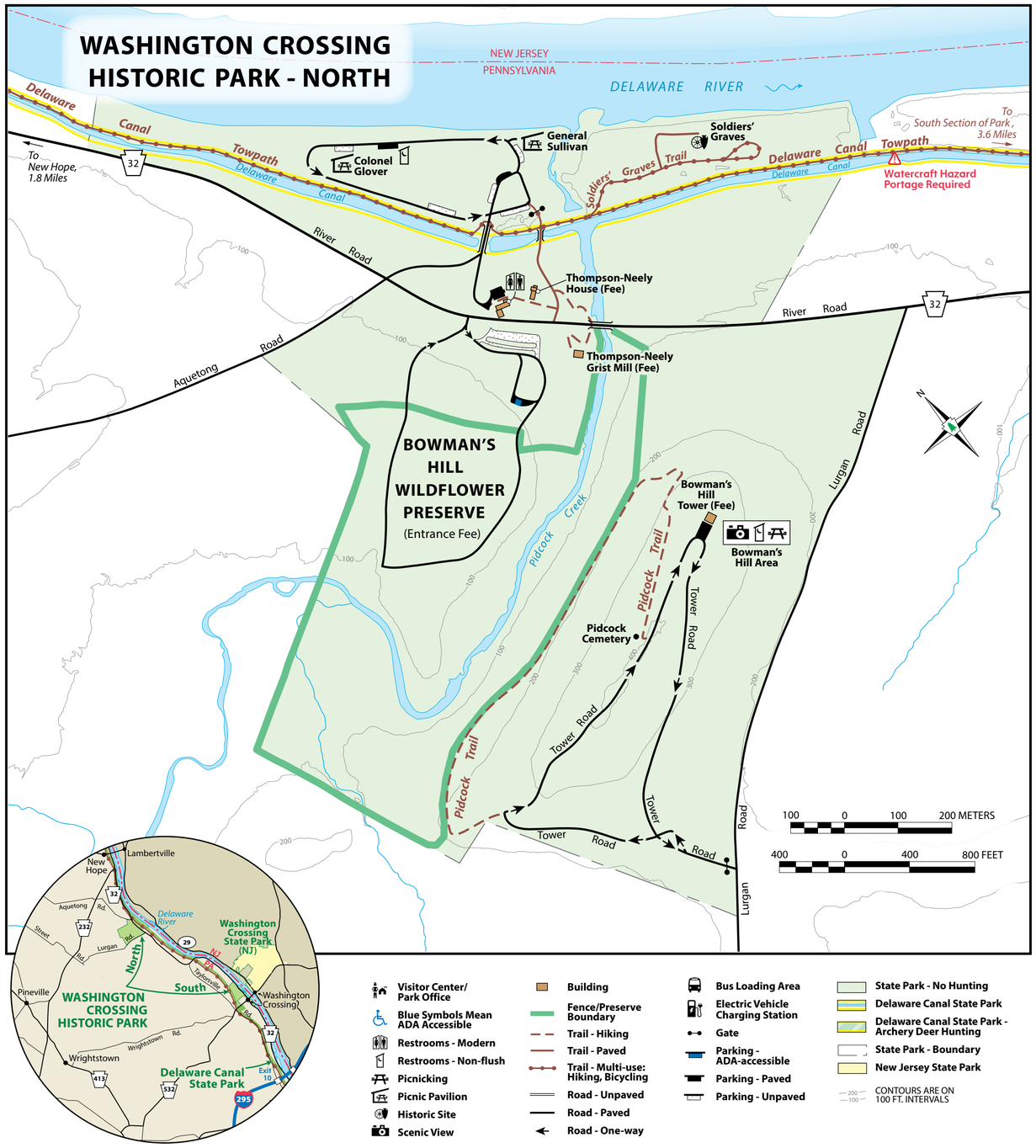
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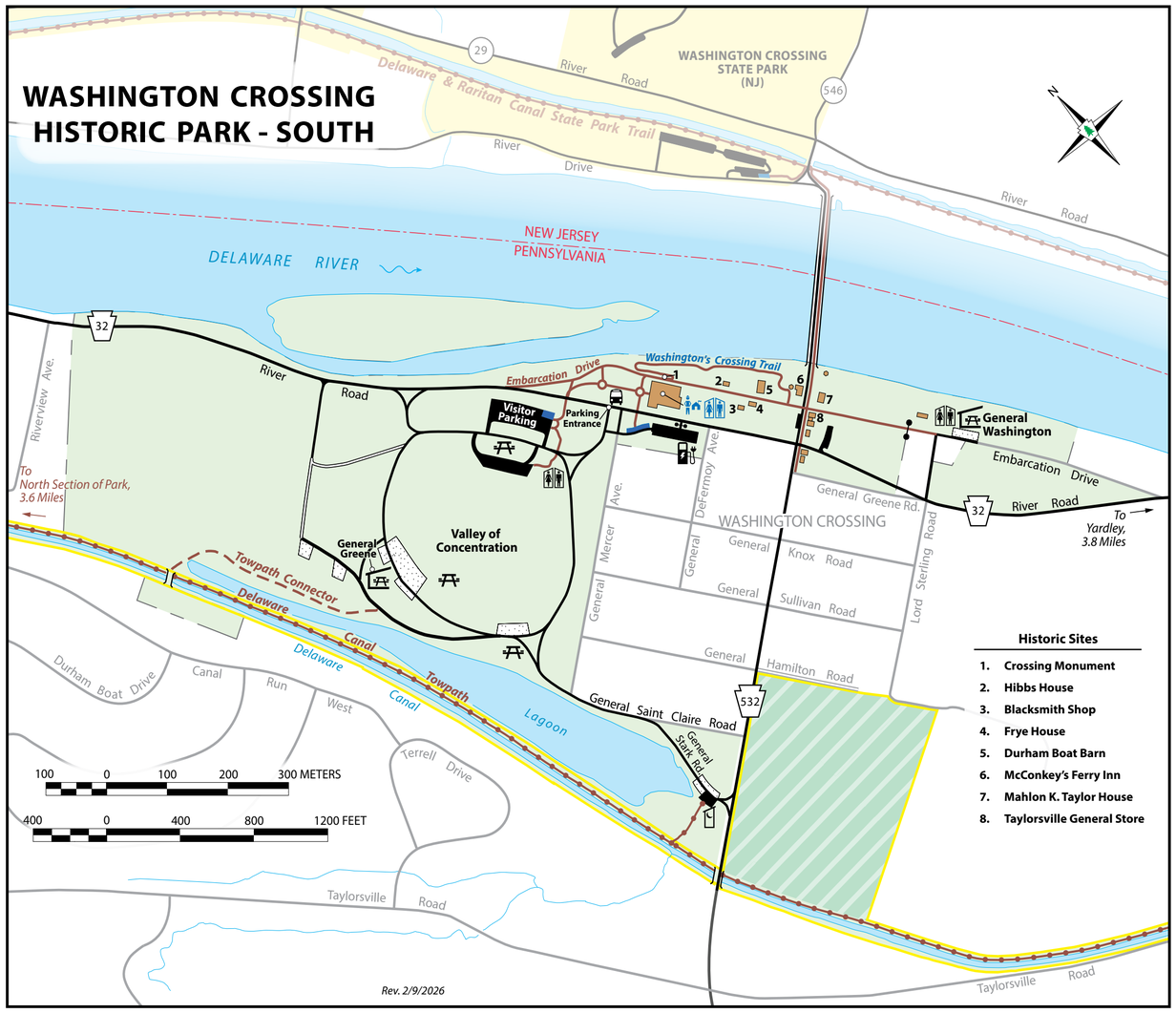
The army establishes winter quarters in Morristown, New Jersey. Ferries along the Delaware River continue to be guarded for months.











