

## Fort Washington Park

The defenses for the city aren't in the foremost thoughts of most Washingtonians today. It takes newspaper headlines about space based missile shields to make most of us think about it. In the early 1800's, as tensions of war with the British grew, Fort Warburton was built as part of the defenses of the nation, on a location that George Washington recommended. The national defense was shown inadequate in 1814 when the British burned the capitol building and the White House during the War of 1812. Fort Warburton was demolished by its own men to prevent it from being used by the invading British. Rebuilding of the fort was begun almost immediately and it was renamed Fort Washington. The initial project was completed by 1824 though it was renovated many times afterwards. Use of the fort came into importance again during the Civil War. At the same time Washington's earthen battery forts, encircling the city, were built. Fort Washington defended and controlled the traffic on the Potomac river. As technological improvements in artillery were made over the years, different refinements and additions were made. Concrete sheltered mortar batteries were built on grounds near the old fort, behind the river bluffs out of view from the water. The river was mined during the Spanish American War. Just after the turn of the century, Fort Hunt was added across the river with more concrete mortar batteries. In World Wars I and II, the Fort Washington saw use as a staging and training area for troops headed overseas. Technological advances continually made it less strategically and geographically important. Since 1946, it has been a park under the management of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

### Getting There

From the Capital Beltway (I-495), take Indian Head Highway, Rte. 210, south. Turn right after 4.2 miles onto Fort Washington Rd. Enter the park after 3.4 miles and pay the fee at the gate (\$4 in 1999). Follow main road as it winds its way to a parking lot before the fort and Visitor Center.

### Area Routes

#### Fort Washington (3.65 miles, III)

This loop takes you right past many of the historic features of the park. Start by passing between the Visitors Center and the old brick fort designed initially by Pierre L'Enfant. The view near the Visitor Center is commanding. When you're finished the run, see the exhibit on the right which shows that the range of the different artillery that extended into Virginia and far down-river. At the bottom of the steep initial hill, begin a counter-clockwise loop by passing the lighthouse. The trail is flat for a way as it parallels the mouth of Piscataway Creek. Mockley Point (see Piscataway Park) is visible across it. The trail gets difficult to run on as it climbs and drops over a steep ridge with wooden stairs. A second climb passes near dangerous bluffs before turning left. After the turn, the trail is grassy and difficult to distinguish for a short way. Go around one of the concrete bunkers, skirt the park's eastern borders, and merge onto a paved park access road. Pass the park entrance station and start downward, still along the park's eastern border. Begin to loop back through a wetland area near Swan Creek. The Potomac River is soon visible again though much of it is obscured by trees. Follow it on another park access road and paved

trail back to the main fort to begin the steep climb back.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

Piscataway Park  
Tucker Athletic Complex/Henson Trail

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

Picnic  
Golden Dragon Restaurant - 301 292-5050  
Charlie's Restaurant - 301 292-0655

#### Entertainment and Edification

Fort Washington Visitor Center - 301 763-4600  
National Colonial Farm - 301 283-4201

