

Washington Heritage Trail

The Washington Heritage Trail in West Virginia



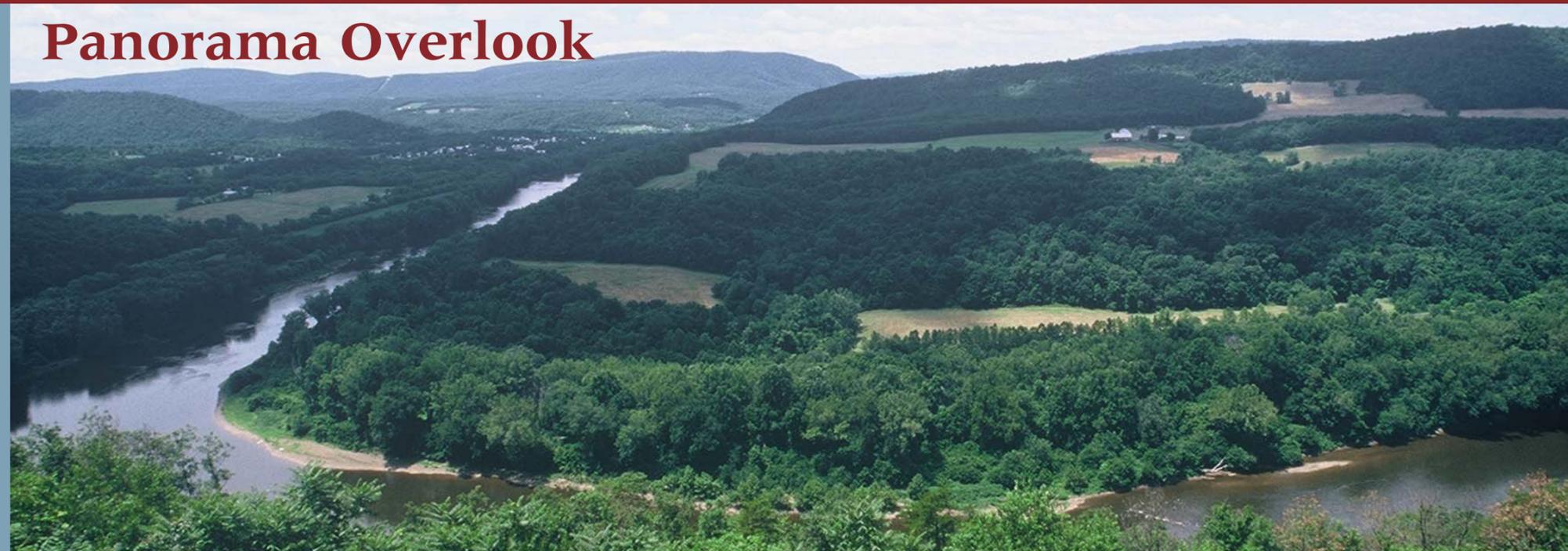
The Washington Heritage Trail is a 136-mile national scenic byway inspired by the prominent footsteps of George Washington through the three historic counties of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. Compelling history, spectacular scenery, geologic wonders, recreation and year 'round activities and festivals are highlighted by 45 historical sites. The trail meanders across mountains and rivers, through forests, farms and orchards as it connects five 18th century towns that remain the center of life today and offer comfortable lodging, unique shopping and fine dining. More information on attractions and services throughout the area is available at each town's Visitor Center.

www.washingtonheritagetrail.com



Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association

Panorama Overlook



Today's View

Panorama Overlook marks the end of Cacapon Mountain's 30-mile march. Composed of Oriskany sandstone, it plunges nearly 1000 feet into the Potomac River, which bends along the base of Overlook as it heads downstream (to the right) toward the Chesapeake Bay. West Virginia is the near side of the river; Maryland is the farmland on the far side. Looking downstream, the hazy mountains in the distance (right) are in Pennsylvania. The jumbled mountains to the left mark the beginning of the Eastern Continental Divide.

The tiny hamlet along the West Virginia side of the Potomac is Great Cacapon. Much of its area was surveyed by a young George Washington. Just downstream from the town is the confluence of the wild and scenic Cacapon River, snaking north from its origin. Further upstream from the town, Washington owned riverfront acreage which he prized for its virgin walnut trees.

The scene encapsulates America's transportation history showing the C&O Canal on the Maryland side of the river and the B&O Railroad on the West Virginia side. Construction started on both on the same day in 1828.

George Washington's View

Higher on Cacapon Mountain, Prospect Rock (also called Cacapon Rock) offers the same spectacular view. It was a favorite daytrip for visitors on horseback from colonial times to the early 20th century. Washington often rode here, fueling his vision of a way west and dreams for his Powtomack Navigation Company. Today the unique rock formations may be reached by a 12-mile fire road and flat hiking trail along the top of Cacapon Mountain accessed from Cacapon State Park and hiking trails from Coolfont Resort.

Over the years, the view from Panorama has been lauded by many including the following. Art Association rates Panorama view the 10th finest in the world; Museum of Natural History in New York rates Panorama view the 5th finest in the US; National Geographic called it the "Switzerland View of America."

"...one of the wildest, sublimest and most interesting views of mountain country interspersed with cultivated valleys and rivers, was to be seen, which our country afforded, rich as it was in scenery."

Laurence Augustine Washington 1796