Historical Sites

NORTH SECTION

Thompson-Neely House
Site of Washington's Encampment
In December 1776, thousands of Continental soldiers camped in the frozen farms, fields, and forests of rural Bucks County. The home of miller, Robert Thompson, and his son-in-law, William Neely, served as housing for officers and their servants. The grounds were used by camping soldiers, some of whom were ill, and to bury the dead.

Pre-purchase tickets to tour inside the house.

Thompson-Neely Grist Mill
In December 1776, the army was unwelcome in many parts of Bucks County. While some millers refused to accept Continental money to grind grain for the hungry army, Robert Thompson likely embraced the patriotic cause and provided the army with much needed flour from his mill. Washington ordered grain to be seized from uncooperative millers and that they be paid full value for their loss.

In the late 1820s, construction of part of the Delaware Canal on the property raised the water level of Pidcock Creek and halted operation of the mill. Robert Thompson Neely, Robert Thompson's grandson, eventually abandoned the original location of the mill and moved it upstream. In 1873, that second mill caught fire. The mill was rebuilt in the same location and still stands today.

Pre-purchase tickets to tour inside the mill.

Soldiers' Graves
The graves of many unknown soldiers who died during the December 1776 encampment are located here. The only known soldier buried here is Captain Lieutenant James Moore of the New York Artillery. Alexander Hamilton wrote of Moore's death and said that "a promising officer, who did credit to the state he belonged to, died on the 25th of December after a short but excruciating fit of illness." The stone wall surrounding the graves was finished in 1929 and the flagpole monument was dedicated in 1940.

Bowman's Hill Tower
This 125-foot tower was built in 1931 to commemorate the American Revolution. Stone steps lead to the top of the tower with an impressive view of the Delaware River and surrounding countryside. This site is open seven days a week, March through December, weather permitting. An admission fee is charged.


Thompson-Neely House


Thompson-Neely Grist Mill


Soldiers' Graves


Bowman's Hill Tower

SOUTH SECTION


Hibbs House


Blacksmith Shop


Frye House


Durham Boat Barn


McConkey's Ferry Inn


Taylorsville General Store


Mahlon K. Taylor House

Hibbs House
This restored and furnished nineteenth century home was erected circa 1828–1830 as part of the village of Taylorsville. It was leased out as a tenant house for craftsmen and was advertised as a wheelwright's house and shop.

Blacksmith Shop
The current blacksmith shop was built in 1990 to replicate Taylorsville's original blacksmith shop constructed around 1830.

Frye House
Built circa 1828–1830 by the Taylor family, this home is believed to have been constructed for a blacksmith.

Durham Boat Barn
This twentieth-century structure houses Durham boat replicas. Durham boats were originally used to haul iron ore and were the sturdy craft used by Washington and his men for the crossing. Today, these replicas are a key component of the annual reenactment of Washington crossing the Delaware River on Christmas Day.

McConkey's Ferry Inn
This eighteenth-century inn and tavern was owned by Samuel McConkey. The inn served as a guard post during the Continental Army's encampment in Bucks County in December 1776. Earthworks and cannon defended the ferry landing. From here Washington wrote ..."I am determined... to cross the River, & make the attack upon Trenton in the Morning." Additions were made to the inn in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by the Taylor family. This building continued to serve as an inn for many decades, and it is the only original structure that was here at the time of the crossing.

Taylorsville General Store
Beginning around 1828, this store was owned and operated by Mahlon K. Taylor. It also functioned as the post office for Taylorsville. Mahlon Taylor served as the postmaster for nearly 40 years.

Mahlon K. Taylor House
This home was built circa 1817 for one of the town founders of Taylorsville, now known as Washington Crossing. It shows the status and prosperity of the Taylor family in the community.

Hiking: 12.2 miles

All trails are unblazed and easy to follow except where noted below.

DELAWARE CANAL STATE PARK TOWPATH: 4.4 miles between the northern and southern sections of the park, 59 miles total | Easiest hiking | Point-to-point trail
The park is adjacent to the Delaware Canal State Park Towpath, which runs from Easton to Bristol. A four-mile section of this trail connects the northern and southern sections of Washington Crossing Historic Park. The towpath is part of the 165-mile Delaware and Lehigh (D&L) Trail system, which follows the historic route of the Delaware and Lehigh canals. Once trod by mule teams pulling cargo-laden boats from the coal fields of northeastern Pennsylvania, the towpath now is used by walkers, joggers, bicyclists, cross-country skiers, and bird watchers.

Embarcation Drive: 0.4 mile | Easiest hiking | Out-and-back trail
Accessed from the visitor center, this paved path travels through the main historic area of the park and along the Delaware River.

Pidcock Trail: 0.8 mile | Most difficult hiking | Out-and-back trail | Yellow blazes
This trail near the Pidcock Cemetery is a short but rugged hike down the forested slopes of Bowman's Hill and back up again, with nearly 400 feet of elevation change. User can make a one-mile loop by walking back to the starting point along the road.

Soldiers' Graves Trail: 0.2 mile | Easiest hiking | Connector trail
Accessed from the Delaware Canal Towpath in the northern section of the park, this gravel path leads to the graves of the fallen soldiers.

Thompson-Neely Trail: 0.2 mile | Easiest hiking | Out-and-back trail
In the northern section of the park, access this trail from the parking lot near the barn. The trail branches out to the Thompson-Neely House and Grist Mill.

Towpath Connector: 0.2 mile | Easiest hiking | Connector trail
This easy trail through fields connects the Valley of Concentration to the Delaware Canal Towpath.

Washington's Crossing Trail: 0.2 mile | Easiest hiking | Connector trail
Starting and ending on Embarcation Drive, this ADA-accessible, self-guided trail parallels the Delaware River and helps tell the story of the pivotal events of Washington's Crossing.