## Fort Washington

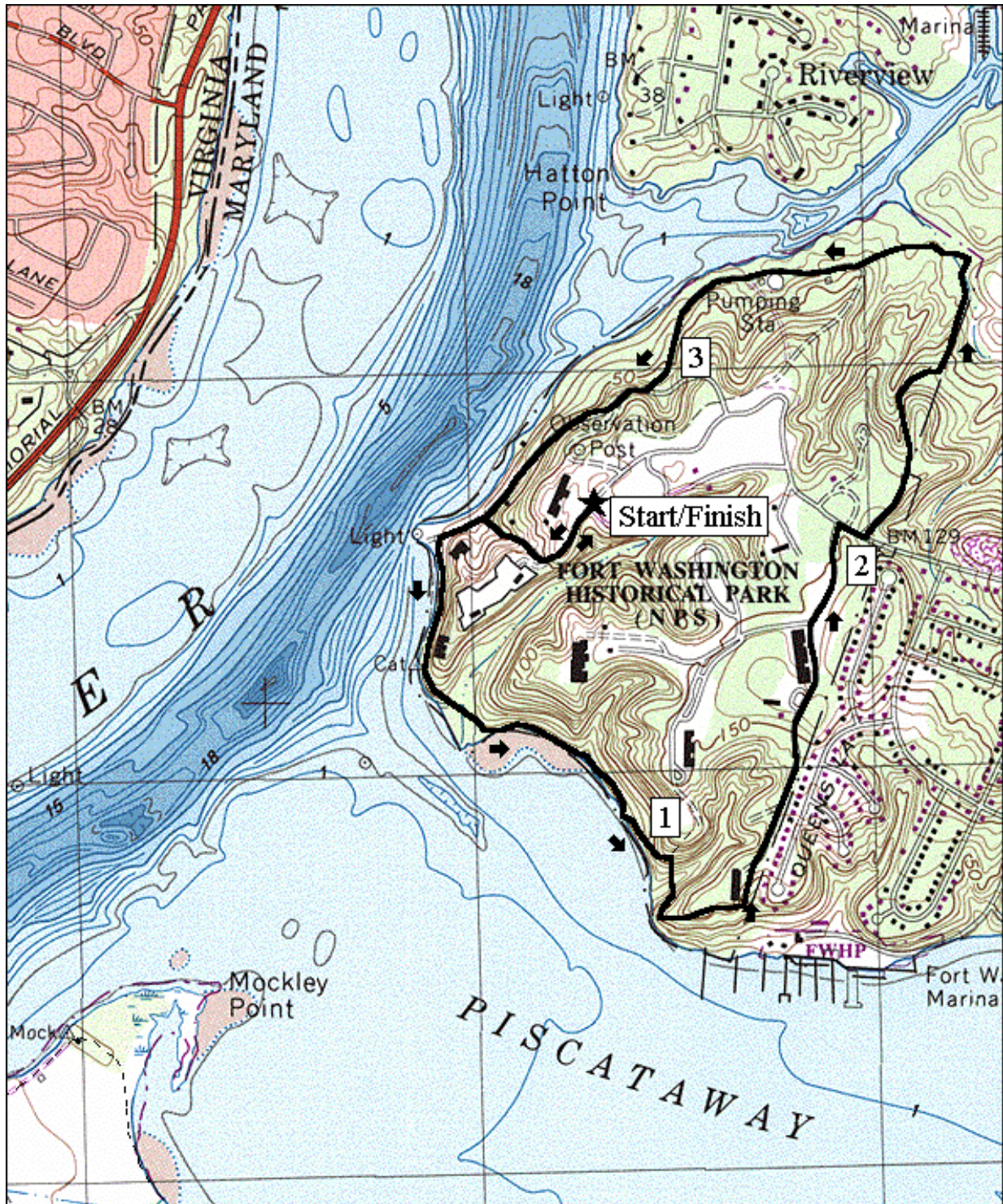
Distance: 3.65 miles

Rating: III, mostly unpaved wooded trails with some steep hills

- |         |   |          |  |
|---------|---|----------|--|
| 0.0     | from the parking lot, go toward the main fort w/Visitor Center on R                                       | BR 1.75  | Rd X after bunker  |
| R 0.1   | asphalt path going down to the water  | R/L 1.95 | Fort Washington Rd (unmarked) toward & past Entrance Station; L is at grassy road & chain gate |
| L 0.25  | at T; service road  | 2.35     | wooden ramp  |
| L 0.3   | gravel road before lighthouse   | 2.6      | TR X on R  |
| 0.6     | wooden bridge   | R 3.05   | L'Enfant Rd (unmarked)   |
| 0.95    | TR X on R & concrete works at water; begin steep climb  | S 3.35   | onto service road at end of road (water/restrooms)   |
| BR 1.05 | at TR X; steep downhill (!)   | L 3.4    | paved trail on L up steep hill along old fort  |
| BL 1.15 | at trail split; very steep uphill and cliffs on R (!); trail becomes grassy ahead as it continues up to L | L 3.5    | at T; toward parking/Visitor Center  |
| BR 1.25 | at mound for concrete bunker; over grass to paved road  | 3.65     | parking  |



# Fort Washington



MN | TN  
10 1/2°

0 1/2 1 MILE  
0 1000 FEET 0 500m 1000m

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